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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS'/PHILOSOPHERS' VIEW OF OMNISCIENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

It has been commonly understood that Divine Knowledge, even though eternal and inclusive of foreknowledge of free human actions, does not restrict human freedom. But the philosophers and theologians both in the Muslim and the Judaeo-Christian tradition have pointed out that apparently the doctrine of Omniscience of God does not cohere with the doctrine of freewill of man. The present research is an attempt to examine different formulations of the problem as well as solutions attempted by Christian theologians/philosophers. I have observed that Saint Thomas Aquinas' formulation of the doctrine of omniscience in an absolutist manner (known as Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience) makes it incoherent with the concept of human freedom. History of Christian thought on this problem is basically formulation and reformulation of this doctrine in different ways. I agree with Swinburne that there is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will, if the traditional doctrine of Omniscience is accepted. That the basic fault lies in its absolutist approach. Swinburne asserts that it is contrary to Biblical teachings as well. On the base of my understanding of 'Islamic View of Omniscience and Human Freedom' I believe that the correct formulation of the concept of Omniscience must include an indeterminate aspect concerning free choice of a human action.

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Omniscience is generally considered to be a necessary characteristic of an absolutely perfect being. But is this concept coherent? In the western philosophical tradition, at least three main problems have been identified concerning the coherence of this Divine Attribute. First problem relates to the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with Immutability. As restated by Professor Norman Kretzman, it runs as follows:

- “(1) A perfect being is not subject to change.
 - (2) A perfect being knows everything.
 - (3) A being that knows everything always knows what time it is.
 - (4) A being that always knows what time it is, is subject to change.
 - ∴ (5) A perfect being is subject to change.
 - (6) Therefore, a perfect being is not a perfect being.
- Finally, therefore, (7) There is no perfect being.”¹

Religious people often claim that man is, at least in some sense, free to do what he chooses to do. But if God as an Omniscient being foreknows everything, how can man be free? Is it possible for man to go against infallible Divine Foreknowledge? The second problem identified in this context is: How is Divine Omniscience compatible with human freedom? The third problem concerns the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with Eternity. Eternity, as Immutability has been considered to be the

necessary characteristics of the Omniscient being in Christianity. In the history of Western philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas(c. 1225-1274) formulates the first and the second problem,² whereas the third problem is formulated by Boethius (c.480-524).³ Since my basic concern in this article is with the problem of the compatibility of divine Omniscience and human freedom, I shall confine myself to the second problem and touch the first and the third ones only if so needed.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 14, 13, 3 states the second problem in two versions. First version shows that if man is supposed to be free, God cannot be considered to be Omniscient. The purpose of the second version is to show that if God is supposed to be Omniscient, man cannot be proved to be free. Hence: incompatibility of Omniscience and human freedom.⁴ **The first version** runs as follows:

“Whatever is known by God *must* be; for whatever is known by us *must* be, and God’s knowledge is more certain than ours. But nothing which is future and contingent *must* be. Therefore, nothing which is future and contingent is known by God.”⁵

St. Thomas uses the word ‘contingent’ as synonymous to ‘not causally determined.’ No causally determined action is a free action. Thus free human actions are contingent events. St. Thomas himself states this position.⁶ As far as his position with respect to Divine Foreknowledge of contingent events is concerned, he states that “God knows all things, not only those actually existing but also those within His Power, or the creature’s, and since some of these are future contingents to us, it follows that God knows future contingent things.” St. Aquinas distinguishes two aspects of contingents thing: as *it is in itself i.e.*, in the present, and as *it is in its cause* and in this way it is considered as future. Aquinas asserts that “God knows all contingent things not only as they are in their causes, but also as each one of them is

actually in itself.” He also holds that God does not know contingents successively, but simultaneously because God’s Knowledge as His Being is eternal and eternity being simultaneous whole comprises all times. “Hence it is manifest that contingent things are infallibly known by God.”⁷

Aquinas states the **Second Version** of this problem in his *Summa Theologiae*, in the following words:

“...every conditional proposition wherein the antecedent is absolutely necessary must have an absolutely necessary consequent. For the relation of the antecedent to consequent is like that of the premises to the conclusion: and from necessary premises only a necessary conclusion can follow,...But this is a true conditional proposition: ‘If God knew that this thing will be, then it will be’; for God’s knowledge is only of true things. Now the antecedent of this conditional proposition is absolutely necessary, both because it is eternal and because it is signified as past. Hence the consequent also is absolutely necessary. Therefore, whatever is known by God is necessary; ...”⁸

Brody⁹ presents the following restatement of the above problem:

- “(A) Everything that has occurred is now necessary;
- (B) Suppose that a man does *A* at some future time;
- (C) Then God already has known that he will do *A*;
- (D) So it is necessary that God has known that he will do *A*;
- (E) It is necessary that if God has known that he will do *A*, then he will do *A*;
- (F) Therefore, it is necessary that he will do *A*;
- (G) But then he did not do *A* freely and he had no free will concerning his

doing A.”¹⁰

Let us examine the solutions offered for these versions of the Second Problem.

