

Theism, Time, and Human Freedom
(A Consideration of the Solutions
Offered for the Problem of Omniscience)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	p.1
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Chapter

I. SOME SOLUTIONS OFFERED FOR THE PROBLEM OF OMNISCIENCE

A. Pike's Argument for the Incompatibility of Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom.....	p.5
B. Plantinga's Critique of Pike Via Possible Worlds.....	p.11
C. Pike's Rebuttal to Plantinga.....	p.17
D. Stephen Davis on the Contingency of God's Knowledge.....	p.22
E. Douglas Lackey on God's Knowledge as Determining.....	p.34
F. Conclusion.....	p.39
Footnotes to Chapter I.....	p.43

II. THE ISSUE OF TIME

A. Introduction.....	p.46
B. Boethius' Solution to the Problem of Omniscience.....	p.46
C. Hebblethwaite's Three World-Views of Time and Freedom.....	p.48
D. Definitions of God's Knowledge and His Relationship to Time.....	p.49
E. God's Knowledge in Each of Hebblethwaite's Three World-Views.....	p.51

F.	The Problems With Timelessness and the Reasons Why It's Held.....	p.52
G.	The Thomistic Doctrine of Timelessness and Immutability.....	p.53
H.	The Doctrine of Middle Knowledge.....	p.58
I.	Conclusion.....	p.58
	Footnotes to Chapter II.....	p.65

III. ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF FUTURE TRUTH

A.	Introduction.....	p.67
B.	Hebblethwaite on the Notion of God's Self-Limitation.....	p.67
C.	Wolterstorff on the Nature of Truth Value.....	p.69
D.	Conclusion.....	p.77
	Footnotes to Chapter III.....	p.81

	CONCLUSION.....	p.82
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Selected Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Those engaged in the philosophy of religion examine the claims made by theists and atheists concerning the existence and attributes of a supreme being referred to as "God". These philosophers approach such claims about God in terms of their logical consistency. For example, if one claims that God is all-good, all-powerful, and the creator of all things, is this claim consistent with the existence of evil in that creation? In this paper my focus is not the problem of evil, but rather the problem of the compatibility of divine omniscience with human freedom.

The problem of omniscience can be stated as follows: Given that God knows the future, that God cannot be mistaken in His knowledge, and that God's knowledge is complete and cannot change, are human choices and actions free? Why is such a question being raised? Isn't it obvious that God is omniscient and that humans are free? If one were to read philosophical essays on the issue it would soon become clear that the solution is not so obvious. Questions concerning the deterministic nature of God's knowledge, the immutability of the past, the requirements of human freedom, and the logical limitations applicable to knowledge of the future must be considered before coming to any conclusions concerning the compatibility or incompatibility of God's omniscience with human freedom.

Another crucial issue that must be addressed is that of God's relationship to time and the advantages and disadvantages respective to placing God within or outside of time. Given God's relationship to time, can He know the future? Can He relate Himself to a temporal creation? Can He be described as immutable? Such questions lead one ultimately to an investigation of the nature of truth itself and to the logical prerequisites of knowledge of future truth, as well as to the question of whether or not there is such a thing as future truth.

My purpose in this paper is not to solve the problem of omniscience, but rather to provide an overview of the recent philosophical discussion concerning the issues and questions which I have described above. I will summarize the solutions offered by some important philosophers of religion, consider their respective merits and difficulties, and point out the issues that remain to be resolved. My treatment of the problem of omniscience will be divided into three chapters. Chapter I will focus on the nature of God's knowledge and its implications for human freedom. My material will be drawn from articles by Nelson Pike, Alvin Plantinga, Stephen Davis, and Douglas Lackey. Pike provides a formula for the problem and comes to conclusions based upon that formula. Plantinga criticizes Pike's conclusions; his criticisms and his own conclusions make use of the logical device of possible worlds. We return to Pike who defends his original conclusions and calls into question Plantinga's use of possible worlds. Stephen Davis examines the

arguments posed by Pike and Plantinga and comes to his own conclusion about the logical relationship between God's knowledge and the objects of that knowledge. Finally in the first chapter, I consider Douglas Lackey's explanation of the causal theory of knowing and his application of that theory to the problem of omniscience.

All the authors discussed in Chapter I comment briefly on God's relationship to time, but do not pursue the issue. In Chapter II I do pursue the issue of time and how it affects the various solutions to the problem of omniscience. First I present the solution offered by the Medieval philosopher Boethius, a solution which placed God outside of time. Boethius' solution expresses a world-view of time and human freedom that is one of three predominant such world-views which are outlined by Brian Hebblethwaite. After summarizing Hebblethwaite's comments I turn to Nicholas Wolterstorff for definitions of the concepts used to describe God's relationship to time. A concluding set of definitions are presented to distinguish terms commonly applied synonymously to God's knowledge.

Armed with these definitions we return to Hebblethwaite's three world-views and examine his conclusions about God's possible relationship to each. Timelessness is one such world-view and I point out the problems with this doctrine as well as the reasons why it is commonly held by many theists. Besides Boethius, the major defender of the doctrine of timelessness is Thomas Aquinas and I attempt to summarize his complex arguments with the help of John Knassas, a contemporary

Thomist. Another equally complex solution proposed to the problem of omniscience is the doctrine of middle knowledge. I consider the summary and criticism of this doctrine presented by Robert Adams, and conclude this chapter by offering my own analysis of how timelessness could help to clear up the difficulties inherent in middle knowledge.

The argument for or against timelessness is not concluded in Chapter II however. Is there something about the nature of truth value which makes it logically impossible for the future to be known, or is truth itself timeless? These are the questions that are discussed in the third and final chapter of this paper. I begin by returning to Brian Hebblethwaite who develops the notion of God's self-limitation in the face of the nature of truth. Hebblethwaite, however, does not attempt to explain in depth what the logical nature of truth value consists in. Nicholas Wolterstorff does take on this task and I summarize his rather lengthy analysis of it.

Has Wolterstorff or any of the others solved the problem of omniscience and time? I conclude that they do not and I point out some key issues that remain to be resolved. Although this paper is largely expository in its purpose, I do offer my own criticisms and suggest possible solutions. My hope is that this paper can serve as a springboard for further discussion about the logical and theological consequences of man's assertions concerning the existence and the attributes of God.

CHAPTER I

SOME SOLUTIONS OFFERED FOR THE PROBLEM OF OMNISCIENCE

A. PIKE'S ARGUMENT FOR THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF DIVINE OMNISCIENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

Nelson Pike in his article "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action"¹ developes an argument which he hopes will establish the incompatibility between the doctrine of God's omniscience and the belief in human freedom. Pike first establishes what is meant by God's omniscience. Consider an agent A and any proposition P . If the statement "A knows P" is true then the statement "A believes P" is true. Given this, it follows that "P" is true.² Pike applies this analysis of knowledge to God's omniscience. Pike recalls that Boethius defined God's omniscience as "He cannot in anything be mistaken." In other words, God cannot hold any false beliefs. Therefore, if God knows P then God believes P and P must be true. Pike goes on to say that it is part of God's essence to be omniscient. That is, if a given person is God, that person holds no false beliefs. Pike offers this as an a priori truth, it is part of the definition of the being called "god" that that being holds no false beliefs, i.e. is omniscient.³

Given this definition of God's omniscience, Pike goes on to explore a further aspect of the doctrine, namely, that God knows everything He knows from eternity. What is meant here by "eternity"? Pike considers two possible meanings. The first

meaning of "God is eternal" is that God exists outside of time; God has no temporal relation to the created world. Pike considers this notion obscure, but nevertheless goes on to describe its application to the doctrine of omniscience. If God exists outside of time then to say that He knows everything that He knows from eternity cannot mean that God knows events before they happen. "Before" is a temporal description and if God is outside of time He can bear no temporal relation to the created world.⁴ Pike does not pursue this first meaning of "eternity" further (I will be discussing it in the second chapter of this paper) but rather moves on to the second possible meaning.

The second understanding of what is meant by God's eternity is that God has existed at every moment (in time) and will continue to exist indefinitely. Therefore, using this understanding of "eternity", God has always known what was going to happen in the created world even before the world existed. This is what is properly understood as God's foreknowledge. Pike offers as an expression of this second meaning the doctrine put forth by John Calvin. Calvin described God's foreknowledge as the past, present, and future being eternally present before God. At this point I would raise the question of whether Pike has properly understood Calvin's interpretation of foreknowledge. The concept of perpetual present is often used as a description of God's timeless rather than temporal nature. If this is the case then Calvin is really expressing the first meaning of "eternity" rather than the second. Although Pike thus

misuses Calvin's interpretation, Pike himself is of the conviction that God is in time and therefore subject to the logical principles which govern time.

Pike offers the following statement as a general formula for God's omniscience (in time): God knew at time T_1 prior to time T_2 that at T_2 an agent A would do an action X.⁵ Using this formula, Pike proceeds to question the compatibility of divine omniscience with human freedom. First however, let us define human freedom in the following terms: A is free at T with respect to X if it is equally within A's power to do or to refrain from doing X at T. Pike develops his argument using the now classic example of Jones mowing his lawn on Saturday. For the sake of simplicity and consistency I will generalize this example in the formula "A does X at T_2 ." Pike provides the reader with a schematic representation of what he admits is a rather complex argument. I will reproduce that schematization in its entirety, substituting my abbreviated formula.

1. "God existed at T_1 " entails "If A did X at T_2 , God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 ".
2. "God believes X" entails "'X' is true".
3. It is not within one's power at a given time to do something having a description that is logically contradictory.

4. It is not within one's power⁶ at a given time, to do something that would bring it about that someone who held a certain belief at a time prior to the time in question did not hold that belief at the time prior to the time in question.⁷

5. It is not within one's power at a given time to do something that would bring it about that a person who existed at an earlier time did not exist at that earlier time.

6. If God existed at T_1 and if God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , then if it was within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X, then⁸
 - (1) it was not within A's power at T_2 to do something which would have brought it about that God held a false belief at T_1 ,
 - or (2) it was within A's power at T_2 to do something which would have brought it about that God did not hold the belief He held at T_1 ,
 - or (3) it was within A's power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that any person who believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 (one of whom was, by hypothesis, God) held a false belief and thus was not God, that is, that God (who by hypothesis existed at T_1) did not exist at T_1 .

7. Alternative #1 in the consequent of premise #6 is false (from 2 and 3).
8. Alternative #2 in the consequent of premise #6 is false (from 4).
9. Alternative #3 in the consequent of premise #6 is false (from 5).
10. Therefore, if God existed at T_1 and if God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , then it was not within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X (from 6 through 9).
11. Therefore, if God existed at T_1 , and if A did X at T_2 , then it was not within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X (from 1 through 10).⁹

What are the basic principles underlying Pike's argument? I think that they can be summarized in the following three premises:

1. God, or at least His knowledge, is in time, that is, His knowledge of human actions preceeds the performance of those actions.
2. God's knowledge cannot be changed.

3. The past cannot be changed.

As a consequence of these three premises, Pike concludes that if God knows at T_1 that A will do X at T_2 then for A not to do X at T_2 would amount to A changing God's knowledge and thereby changing the past. Since it is logically impossible for A to do either of these things, if God knows at T_1 that A will do X at T_2 then A cannot refrain from doing X at T_2 , and therefore, A is not free with regard to the action at T_2 . Pike offers his formula as a paradigm for all God's acts of knowing and for all human actions. Pike therefore concludes that postulating divine omniscience is equivalent to denying human freedom; the two are incompatible.

In order to overcome Pike's conclusion one must succeed in doing one of the following:

1. Deny God's omniscience entirely with respect to the actions of humans.
2. Deny the freedom of human actions.
3. Postulate that God's knowledge can indeed be changed.
4. Redefine God's omniscience without respect to temporal descriptions.
5. If one wishes to retain a temporal description of God's omniscience, explain how A could refrain from doing X at T_2 without it constituting a change in a past belief of God.

Options #1-4 will be pursued at various points later in this paper. Our immediate attention will be #5 which is the

approach taken by Alvin Plantinga in his response to Pike's argument.

