



Biannual Journal of
Metaphysical Investigations,
Vol.6, No. 1, Spring-2026, English
Volume, pp 75-90

Rational Solutions to the Incompatibility between God's Absolute Knowledge and Human Free Will: A Critical Survey¹

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Abstract

When the attribute of absoluteness is ascribed to various divine attributes, especially God's mercy and knowledge, it gives rise to significant philosophical and theological challenges. These difficulties become even more pronounced when considering the relationship between God's absolute attributes and certain human attributes, particularly free will. Throughout the history of Islamic and Christian theology, thinkers have proposed numerous analyses and solutions in response to this theological–philosophical problem. Broadly speaking, these solutions can be divided into two categories: rational and faith-based. The former rely on philosophical reasoning, while the latter are grounded in revealed teachings found in sacred texts.

In this study, we attempt to trace the most important rational solutions in both Islamic and Christian traditions and to classify them within a framework of ten approaches. We then critically evaluate their degree of rational adequacy. Some of these solutions have proponents in both traditions, while others are specific to only one. Among the most prominent are the following: the dependence of knowledge on the known, the timelessness of God, the rejection of determinism in divine action, the theory of possible worlds, and the analogy between divine knowledge and the knowledge of a close friend.

Keywords: Absolute Knowledge, Free Will, Theology, Reason, Faith.

¹ . **Research Paper**, Received: 24/9/2025, Confirmed: 17/5/2026.

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1. Introduction

The debate over the alleged incompatibility between God's absolute knowledge and human free will, as its very formulation suggests, involves two central concepts: absolute knowledge and free will. Therefore, before examining and evaluating the major responses to this problem, it is necessary to clarify the meanings of these two notions. Only then can we determine which interpretation of absolute knowledge may conflict with which understanding of free will.

1.1. Semantics of Absolute Knowledge and Free Will

With regard to the nature of knowledge, especially when discussing its absoluteness in relation to God, philosophers and theologians have offered various accounts. Here, we focus on two widely discussed definitions of absolute knowledge: first, that God knows all truths, meaning that He knows the truth of every true proposition and the falsity of every false one; second, that God knows only those things that are logically possible to know (Taliaferro, 2003, p 194). On the other hand, the concept of "free will" (ikhtiyār) admits a wide range of interpretations, so much so that some scholars have identified nearly 200 different meanings. David Hume even described it as the most contentious issue in metaphysics (Hume, 1996, p 160). Here, we focus on two principal meanings. The first is *liberty of indifference*, that is, freedom understood as the genuine possibility of both performing and refraining from an action. In the Islamic tradition, this is expressed as *ṣihḥat al-fi'l wa al-tark* (the equal possibility of action and non-action) (Sharif al-Murtaza, 1984, vol. 2, p 279; Hilli, 1992, p 354). Those who argue for an incompatibility between divine knowledge and free will generally rely on this definition. Thus, the core issue becomes the alleged conflict between this understanding of free will and the first definition of absolute knowledge. The second meaning is *liberty of spontaneity*, that is, freedom understood as self-determined action or natural inclination. According to this view, an action is free as long as it is not externally compelled, even if it arises necessarily from internal factors (Zagzebski, 1991, p 28). For example, if a person is forced at gunpoint to perform an action, that action is not free in this sense. However, if no external coercion exists and the action arises from internal motivations, even if it is necessary in that sense, it is still considered voluntary.

1.2. Outline of Responses

The responses to this problem can be broadly divided into two categories:

A) Reformulating the Problem: a. Changes in the concept of divine omniscience (e.g., rejecting God's existence, denying omniscience, limiting its scope, or redefining its meaning), b. Changes in the concept of free will (e.g., denying free will altogether or rejecting its primary definition)

B) Retaining the Original Formulation of the Problem: This paper focuses exclusively on the second category, namely, responses that preserve both divine omniscience and human free will in their primary senses.

2. Responses That Preserve the Original Formulation

These responses accept both absolute knowledge and free will as defined above. They can be divided into two groups: rational responses, which rely entirely on philosophical argumentation, and faith-based responses, which draw upon religious teachings and scriptural sources.

2.1. Rational Responses

These responses are numerous and often overlapping. Elements of one argument may appear in another, and different thinkers may present similar ideas in distinct forms. For this reason, the discussion here is organized thematically rather than historically or individually.