Solutions to the First Version:

St. Thomas recognises two difficulties in this problem. **First difficulty** relates to the meaning of first proposition in the above argument. Second difficulty relates to the status of *necessity* to be attached to a past-tensed proposition. Concerning the first difficulty he provides a long answer part of which, as presented by Kenny, runs as follows:

“The proposition ‘*whatever is known by God must be*’ can be analysed in two ways. It must be taken as a proposition *de dicto* or as a proposition *de re*...”

As a *de re* proposition, it means:

“Of *everything* which is known by God, it is true that *that thing must be*.

So understood the proposition is false.”

As a *de dicto* proposition, it means:

“The proposition ‘*whatever God knows is the case*’ is necessarily true. So understood, the proposition is true.”¹¹

As is obvious, in the former sense the proposition claims the necessary occurrence in future of what is known by God in the past or in the present. In the later sense it relates to God’s past or present knowledge of a present state of affairs.

Raymond Bradley & Norman Swartz in their *Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy* observe that according to Thomas Aquinas a *de dicto* modality meant “the attribution of a modal property to a *proposition* as in the proposition: It is possible that Socrates is running.” Whereas “by a *de re* modality is meant the attribution of a modal property to an *individual* as in the proposition:

Socrates is possibly running.” They observe that “the above distinction reflects accurately the uses of modal expressions in natural language” and the authors find nothing troublesome about it. However, some philosophers do not agree with this view.¹²

The **Second difficulty** identified by St. Thomas, as stated by Kenny, runs as follows:

“In any true conditional proposition whose antecedent is necessarily true, the consequent is also necessarily true. That is to say, whatever is implied by a necessary proposition is itself a necessary proposition.

The following is clearly a true conditional proposition: ‘if it has come to God’s knowledge that such and such a thing will happen, then such and such a thing will happen.’

The antecedent of the conditional, if it is true at all, appears to be necessarily true: for it is in the past tense, and what is past cannot be changed. What has been the case cannot now not have been the case. Therefore, the consequent is also necessarily true.

Therefore, whatever is known by God is a necessary truth.”¹³

St. Thomas’s solution to this difficulty, as stated by Kenny, runs as follows:

“God is outside time: God’s life is measured not by time, but by eternity.

Eternity, which has no parts, overlaps the whole of time;

Consequently the things which happen at different times are all present together to God.

An event is known as future only when there is a relation of past to future between the knowledge of the knower and the happening of the event.

But there is no such relation between God's knowledge and any contingent event: the relation between God's knowledge and any event in time is always of simultaneity.

Consequently, a contingent event, as it comes to God's knowledge, is not future but present; and as present it is necessary; for what is the case, is the case, and beyond anyone's power to alter.

Hence, we can admit that what is known to God is a necessary truth; for as known by God it is no longer future but present.

But this necessity does not destroy contingency: for the fact that an event is necessary when it happens does not mean that it was predetermined by its causes."¹⁴

Kenny differs with Aquinas concerning the above solution of the second difficulty. He finds following flaws in Aquinas's solution.

i. Foreknowledge relates to God's knowledge of free human actions, and divine Omniscience relates to God's knowledge of all objects be it things, events, concepts or propositions or whatever. Since "St. Thomas insists that no-one, not even God can know contingent events", Kenny observes that the above solution "forces us to deny not only God's foreknowledge, but also God's Omniscience. For the statement that God's knowledge is outside time must mean, if anything, that no temporal qualifications (e.g., 'now', 'then', etc.) can be attached to God's knowledge."¹⁵

ii. Kenny further observes that "the whole concept of timeless eternity, the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically incoherent. For simultaneity as ordinarily understood is a transitive relation. If A happens at the same time as B, and B happens at the same time as C, then A happens at the same time as C... But on St. Thomas's view, my typing of this paper is simultaneous with the whole

eternity. Again, on this view, the great fire of Rome is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Therefore, while I type these words, Nero fiddles heartlessly on.”¹⁶

Kenny not only makes plain the flaws in the above solution, but also offers a solution of his own. Let us first determine the real point as contained in the second difficulty. It states:

“[I.] What is implied by a necessary proposition is itself necessarily true.