B. PLANTINGA'S CRITIQUE OF PIKE VIA POSSIBLE WORLDS

In Part 1, section B of his book God, Freedom, and Evil¹⁰ Alvin Plantinga responds to Pike's article. Plantinga recalls Pike's claim that God is essentially omniscient. Plantinga distinguishes between the claim that God is omniscient and that God is essentially omniscient as follows: If God is omniscient then He is unlimited in knowledge; if God is essentially omniscient then He is not only unlimited in knowledge, but He could not have been so limited. This apparently subtle distinction is based on what is known as the apparatus of possible worlds. Before proceeding with Plantinga's critiques of Pike it is necessary to briefly summarize the main features of the possible worlds apparatus.

Plantinga himself provides an explanation of possible worlds in Part 1, section A of God, Freedom, and Evil¹¹. A possible world is "a way things could have been" or a "state of affairs". An actual world is state of affairs that does in fact obtain, i.e. not only exists as a possibility but exists as an actuality. Only one possible world is an actual world, the world as we know it in which we exist. Not every possible state of affairs is a possible world, however. In order for a state of affairs to be a possible world it must be complete. A complete state of affairs has the properties of inclusion and preclusion.

Inclusion means that a state of affairs "A" includes a state of affairs "B" if it is not possible that A obtain and B not obtain, or if the state of affairs "A but not B" is not possible. Inclusion among states of affairs is like entailment among propositions. Preclusion means that a state of affairs "A" precludes a state of affairs "B" if it is not possible that both states of affairs obtain, or if the state of affairs "A and B" is impossible. Therefore, a state of affairs "A" is complete if and only if for every state of affairs "B" B either includes A or A precludes the negation of B.

Corresponding to each possible world "W" is a set of propositions called "the book on W". A proposition "P" is true in W if and only if P would have been true if W had been actual, in other words, if and only if it is not possible that W be actual and P be false. If P fulfills these conditions then P is in the book on W. Each book contains a maximal consistent set of propositions, that is, if another proposition would be added to the set the set would become inconsistent. As was stated earlier, only one possible world is actual. For this statement Plantinga offers the following argument: Consider W and W'. Both worlds cannot contain all the same propositions for then they would be the same world. Therefore, there must be one state of affairs "S" that W includes and W' does not. However, a possible world must be maximal, and therefore W' must include S' (the negation of S). If both W and W' were actual then both S and S' would obtain, but this is impossible. Therefore, only one

possible world can be actual.

Finally, we have a clarification on the logical status of propositions (P and Q). P is necessary if it is true in every possible world. P is possible if it is true in at least one possible world and impossible if it is true in no possible world. P entails Q if there is no possible world in which P is true and Q is false. P is consistent with Q if there is at least one possible world in which both P and Q are true.

To return to Plantinga's distinction between God being omniscient and being essentially omniscient, if God is essentially omniscient He is not only unlimited in knowledge but He could not have been so limited¹². What Plantinga means is that there is no possible world containing the proposition "God believes X but X is false" or "X is true but God does not know that X is true". Another way to say this is that given the state of affairs B: "God has a false belief", every possible world precludes B and includes not-B: "God never has a false belief". Given this understanding of "God is essentially omniscient" using the possible worlds apparatus, Plantinga proceeds to use this apparatus to undermine Pike's argument that God's essential omniscience is incompatible with human freedom.

Plantinga reconstructs the schematization of Pike's argument as I did earlier. It is on premise six that Plantinga focuses his attention. For the sake of convenience I will reproduce that premise here.

6. If God existed at T_1 and if God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , then if it was within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X then

(1) it was within A's power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that God held a false belief at T_1

or (2) it was within A's power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that God did not hold the belief He held at T_1 ,

or (3) it was within A's power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that anyone who believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 held a false belief and therefore was not God.

Pike went on to show that each of the consequents contained in premise six is false. Since, as Pike claims, the antecedent of premise six entails each of the consequents, the antecedent itself is false, in other words, it is not the case that it was within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X at T_2 . Consequently, Pike concludes that divine essential omniscience is incompatible with human freedom.

Plantinga poses the question, "Does the antecedent of premise six entail consequent one?" His answer is "no". Plantinga points out that if A refrained from doing X at T_2 then God would not have believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , in

fact, God would have believed that A would refrain from doing X at T_2 . What Plantinga claims that the antecedent does entail is that it was within A's power to do something such that if he had done it, then a belief which God did hold at T_1 would have been false.¹³ The distinction between this consequent and the one proposed by Pike is not immediately clear. Plantinga realizes this and goes on to highlight the distinction through the use of the possible worlds apparatus.

Given that in the actual world God believes at T_1 that A does X at T_2 , and given that it is within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 , consider any possible world W in which A does refrain from doing X at T_2 . In that possible world the belief that God holds in the actual world is false. However, had W been actual then God would have believed that A would refrain from doing X. Plantinga's reason for this conclusion is that it does not necessarily follow that the beliefs which God holds in the actual world would be beliefs held in any or all possible worlds. Therefore, it does not necessarily follow that God would have believed that A would do X at T_2 .¹⁴ Following this line of reasoning, Plantinga concludes that the antecedent of premise six does not entail consequent one.

Plantinga continues his examination of premise six now moving to the second consequent. Plantinga asks what consequent two really means. His evaluation of it is that it was within A's power at T_2 to do something such that if he had done it then God would not have held a belief that in fact (in the actual world)

He did hold. This seems to be a valid restatement of Pike's version of the consequent and Plantinga agrees that the antecedent does entail it. However, Plantinga does not consider this consequent as being inconsistent with Pike's earlier premises. Consider a possible world W in which A refrains from doing X at T_2 . If God is essentially omniscient then in W He would not have believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 .

Finally, Plantinga considers consequent three. Does the antecedent of premise six entail this consequent? Plantinga claims that it does not. What the antecedent does entail is that it was within A 's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X so that anyone who believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 would have held a false belief. To rephrase this, in any possible world W in which A refrains from doing X at T_2 anyone who believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 would have held a false belief. What Plantinga is taking exception to in Pike's formulation of the consequent is that God can be considered among "anyone". Plantinga is saying that anyone who is essentially omniscient in W , namely God, would not have believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , but would have believed that A would refrain from doing X .¹⁶

The general conclusion to be drawn from Plantinga's assessment of Pike's argument is that if God is essentially omniscient then He is essentially omniscient in every possible world in which He exists. Therefore, there is no possible world in which God exists and holds a false belief. God's beliefs in a

given possible world always correspond to the actions which take place in that possible world. The misconception that Plantinga claims led Pike to his conclusion is that God would have held in every possible world the beliefs which He holds in the actual world. Plantinga points out that God's beliefs are not essential to Him and therefore, this misconception and the resulting conclusion of Pike is unfounded.

C. PIKE'S REBUTTAL TO PLANTINGA

In response to Plantinga's criticism of his argument, Pike published an article entitled "Divine Foreknowledge, Human Freedom, and Possible Worlds"¹⁷ in which Pike himself employs the apparatus of possible worlds in order to justify his argument and refute Plantinga's criticisms. Pike begins by establishing some fundamental definitions. A being who is omniscient believes all true propositions and believes no false propositions. God is essentially omniscient, that is, He is omniscient in every possible world in which He exists. God is everlasting, that is, He always has and He always will exist in time. Finally, God's beliefs do not change.¹⁸ Pike goes on to reconstruct the argument in question which I outlined in section A of this chapter, and he summarizes Plantinga's criticism that I outlined in section B.

According to Plantinga, to say that it is within A's power to do X means that there is some possible world in which A does do X, even though in the actual world A may or may not do X. It

is with this equivocation that Pike takes exception. Pike asks us to consider Plantinga's equivocation: (1a), "It is within A's power to do X" means (1b), "It is the case that there is some possible world in which A does X." The negation of (1a) is (2a), "It is not within A's power to do X" which means (2b), "It is not the case that there is some possible world in which A does X." Pike proposes that if (1b) means the same thing as (1a) then (2b) must mean the same thing as (2a). Does (2b) mean the same thing as (2a)? When I say that it is not within my power to fly do I mean that there is no possible world in which I could fly? Pike would say "no" there is a possible world in which I could fly...a world in which I had wings, for instance. What is Pike's point? His point is that when we assert (2a) we are not asserting (2b), but rather (2c), "It is not the case that there is a possible world identical to the actual world in which A does X." When I say that it is not within my power to fly what I mean is that there is no possible world identical to the actual world in which I can fly. Since (2a) and (2b) are not equivalent, Pike concludes that (1a) and (1b) are not equivalent. If one is going to restate (1a) in the language of possible worlds one must do it as (1c), "It is the case that there is a possible world identical to the actual world in which A does X."¹⁹

In order to clarify his point, Pike proposes another interpretation of what is meant by saying "it is not within A's power to do X" still using possible worlds. Pike claims that

this statement implies that given certain conditions C1, C2, C3 it is not within A's power to do X. In other words, there are circumstances which determine whether or not it is within A's power to do X. The equivalent of this statement using possible worlds is that within the subset of possible worlds in which conditions C1, C2, C3 obtain, there is no possible world in which it is within A's power to do X. Here is the crux of what seemed wrong with Plantinga's equivocation. The claim "it is not within A power to do X" is not a claim about all possible worlds, rather, it must be restricted to a claim about a subset of possible worlds containing the same conditions.²⁰ It follows that when talking about the logical possibility of a certain action, the subset of possible worlds must contain circumstances identical to those of the actual world, otherwise, there would be no value in such speculation (we can only make logical claims about the actual world in which our logic applies).

Pike continues by observing that when we are considering a subset of possible worlds containing conditions which obtain in the actual world, among the conditions taken into account are conditions which obtained in the past relative to the time in question. B did Y at T_1 . At T_2 it is not possible for B not to have done Y at T_1 . In fact, among the subset of possible worlds that share in common the fact of B having done Y at T_1 , there is no possible world in which at T_2 B did not do Y at T_1 .²¹ These considerations bear importantly upon speculation concerning specific choices at given times. If A's choice to do X at T_2 is

free what is meant is that, given a possible world sharing all the conditions which obtain in the actual world prior to T_2 , it was within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 . If the conditions prior to T_2 were not the same in the possible world as in the actual world, a comparison between the two worlds could not be validly used to establish the freedom of a given choice at T_2 ...in each world, the choice could have been different without respect to freedom.

Now Pike asks us to consider his original argument again. A does X at T_2 . God exists, is everlasting, and is essentially omniscient. God believes at T_1 that A does X at T_2 . Is it within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X? Plantinga would rephrase the question as "Is there a possible world in which A refrains from doing X at T_2 ?" Plantinga would answer this question "Yes, in the possible world in which God believes at T_1 that A will refrain from doing X at T_2 ." However, according to Pike, Plantinga's question is not in the form proper to the use of possible world comparisons. Rather, the question must be: Is there a possible, indistinguishable from the actual world, in which A refrains from doing X? For Pike, the answer to this question must be "no", for in every such possible world there would have been God's belief at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 . Therefore, in such a subset of possible worlds, it would not be within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X, or else the result would be that God held a false belief at T_1 , the past has been changed, or God did not exist at T_1 . Therefore, given the

doctrine of God's essential omniscience, no human action can be voluntary.²²

To conclude this interplay between Pike and Plantinga I want to point out the central disagreement between them. Plantinga claimed that Pike was under the misconception that God would have held in every possible world the beliefs which He holds in the actual world. Plantinga is correct in calling such a claim a misconception, but I do not think that this is Pike's claim. Rather, Pike is claiming that it is a point of proper usage within the apparatus of possible worlds that if one is considering a certain choice C at a specific time T_2 and trying to establish whether such a choice is indeed free, then one can only consider a subset of possible worlds which share identical circumstances prior to T_2 . If possible world W is a world in which the proposition "God believes at T_1 that A will do X at T_2 " obtains, then the only way to determine if it is within A 's power to refrain from doing X is to consider the subset of possible world in which this proposition obtains. However, given God's essential omniscience in all such possible worlds, there is no possible world in which A could refrain from doing X at T_2 , otherwise, God would have held a false belief. Since this is impossible, the belief that God exists, is everlasting, and is essentially omniscient is incompatible with human freedom.

