

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE VERSUS FREE WILL

If God can do all things and knows all things past, present and future and is not doing much about suffering then his power is limited and too weak unless he does not care. Knowing the future is quite a feat. It is the most remarkable one.

As God creates all that is not God including time he must know what is in the past, the present and even the future. God is not God if the future can be better than him and outwit him.

Religion says that God knowing the future does not mean that God controls the future. He only makes it possible and it is up to us what it will be. They argue that creating and controlling are two different things. I know the present moment but that does not mean I cause it or control it.

But with God it is different for everything is totally dependent on him. Thus if God lets something act like it is free from him this is only an appearance. It cannot be done. A dog that is held by his master is controlled and he is controlled just as much if the master puts him on a lead. If I do something with my hand or relax it relaxing it is still me doing something with it. God letting you be free is not letting for he creates and controls all the freedom. Freedom that is so simulated is far less free than a person being programmed to feel free would be. It is even more of a lie!

IN DEPTH STUDY

Religious people believe God gave us the power to do good or to sin so that we might love him freely for love is a voluntary thing and cannot be programmed into us or be forced. Calvinists hold that God predestines us to do evil or to be good. "Predestination has frequently been attacked on the ground that it is supposed to be denial of free will, although its defenders point out that in fact it is the very opposite. The real trouble with the concept is that it has been made synonymous with determinism by people who do not distinguish the person from the essence, either in God or in humanity." At the level of being, it is true to say that both the divine and the human are determined by their respective natures, an obvious point to which everyone admits. Human beings might do something out of character, but they cannot go against their nature. Freedom is really conceivable only in personal terms, and it is at that level that both free will and predestination operate." See page 91. *The Doctrine of God*, Gerald Bray, IVP, Illinois, 1993). Predestination is based on the idea that God knows what you will do in the future. Though it is not the same as foreknowledge, there can be no predestination without foreknowledge.

The argument that if God knows what a free agent will do in the future that that person cannot be free for what will be will be is popular among modern philosophers. The Catholic and Christian cannot accept this doctrine for their Bible has a God who does know the future and who punishes us for our sins meaning we must have free will and have been therefore responsible for our sins.

Here are the objections:

1 The error is in not realising that that foreknowledge is not causing what the person will do but merely seeing what will be done. If God foresees X will do something it does not mean intends X to do it.

Some draw the analogy that you can sometimes predict what a person you know will do. Perhaps they always come into your house and go before twelve. It is argued that when you can do that foreknowledge does not conflict with free will. Some object that it is not the same as seeing into the future but that is irrelevant. Just as seeing a person drive a car does not mean that you are causing them to do it so gazing into the future does not mean that you are directing the future.

God is outside time. This timeless state is like the past, present and future all rolled into one. It is the same as a present without a past or future. All events happen in it at once. So, God can see the future if he is in eternity. He sees the past too and when he can see that without controlling all of it his knowledge of the future does not command us to believe that he causes the future.

God sees the past but that doesn't mean he has fixed the past. The past used to be the future too. If God caused the future by looking at it then how could he cause it by looking "back" at it? It is a contradiction for he cannot cause what has been caused. God cannot cause something by looking back into it for that would be reversing time. You cannot cause the past from the present moment be it a moment in time or the endless moment of eternity.

So God seeing the future is not the same as God controlling it and making our future decisions for us.

Response:

Most theologies say that God is outside time and is timeless. In this view he is in a present but there is no past or future and he sees all our past present and future for it is all present to him. It is like there is one moment of time which doesn't have a past or future. In that moment of time, God creates the year 1AD at the same time he creates 2AD and so on possibly ad infinitum. In this view, God cannot see the future for there is no future. All moments happen at the one time but he is somehow able to make it seem to us as if they happen one after the other. He doesn't see the future because the future is only in our imagination and there is no future.

Read page 134, GOD A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED Keith Ward, OneWorld, Oxford, 2003. The Bible God claims to be able to see the future. This timeless God refutes that notion because there is no future for him.

The philosopher Anthony Kenny does good work in arguing that God having the future with him means there is no real free will for free will is based on there being a future. His comments are from his book What I Believe by Anthony Kenny, Continuum, London – New York, 2006.