[II.] But from ‘it has come to God’s knowledge that such and such will be the case’ it follows that ‘such and such will be the case’.

[III.] But, ‘it has come to God’s knowledge that such and such will be the case’ is necessarily true.

Therefore, if God knows the future, the future is not contingent.”¹⁷

If we substitute ‘such and such will be the case’ with ‘*p*’ the above formulation becomes:

X. What is implied by a necessary proposition is itself necessarily true.

Y. But from “it has come to God’s knowledge that *p* .it follows that *p*”.

Z. But, “it has come to God’s knowledge that *p*” is necessarily true.

Therefore, if God knows the future, the future is not contingent.¹⁸

Apparently it seems undeniable that what follows from a necessary proposition is itself necessary. It also appears irrefutable that ‘it is the case that *p*’ follows from ‘it has come to God’s knowledge that *p*’. But what about the third premise? Is it true, for all substitutions for “*p*”? Kenny observes that this last premise is based on Aristotelian principle that all propositions in the past are necessary. Kenny differs with Aristotle and, for that matter with Aquinas too, concerning the validity of this principle in its different senses. Kenny examines the premise in question, in the perspective of the following different senses of *necessary truth*: i) Necessity of present- and past-

tensed propositions, as Aristotle thought,¹⁹ in a way in which future-tensed propositions are not, compared to the sense in which logical truths are necessary. ii) Necessity of past-propositions, if they are necessary at all, as something *eo ipso* incompatible with freedom. (iii) Contrast of the past- and present-tensed propositions with the future-tensed propositions with the purpose of discovering any sense of necessity, if there is any, which is not shared by future-tensed propositions. Kenny rightly observes that there seems to be no reason to maintain that “It has come to God’s knowledge that *p*” is a necessary truth. He observes that “even if “necessary” is given the weak interpretation of “true at all times”, there seems no reason to believe the Aristotelian doctrine that past- and present-tensed propositions in *materia contingenti* are necessary.”²⁰ Regarding God’s Omniscience Kenny observes that “it does not at all imply that whatever we substitute for “*p*” in “God knows that *p*” is true. ... In fact, God’s knowledge will only be necessary where what He knows is necessary (*i.e.*, is logical truth) But by definition, a contingent proposition — such as a proposition reporting or contradicting a free action — is never a necessary truth. Hence the argument which we are considering has no tendency to show that human freedom and divine foreknowledge are incompatible.”²¹ Thus Kenny differs with St. Thomas’s interpretation of this Aristotelian principle in the solution in question.

Kvanvig²² seeks to answer the objection that ‘God’s past beliefs about events that lie in the future are, because past, also necessary’ through the distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ facts. Marilyn McCord Adams and Alvin Plantinga²³ had brought out the explications of this distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ facts. William Haskers criticises this distinction and observes that “just what is it about the proposition, ‘God knows that *p*’, that makes this a ‘soft fact’? Is it that God’s *individual essence* entails the property of Omniscience, and therefore the truth of what God believed? Or is it the

word ‘God’ which appears in the quoted sentence, connotes or implies essential Omniscience? If the former the entire distinction between the ‘hard’ and the ‘soft’ facts collapses.”²⁴

Solutions to the Second Version

I. St. Thomas’s solution to this problem rests upon his idea that God’s knowledge is not temporal in the way that our knowledge is. God is outside of time, in eternity, and everything is eternally present to God. As a result, what God knows is the present-tense proposition that the man is doing A, and not the future-tense proposition, and there is no reason why it must be contingent.²⁵

II. Brody states that Professor Kenny suggests that we ought to deny (A) and, therefore, (D). “He urges that there really is no way in which what has occurred is now necessary, and that the whole problem rests upon this illusion.”²⁶

III. Brody states that Professor Prior²⁷, suggests that we ought to deny (C). “The trouble with this argument, as he points out, is its assumption that if at some future time he does A, then it was already true that he will do A and that therefore God knows it. If we drop this suggestion as Pierce²⁸ suggested, then (C) will not follow from (B) and the argument collapses.”²⁹