It would appear that Plantinga has failed in his attempt to discredit Pike's argument. However, a crucial issue remains to be resolved: What is the proper basis of comparison between

possible worlds? Is Pike justified in limiting the comparison to possible worlds sharing identical circumstances? Exactly what must be included in "identical circumstances"? Is God and/or His omniscience to be considered a circumstance in a possible world? In Plantinga's comparison both worlds contain an omniscient God and all the circumstances prior to T_2 other than God's belief at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 . If God's beliefs are not essential to Him then couldn't A be free to refrain from doing X at T_2 in at least one possible world? Plantinga may have a valid exception to Pike's argument. Another crucial issue that must be examined in more detail is that of the definition of freedom. What constitutes freedom? Is it merely the ability to have done otherwise in another possible world? Finally, a closer look must be taken at the relationship between God's beliefs and the contingency of human actions. It is precisely this issue that Stephen Davis considers, and so we now turn to him.

D. STEPHEN DAVIS ON THE CONTINGENCY OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

Stephen T. Davis offers a different perspective to the discussion of compatibility in his article "Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom."²³ Davis summarizes the problem in the formula: If God knew at T_1 A would do X at T_2 , then A will do X at T_2 and, therefore, A must do X at T_2 . (I have substituted Davis' variables with those that have been used previously in this paper). Davis offers what he calls a "possible

reconciliation" of the problem: What God knew yesterday is contingent upon what I freely decide to do tomorrow.²⁴

What Davis attempts to establish in his paper is that this possible reconciliation is consistent, that is, is possibly true. His method of argument is to find a proposition consistent with omniscience and show that it and omniscience entail human freedom, and to prove that the proposition itself is possibly true. Davis asks us to consider the following propositions:

- (1) God is omniscient.
- (2) Humans are free.
- (3) What God knew yesterday is contingent upon what I
freely decide to do tomorrow.

Is (3) consistent with (1)? Davis claims that it is because (1) doesn't say what the truth of the propositions God knows is contingent upon.²⁵ However, at this point it should be pointed out that (1) doesn't require that such propositions are contingent upon anything. Davis seems a little presumptuous in his conclusion. But for now, let us continue with his development of his argument. Taken together, (1) and (3) do entail (2) for (3) explicitly mentions the freedom of human choice. All that is left for Davis to show that (3) is possibly true, i.e. consistent.

At this point, Davis admits that (3) cannot be proved to be true, possibly true, or consistent. Davis can only say that it "seems" to him that (3) is consistent. Davis attempts to justify his intuition by disproving the arguments of those who claim

that (3) is inconsistent. There are basically two such arguments although there are different versions of each. The first argument seeks to show the inconsistency of free choice in (3). The second argument debates the relationship of contingency established in (3).

The first version of the first argument takes the form: If God knew yesterday that A will do X tomorrow, then it is true that A will do X tomorrow, and therefore A is not free not to do X tomorrow. Davis admits that the conditional in the premise is obviously correct. If anyone knew Q, then Q is true. Knowledge of a proposition implies the truth of the proposition. However, Davis does not believe that the conclusion that A is not free with respect to X follows from this premise.²⁶ He restates the argument as follows:

- (1) God believes A will do X.
- (2) It is not possible for God to believe a falsehood.
- (3) Therefore, it is not possible for A not to do X.

Davis claims that this argument is ambiguous and that the ambiguity lies in premise (2). (2) implies either (a) or (b):

- (a) It is not possible for God to believe P and for P to be false.
- (b) If God knows P, then not-P is impossible.

It would seem that (a) is true, but will it fit into the above argument?

Given P = "A will do X",

(1) God believes P.

(2a) It is not possible for God to believe P and for P to be false.

(3) Therefore, not-P is impossible.

In fact, (2a) does not entail (3). (2a) merely states that if God believes P then P cannot be false. It does not say that not-P is impossible. The concepts of falsehood and logical impossibility are not interchangeable. Does (b) work in the argument?

(1) God believes P.

(2b) If God believes P then not-P is impossible.

(3) Therefore, not-P is impossible.

In this case, (3) clearly follows from (2b), but is (2b) a true premise? If (2b) is true then God's knowledge is limited to only necessary truths. Davis (and most other philosophers) dismiss such a limitation of God's knowledge as implausible.²⁷

Davis now turns to the third version of this first argument, that of Nelson Pike. Davis believes that Pike's crucial premise (God existed at T_1 , and God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , and it was within A's power at T_2 to refrain from doing X) is consistent with his own premise (What God knew yesterday is contingent upon what I freely decide to do tomorrow). Since Pike concluded that his premise must be rejected, he would also reject Davis' premise. In rebuttal against Pike, Davis reconstructs Plantinga's arguments which Davis considers to have been successful.

The main fruit of Davis' reconstruction of the Pike-Plantinga debate is what he calls a 'basic intuition' concerning the following propositions:

- (1) A will not do X tomorrow.
- (2) A cannot do X tomorrow.

Does (1) entail (2), does "will not" entail "cannot"? In other words, if God knew yesterday that A will do X tomorrow does that mean that A cannot do X tomorrow? To answer this question let us consider the following propositions:

- (3) God knows A will do X at T_2 .
- (4) A will do X at T_2 .
- (5) It is within A's power not to do X at T_2 .

(3) entails (4) but does (4) entail (5)? Davis believes that (4) does entail (5) and offers the following argument in support of this belief:

- (6) A can prevent B from doing X.
- (7) However, A will allow B to do X.
- (8) Therefore, B can do X.

Davis suggests that (6) and (7) entail the same meaning as (3) above. God can prevent A from doing X but gives A the freedom not to do X. If A decides to do X, God knows that A will do X. Therefore, (7) is consistent with (4). Since (6) and (7) entail (8), and (6) and (7) are logically consistent with (3) and (4), Davis concludes that (8) is consistent with (5), and that (3) and (4) entail (5). Our original question was whether "will not" entails "cannot", in other words, if God knew yesterday that A

will not do X tomorrow does that mean that A cannot do X tomorrow? From the argument that I just cited, Davis concludes that "will not" does not entail "cannot" and that although God could prevent A from doing X tomorrow God does not, in virtue of the freedom which He has given A.²⁸

My belief is that the real intuition here is that God's knowledge is not deterministic. Just because God knows that A will do X tomorrow does not mean that A must do X. This is an important concept in the discussion of the problem of omniscience, but at this point, Davis does not pursue it. Instead, Davis merely concludes that since Pike's premise that "God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 " is inconsistent with "It is within A's power to refrain from doing X" was based on an incorrect equivocation of "will not" with "cannot", Pike's argument is not conclusive.

At this point Davis turns his attention to the dispute between Pike and Plantinga concerning the meaning of the statement "It is within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 ". Let us recall that Pike argued that this statement does not mean that there is some possible world in which A refrains from doing X at T_2 , but that there is a subset of possible world sharing identical circumstances in which A could refrain from doing X at T_2 . Davis agrees that "it is within A's power to do X" means more than "it is logically possible for A to do X," and that there is no possible world in which God believes A will do X at T_2 and A fails to do X at T_2 . Davis asks us to consider all

those possible worlds in which God believes at T_1 that A will do X at T_2 . He calls such worlds "P - worlds." It is true that in all P - worlds A does X at T_2 . However, does it therefore follow that in no P - world is it within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 ? Pike would answer "yes". Davis will argue "no".

If Pike were to use Davis' terminology, he would say that Plantinga's mistake was that he did not restrict his consideration to P - worlds. Davis' argument is that this restriction does not help to solve the problem of whether or not it was within A's power to refrain from doing X. Plantinga would agree that in all P - worlds A will do X at T_2 . However, this does not prove that it was not within A's power to refrain from doing X. It only shows that if A has this power A will not exercise it.²⁹ Davis asks us to consider the following argument:

- (1) In no P-world will A refrain from doing X at T_2 .
- (2) Therefore, in no P-world is it within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 .

Davis argues that the inference from (1) to (2) is invalid because if (1) entails (2) the argument is assuming a premise (a).

- (a) It is not within A's power to do X if doing X is not logically possible.

The argument in question therefore takes the following form:

- (1) In no P-world will A refrain from doing X at T_2 .
- (1a) Therefore, in no P-world is it logically possible for A to refrain from doing X at T_2 .
- (2) Therefore, in P-world is it within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 .

Davis claims that if this argument is valid then it implies universal fatalism. Why does Davis make this claim? He asks us to consider a practical application of this argument. Consider a set of possible worlds called A-worlds. An A-world is any possible world in which Jones freely raises his arm at T_3 .

- (1) In no A-world will Jones refrain from raising his arm at T_3 .
- (2) Therefore, in no A-world is it logically possible for Jones to refrain from raising his arm at T_3 .
- (3) Therefore, in no A-world is it within A's power to refrain from raising his arm at T_3 .

However, (3) contradicts the stipulation that in A-worlds Jones freely raises his arm at T_3 . Therefore, if one is to accept this argument as valid, then one must remove the stipulation of freedom from the description of A-worlds. Davis concludes that whenever this form of an argument is employed, no claim of freedom can be consistently upheld.³⁰

What is the mistake Pike made, according to Davis? The mistake lies in the use of logical possibility. According to

Davis, logical possibility or impossibility is a function of what does or does not occur in all possible worlds, not in a limited set of possible worlds such as P-worlds or A-worlds.³¹ But this is not Pike's only mistake, Davis continues. Aside from the issue of possible worlds, Pike has difficulty with the problem of God's knowledge. Consider:

- (1) God knows at T_1 that A will do X at T_2 .
- (2) Therefore, it is within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 .

Davis says that Pike believes that (1) and (2) cannot both be true. Pike's problem lies not in logical possibility but in what Davis calls "causal possibility". The causal possibility of X means that there is no natural law preventing X. Both (1) and (2) cannot be true because (1) makes (2) causally impossible. The claim here seems to be that God's knowledge causes A's action and therefore, A is not free with regard to that action. Davis says that it seems as if this is the claim Pike is making. Davis himself does not believe that God's knowledge provides a causal impossibility to A's free action.³² This issue of God's knowledge as causing will be addressed again later in our discussion.

Davis points out another difficulty Pike may be trying to address. Is his argument trying to maintain that the past cannot be changed? Consider the following argument:

- 1) It is true that at T_1 God knew at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 .

- 2) T_1 is in the past.
- 3) No past truth can be changed.
- 4) The truth of (1) cannot be changed.
- 5) No one can do what cannot be done.
- 6) A is not able to do anything that would change the truth of (1).
- 7) If A is able to refrain from doing X at T_2 then A is able to change the truth of (1).
- 8) Therefore, A is not able to refrain from doing X at T_2 .

Davis considers this argument to be invalid. The problem lies in premise (7). Why does A's not being able to refrain entail A's ability to change the truth? Davis, like Plantinga, proposes that what is entailed is that A is able at T_2 to have made God hold a different belief at T_1 than He does in fact hold at T_1 . A has the power, but in the actual world he does not exercise it.³³ Having eliminated (7), can (5) still be derived? Davis introduces two premises:

- (1) It is true at T_1 that God knew at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 .
- (1a) A will do X at T_2 .
- (6a) It is never in anyone's power to do something that he will not do.
- (8) Therefore, it is not within A's power to refrain from doing X at T_2 .

The trouble with this new argument is that (6a) implies

fatalism. Although Davis rejects fatalism and rejects this argument, he also believes that the past cannot be changed. However, he does not think that it has been proved that belief in this premise entails the incompatibility of divine omniscience and human freedom.³⁴

Recalling Davis' original premise that what God knew yesterday is contingent upon what I freely decide to do tomorrow, the arguments so far have been concerned with the issue of freedom. Davis now turns to the second major argument proposed against his premise. This argument objects to the notion of the contingency of God's past knowledge on a future event. The objection takes the form: How can what A does in the future cause what God knew in the past? Davis points out that this is not what his premise implies, rather, his premise claims that it is God's ability to foreknow, exercised at T_1 , that causes God to know at T_1 what A will do at T_2 .³⁵ What is the difference between these two interpretations? The issue here is whether or not the relationship "is contingent upon" is the same as "is caused by". Davis argues that the two relationships are not the same. Earlier states of affairs can be contingently related to later ones. Consider the statement "A will do X." This statement is now either true or false, but the truth value is known only to an omniscient being. Nevertheless, even though the truth value is known by an omniscient being, that truth value is still contingent upon whether or not A does do X. Therefore, Davis concludes that God's foreknowledge is

contingent upon (but not caused by) future events.³⁶

Another objection raised to Davis' premise based on the relationship between God's knowledge and future events is that the relationship being implied is that God's knowledge causes future events. Pike claimed in his article "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action"³⁷ that Aquinas maintained that God's knowledge does cause future events. Davis correctly points out that Pike has misread Aquinas. What Aquinas was maintaining is that God's knowledge, when joined with His will, is the cause of everything.³⁸ This is what is known as God's "intentional knowledge."

