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What I Believe by Anthony Kenny, Continuum, London – New York, 2006

What I Believe says

Compatibilism, the idea that human actions are free though they can be pre-determined by God through physical and psychological causes, is possible and God could know what you would do even if he doesn't look in the future PAGE 49

My Comments

Compatibilism refutes God for it means that God could cause us to freely make nicer decisions. He causes us anyway to make the bad ones so it makes no difference to our freedom.

Compatibilism sounds suspiciously like hard determinism the view that our freedom is an illusion and that all we do is caused by inner forces and that people are just calling our actions free nevertheless.

What I Believe says

We go by our knowledge of people to be able to tell what things like know, design and control mean. God is so different that we cannot say he does these things and know what we mean. We cannot really say God has a mind and when we don't know what we are saying we are just spouting nonsense PAGE 53

My Comments

True.

What I Believe says

The unbeliever can decide that he was wrong and start to believe in religion. But the religious believer does not have freedom. He cannot claim he has the right to change his mind and maybe lose the faith. This does not make the faith of the religious person illogical or irrational or silly. A secular liberal must hold that it would be wrong for him to become a narrow Nazi PAGE 59

My Comments

Who is the most open to reason then? It is the unbeliever. Who is the most humble then? It is the unbeliever. The religious person IS irrational and arrogant. A secular liberal would indeed be very anti-Nazi. But if he changed and became a Nazi he would then have to be very anti-secular-liberal. When we adopt positions whether we care to admit it or not we are rejecting and therefore hindering the power of a party or school of thought. To say, "I am a Protestant but not anti-Catholic" is a contradiction. If you really think you are right you want other people to believe what you believe. And if you don't think you are right then you are not a true Protestant but a fake.

The liberal refuses to become a Nazi because he sees Nazism as evil. As long as he is liberal he will hold that. But he will keep his mind open. If you believe something you have to be in some way against other ideas. But that doesn't mean you are closed-minded. You would be open to accepting these ideas should the evidence and case for them be sufficient.

The religious person has to be against other ideas that are incompatible with his or her faith and cannot keep the mind open. They cannot say they are wrong in matters of religious dogma. That is the difference.

What I Believe says

Papal authority is based on the idea that the pope succeeds St Peter as bishop of Rome which is dubious because there is no evidence that Peter was bishop of Rome or a bishop at all PAGE

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My Comments

True.

What I Believe says

For centuries the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church was that only Catholics go to Heaven and then probably only a small minority manage it and Augustine took Jesus to have meant that only a few are saved when Jesus said that there are few that find the way to life. Cardinal Newman believed that few will be saved PAGE 63

My Comments

The declaration of Pope Boniface VIII, “We declare, say, define and proclaim to every human creature that if they are to be saved they must of necessity be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Unam Sanctam, 1302) is cited. This was a message for every individual in the world. If anybody didn’t hear the message it was to be told to him for it was his only hope. It tells us that they have no hope without obedience to the pope and recognising him as the head of the Church. This is very far from Roman Catholicism’s new doctrine that invincible ignorance of the truth means that a person can be saved by doing their best.

What I Believe says

Prayer to a God when one doesn’t believe in God but holds that one isn’t sure if there is a God or not is no more irrational than shouting for help when nobody might be there to hear you and agnostics may pray PAGE 64

My Comments

Then which God then should we pray to in case he exists? Jehovah? Jesus Christ? Krishna? Satan? Zeus? The real God might be jealous and mightn’t like the person who has the attitude, “Zeus, Jehovah etc. help me.” God, in the Bible, says that he is a jealous God.

Kenny goes to Church to pray. This is irrational. It might be reasonable to pray to God whose reality is doubtful in an emergency only.

Also, if you believe you cannot know if God exists right now, even if you think there may be a possibility of finding out, isn’t it using him to pray to him? Prayer would be seeking his help and if he wants to help he would make sure you can know he exists.

The Bible forbids Christians to pray with idolaters. Would it not be worse to pray with agnostics? At least the idolater is sure there is deity out there. And Kenny does not believe in the Christian God of infinite power and love who is outside time for he said that free will cannot agree with this God so he is certainly an idolater for he rejects what Christendom says is the one true God in favour of an inferior one whose existence he is not sure about.

If prayer were any good that would mean that God is powerful and helps. Then why doesn’t he help people with their memories in matters relating to himself? If there was such a thing as divine grace and the Catholic Church were the true Church then clearly you would find you have an unusual ability to remember the catechism and retain it. Memory is a thing independent of choice. We cannot make ourselves remember anything. It just happens. God would not be interfering with our freedom if he gave us a better memory for the realisations and evidences and signs that point to his existence.

What I Believe says

When Descartes doubted everything he was unable to doubt that he existed. The mind is a capacity not an activity. It is the power to gain intellectual abilities. The most important of these abilities is the learning and use of language. The will is the power to go after goals or ends that only language users can formulate. Descartes did not take this seriously. When he meditated and tried to doubt everything he would have seen that the words he used did not come from him but from outside of him. Words and language came from people outside of him. He tried to create a philosophy based on solely his own ideas as if there was no external world which is impossible. PAGE 69

My Comments

Wrong. Descartes didn’t use the words in his meditations but the concepts expressed by the words. He tried to be like a person who had never seen, touched, heard, smelt or tasted anything. He experienced what they experienced. There was nothing of the outside world involved in this.

What I Believe says

Behaviourism is wrong. It teaches that all that we think or everything we do mentally just comes from the body. The way bodies behave is not the same thing as mental life but only evidence for it PAGE 70

My Comments

The mind can be part of the body just like the brain of the computer is a part of it. You don't take the behaviour of a computer as evidence that something separate from it is controlling it.

What I Believe says

Bodies and brains are physical things. Minds are not physical for minds are capacities. This is not to say that the mind is a spirit. The power of a round peg to fit into a round hole is not a physical thing but nobody would imagine that it is a spirit. However the mind isn't a physical thing and doesn't have length or breadth PAGE 71

I do not believe in life after death and this doesn't bother me for it doesn't bother me that I was non-existent before the first moment of my existence. The truth is that if I rise again I won't be a member of the human species any more if Christian descriptions of the resurrection body are anything to go by PAGE 164 - 165

My Comments

Minds are conscious and they can use a facility called intelligence and can remember things and think. A mind that loses all things and nothing is left only consciousness is still a mind. Such a mind is not a capacity anymore. It is an activity. A mind with all the faculties is an activity and is the capacity to think and remember and so on. Kenny is wrong.

The argument against resurrection is probably true. Whatever the Bible says Jesus came back as it was not as a human being.