2.1.1. The Dependence of Knowledge on the Known

This response was articulated by Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi in *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*, where he briefly states: "Knowledge is dependent" (Tusi, 1986, p. 199). The idea is that divine knowledge is not the cause of human actions. Those who perceive a conflict between divine knowledge and human freedom often assume that God's knowledge determines human actions, that because God knows an action, it must occur. Tusi rejects this assumption. According to him, the correct relation is the reverse: God knows an action because it will occur, not that it occurs because God knows it. Thus, human actions are not dependent on divine knowledge; rather, divine knowledge is dependent on the actions themselves.

A similar argument appears in the Western tradition. Augustine distinguishes between two propositions: (1) because an event will occur, God knows it; and (2) because God knows an event, it will occur. He accepts the first and rejects the second, arguing that the latter implies determinism. He illustrates this with the analogy of memory: we remember past events because they occurred, not the other way around (Augustine, 1999, p 55). Erasmus offers a comparable example: an astronomer's prediction does not cause an eclipse; rather, the eclipse is the reason the prediction is possible (Olin, 1987, p 121). Likewise, Luis de Molina argues that God's foreknowledge does not cause

human actions; instead, human actions, if they occur freely, are the basis of God's prior knowledge (Craig, 1988, p 63).

2.1.2. Objections to This View

In the Islamic tradition, Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra criticize this view, arguing that it implies that God's knowledge is passive rather than active. They maintain that divine knowledge must be active, that is, causally related to the existence of its objects, whereas passive knowledge is dependent on them (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 6, p 189; Mir Damad, 1988, p. 63).

In the Western tradition, a similar objection holds that this view makes God dependent on creation, which contradicts divine self-sufficiency. Boethius raises this concern in *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Boethius, 2001, p 93). Another objection argues that this response misses the point. The issue is not whether divine knowledge causes human action, but whether the mere fact that God knows an action in advance undermines its freedom, regardless of causation (Evans, 2001, p 145). A further objection, raised by Anthony Kenny, suggests that if this argument is accepted, human freedom becomes no greater than the "freedom" of natural events such as the rising of the sun. This raises doubts about whether such a notion of freedom is sufficient for moral responsibility (Kenny, 1987, p 52).

2.1.3. God's Eternity

The response based on divine eternity in the Western tradition begins with Boethius and was later adopted by Anselm and Thomas Aquinas. In general, this response was widely accepted throughout the middle ages thinkers. It consists of two parts: the first is shared by all proponents, while the second is developed differently by individual thinkers. The first part of this response is grounded in a specific interpretation of eternity. Eternity can be understood in two ways: first, as God's existence extending throughout all time, from beginning to end, and second, as God's being timeless or supra-temporal. The argument here relies on the second meaning. According to this view, God is not located within time; rather, past, present, and future do not apply to Him. All events, past, present, and future, are present to God in a single, eternal "now" (Evans, 2001, p 92). Thomas Aquinas explains this idea with a vivid analogy. If we consider the future as future, neither humans nor God can know it. He asks us to imagine a road on which some people have already departed, others are about to begin, and still others will start later. Those traveling on the road cannot see all the others. However, a person standing on a hill beside the road can observe everyone at once. God is like this observer, not existing along the road (i.e., within time), but outside it, with a

complete and simultaneous view of all events. Thus, what is future for us is present for God, and all events are equally immediate to Him (Aquinas, 1905, p 93). The second part of this response addresses a crucial question: if all events are present to God and therefore necessary for Him, how can human free will be preserved? Boethius responds by distinguishing between two types of necessity: simple necessity and conditional necessity. Simple necessity refers to necessary truths, such as “all humans are mortal.” Conditional necessity, however, depends on a particular condition, such as knowledge. For example, if you observe someone walking, then, at that moment, it is necessary that the person is walking; they cannot both be walking and not walking simultaneously. This is not an absolute necessity, but a conditional one. Similarly, God’s knowledge renders human actions conditionally necessary, not absolutely necessary. According to Boethius, free will is only negated by simple necessity, not by conditional necessity (Boethius, 2001, p 32). Thomas Aquinas formulates a similar distinction, though in different terms. He differentiates between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent. For example, from the proposition “If God knows that Socrates is sitting, then Socrates is sitting,” it follows necessarily that Socrates is sitting, this is the necessity of the consequence. However, it does not follow that “Socrates is necessarily sitting”, which would imply the necessity of the consequent. In this latter case, necessity would apply directly to the action itself. Thomas rejects this second interpretation, maintaining that Socrates sits voluntarily and could stand up if he chose. Thus, divine knowledge does not impose necessity on human actions (Aquinas, 1950, p 112).