Davis makes a final distinction concerning God's knowledge, a distinction between "inferential knowledge" and "future vision". Inferential knowledge is knowledge of an action based on knowledge of the causes which predetermine that action. Such actions are not free. There is also knowledge known as "future vision" which is an immediate, intuitive knowledge of the future as if it were present. Which type of knowledge describes God's omniscience? If God has only inferential knowledge then either He has no knowledge of future free acts, or there is no freedom. If God's omniscience is future vision then His knowledge is not limited and freedom can exist. Davis believes that God has both types of knowledge: inferential knowledge with regard to predetermined events, and future vision with regard to the free acts of humans.³⁹

Davis concludes his article by commenting on the

relationship between God, His knowledge, and time. According to Davis, future vision does not entail that God is outside of time. Davis believes that God is in time and that His knowledge takes the form of complete memory of the past, complete awareness of the present, and complete future vision.⁴⁰ My question at this point is how can God know the future before it occurs? How can God have future vision if He is in time? Davis claims that truth value is timeless and yet contingent upon the future. Such issues are crucial and they will be addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this paper. For now, Davis' failure to address himself to these issues is a flaw in his solution to the problem of omniscience. We now turn our attention to another point of view on the relationship between God's knowledge and the contingency of human actions, that of Douglas Lackey.

E. DOUGLAS LACKEY ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE AS DETERMINING

Douglas Lackey also considers the problem of omniscience and freedom in his article "A New Disproof of the Compatibility of Foreknowledge and Free Choice."⁴¹ Lackey states the problem as follows:

Given P: A will do X at T_2 ,

If God knows P then A cannot fail to do X, or else
God would not have known, i.e. would not have been
certain that P is true.

Lackey, as Davis, maintains that there is no rule of logic that will take one from "God knows A will do X" to "A cannot do X."

"A will not do X" is not equivalent to "A cannot do X." The former states that a possibility exists but is not actualized. The latter states that no possibility exists at all. According to Lackey (as well as Davis), it is fatalism that maintains that "will not" entails "cannot". However, it is exactly this assumption that Lackey seeks to substantiate. Particularly, Lackey sets out to argue that "A cannot fail to do X" implies "it is causally determined that A does X."⁴²

Is it God's knowledge of the future that causally determines the future? Lackey's argument runs as follows:

- 1) If "God knows A will do X" entails "it is causally determined that A does X",
- 2) and if "it is causally determined that God does X" entails "A cannot fail to do X",
- 3) then "God knows A will do X" entails "A cannot do X."

Lackey builds this argument upon a comparison of divine knowledge with human knowledge. Consider human knowledge. When it is said that Jones knows it is 3:00, three assumptions are entailed: First, that it is in fact 3:00; secondly, that Jones believes it is 3:00; and finally that Jones has good reason to believe it is 3:00. These assumptions can be consolidated into the statement that knowledge entails justified true belief.

However, is this the extent of the entailment? No, justified true belief does not entail knowledge. In order for this entailment to hold a fourth condition must be added to

justified true belief', that condition maintained by the causal theory of knowing. The causal theory of knowing states that for any knower to know any proposition P, P must be true, the knower must have reason to believe that P is true, and there must be a causal connection between the fact that P is true and the knower's reason for believing that P is true. What is the nature of such a causal connection? Lackey gives us the following example: A man sees a football team practicing on a field and sees the tracks left by the team. If the man passes the field after the football team has practiced and sees the tracks, he believes that the football team has practiced. If the football team has in fact left the tracks then there is a causal connection between the fact that the team has practiced and the man's belief that the football team has practiced. But what if the tracks were left by the soccer team? The man believes that the football team has practiced based on the soccer team's tracks. The man does not have justified true belief because there is no longer a causal connection between the fact believed and the reasons for belief.⁴³

Lackey attempts to apply this causal theory of knowing to God's omniscience. A does X. God has reason to believe that A does X. There must be a causal connection between the fact that A does X and God's belief that A does X. What is God's reason for believing that A does X? According to Lackey it is the fact that God causes A to do X. (There is another possibility, however, in that God could have future vision of A doing X.)

What is the causal connection between God's belief and the fact that A does X? For Lackey, it is again the fact that God causes A to do X. (Recall that Davis would say that the causal connection is the fact that God's belief is contingent upon A doing X. Aquinas would say that the fact that A does X is a secondary cause within God's providential plan. This possibility will be pursued later.).

Lackey points out that whenever there is a causal connection between A and B, either A modifies B or B modifies A. This must apply to the causal connection between God's knowledge and the proposition P. However, since nothing can modify God, P can't modify God's knowledge. (Although, this is precisely what Davis was claiming when he said that God's knowledge was contingent upon the future.) Therefore, God's knowledge must modify P. How does God's knowledge modify P? For Lackey, God's knowledge must cause P. But if it is God's knowledge that causes P to be true, then it is not man's freedom that determines whether or not P is true (as Davis proposed). Lackey concludes that, in fact, man's freedom is a fiction. In Lackey's estimation, the Thomistic separation of God's will and His knowledge breaks down. Whenever God knows, He causes, for there must be that causal connection for there to be knowledge.⁴⁴

Lackey admits that his argument depends on an analogy between human and divine knowledge. Is such an analogy justifiable? Lackey proposes the same set of entailments that

Pike did for both divine and human knowledge: "God knows P is true" entails "P is true" and "God believes P is true." However, does God's belief need to be justified, i.e. does God need grounds for belief? This involves the distinction Davis raised between intuitive and inferential knowledge. Davis defined inferential knowledge as requiring grounds whereas intuitive knowledge did not. Lackey disagrees; intuitive knowledge does require grounds for belief. Lackey asks us to consider perceptual knowledge which is a kind of intuitive knowledge. If I see a table in front of me then I know the table is there, given that it is true that a table is in fact there. My knowledge that the table is there is grounded in the fact that I see that the table is there and yet, the knowledge is immediate and intuitive upon sight of the table. There is a causal connection between the sight of the table and my belief that the table is there.⁴⁵

Lackey concludes that if intuitive knowledge requires grounds for belief then God's knowledge requires such grounds. However, Lackey doesn't presume to know what grounds God's knowledge would require. I wonder if God's immediate relationship to (identity with) the truth might be the key here. In such a case the causal connection becomes one of identity and is internal within God.

Lackey concludes with an interesting comment about God's relationship to time. An objection might be raised to Lackey's argument in that to say "God now knows that P is true" places

God in time. Lackey's response to such an objection is that what he is claiming is that it is now true (now for us) that God knows P is true. God may indeed be outside of time. Whether He is or not, Lackey says, does not affect the causal connection.⁴⁶ The issue of time is a complex one. This is one more opinion to put into the "pickle barrel" when we address the issue later. Lackey's conclusion still remains that, given the causal theory of knowing, one must deny that God has foreknowledge of free actions.

F. CONCLUSION

In this first chapter we have examined a variety of positions on the relationship between God's omniscience and human freedom. Having done so, what general conclusions can we make and what are the issues still to be resolved? In order to answer this question I will briefly summarize the conclusions of the various philosophers we have looked at.

Nelson Pike's argument places God in time; God's knowledge of the future precedes the occurrence of the future. Since God's knowledge is in the past, and since the past cannot be changed, God's knowledge cannot be changed. God cannot be mistaken in His knowledge about anything, including human actions. Therefore, human actions must correspond to what God foreknew in the past. Given this state of affairs, if God is omniscient then human actions are predetermined and are not free.

Alvin Plantinga concluded that Pike's argument suggested

that God's beliefs are essential to Him. Plantinga asserts that God's beliefs correspond to what humans do. In a given possible world, humans are free with respect to their actions and God's beliefs correspond to those actions. Freedom consists that in different possible worlds humans could have acted differently and God could have held different beliefs.

In his response to Plantinga, Pike reaffirmed his belief that human actions must correspond to God's beliefs, no matter what possible world one is considering. He insists that Plantinga's reference to possible worlds does not take into account the fact that if God had held different beliefs then human actions must still correspond to those beliefs (and not the other way around).

Stephen Davis' central argument is that since truth value is contingent upon the future, God's knowledge must be contingent upon the future. Davis makes confusing claims about the timeless quality of truth and yet its contingency upon the future, and about the fact that God is in time and yet knows timeless truth.

Douglas Lackey, basing his conclusions upon the causal theory of knowing, proposes that God's beliefs must have a causal connection to future truths and that this connections lies in the fact that God's knowledge causes the future. Lackey openly denies the freedom of human actions. The only way God can be omniscient is that His knowledge determines the future.

None of these "solutions" to the problem of omniscience is

conclusive and I have endeavored to point out the key problems in each of them. Pike's insistence upon God's knowledge being in time coupled with his implication that this knowledge determines the future inevitably leads him to conclude that omniscience and human freedom are incompatible. What if God's knowledge is not in time? If so, the predetermining implication of Pike's otherwise noteworthy observations could be avoided.

Plantinga's use of possible worlds does not solve the problem but seems to create new ones. God could have held different beliefs and humans could have performed different actions in other possible worlds, but is this the basis of freedom? If God is omniscient, human actions would still have to correspond to God's beliefs. Plantinga has not adequately explained how such correspondence takes place without compromising either divine omniscience or human freedom.

The problems in Davis' arguments are obvious. How can God's knowledge be contingent upon the future and yet be in time? Is truth value timeless or contingent? It is interesting to note that Davis' notion of contingency sounds similar to Plantinga's belief that in another possible world humans could have acted differently and God's beliefs would have corresponded to those actions. Can any aspect of God be contingent?

Lackey's conclusion that human freedom is an illusion is enough to draw suspicion to his argument. Is God's knowledge causal (that is, causal to the detriment of human freedom)? As I stated earlier, I am not satisfied with Lackey's dismissal of

Aquinas' argument to the contrary and we will look again at that argument in the next chapter.

I hope to address all of these objections to the preceding arguments in the remainder of this paper. First I will consider the question of time and then I will look at the nature of truth value. If God is in time and truth value is contingent upon the future then God cannot know the future or humans are not free. If God is timeless and truth value is timeless then God can be omniscient and humans can be free. But what if God is timeless and truth value is contingent, or if God is in time and truth value is timeless, or are these combinations logically inconsistent? These are the issues yet to be resolved.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, ed. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

²Ibid., p. 62.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 63.

⁵Ibid., p. 64.

⁶It is not within A's power because it is logically impossible. This is the precise nature of Pike's reasoning in this argument.

⁷The presupposition behind this premise is that it is logically impossible to change the past.

⁸The logic of Pike's reasoning is unclear here. A better formula would be: If God existed at T_1 and if God believed at T_1 that A would do X at T_2 , and if it¹ was within A's power to refrain from doing X, then either...

⁹Pike's schematic representation can be found in its original form in "divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," pp. 66-67.

¹⁰Alvin Plantinga, God, Freedom, and Evil (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1974), pp. 66-73.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 34-44.

¹²Ibid., p. 68.

¹³Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁷Nelson Pike, "Divine Foreknowledge, Human Freedom, and Possible Worlds," Philosophical Review 86 (April 1977): 209-216.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 209-210.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 211-212.

²⁰Ibid., p. 214.

²¹Ibid., p. 215.

²²Ibid., p. 216.

²³Stephen Davis, "Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom," Religious Studies 15 (September 1979): 303-316.

²⁴Ibid., p. 304.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 305.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 308.

²⁹Ibid., p. 309.

³⁰Ibid., p. 310.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 311.

³³At this point, an objection can be raised as to the sort of language that Davis and Plantinga are using. Is it the case that A has the power to make God hold a different belief, or is it merely the case that God could have held a different belief? The former attribution of power does not seem to be necessitated by the arguments we are considering.

³⁴Davis, "Omniscience," p. 312.

³⁵Ibid., p. 313.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Pike, "Omniscience and Voluntary Action," p. 71.

³⁸Aquinas Summa Theologiae Ia.14.9.

³⁹Davis, "Omniscience," p. 314.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 315.

⁴¹Douglas Lackey, "A New Disproof for the Compatibility of Foreknowledge and Free Choice," Religious Studies 10 (September

1974): 313-318.

⁴²Ibid., p. 314.

⁴³Ibid., p. 315.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 316.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 317.