Anthony Kenny: God is omniscient. He knows the future and what we will do. But if we are really free, God cannot know what we will do. PAGE 8

If God is outside time he cannot foresee our actions for past, present and future are all the one for him. It is like a present moment with the past and the future present in it and all is happening at the one time. That means my future actions are present to him already and not future to him and so I cannot avoid doing them. If God can see that I sin tomorrow that means I cannot avoid sinning and so I don't have free will. The thought that God is timeless is silly for it has Boethius being imprisoned being simultaneous with the sack of Troy. Eternity doesn't have parts so we cannot say that time and eternity both happen. That would require eternity to have a limit and also be treating time like a part of eternity that was different and in which change really happened PAGE 48, 49

When actions are future there is no necessity for them to happen but suggesting God knows what we will do contradicts that so God knowing what we will do in the future contradicts our free will PAGE 50

If God is not timeless then it is impossible for God to know the future without controlling what we do and controlling everything. Then there is no free will. Then God is to blame for all the wrong we do.

If God is timeless then it is only an illusion when I think I deliberate about things and make a decision. To deliberate it would really need to happen before the decision but timelessness has time down as an illusion and the deliberation and the deciding all happening at once. Free will is about thinking your choice through and going for it or not going for it. It requires time.

A God knowing the future and free will are incompatible.

A response?

Religionists say that God foresees what we will freely do. But they cannot prove that this is possible given the nature of time and eternity. They endanger belief in free will with their God idea until they prove the two are compatible. They cannot prove a thing. Therefore what they are saying makes no sense.

They don't know what way free will works or how to make it. They don't know how God's knowledge works or how to make it. They therefore cannot rule out that both are so linked that genuine free will isn't possible.

Let me explain. It might be impossible for God in some way we don't understand for him to be aware of anything even the future without largely controlling it or totally controlling it. I can look at something without the looking affecting it. But God is totally different from me. An X-Ray Machine cannot look at me without sending radiation into me that affects me. Religion says that God's powers and attributes are all one with him because in spirit there is no division and he is spirit. His knowledge is the same as his power to control things. This may prove that he cannot foresee what we will do without making us do it. If it doesn't, it makes it the most likely scenario.

Jack the Ripper mutilated Catherine Eddowes in a very distinctive way. He left cuts below her eyes that looked like incomplete triangles. Suppose I know all this. Suppose an alien appears to me and wipes my memory and sends me back in a time machine to the Ripper's killing field in 1888 and I become the Ripper. I kill all those women. The exact same thing happens as I read about in the books before I went back in time. How could what I knew before I went back in time coincide and be an exact match for what happened to Eddowes when my memory is wiped and the alien didn't force me to copy the books? How could I copy the books when the books are about what I did? Something forced me to carry out the

murders according to the books. It must have been God or something. God knowing the future means that God must control the future and program our decisions. We do not have free will if there is a God. And if there is a God he must be evil or not all-good for we cannot blame ourselves but him for evil and suffering.

You may object that God seeing the past doesn't mean that God controlled the past. The past has happened. The future hasn't. That is where the difference is. The question is how something that doesn't have to happen could be foreseen by God which implies it has to happen after all.

If the past is fixed because it happened then the future is fixed too if the future is just like the past in another direction. That is what believers have.

Religion says it is wrong to think that because God knows what you will do tomorrow that he is predestining or predetermining you to do it. Islam is an exception. It treats belief in God like belief in fate. The result is they are not afraid of waging war when they feel like it for they think God predestined them to do it. Nor are they afraid to stone adulteresses to death. If belief in God justifies this, then the belief is wholly evil. If it doesn't justify then when such intelligent men as Kenny say it does, clearly nobody can be blamed for thinking as the Muslims do. Belief in God is dangerous.

And at any rate, there is no way to prove the Muslims wrong. The belief is dangerous. It allows a person to agree with the Muslims on the matter of fate. And there is reason to believe the Muslims would be right if there is a God.

Nobody thought that when Muhammad started his religion that it would become so powerful. Nobody thought that Christianity would take off and morph into Roman Catholicism the bloodiest religion ever. The point is, don't take chances. Oppose the God belief and destroy faith in God today.

Another argument that the future is fixed so we have no real free will: Whether God can see the future or not does not change the fact that whatever will be will be. If whatever will be will be is fatalism then it is still fatalism if God does or does not exist. What will happen will happen, so if God sees the future that makes no difference. Whether he sees it or not what will happen will happen. So God seeing the future is not the same as God pre-determining the future.

Response:

Whatever will be will be can be understood two ways. The fatalistic way which reckons the future is fixed. The other way in which what will happen will happen without being fixed. Whatever will be will be has nothing to offer by way of arguing that fate rules the day.

Conclusion

The foreknowledge of God, his knowing the future, does disprove the compatibility between God and human free will, a compatibility assumed by believers.