Although Islamic philosophers have accepted eternity in the second, supra-temporal sense, they have generally not employed this argument in addressing the problem of free will. Discussions of presential knowledge (*‘ilm al-ḥudūrī*), the idea that all things are present before God, may resemble this approach, but they are typically developed in relation to the nature of divine knowledge rather than the issue of determinism. Martyr Motahhari notes that many discussions assume God’s knowledge is prior in a temporal sense; however, if knowledge is presential, it cannot be understood as temporally prior (Motahhari, 2013, vol. 1, p 436).

2.1.4. Objections to the Views of Boethius and Thomas

Some philosophers reject the very notion of a timeless being, arguing that it is conceptually incoherent or contradictory (Smart & Haldane, 2003, p 161).

1. It has been argued that the Bible portrays God as eternal in the sense of enduring through time, rather than as timeless (Smart & Haldane, 2003, p 165).
2. Even if a timeless being is granted, it remains questionable whether such a being could have knowledge of temporal events (Evans, 2001, p 92).
3. Peter Geach objects that claiming God knows future events as present leads either to misunderstanding or contradiction. If God knows future events as present, then He misunderstands their temporal status. If He knows them both as present and as future, this results in contradiction (Geach, 1977, p 9).
4. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre argues that if time is real, then even God must wait for events to unfold, for example, for sugar to dissolve in water. If, however, God already knows such events in a timeless manner, then temporality becomes an illusion rather than a reality (Sartre, 2015, p 206). Sartre's point is that time must be either real or illusory. If it is real, then past, present, and future must retain their distinct meanings for both humans and God. In that case, God cannot know future events before they occur. If, on the other hand, God already knows future events, then time loses its reality and becomes merely an illusion. Sartre himself affirms the reality of time, and therefore concludes that even God, if He exists, must wait for events to occur before knowing them. Thus, the implication of Boethius's and Thomas's view, according to Sartre, is that time is unreal.

2-1-5. Response Based on the Impossibility of God's Actions Being Deterministic

The argument of Boethius and Thomas can be reformulated as a *reductio ad absurdum*. However, an objection arises: it does not necessarily follow that if God knows human future actions, those actions become deterministic. God also has knowledge of His own future actions. If prior knowledge renders human actions deterministic, then it should also render divine actions deterministic. Yet proponents of incompatibility, such as the Ash'arites, maintain that God's actions are voluntary, not determined. Therefore, either prior knowledge renders all actions deterministic (both divine and human), or it renders none deterministic (Augustine, 2010, p 121).

Mulla Sadra, in *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, and Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, in *Af' al al- 'Ibad*, express a similar idea: whatever determinists claim about divine actions should equally apply to human actions (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 2004, vol. 4, p 312). In the Islamic tradition, however, Taftazani criticizes this *reductio* argument. He maintains that divine actions are not deterministic

because they are grounded in God's eternal will. According to him, God, through a single eternal act of will, has willed all future actions. Since Taftazani rejects the notion of temporal or created wills (*irādah ḥādithah*), he holds that all divine willing occurs in eternity. To defend human free will, he defines *ikhtiyār* as *ṣiḥḥat al-fi'l wa al-tark*, the ability to will both action and non-action. He argues that God, in eternity, had the freedom to will or not will, and having chosen to will, His will encompasses all actions. This, he claims, is sufficient to ground human freedom (Taftazani, 1988, p. 231). In response, it can be argued that Taftazani's position depends on treating will (*irādah*) as an attribute of the divine essence rather than of divine action. If will is instead considered an attribute of action, then one must accept temporal or created acts of will, meaning that God may will something at one moment that He did not will previously.

2.1.6. Response Based on "God's Knowledge of the Voluntary Nature of Human Action"

According to this response, God's knowledge encompasses not only the occurrence of actions but also their qualitative characteristics. For example, God knows that fire burns and also knows that it does so necessarily. Similarly, in the case of human action, God knows not only that a person will perform a particular act, but also that the act will be performed freely. For instance, God knows that Khayyam drinks wine, and He also knows that Khayyam does so voluntarily. Thus, divine foreknowledge includes the voluntary nature of human actions. This allows for the coexistence of divine knowledge and human freedom: God knows in advance that I will perform an action freely, and therefore my freedom is preserved. Augustine expresses this view clearly: "God compels no man to sin, though He knows beforehand who are going to sin by their own will" (Augustine, 2010, p 134). Similarly, Molina argues that God knows in advance what each creature will freely choose in every possible situation (Evans, 2001, p 61). In the Islamic tradition, this response is often attributed to Mir Damad, and was later adopted and developed by Mulla Sadra (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, vol. 6, p 273).