CHAPTER II

THE ISSUE OF TIME

A. INTRODUCTION

As I have mentioned several times already, the issue of God's relationship to time is a crucial component of any discussion of omniscience. In this chapter I hope to expand upon these previous references to time and show the logical implications of God's relationship to time on what He can be said to know. I begin with Boethius' solution to the problem of omniscience which makes explicit use of the doctrine of timelessness. Next I present three ways of looking at time as summarized by Brian Hebblethwaite. After defining some terms used to describe God's relationship to time and His omniscience, I consider the problems and merits of postulating the doctrine of timelessness. In order to expand upon Boethius, I present the Thomistic doctrine of omniscience, and finally, as a contrast, I consider the doctrine of middle knowledge.

B. BOETHIUS' SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF OMNISCIENCE

Nelson Pike, in his book God and Timelessness¹ sums up Boethius' version of the problem of God's omniscience as follows: if God is infallible and if He knows the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance, then no human action is voluntary. Boethius wanted to maintain that God is indeed infallible (omniscient) and that human actions are

voluntary (free). Therefore, Boethius needed to deal with the premise that God knows the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance. Boethius' solution was to deny this premise and opt for a world view that placed God and His knowledge outside of time.²

How is Boethius' doctrine of timelessness a solution to the problem of God's omniscience and human freedom? If God knows/believes at T_1 that A will do X at T_2 , does A have the power to refrain from doing X at T_2 , given the infallible knowledge of God? If one were to answer "yes" then wouldn't one be ascribing to A the power to change a past belief of God? The issue crucial in this discussion of God's relation to time is not that it is one of God's beliefs that would be changed, but rather, that it is a past belief that would be changed. Here is the problem for, Boethius, Pike, and most other philosophers who hold the conviction that the past cannot be changed. Since A does not have the power to change the past, and since God's knowledge is infallible, then A does not have the power to refrain from doing X at T_2 . Boethius' solution, by placing God and His knowledge outside of time, avoids the issue of A's ability to change the past. What Boethius concludes is that God's beliefs cannot be dated and, therefore, we cannot properly speak of God's foreknowledge. Rather, God's knowledge is a timeless apprehension of all human actions - past, present, and future, - in one eternal act of God's knowing outside the temporal dimension which applies to the created universe.³

Let us leave our discussion of Boethius for the present and consider some fundamental definitions concerning time and concerning God's Knowledge.

C. HEBBLETHWAITE'S THREE WORLD-VIEWS OF TIME AND FREEDOM

Brian Hebblethwaite summarizes the most common world views of time held by philosophers.⁴ The first view is that time is a fourth dimension of the universe, a temporal dimension in addition to the three spatial dimensions. According to this world-view, the universe is a determinate whole of which we experience temporal slices. Consequently, human freedom is an illusion, for human actions are part of this determinate whole. Chance and change have no place in this universe. This view has been proposed by a segment of the scientific community and Hebblethwaite leaves it to them to explain the mechanics of such a four dimensional universe.

The second world-view Hebblethwaite discusses maintains the reality of time as it is commonly conceived: a temporal flow wherein the past is over, the present passes even as I write, and the future remains to be seen. The physical (and spiritual) universe is caught in this flow, but in a very particular way. This world-view proposes that each state of the universe determines the next. The future is not yet, but if we could trace all of the causes at work in the past and the present we could predict the future. This is, therefore, the world-view of determinism. Determinism is quite clear about the status of

human freedom. In this world as in the first, human freedom is an illusion.

The third and final world-view is that which is commonly held in the Judeo-Christian tradition, particularly the Catholic. Time is real and the future is not determined. Human freedom, chance, and change are real. Time flows from the past into a future open to innumerable possibilities, some of which depend entirely upon the free choices which humans make.

D. DEFINITIONS OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO TIME

Before examining the repercussions of these three world-views on the issue of God's omniscience, let us become clear about the definitions of the concepts commonly applied to the relationship between God and time. The concepts which I will consider are infinite, eternal, everlasting, and timeless. The definitions which I will use have their source in Nicholas Wolterstorff's article "God Everlasting."⁵

To say that God is infinite is to say simply that God's existence has no beginning and no end. Thus, the term 'infinite' does not locate God's existence either in time or outside time. It merely states that, whatever God's relationship to time, it has neither a beginning nor an end. The term 'everlasting' is more specific on this point. Like 'infinite', 'everlasting' implies that God's existence has neither beginning nor end. However, 'everlasting' places God's existence within time. God has existed since time began and will continue to exist until

the end of time. What is implied on this view is that time itself has no beginning nor end, that it is co-existent with God. Contrarily, the definition of 'eternal' states that God's existence has neither beginning nor end and, moreover, bears no temporal relation to the created world. God's existence can be said to have neither a temporal duration nor a temporal location. He is 'outside of time'. The term 'timeless' is synonymous with 'everlasting'. For the sake of consistency I will hereafter use 'everlasting' to refer to the position that God is in time, and use 'timeless' to refer to God as outside of time.

A final set of distinctions need to be made concerning the terms used to describe God's knowledge, especially His knowledge of the future. Some of these definitions have already been referred to, but I think that it would be useful to gather all of them together at this point. The terms commonly applied to God's knowledge are: omniscience, foreknowledge, prescience, and providence. 'Omniscience' is an all-inclusive term referring to God's infallible knowledge of the past, present, and future. 'Foreknowledge', at least in this discussion, is used to refer specifically to God's knowledge of the future before it occurs. Therefore, God's foreknowledge bears a temporal relationship to creation. 'Prescience' is commonly used as a synonym of 'foreknowledge' but I wish to use it to denote God's knowledge of the future from a vantage point outside of time. Finally, 'providence' involves not only God's knowledge of the future,

but also His ordering of events in respect to His divine plan. Providence may be said to operate either within or outside of time.

E. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE IN EACH OF HEBBLETHWAITE'S THREE WORLDS

We now have the concepts necessary to make some initial observations about the interplay between time, human freedom, and God's knowledge. Let us return to Hebblewaithe's three world views. According to Hebblethwaite, what must God's knowledge and existence be like in each of these worlds? The first world holds no problem for God's omniscience, for God knows creation in its state as a determinate whole. Since time is a dimension of creation, God does not have to be said to be in time. If this is the case, we would not refer to God's foreknowledge but rather to His prescience and His providence. There is no problem concerning human freedom, for in this world freedom is an illusion.

In the second world, God again knows the future, for the future is determined. In this world it is more proper to speak of God's foreknowledge because the future is present in its causes. God at any moment knows all of the causes at work and can therefore predict the future. Since determinism is quite open about its denial of human freedom, no clash is seen with God's foreknowledge. But can we postulate that God is timeless in this world? Hebblethwaite thinks not, for if time is real God needs to relate Himself temporally to the world He created.

Therefore, in this world it seems to Hebblethwaite that we must speak about God as everlasting - in time.

In the Judeo-Christian world thinkers have supported a variety of notions about God's relationship to time, knowledge, and human freedom. Hebblethwaite, however, is concerned with what this relationship must logically be like in order to be consistent with the world view. If time is real and human freedom is real, what must God and His knowledge be like? Once again, Hebblethwaite maintains that if God created a temporal universe then He must relate Himself to it temporally. On this point he becomes even more specific. God, in His essence, may be outside of time, but His knowledge and His action must be in time. God has limited Himself for the sake of His creation. But what is the nature of this limited knowledge? If human freedom is real the future does not yet exist. If God is in time He cannot know the future. God, in His self-limited omniscience, knows everything there is to know about the past and the present, and about those events which are causally determined by the past and the present. However, those events do not include free human actions.⁶

F. THE PROBLEMS WITH TIMELESSNESS AND THE REASONS WHY IT'S HELD

Many theists still hold the belief that God is timeless, as did Boethius. The main difficulties with the doctrine of timelessness we have seen so far are two: First, if all times

are present to God then all times become one and time is unreal. And secondly, if God is timeless how can He relate Himself in knowledge and in action to His temporal creation and how can His temporal creation relate to Him?

Given these problems with the doctrine of timelessness, why do many theists wish to maintain it? Swinburne postulates two reasons:⁷ First, if God is timeless then He can be omniscient without being detrimental to human freedom (as Boethius argued). Second, if God is timeless, then He can be said to be immutable, that is, unchanging in either His being or His intention. The Thomistic tradition, particularly, has endeavored to support an image of God as timeless, immutable, and omniscient with regards to the past, present, and future including the free acts of His creatures.

G. THE THOMISTIC DOCTRINE OF TIMELESSNESS AND IMMUTABILITY

Let us briefly examine the connection between timelessness and immutability. Aquinas claimed that God is immutable. His reason for this was that when a being changes it acquires something new. If God is perfect, as Aquinas maintains He is, then there is nothing that His nature lacks that it can acquire.⁸ Moreover, if God lacks change, His being can not "display a before or after"⁹ and hence, for Aquinas, timelessness follows upon unchangableness.¹⁰

But how can such a timeless and immutable God relate to His temporal, changing creatures and how can those creatures relate

to Him? John Knassas, a contemporary Thomist, offers an answer to this question in his article "Aquinas: Prayer to an Immutable God."¹¹ The particular problem Knassas is addressing is that of prayer. If God is omniscient and immutable (and therefore timeless) what good do prayers do? If God is omniscient He already knows our needs and desires, and if He is immutable, His providential plan has existed of all eternity and is inalterable. This second point seems to not only dismiss the value of prayer but also calls into question the reality of human freedom.

Do our prayers tell God anything He doesn't already know or effect any sort of change in His will? Since Knassas is invoking the Thomistic tradition he must maintain that God is indeed omniscient and therefore knows the past, present, and future in His perfect, timeless way. Our prayers do not tell God anything He doesn't already know. Do our prayers change God's will? No, God's will is immutable and eternal as well. However, Knassas argues that the value in our prayers is not that they change God's will but that they effect, or bring about God's will.¹²

At this point, the Thomistic waters become muddy. Knassas attempts to clear them and I will try to clarify Knassas' analysis. Aquinas defined God's providence as the ordering of all causes to His desired ends. With regard to human actions, this ordering does not determine choices. Providence orders all things to the good. It is the good of creatures that they be brought to perfection each according to its nature. It is the

perfection of the universe that all grades of being exist. Moreover, God has granted humanity a share in His creative power such that they make choices which will perfect their being. Therefore, human choices are included in God's providence as secondary causes.¹³

Let us examine this notion of second causality more closely. God is the first cause of all being. His creative act is to grant existence. Therefore, creatures receive their existence from God whose essence it is to exist. All creatures and all creaturely actions depend upon God's continual actualizing of their being. Besides granting existence, God gives each creature a nature, some limited aspect of the infinite perfections that God's divine nature contains. Each nature contains within it powers relative to that nature. It is according to these powers that a creature acts. Thus, the fact of a creature's existence, its nature, and the powers appropriate to that nature have God as their first cause for He grants them being. As was said above, because it is the perfection of the universe that all grades of being and all types of natures exist there is a multitude of creatures in the universe.

Now the actions of creatures are in accord to their respective powers which follow from their natures. These particular actions are limitations of the potentialities of those powers whose first actuality lies with God. Therefore, the particular actions of creatures act as secondary causes within

the universe. They have primary cause in God on two counts: First, because their first actuality comes from God. And second, because God's infinite nature, of whose nature the creature's is a limited share, contains all the possible perfections of that nature. Actions are perfections of natures, and therefore God's nature contains all actions of His creatures as infinite possibilities.

Humans have a special share in the nature of God because they have been given intellect. Among the powers of the intellect is the power of free choice. Free choices, as perfections of the human nature, have their first cause in God, for it is God who actualizes the human nature and sustains it in being, and also, because God's infinite nature embraces all perfections and all possible human choices exist in God as infinite possibilities. This could make Aquinas make the paradoxical claim that God causes the free acts of humans. God's causation is primary causality, but He does not determine the particular choices of individuals. Thus humans exhibit secondary causality in their actions.¹⁴

Another way to explain this complicated Thomistic theory is to talk about contingency. Contingency is, simply, the ability to do otherwise. To say that human actions are contingent is to say that they are free. As stated above, humans act in virtue of their limited share in the nature of God. Therefore, humans 'can do' because they can actualize through their second causality one of the perfections contained in the infinite nature of God.