IV. Brody observes that “both of these possible solutions rest upon views about the relation between time, reality, and truth. One can not simply adopt one of them without considering its implications for a whole host of related logical and metaphysical issues.”³⁰

Doctrine of Omniscience and its Formulations:

The problems, and for that matter their solutions, concerning the compatibility/incompatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom always presuppose some certain concept of Omniscience and some certain concept of Human

Freedom. It is the implications of these concepts which manifest themselves when they are formulated into propositions, and propositions into arguments. The concepts are the building blocks of propositions and propositions, the building blocks of arguments. A concept can be self-inconsistent or inadequately formulated. It may be that incompatibility of two concepts arises from the self-inconsistency or inadequate formulation of one or the both concepts. Owing to such considerations it seems necessary to examine the different formulations of the doctrine of Omniscience and the doctrine of Free Will at the hands of philosophers to critically examine the coherence & consistency of their basic concepts. Let us first examine the formulations of the Doctrine of Omniscience.

1. **Traditional Formulation:**

It seems quite intuitive to think that what is meant by the concept of Omniscience is that God knows everything. Again, quite naturally the question which occurs to us is: what are the things which are known to God? A common answer can be that God knows everything that is true. There is nothing that is true and He is unaware of it. And it is also intuitive to believe that He does not make mistakes about what is true or not. But truth or falsity is the property of propositions. It means that a being is Omniscient if He knows all true propositions. But knowledge is defined as justified true belief. So Omniscience means that God justifiably believes all true propositions. This is what is known as Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience.³¹ Aquinas is the first to formulate this doctrine. Kvanvig expresses this doctrine in the following way:

O: A being B is Omniscient = df B justifiably believes that p if and only if p is true.³²

St. Anselm (1033-1109) has already given this traditional doctrine a deep philosophical tinge by asserting that ‘God is essentially omniscient’. But ‘if God is

essentially omniscient', He simply could not be mistaken about anything, *i.e.*, He has infallible knowledge. This implication raises certain problems regarding God's knowledge of the future. Notwithstanding these problems Kvanvig is of the view that the traditional construal of the doctrine of Omniscience, according to which God knows all true propositions, is quite proper. In his book *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God*, he tries to defend the logical consistency of the traditional construal of this doctrine. However, he prefers reformulation of this doctrine in the hands of Molina (1535-1600)³³ and observes that a Molinistic account of Omniscience and essential Omniscience, combined with traditional construal of Omniscience as knowledge of all truths, is adequate for such an account implies that an Omniscient being knows everything there is to know without requiring that such a being be causally responsible for the actions of persons. Hence such an account does not imply that human beings are not free. According to this Molinistic account to say 'that a being is omniscient' is not simply to say that 'such a being exhibits 'maximal cognitive perfection'. Since no being could be God without being maximally perfect with regard to Omniscience, we ought also to affirm that God exhibits maximal cognitive perfections other than Omniscience. Hence, God not only knows all truths, He is intimately aware of His Own Self and is as intimately acquainted with the natures of every other thing in the universe as He can be.³⁴ He further observes that these properties are also possessed *essentially* by God: no matter how the world might have turned out, God would have been maximally cognitively perfect. Kvanvig claims that the Molinist account of God's foreknowledge provides an explanation of how God knows what will be done freely and also how God can have this sort of knowledge essentially. He asserts that there is no incompatibility between the two unless God could not be essentially Omniscient.

The main features of the theory *i.e.*, the Molinist account as explicated by Kvanvig

are that it explains: i) How God knows the future without its being determined in any manner whatsoever. The intuitive idea of the theory is that there are true statements about what a person would freely do, if he were in certain circumstances. Kvanvig calls this set of true statements as ‘conjunction of claims’ and says that there is a ‘maximal conjunction’ of claims of this sort that correctly state what each of us would do in certain circumstances. And since God knows these ‘maximal subjunctives of freedom’ He knows the future.

ii) But the question is how does God know these ‘maximal subjunctives of freedom’? Kvanvig observes that “in the standard semantics for such subjunctives, any subjunctive is true because of similarity relations between various possible worlds and the actual world. Such a theory may be adequate regarding subjunctives of freedom as well.”

iii) Conceiving a possible objection to this theory that ‘there is no actual world before God creates it’ Kvanvig says that the concept of ‘actual world’ is confusing one and the objection is based on a confusion of the above notion. His argument is: “Since it is impossible that there be no actual world, it is impossible for there not to have been an actual world before creation.” It seems as if Kvanvig is of the view that the actual world is from all eternity.