2.1.7. Criticisms of This View

Critique 1: Nelson Pike

Pike criticizes Luis de Molina by questioning what divine knowledge implies for human free will. According to Pike, those who offer such responses have not fully grasped the essence of the problem. Using the example of Jones mowing the lawn, God knows at time t_1 that Jones will mow the lawn at time

t2. If we assume that God's knowledge is infallible, then this very infallibility seems to imply determinism. Pike illustrates this with an analogy: it is like saying, "You must give me a thousand Dollars tomorrow, of your own free will." If the outcome is already fixed with certainty, then the notion of free will becomes meaningless. Therefore, if one insists that Jones performs the action freely, one is effectively ignoring, or denying, the infallibility of divine knowledge (Pike, 1965, p 42).

Morteza Motahhari, in the third volume of *Principles of Philosophy*, argues that such difficulties arise because we mistakenly equate divine knowledge with human knowledge. In doing so, we fall into a form of anthropomorphism. He suggests that this issue may ultimately belong to the domain of fideism rather than purely rational analysis, since any attempt to describe divine knowledge inevitably relies on the limitations of human language and conceptual frameworks.

Critique 2: God's Knowledge of Human Actions through His Own Will

John Duns Scotus proposes that God's knowledge of possible future events is grounded in His own will. Consider the proposition: "Adam will eat the forbidden apple." Prior to God's decision to create, this proposition is neither true nor false. However, once God wills creation, the proposition becomes definitively true. Despite this, Scotus maintains that the action remains possible rather than necessary. He introduces a distinction between **certainty** and **necessity**: divine will renders events certain but does not make them necessary. In other words, God's will does not eliminate contingency; it preserves the possibility of the act while establishing its certainty. This view thus combines a voluntarist framework with a nuanced distinction between necessity and certainty.

Critique 3: The Distinction between Certainty and Necessity

John Milton also attempts to reconcile divine foreknowledge with human free will by distinguishing between certainty and necessity. According to him, when God knows future human actions, this knowledge makes those actions certain, but not necessary. For example, God's eternal knowledge that Adam will eat the forbidden fruit freely implies certainty, not necessity. God knows that Adam will certainly perform the act, but not that he must necessarily perform it (Milton, 1959, p 58). In response, Jonathan Edwards argues that certainty cannot exist without necessity. One can only claim certain knowledge of an event if it is necessary that the event occurs. If necessity is absent, then certainty is undermined. In his work *On the Freedom of the Will*, Edwards maintains that it is contradictory to assert both

that God knows an event will certainly occur and that the event remains genuinely contingent. For Edwards, there is ultimately no meaningful distinction between certainty and necessity (Noll, 2002, p 36).

2.1.8. Response Based on Middle Knowledge

This response was developed by Luis de Molina and Francisco Suárez, though it is most closely associated with Molina and has given rise to the school known as Molinism. Molina distinguishes three types of divine knowledge:

1. Natural knowledge: God's knowledge of His own essence, through which He knows all possibilities. This stage precedes any decision to create.
2. Free knowledge: God's knowledge after deciding to create a particular world. This includes knowledge of all actual events within that world.
3. Middle knowledge (*scientia media*): Knowledge of what every possible being would freely do in any possible circumstance.

Middle knowledge occupies a position between natural and free knowledge. At this stage, the decision to create has been made, but different possible scenarios are still considered. For instance, God knows what a particular individual would do if created in different environments, such as America or Iran, and in every other conceivable situation. Thus, middle knowledge is essentially counterfactual knowledge: knowledge of what would happen under hypothetical conditions. Molina illustrates this with biblical examples, such as the passage in the Book of Wisdom (4:11), where God indicates that a righteous person was taken away to prevent future corruption, implying knowledge of what would have happened otherwise.

For Critiqueing of This Response, we can say the textual evidence used by Mulla Sadra does not sufficiently support the argument. The concept of free will employed here corresponds to the second meaning (liberty of spontaneity), rather than the first (liberty of indifference). This issue will be further examined in the next solution.