However, when a human acts, the perfection is limited in proportion to the limitation of that being. Therefore, a human 'can do otherwise' only because another perfection exists in God and thus has primary causality.¹⁵

Prayer, therefore, acts as a secondary cause within God's providential plan which is ordered to the good. Thus, prayers do not change God's will but actualize some aspect of it. I introduced Knassas' article on prayer and secondary causality as an example of how, in the Thomistic tradition, humanity can be said to relate to a timeless, immutable God. However, our concern is with God's omniscience. How does the Thomistic tradition explain God's knowledge as omniscient and timeless, and how is such knowledge compatible with human freedom? What follows is a sketch of Aquinas' line of reasoning that seeks to answer these questions in response to the objections raised by Aquinas' contemporaries.

Aquinas states first that since God is perfect, His understanding of Himself is perfect. If God understands Himself perfectly He understands His power perfectly. Now, to understand one's power perfectly is to know that to which one's power extends. God's power extends to all creation because He is the first cause of all creation. Therefore, God knows all creation. Moreover, whatever pre-exists in God as in its first cause must pre-exist in God's act of understanding, for God's act of causing is His act of understanding. Aquinas expresses this another way by saying that God knows all things because His

infinite essence contains their finite species. All creaturely events and actions are known by God because action is a perfection of being. All perfections pre-exist in God as their first cause, therefore God knows them. God's act of knowledge is eternal as is His being. His act of understanding is without succession, comprehending all time while existing above time. Although contingent things become actual successively God knows them simultaneously from His vantage point outside time. Even though God knows contingent future actions, these actions remain contingent because their secondary causality depends upon the free choices of humans.¹⁶

H. THE DOCTRINE OF MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

Aquinas' solution to the problem of omniscience and human freedom has sat rather uneasily with a number of contemporary philosophers of religion. The point of discomfort is Aquinas' claim that God, through His knowledge, is the cause of man's actions without detriment to the contingency (freedom) of those actions. Many philosophers since Aquinas have not been satisfied with his explanation via the doctrine of secondary causality. Another important explanation of the compatibility of God, efficacious knowledge, and human freedom was developed by the sixteenth century Jesuit Luis Molina. A presentation and criticism of Molina's theory is found in Robert Adam's article "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil."¹⁷

The theory of middle knowledge holds that God can be said

to cause the free actions of humans not because He determines the choices humans make, but because He can cause circumstances in which humans will act according to His divine providence. God can cause such circumstances in virtue of His omniscient knowledge of how every creature would act in every possible situation. Such knowledge is called "middle knowledge" because it lies between God's knowledge of necessary truths and His knowledge of merely possible truths.

What would be an example of middle knowledge? Adams offers what he calls the 'proof text' cited by the proponents of middle knowledge.¹⁸ In the First Book of Samuel 23:1-14, King David consults an oracle to find out whether Saul will attack him if he stayed in the city, and if Saul attacks, would David's men surrender him to Saul. The Lord replied affirmatively to both questions, and therefore, David and his men withdrew from the city which they were occupying. God, through His omniscient middle knowledge, knew what Saul would do if David stayed in the city and what Saul would do if David fled. God also knew what David's men would do if Saul attacked. God knew that

(1) If David stayed, Saul would attack,

and

(2) If David stayed and Saul attacked,

David's men would surrender him.

God knew what they would do in each circumstance and yet, it is assumed that their actions would have been free no matter what they did.

Is this theory of middle knowledge consistent? For Adams, the test of the theory lay in whether or not propositions (1) and (2) can be known to be true by God or by anyone else. We must first note that we are dealing with conditional propositions here. Such propositions make claims about what might or will happen in a given circumstance. The propositions which are the objects of God's middle knowledge are such conditionals. However, the proponents of middle knowledge would insist that God does not know what might happen in a given circumstance but what will happen. How is the truth of such conditionals established? Francisco Suarez, a Jesuit defender of Molina and of middle knowledge, argued that if the contradictions of such conditionals are known to be false, then the conditionals themselves must be true. The point here is that conditionals come in pairs and one member of the pair must be true and the other must be false: 'if A then B' or 'If A then not B.' However, does it follow that because 'If A then not B' is false 'If A then B' is necessarily true? Yes, but only if there is some causal or analytical relationship between A and B. However, in our discussion 'A' and 'B' represent the actions of free persons, therefore, no causal or analytical relationship exists. Therefore, for our purposes, Suarez's criterion of establishing the truths of conditionals is not valid.

Can the truth of the conditionals be established based on the predictive power of God, i.e. His foreknowledge? Adams points out that middle knowledge is not the same as

foreknowledge. God is not predicting what Saul or David's men will in fact do, but rather God is using His middle knowledge to tell David what these men would do given certain circumstances. If God was predicting, the truth of the propositions which would be the object of His predictions could be established on the basis of whether or not the events actually occurred as He predicted. But David didn't stay in the city and so neither 'prediction' could be verified. But God was not predicting and so the criterion for establishing the truth of predictions cannot be used to establish the truth of middle knowledge.²⁰

If Saul's attacking the city does not follow from logical or causal necessity from David's staying and if God is not predicting that Saul will attack or that the men will surrender, and given that Saul, David, and David's men are free, what is the basis for God's middle knowledge of the truth of propositions (1) and (2)? Adams presents two responses to this question, that of Molina himself and that of Suarez. Adams quotes Molina as follows: "the certainty of that middle knowledge comes from the depth and unlimited perfection of the divine intellect by which [God] knows certainly what is itself uncertain."²¹ This appeal to the superiority of God's intellect is insufficient to explain how God knows. The truth of Molina's assertion cannot be argued - we don't know what God's knowledge is like. But for the same reason, Molina has no evidence to support his claim.

Suarez offers what, in Adams' estimation, is an equally

obscure explanation of how middle knowledge works. Suarez asks us to consider a possible being C. C has a property ('habitudinal' as Suarez called it) to be either a possible agent who, in a situation S, freely does an action A or to be a possible agent who in S freely refrains from doing A. God has middle knowledge of what C would do in S because God knows which property C has. Adams' objection to Suarez's theory of 'habitudinal' is that he does not understand the nature of such a property or what all is entailed when it is predicted of free agents.²² So it seems that neither Molina nor Suarez have adequately explained how God could know that propositions (1) and (2) are true.

Adams next discusses Alvin Plantinga's argument in favor of middle knowledge via possible worlds. According to Adams, Plantinga's argument is more or less a restatement of Molina's and Suarez's explanations of what it would mean for God to know that propositions (1) and (2) are true.²³ The criticisms of those explanations hold for Plantinga's arguments and so I will not repeat them.

Adams seems to have been successful in pointing out that neither Suarez, Molina, nor Plantinga have provided a clear, successful explanation of how God, by virtue of His middle knowledge, could know the truth of the conditional propositions (1) and (2). Does this failure demand the abandonment of the theory of middle knowledge? My suspicion is that the doctrine of timelessness could be of some help here. In his presentation, Adams makes no explicit allusion to the relationship between

God's middle knowledge and time. I do not know whether or not Molina or Suarez alluded to this issue themselves. However, I suggest that if God were timeless He could very well know what every possible creature would do in every possible situation. God creates knowing full well what His creatures could do and what they will do. Since His knowledge of their actions does not cause their actions (or at least allows for their contingency as secondary causes) His creatures remain free. Based on this knowledge (although we can say nothing about any temporal relationship between God's knowing and His acting), God chooses to create those agents and circumstances that are in accord with His divine providence.

I. CONCLUSION

What are the major conclusions to be drawn from this discussion of time? Both Boethius and Aquinas considered timelessness a solution to the problem of omniscience. If God is outside of time then He can be eternally present to all times. Aquinas developed this notion further by explaining the primary causal nature of God's knowledge and the secondary causal nature of free human actions. The doctrine of middle knowledge is also a theistic attempt to explain how God can know the future without detriment to human freedom. This doctrine states that God knows what all possible creatures would do in all possible situations. However, Robert Adams rightly criticized this doctrine as being obscure in its explanation of how God knows

what He knows. I suggested that if this doctrine explicitly postulated timelessness this obscurity might have been avoided.

Brian Hebblethwaite, on the other hand, maintains that if God is going to relate to a temporal creation, then at least His actions and His knowledge with respect to that creation must be in time. God has limited Himself by creating the temporal universe.

In my opinion, Aquinas' solution is the most successful in that it is the most complete in its development. Given the nature we believe God to have, and given our own human nature, Aquinas develops a systematic explanation of how God can exist outside of time, know the future, and allow for the freedom of human actions. His doctrine of secondary causality is both fascinating and complex. Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this thesis to further explore its development and implications. However, I do believe that both Hebblethwaite and Adams are too quick in their dismissal of the Thomistic solution.

Even though one might agree with the Thomistic solution to the problem of omniscience, there still remains the question of whether any timeless knower can know the future given the logical nature of propositions about the future. As our examination of Adams' criticism of middle knowledge pointed out, the basis of future truth value appears to be rather elusive. In the third and final chapter of this paper it is precisely the logical nature of future truth value which will be discussed.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹ Nelson Pike, God and Timelessness, Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion, ed. D.Z. Phillips (New York: Schocken Books, 1970).

² Ibid., p. 53.

³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴ Brian Hebblethwaite, "Some Reflections on Predestination, Providence, and Divine Foreknowledge," Religious Studies 15 (December 1979): 433-448.

⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting," Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, ed. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 77.

⁶ Hebblethwaite, "Reflections," pp. 436-437.

⁷ Richard Swinburne, "Eternal and Immutable," The Coherence of Theism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 218-219.

⁸ Aquinas Summa Theologia Ia.9.1.

⁹ Ibid., Ia.10.1.

¹⁰ Ibid., Ia.10.2.

¹¹ John F.X. Knassas, "Aquinas: Prayer to an Immutable God," The New Scholasticism 57, No.2 (1983): pp. 196-221.

¹² Ibid., p. 199.

¹³ Aquinas Summa Ia.22.4.

¹⁴ Knassas, "Aquinas," pp. 207-208.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 208-210.

¹⁶ For a complete treatment of Aquinas' arguments see Summa Ia.14.5,8,9,13.

¹⁷ Robert Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," American Philosophical Quarterly 14 (April 1977): 109-117.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 111.

²²Ibid., p. 112.

²³Ibid.

CHAPTER III

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF FUTURE TRUTH

A. INTRODUCTION

Although the doctrine of timelessness salvages middle knowledge in terms of how God could know what possible creatures would do, there remains another difficult problem with the relationship between timelessness and God's knowledge - be it middle knowledge or otherwise. The problem has to do with the truth value of the propositions which are said to be the objects of God's omniscience. Adams' criticism of middle knowledge has not been answered and the criticism applies to all theories of God's omniscience. If God knows any proposition P then P must be true. However, what does the truth of P depend upon and what relationship does the truth of P bear to the time of the occurrence of the event that P describes?

B. HEBBLETHWAITE ON THE NOTION OF GOD'S SELF-LIMITATION

Brian Hebbethwaite suggests an answer to this question in his article "Some Reflections on Predestination, Providence, and Divine Foreknowledge."¹ It is in this article that Hebblethwaite described his three world-views of time and human freedom which we considered earlier. Since in the Christian world-view time and human freedom are viewed as real, Hebblethwaite concluded that God must limit His knowledge of the future to allow for the contingency of human actions. Let us also recall that Hebblethwaite concluded that although God's essence might be

timeless, His knowledge and other actions must be temporal in order that He might relate to the temporal world which He has chosen to create.

What do these observations lead Hebblethwaite to conclude about truth value? In reference to any future free action X, it is neither true now nor false now that A will do X. It is true that A will either do X or not do X, but it cannot now be known which. Therefore, there is no future truth. Hebblethwaite himself realizes that this is a rather drastic solution to the problem. However, he is convinced that it is logically impossible for even an omniscient being to know future truths concerning free actions.² If an action is free, a proposition describing that action as occurring or not occurring cannot be true or false until the action takes place. And, if God has indeed created free agents then He must also limit His knowledge of the future to only determined events - not including the free choices of his creatures.³

This notion of God's self-limitation proposed by Hebblethwaite is acceptable in that it does not compromise the dignity and the power of God. In fact, it points out the benevolence of God and His love for His creation. God realizes that in the decision to create free agents He was necessarily limiting His own infinite omniscience. But was it necessary? What is it about the nature of truth that makes it logically impossible for God to know the future? The proponents of the theory of middle knowledge maintained that God knows the future

because he knows what every creature would do in every possible situation. Aquinas and Thomists like John Knassas believe that God knows the future by virtue of His nature as first cause and through the exercise of His timeless prescience. However, all three of these positions leave unanswered (or in Hebblethwaite's case, unexplained) the crucial question of the nature of truth.