iv) Kvanvig conceives another objection, rather a more serious one, “which centres on the possibility of two worlds sharing exactly the same history and yet being such that in one, a person acts in one way, and in the other, he/she acts in another way. The difficulty is in determining which of these worlds is most similar to the actual world.” Kvanvig’s answer to this objection is that “there is only one way for the standard semantics to solve this problem, and that is to hold that individuals have basic natures which explain the truth of the subjunctives of freedom in question.”³⁵

vii) And if this response by the standard semantics fails it would not mean that the Molinist view presented here has failed; it would only mean that it is the ‘standard semantics’ that is in danger because the semantics are developed to account for what are intuitive truths. If a view of theory construction comes out to be such that one has to discard intuitive truths because they do not fit in the theory developed on that view, that view of theory construction is necessarily false.³⁶

Hasker observes that Kvanvig discussing the concept of *middle knowledge* (i.e., a pre-creative grasp of what creatures would freely do if placed in appropriate circumstances) states that the subjunctives of freedom are contained in the *essences* of created individuals. But of course I neither freely chose nor I am responsible for what is contained in my essence. As Maryline Adams and Plantinga all clearly see, the notion that subjunctives of freedom are contained in one’s essence, is fatal to certain other concepts of his theory, the theory of middle knowledge.³⁷ However, Kvanvig claims that the Molinist account of God’s foreknowledge provides an explanation of how God knows what will be done freely and also how God can have this sort of knowledge essentially. He asserts that there is no incompatibility between the two unless God could not be essentially Omniscience.

The traditional account of the doctrine of Omniscience is mostly centred around the propositional view for it supposes that a being can be Omniscient by knowing all true propositions. Propositional view is a reductionist view for it only takes propositions as the objects of intentional attitude. But now further discussions have been arisen on the base of theories concerning our awareness of ourselves and others. Though Kvanvig attempts to defend the adequacy of the traditional doctrine of Omniscience, he does not accept its reductionist bias and challenges it on the base of issues surrounding what has been called *de re* and *de se* awareness. Kvanvig says that

in a considerable recently published literature, it has been asserted that the propositional view of literature is inadequate, and the reason is that it is reductive one. The propositional belief is a *de dicto* belief, and a claim is made that “there is also *de re* and *de se* belief. The *de re* belief is belief with a thing as the object of belief. For example, it is one thing to believe that the proposition the tallest spy is a spy is true; and quite another thing to believe of the tallest spy himself that he is a spy. Finally, it is perhaps one thing to believe of a person in the mirror that his pants are on fire; and quite another to be aware that that person is oneself and to believe of oneself (*de se*) that one’s own pants are on fire. So there is a suggestion here that one cannot know everything there is to know if one is limited to propositions as the objects of one’s awareness.”³⁸ He says that two ways have been suggested by the proponents of the propositional view to meet this objection: i) Some of the proponents of the reductionist view have suggested that a different kind of reductive account in which the object of intentional attitudes is a property, not a proposition, ought to be accepted. ii) The others have suggested that “the propositional account can still be defended if it is supplemented with additional features which imply that some propositions are *private propositions*: they are propositions which only some persons, at only some times and only some places, can access.”³⁹ Kvanvig finds neither of the alternatives as acceptable. He observes (1) that the fault with the *property theory* is that it cannot properly explain what it is to conceive one’s own non-existence. Hence the property theory is inadequate. (2) As far as the doctrine of private propositions is concerned, (i) Kvanvig claims that though there are strong reasons to deny the strict identity between beliefs of different persons about the same experience, yet it is intuitively obvious that there is such an identity. (ii) He also argues from theological point of view for rejecting the possibility of *private propositions*. He observes that God knows us better than we

know ourselves; but if the possibility of private propositions is accepted, there is a sense in which we know ourselves best of all.