2.1.9. Response Based on Possible Worlds

This response is structurally similar to that of Mulla Sadra, though expressed in different terms. Alvin Plantinga develops this approach in *God, Freedom, and Evil* in response to Pike's argument. Pike's argument can be summarized as follows:

- (a) God existed at t_1 and knew that Jones would perform action X at t_2 , while Jones still had the ability not to perform it.

This implies one of the following:

(b) God held a false belief at *t1*.

(c) God did not possess the knowledge attributed to Him.

(d) God had a false belief and therefore does not exist.

Since (b), (c), and (d) are unacceptable, Pike concludes that (a) must be false, implying the incompatibility of divine knowledge and human free will (Plantinga, 1974, p 34). Plantinga responds by arguing that Pike mistakenly assumes that (a) entails (b), (c), or (d). God's knowledge that Jones performs an action belongs to a specific possible world (world A). If Jones were not to perform that action, this would constitute a different possible world (world B). Therefore, God's knowledge in world A is not false, it is simply world-relative. Thus, whatever action we perform, God knows that action in the corresponding possible world. Divine knowledge is not improperly generalized across all possible worlds.

2.1.10. Response Based on Analogy with a Close Friend

Friedrich Schleiermacher offers a more intuitive, though somewhat unconventional, solution. Suppose person A is a close friend of person B and is deeply familiar with B's character and tendencies. If asked how B would behave in a specific situation, such as encountering someone in need, A could confidently predict B's response based on this knowledge. Does such prediction determine B's action? Clearly not. B still acts freely, even though A's prediction is accurate. The certainty of the prediction does not eliminate freedom. Schleiermacher suggests that divine knowledge functions in a similar way: God knows human beings perfectly and thus knows how they will act in any given situation. However, this knowledge does not impose necessity on those actions. Humans remain free, even though their actions are fully known to God in advance (Schleiermacher, 1958, p 61).

Objection to This Answer

This response rests on an analogy that is ultimately flawed. The analogy overlooks a crucial difference: the infallibility of divine knowledge. What is present in God's knowledge of future human actions, namely, certainty without the possibility of error, is not present in the knowledge of a close friend. Even when a close friend predicts behavior with high probability, such knowledge always retains the possibility of being mistaken and may fail to correspond to reality.

Nelson Pike also raises this objection. He writes: "Our knowledge of the actions of our close friend, however high the probability, is still possibly true, but God's knowledge of future human actions is necessarily true" (Pike,

1965, p 56). Here, the phrase “necessarily true” is simply another way of expressing the infallibility of divine knowledge.

2.1.11. Leibniz’s Response: The Distinction between Hypothetical and Absolute Necessity

Leibniz introduces a distinction between two types of necessity: absolute necessity and hypothetical (or conditional) necessity. Absolute necessity is such that its negation entails a contradiction, for example, the proposition “the whole is greater than the part.” By contrast, hypothetical necessity applies to statements such as “I will write tomorrow.” This statement does not possess absolute necessity, since its negation does not result in a contradiction. However, if God knows that I will write tomorrow, the proposition acquires necessity in relation to God’s infallible knowledge. Yet, this necessity remains hypothetical rather than absolute. Even if God knows that I will write tomorrow, the statement does not become intrinsically necessary, its necessity depends on the condition of divine knowledge. Thus, hypothetical necessity is necessity *on the assumption* of God’s knowledge, not necessity in itself. Accordingly, Leibniz maintains that an action becomes deterministic only if it possesses absolute necessity. Hypothetical necessity, in his view, does not conflict with human freedom. Even though God’s knowledge is infallible, it concerns contingent truths, and therefore human actions remain voluntary.

Nelson Pike rejects this distinction as insufficient. He agrees that “I will write tomorrow” is not absolutely necessary, since its negation involves no contradiction. However, he argues that Leibniz’s distinction is irrelevant to the problem at hand. According to Pike, determinism does not require absolute necessity. What matters for freedom is not whether an action is absolutely necessary, but whether it is genuinely voluntary. Even hypothetical necessity, he argues, undermines freedom. If an action is subject to any form of necessity, even conditional, it cannot be considered truly free. Thus, from Pike’s perspective, free will is incompatible with necessity in any form, including hypothetical necessity.

2.1.12. Response Based on the Intrinsic Possibility of Human Action

This response originates in the Mu‘tazilite tradition and bears some resemblance to Leibniz’s position. According to this view, human actions possess intrinsic possibility. However, if God’s knowledge attaches to a human action and renders it necessary, two problematic consequences follow:

1. The action (the known) becomes subordinate to divine knowledge, as though God's knowledge were the cause of the action.
2. The action, while intrinsically possible, becomes necessary, an outcome that is logically untenable.