C. WOLTERSTORFF ON THE NATURE OF TRUTH

Nicholas Wolterstorff attacks the question head on in his article "God Everlasting."⁴ We have met Wolterstorff's views before in our discussion of the definitions of God's relationship to time. Wolterstorff claims that God is fundamentally non-eternal, that is, God is in time and experiences change; at least in His knowledge.⁵ Wolterstorff offers, in proof of this claim, an analysis of the nature of the relationship between true propositions and time. I will now attempt to summarize his analysis.

Ours is a temporal universe. Each event within this universe has some temporal location, some temporal relationship to every other event within the universe. These temporal locations and relationships are called 'modes' and all events have some temporal modality. The temporal modes are the present (is occurring), the past (was occurring), and the future (will be occurring). Furthermore, it was always the case that all events were past, present, and future, it is now this case, and it will always be so. Note, however, that depending upon what I

will call the temporal 'case' that is used, a particular event can be predicated in all three modes. It is now the case that the statement 'I am writing this sentence' has a present mode. It was the case yesterday that the statement 'I am writing this sentence' had a future mode. And, it will be the case tomorrow that the statement 'I am writing this sentence' will have a future mode.

Wolterstorff calls statements of the type 'I am writing this sentence' (hereafter, 'X is occurring') a "tensed sentence." Tensed sentences vary in their meaning depending upon when they are asserted. For example, if I assert now at time T_x that 'X is occurring', my assertion means that 'X is, or was, or will be occurring at T_x .' If, however, I asserted yesterday at a time T_y that 'X is occurring', my assertion means that 'X is, or was, or will be occurring at T_y '. The point here is that the tensed sentence 'X is occurring' alone tells us very little about the temporality of the event it describes. For a sentence to be complete in its description it must be moded and dated, as well as tensed.

Wolterstorff offers us a bit of shorthand called 'tensed operators' with which we can talk about all the aspects of a fully dated (i.e. moded, as well as dated) tensed sentence:

Let P stand for 'it was the case'.

Let T stand for 'it is the case'.

Let F stand for 'it will be the case'.

Let D stand for 'it was, is or will be the

case' (tense indifferent).

Let S stand for 'X is occurring'

Let 'at t', 'before t', and 'after t', serve
as dated tense operators.

Using these tense operators, Wolterstorff makes the following assertions about the truth value of such fully dated tensed sentences:

"P at t(s)" is true if and only if (s) is
true at time t in the past.

"T at t(s)" is true if and only if (s) is
true at time t in the present.

"F at t(s)" is true if and only if (s) will
be true at time t in the future.

Wolterstorff believes that there is a common false assumption held by contemporary philosophers that "every proposition expressed by a sentence which is not wholly tense-indifferent and not fully dated (e.g. 'X is occurring') is a proposition which can be expressed by some sentence which is wholly tense - indifferent and fully dated."⁶ This assumption entails the following equivocations:

$T(s) = D \text{ at } t(s),$

$P(s) = D \text{ before } t(s),$

$F(s) = D \text{ after } t(s).$

In criticism of this assumption and its entailments, Wolterstorff asks us to consider the following proposition:

(1) Now, at t, I utter 'X is occurring'.

(2) D at t 'X is occurring'.

Proposition (1) entails that X is occurring at the time of utterance. Proposition (2) does not entail that X is occurring at the time of utterance. However, (1) is true if and only if (2) is true, Wolterstorff maintains. Recall that the tense operator D stands for "it was, is, or will be the case that..." D(s) is true if and only if P(s) or T(s) or F(s) is true. Consider also the following propositions:

(3) Now, at t, I utter 'X was occurring'.

(4) D before t 'X was occurring'.

Proposition (3) entails that X did occur in the past relative to the time it was uttered. Proposition (4) does not entail that X took place in the past relative to the time (4) is uttered.

In general, what Wolterstorff is postulating is that no matter the time of utterance, if 'D at t(s)' is true it was, is, and always will be true. In other words, wholly tense-indifferent sentences are constant in their truth value, whereas tense-committed sentences such as 'T at t(s)' are not constant in their truth value. Moreover, contrary to the false assumption of most contemporary philosophers (according to Wolterstorff) wholly tense-indifferent and tense-committed sentences are not interchangeable. What this false assumption is presuming is that all propositions are constant in their truth value. Finally, Wolterstorff points out that to know that (s) occurs at t is not to know whether (s) occurs in the past, present, or in the future.⁷

What do all these elaborate distinctions about temporality and truth value have to do with God and His knowledge? What I think Wolterstorff is implying is that we must be very careful about what propositions we use to describe God's knowledge. Does God know merely that (s) occurs at, before, or after a time t? Presumably not, for then God would not know if (s) was occurring in the past, present, or future relative to the act of God's knowing (recall that Wolterstorff places God in time). Does God know that it was, is and always will be the case that (s) occurs at, before, or after a time t? He could, but only if He and truth value were timeless, which Wolterstorff denies - a denial for which he will soon provide an argument. Does God know that it was the case before t that (s) is occurring, and that it is the case at t that (s) is occurring? Such knowledge is successive and changing and is precisely the kind of knowledge Wolterstorff attributes to his everlasting (not timeless) mutable God.

Why does Wolterstorff so attribute God? What follows is a summary of Wolterstorff's argument defending such attribution. Wolterstorff's argument is based on his understanding of the biblical description of God and God's dealing with humanity. The Bible describes God as acting in human history. His acts are described as having beginnings and ends. Therefore, His acts bear a temporal relation to one another. Moreover, since His successive acts are present and then absent to His time-strand, change occurs in God, at least in respect to His knowledge.

Also, the Bible describes God's acts as bearing temporal relations to events on earth. God does one thing, then Israel responds, and then God responds in turn. Such a Biblical description seems to place God, at least His knowledge and involvement with humanity, in time and as changing.⁸

Literal biblical description notwithstanding, Aquinas came to a very different conclusion about God and His knowledge. Aquinas makes the distinction that God not only ordains that events occur, but also when they occur. Both aspects of His ordaining are eternal although the effect is not. Thus, God can ordain that change occurs without Himself changing. Since God's act of ordaining is His one act of knowing, His knowledge is also eternal and unchanging. The temporality of the ordained effect does not 'infect' God or His knowledge with temporality or mutability.⁹

Wolterstorff's first criticism of Aquinas' conclusions is that if all God's acts are eternal then they are always occurring. If they are always occurring then they are simultaneous with one another. Simultaneity is a temporal relation, therefore, God's acts do have a temporality of their own. If God's acts have a temporality then God is not eternal.¹⁰ Aquinas, if he were to reply to Wolterstorff's criticism, would argue that God is simple; His is one eternal act of knowing. But Wolterstorff responds that God's one act occurs at the same time as itself, it is simultaneous with itself, and furthermore, it is simultaneous with every temporal event. Therefore,

Wolterstorff concludes God cannot be eternal.¹¹ It is important to point out here that Aquinas' definition of 'eternal' does not rule out simultaneity, especially since it is a simultaneity with reference to God's acting outside of time. On the other hand, Wolterstorff's definition of 'eternal' does exclude simultaneity, and since God is in time, His simultaneity is in relation to all temporal events. The question here is whether or not simultaneity is consistent with timelessness. My suspicion is that God's acting can be described as simultaneous to itself but still bear no temporal relation to creation.

We need not pursue this question further for Wolterstorff sets out to prove that God is not only non-eternal because of simultaneity, but also because God's knowledge is subject to changeful succession. Wolterstorff attempts to refute Aquinas' claim that God is immutable by showing that, in the case of some of God's actions, the temporality of the event on which God acts 'infects' His own action with temporality. Wolterstorff proposes that there are at least three such actions predicated of God: knowing that an event is occurring, knowing that an event was occurring, and knowing that an event will be occurring.¹²

How are these actions infected with temporality? Wolterstorff maintains that no one can know that an event E is occurring except when E is occurring. Moreover, if I know that E is occurring then my knowledge can only begin when E begins. Since every temporal event has a beginning and end, the act of knowing that an event is occurring has a beginning and an end.

Thus is the act of knowing that an event is occurring infected with the temporality of the event known. These observations hold true for knowledge that an event was occurring and that an event will be occurring. The Bible describes God as performing all three of these actions in relation to temporal events. God's actions, including His knowledge, are described as beginning and ending. Such succession implies change on God's time strand, for there is non-occurrence, followed by occurrence, followed by non-occurrence, and so on.¹³

At this point it is necessary for Wolterstorff to point out the difference between the following two actions:

- (1) knowing that 'E occurs at t'
- (2) knowing that 'E was, is, or will be occurring at t'

(1) is an act not infected by the temporality of E for the statement 'E occurs at t' is untensed and therefore constant in its truth value. On the other hand, (2) is tense-committed and therefore variable in its truth value. (2) cannot be known all the time. If all that God knows about an event is that it occurs then God's knowledge can be eternal. But God cannot know that an event was, is, or will be occurring without His knowledge being temporal. Also, although God would have known that an event was occurring He no longer knows this unless the event is still occurring. Therefore, God's knowledge changes.¹⁴ It is only if time lacked modes and only if propositions were constant in their truth value that God's knowledge would be unchanging. God

can be said to be timeless, but if He is then He could not be aware of any temporal event that it was, is, or will be occurring, He could only know that events occur and which events occur. However, this awareness of God and His action in response to it are essential to the biblical description of God. Therefore, God is in time.¹⁵

One might attempt to criticize Wolterstorff's argument on the basis of his literal interpretation of the biblical description of God. Wolterstorff himself foresaw this criticism and replied that if one were to give up the description of God as being aware of and responding to human actions, God would be shrunk into an impassive cause that knows what events it causes but is not aware of their occurring. Furthermore, if God is timeless He could not be the object of any human action such as knowing or praying, for to act in reference to God is to be in temporal reference to Him and He to the action.¹⁶ Therefore, Wolterstorff concludes, those who propose that God is timeless are caught in the self-referential fallacy that, if God is timeless, no human could know that God is timeless.¹⁷

D. CONCLUSION

What can be said, in conclusion, about Hebblethwaite's and Wolterstorff's discussions of the nature of truth value? Since Hebblethwaite insists that God must be in time in order to relate to His temporal creation, he denies that God can know the future because the truth about the future depends upon what

actually happens in the future. However, I suggest that if God were timeless then He could use His prescience to know what was going to happen in the future because it would be eternally present to His omniscience.

Wolterstorff differentiated between tensed/dated propositions and tense-indifferent propositions. Tensed/dated propositions tell when an event occurred, occurs, or will occur relative to the time the proposition is known by a specific knower. Such propositions are not timeless in their truth value but depend on the temporal location of the knower. Tense-indifferent propositions tell when an event occurred, occurs, or will occur but not in reference to the time at which the propositions are known. Their truth value is timeless, but incomplete. Wolterstorff (like Hebblethwaite) maintains that God must be in time in order to relate to His temporal creation. Since God is in time, the tense/dated propositions which He knows depend for their truth value on when God is said to have known them. The tense-indifferent propositions which God knows may be timeless in their truth value but God's knowledge in virtue of such propositions is incomplete because God does not know when the events such propositions describe occur (i.e. in the past, present, or future relative to God).

Two questions now face us: Must God be in time in order to relate to His temporal creation? and, Is God's knowledge of the future limited by the logic which applies to the propositions which describe future events? In response to the first question,

it should be noted that Aquinas was a devout Catholic, being both a Dominican friar as well as a priest. He obviously believed in the truth of scripture, i.e. that God has been and is involved in human history. God breaks into time and human history through miracles, grace, and through His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. But how is this possible if God is timeless in His essence and His knowledge? Aquinas would say that God's essence and knowledge are timeless and that God, from His eternal presence to the whole of time, ordained that certain actions of His to occur in time (we discussed this notion of Aquinas' earlier in section C of this chapter). God can timelessly ordain that some action occurs in time and yet be present to that action as its cause. Does this theory diminish the personal nature of God's relationship to His creation? I think that it does so no more than placing God in time and limiting His knowledge diminishes His divinity.

What about the nature of the truth value of propositions? I would ask whether God's knowledge actually consists in propositions to which logic can be applied. Is God's knowledge in the form of words which must have a precise logical relationship, or does God's knowledge rather subsist in the fact that God is the first cause of everything and contains in His infinite nature all possible actualities? Propositions which describe events are true because the events occur. All events occur because God causes them to be, either directly or by allowing for secondary causality as in the case of free human

actions. Therefore, the truth of the propositions ultimately lies in the fact that God caused the events which such propositions describe.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹Brian Hebblethwaite, Some Reflections on Predestination, Providence, and Divine Foreknowledge," Religious Studies 15 (December 1979): 433-448.

²Ibid., p. 439.

³Ibid., p. 440.

⁴Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting," Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, ed. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁵Ibid., p. 78.

⁶Ibid., p. 86.

⁷Ibid., pp. 87-88.

⁸Ibid., pp. 88-89.

⁹Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 90.

¹¹Ibid., p. 92.

¹²Ibid., p. 93.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 96.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have endeavored to present several examples of the solutions offered for the problem of omniscience. These solutions led me to discuss the issues of the nature of God's knowledge, the relationship between God's knowledge and human freedom, the nature of truth value and its implications for knowledge of the future, and the question of God's relationship to time. In the first part of this conclusion I will summarize the key questions which present themselves as a result of this discussion and I will offer my own suggestions as to possible resolutions of these questions. In the second part of this conclusion I will point out three areas which need to be considered in any future attempt to resolve the problem of divine omniscience.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

The issue of the nature of God's knowledge raises two key questions that must be addressed in any discussion of omniscience. (These questions are in addition to the question of God's relationship to time which will be discussed separately.) The first of these questions is: Is knowledge determined by conditions independent of the knowledge? We have seen this question alluded to throughout our discussion of divine omniscience. What are the necessary conditions of knowledge, human or divine? Two theories were suggested in answer to this

question:

- 1) Knowledge, human or divine, requires justified, true belief.
- 2) Human knowledge requires justified, true belief; divine knowledge is in virtue of God's creative act whereby He knows all which He causes.

Davis stated the first theory explicitly, joining to it the causal theory of knowing. Aquinas proposed the second theory as a corrolary of his doctrine of primary and secondary causality. Neither Pike nor Plantinga addressed the issue in such terms, and it is my suspicion that Hebblethwaite and Wolterstorff's conclusions are compatible with the first theory. If God's knowledge is determined by conditions independent of His knowledge then we are committed to a view of omniscience that is essentially limited by the conditions which determine that knowledge. Such a limitation entails that God's knowledge is in time (in order to be affected by temporal conditions) and that God cannot know the future (for the future cannot affect the past). If one finds such limitation unacceptable one must either construct a theory of God's knowledge in a manner comprable to Aquinas', or formulate a new theory of divine omniscience other than those we have discussed in this treatment of the problem.

The second question that is suggested in a discussion of omniscience is: Is God's knowledge essential or contingent? This question is related to the first but broadens the perspective from which the issue is viewed. This was the point of debate

between Pike and Plantinga. Pike believed that God's knowledge, His set of beliefs, is essential to Him and therefore His knowledge is unchanging. If God's knowledge is unchanging then human actions must correspond to it (if God's knowledge is in time). Plantinga proposed that God's knowledge is not essential to Him, that it could change in order to correspond to free human acts. This seems to suggest that God's knowledge is contingent upon such acts.

Both Pike's and Plantinga's solutions are incompatible with the traditional Thomistic doctrine of omniscience, Pike because his theory implies fatalism, and Plantinga's because it implies contingency in God. This incompatibility brings us back to the central issue behind both questions about God's knowledge: What is the knowledge of God rooted in? Is the nature of God's knowledge determined by the world, the object of that knowledge, or is the nature of God's knowledge determined by God's relationship to the world as creator? As we have seen, Aquinas would answer that God's knowledge is determined by His role as creator. If one suggests any other possible answer one must take into account the restrictions that such an answer might make upon the scope of divine omniscience.

KNOWLEDGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FREEDOM

The discussion of this issue within the broader context of divine omniscience suggests that the following question needs to be addressed: Does knowledge of an action rob that action of its

freedom? Knowledge, human or divine, is the correspondence of beliefs to the truth. Pike believed that all human actions must correspond to God's beliefs and concluded that human actions are therefore not free (if God is omniscient). Plantinga, on the other hand, described God's beliefs as corresponding to human actions thereby protecting the freedom of those actions. The real question here is which way does the correspondence run, human actions to God's beliefs, or God's beliefs to human actions?

Davis and Lackey also represent antithetical positions. Davis claimed that human actions determine God's beliefs, whereas Lackey claimed that God's beliefs determine human actions. Once again, we have a question about the direction of correspondence. What must be taken into account is that this direction is a temporal distinction. Knowledge (true belief) before the occurrence of an event implies that the event is already determined. If knowledge is contingent upon the future then the knowledge, if it is located before the event, is not true belief but only conjecture. Only a knowledge that is timeless can be described as true belief without such belief implying determination of the future.

TRUTH VALUE

Knowledge is the correspondence of beliefs to the truth. But, what is truth? There are a priori truths which consist in definitions, and there are a posteriori truths which are derived

from observation. In our discussion of omniscience we are concerned primarily with a posteriori truths, truths about events which have occurred, are occurring, or will occur. Moreover, the events which we are considering are the free actions of humans. How is the truth about a free act established? One cannot know the truth about a free act until that action is performed. If this is so, then there is no truth about the performance of an action prior the actual performance. Therefore, there can be no prior knowledge of a future free act.

The preceding argument was put forth by Hebblethwaite and Wolterstorff. Is it the only argument? Consider again the premise that the truth about an event, a human action, is established by the occurrence of that event, the performance of that action. If the performance of an action is dependent solely upon the human agent as its cause then, since the human agent is located in time, the performance of the action is located totally in time. If human freedom means that God is in no way the cause of human actions then God's knowledge concerning human actions is dependent toatally upon the performance of those actions by human agents (and God's knowledge is in time). But is it true that human freedom by its definition prohibits possitting God as a cause of human action? What is God's role as creator then, merely the first cosmic push that set the universe in motion? Aquinas did not believe that this description of divine involvement in human actions adequately described God's role as Prime Mover and man's identity as creature. Moreover,

Aquinas believed that it was possible to define human freedom in such a way that included God's role as Prime Mover. Aquinas accomplished this definition of the relationship between Creator and creature and of human freedom in his doctrine of primary and secondary causality. As we have already seen, in the context of this doctrine the performances of human actions have their primary cause in God and their secondary (contingent) cause in the human will. God's knowledge about human actions is established by the performance of those actions because the performance of those actions are rooted in God as their primary cause. The truth about all events is established through the creative act of God. No other theory can explain divine knowledge of the future without compromising either omniscience or human freedom.

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO TIME

What one believes about the relationship of God's knowledge to time depends a great deal on how one views the relationship between God's knowledge and the objects of that knowledge. If God's knowledge is contingent and determined by human actions then that knowledge must be in time. If God's knowledge determines human actions, God need not be timeless. If however, one postulates that God's knowledge is not contingent and does not determine, does one need to define God's knowledge as timeless? My suggestion is that the answer is: Not necessarily. Although Aquinas believed that God is timeless, one can use the

doctrine of primary causality to explain how God could know the future yet be in time. God as first cause is always sustaining and empowering human actions. God's knows what humans do in virtue of this sustaining and empowering. God knows the future because in every moment his infinite intelligence knows what every concurrent action could possibly lead to in the next moment. This was the insight into omniscience that middle knowledge struggled to express. However, this is still only knowledge of all the possibilities that could be actualized in the future. It is my belief that certain knowledge of what will happen in the future in terms of free human actions can only be possible to a knower that is outside of time and perceives creation from the perspective of an eternal present.

Now that I have summarized the conclusions which can be drawn from our discussion of the solutions offered for the problem of omniscience, what can we learn about how such problems in the philosophy of religion should be addressed? I believe that there are three "lessons" that should be considered before any attempt to resolve such problems as that of divine omniscience.

The first prerequisite of any philosophical endeavor is consistency in one solutions of problems. One's approach must be a systematic treatment of the whole problem that takes into account all the various aspects of the issue that one is considering. In the philosophy of religion this principle

requires that one does not focus one's attention on isolated concepts such as only the knowledge of God. A discussion of God's knowledge requires that adequate attention is paid to God's role as creator, the limitations of creatures, God's purpose in creation, and the limitations of our analogies between God's attributes and their reflection in His creatures. The failure to address any one of these issues constitutes a serious flaw in any solution offered for a problem in the philosophy of religion and accounts for claims that are contradictory or insufficiently explained.

Not only must one's treatment be consistent and systematic, but one should beware of importing theories from other areas of philosophy into the philosophy of religion without careful consideration of how they may or may not adequately apply to God. Theories such as Possible World Semantics, the Causal Theory of Knowing, and the Logic of Propositions cannot be employed in solutions for the problems of religion without explaining such theories in the light of religious claims about the nature of God and His creation. In the case of Possible World Semantics we have seen that confusion arises because of the absence of any clear definition of the relationship between God and possible worlds. Do possible worlds exist as possibilities that God can actualize? Are they objects of His knowledge in terms of what might have been and what yet could be? What is the value of discussing possible worlds if the world in which we live is the only actual world? These are the

questions that must be answered before Possible World Semantics can be introduced into a solution for the problem of omniscience.

The Causal Theory of Knowing was introduced as applicable to God's knowledge, but is divine knowledge comparable to human knowledge? Does divine knowledge require the same grounds of belief as human knowledge? The Causal Theory of Knowing does not appear to take into account God's role as creator nor does it offer any other definition of God's relationship to the world other than 'a knower'. The introduction of such a theory that seems foreign to the philosophy of religion one is bound to come to conclusions that either deny human freedom or limit the scope of God's knowledge.

When Wolterstorff introduced the Logic of Propositions into the discussion of God's omniscience he based that introduction on the assumption that God's knowledge consists in propositions similar to human knowledge. This assumption led him to limit God's knowledge of the future. Is this limitation inherent in divine knowledge or does it simply represent a limitation of the applicability of the theory to divine knowledge? If the logical theory is applicable to God's knowledge then the limitations it places on knowledge of the future will apply to God's knowledge. However, if God's knowledge does not consist of propositions but transcends them in virtue of God's relationship to the truth via His creative act, then it is the application of the theory that is limited and not God's knowledge.

As a final note on this issue of the importation of theories, it should be pointed out that to the degree that a theory lacks satisfactory accounts in ordinary cases (such as human knowledge), then to that degree will the theory create possibly unnecessary problems when it is applied to ideas about God.

If one's solution is consistent and systematic, and if one has not introduced theories that are incompatible with the phenomenon one is considering, what else must be taken into consideration in a solution to a philosophical problem of religion? I suggest that due attention must be given to religious intuition and revelation. I am not suggesting that the philosophical endeavor must be limited to the premises of these two categories, but such premises do need to be addressed for any solution to be complete as well as consistent. One must keep in mind that to limit any given attribute of God amounts to a redefinition of the nature of God in the eyes of believers. This is not necessarily a negative consequent of philosophy but one should be sure that such limitation is necessary. One should beware of doing philosophy for the sake of the doing rather than for the sake of expanding and deepening the understanding of religious beliefs. It should be remembered that the God of the philosophers is also the God of religion.

In conclusion, the problems which we have encountered in the solutions offered for the problem of divine omniscience and

human freedom might be resolved if more attention is paid to the issues of consistency, the need to be systematic, the danger of using imported theories, and the role of religious intuition and revelation. I believe that the solution offered by Thomas Aquinas best fulfills these criteria, but it may be possible for another theory to be advanced that would also adequately explain how God can know the future without detriment to the freedom of human actions. Such a theory would have to keep in mind that if one postulates that God is in time then one is restricted to a temporal correspondence between God's knowledge and human actions. Such a correspondence, however, seems to entail either a limitation of God's knowledge or a denial of human freedom. If one fails to account for God's role as creator then one will be restricting omniscience to a mere analogue of human knowledge, a necessarily limited analogue. And finally, if one ignores religious intuition and revelation one will be in danger of doing philosophy simply for the sake of the doing and will end up by making claims that are foreign to the central project of the philosophy of religion, the expansion of our understanding of the nature of God and of His relationship to humanity.

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