Therefore, it is concluded that God's knowledge does not render human actions necessary (Motahhari, 2013, Vol. 1, 346).

Al-Razi's Objection

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi accepts that human actions possess intrinsic possibility, but argues that these actions fall under the scope of divine will and power. Because God's will and power are connected to human actions, these actions acquire a form of necessity, namely, necessity by virtue of another (*wujūb bi'l-ghayr*). In his view, this derived necessity is sufficient to undermine genuine freedom.

It is not entirely clear why al-Razi shifts the discussion from divine knowledge to divine will and power, since he could have argued that necessity arises directly from God's knowledge. Nevertheless, his conclusion parallels that of Nelson Pike: even a derived or conditional necessity is incompatible with free will. The difference lies in emphasis: Pike attributes necessity to divine knowledge, whereas al-Razi attributes it to divine will and power.

3. 1. 13. Ockham's Response

Ockham offers a partially rational response, though he ultimately appeals to faith. He introduces the notion of accidental necessity, which arises when an event is located in the past. Since the past is unchangeable, any past event acquires a kind of necessity. For example, Socrates' present sitting is contingent, he may sit or not. But once we say "Socrates sat," the action becomes necessary in the sense that it cannot now be otherwise. This is accidental necessity: the action was not necessary in itself, but becomes necessary by virtue of being past. Ockham then raises a more complex question: what about statements that refer to the past but are also connected to the future? For instance: "Hassan knew that there would be a solar eclipse in 2012." Although this statement refers to the past, it also involves a future-oriented content. Ockham argues that such cases differ from purely past events like "Socrates sat." The latter is a completed past fact, whereas the former retains a connection to future contingents.

Accordingly, Ockham distinguishes between hard facts about the past, statements referring solely to past events (e.g., "Socrates sat"), which possess accidental necessity; and Soft facts about the past, statements that involve

both past and future elements (e.g., “Hassan knew there would be an eclipse”), which do not possess accidental necessity. God’s prior knowledge of human actions, Ockham argues, belongs to the second category. Since such knowledge is a “soft fact,” it does not have necessity. Therefore, it does not render human actions necessary, and human freedom remains intact. However, this position leads to a significant consequence: if God’s knowledge lacks necessity, then its infallibility is undermined. In this framework, divine knowledge becomes dependent, at least in part, on human action.

Critique

A serious problem arises: if human beings can act contrary to God’s prior knowledge, then what becomes of that knowledge? Ockham succeeds in preserving human free will, but only at the cost of weakening the notion of God’s absolute and infallible foreknowledge. While he affirms divine omniscience, his account seems unable to fully sustain it. Indeed, Ockham himself ultimately turns to a fideistic resolution. In his *Treatise on Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, he writes: “I believe that the manner of God's knowledge of possible future events cannot be clearly stated. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that He knows the future, albeit in a possible way, because the saints have said so.” By appealing to the authority of the saints, Ockham implicitly acknowledges the limits of rational explanation and resolves the issue through faith rather than philosophical argument.

4. Conclusion

The enduring concern of philosophers and theologians with the nature and scope of God’s absolute knowledge, and its relation to human free will and destiny, has led to a wide range of attempts to resolve this complex problem through both rational analysis and religious teaching. In the present study, however, the focus has been exclusively on rational responses and their critical evaluation. To this end, the various rational solutions have been organized into ten distinct categories. It has been shown that some of these approaches are shared across both Islamic and Christian intellectual traditions, while others are more specific to particular thinkers or schools.

The analysis also reveals an important historical shift. Among Western philosophers and theologians, especially from the eighteenth century onward, rational responses tend to move away from the strongly metaphysical frameworks characteristic of earlier Christian thought and instead adopt more concrete and analytically oriented approaches. This

tendency is evident, for example, in the works of Plantinga and Schleiermacher. In contrast, the solutions found in medieval philosophy, as well as in the works of Muslim philosophers and theologians, remain deeply rooted in metaphysical reasoning. Accordingly, the critiques directed at each of these responses have been framed in terms of their underlying metaphysical and epistemological assumptions. It should be emphasized, however, that each of the viewpoints discussed here deserves a more detailed and independent examination. A comprehensive evaluation of these positions would require further analysis from multiple philosophical and theological perspectives.

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