Kvanvig offers a way to avoid this view of private propositions through a distinction between *direct* and *indirect* grasping which entails, as we shall see, the rejection of a dyadic theory of belief in place of a triadic theory of belief.⁴⁰ He also suggests that it is the meaning of the sentence used to express the proposition in question which provides the ground to this distinction between directly & indirectly grasped propositions. Because, as Kvanvig observes, it is the meaning of some terms that tie us in more intimate way to certain features of the world. He further says that the distinction between *direct* and *indirect* grasping is not something difficult to understand; it is quite intuitive “that we bear a special relation to ourselves which we bear to nothing else; that we are more intimately associated with what is here and now than to what was then or what is or what was there.” The way the theory of Omniscience suggested by Kvanvig captures this connection is by claiming that there are some propositions “that we grasp *directly* by virtue of being expressed by sentences which refer in an especially immediate way to oneself, the present moment, and the present place.” He further says that when such sentences “are used to pick out individuals other than ourselves, times other than the present, and spaces other than the local, such propositions are more remote and distant to our conceptual apparatus — we only grasp such propositions *indirectly*.”⁴¹

Let us study Kvanvig’s argument through which he draws the above conclusions.

Concerning range of knowledge for an Omniscient Being, Kvanvig observes that it seems quite intuitive that in order for a being to be Omniscient, He must know about all spatial regions; but the being in question also must know about all temporal regions *i.e.*, in addition to the present, the Omniscient being must also know the past as well as

the future. Articulating the same view in technical terminology he observes that “in order for a being to be Omniscient, the being in question must have *maximal knowledge*” and discusses the question of the possibility of a *maximal knower*, i.e., “are there special problems that limit any possible knower in such a way that the concept of a maximal knower is incoherent?”⁴²

As is obvious, the concept of a maximal knower seems to ascribe the same status to future as to past. But can we allow the future the same status as the past? Kvanvig identifies issues regarding the knowledge of future having two aspects: metaphysical & epistemological. The issues regarding the metaphysical aspect of the knowledge of future arise from the ontology of future. The epistemological questions deal with the possibility of knowing the future events.⁴³ Concerning the issue of the reality of future, Kvanvig sees two further points of note:

a) The ontological question of the reality of future involves the objection that the future can not be real because if it were it would be present, not the future. Kvanvig is of the opinion that the future is real. He thinks that there are strong intuitions which support the view that the future can be the object of knowledge and other *intentional attitudes* and that it must be known in order for a being to be Omniscient. He thinks that if it can be shown that there is no good argument for denying connection between Omniscience and knowledge of the future, it can be considered a sufficient reason in favour of the view that Omniscience requires knowledge of the future.⁴⁴ It is with this purpose in his mind that he examines the argument offered by Swinburne and others.

b) That the issue of the reality of future should be kept distinct from the issue about whether the future is determined or not. These are two different issues and should not be confused with each other. Kvanvig conceives four possible stand points concerning these issues. He observes that one can hold that i) the future is both not

real and yet determined; one can also believe that ii) some parts of the future are real and yet indeterminate iii) that the future is both real and determined; and, iv) the future is not real and undetermined.⁴⁵

Let us take the first point to discuss in detail:

Kvanvig does not attempt to show that God can know the future, rather he tries to show that unless a being does know the future, that being cannot be Omniscient. In order to defend his view he examines two attempts to deny this claim. The first of these attempts is a metaphysical claim made by Geach⁴⁶ ‘that since the future is not real, it cannot be known’. The second attempt to deny Kvanvig’s claim is “an epistemological attempt, a version of *limited scepticism* about the future presented by Swinburne. This attempt is directed at showing not that there is no Omniscient being, but rather that we need a new understanding of Omniscience — a limited version of the doctrine of Omniscience.”⁴⁷ Let us first examine Geach’s anti-realism concerning the future as presented by Kvanvig.

Geach thinks that there are no truths about future. The apparent knowledge of the future is really only knowledge of the present tendencies of things. He says that “The future consists of certain actual trends and tendencies in the present that have not yet been fulfilled.”⁴⁸ This is his *anti-realism* of the future. Geach also “holds *anti-deterministic* view of the present tendencies of things when he claims that “what was going to happen at an earlier time may not be going to happen at a later time because of some action taken in the interim.”⁴⁹ However he does not claim his anti-realism about the future to be based on his indeterminism of the present tendencies. Kvanvig thinks that Geach rightly recognised that the two views were logically independent but observes that Geach’s thought suffers from a confusion of these views.

Kvanvig says that if we assume that objects of knowledge are propositions,

Geach's view amounts to enabling him to translate any proposition apparently about the future into some other proposition which is not about future. Kvanvig construes Geach's reasons for rejecting realism about future into the following propositions:

1. Propositions apparently about the future are propositions about what is going to be the case.
2. Propositions about what is going to be the case obviously refer to the present, not the future.
3. If (1) and (2) are true, then there are no propositions about the future.
4. If there are no propositions about the future, then the future is not real.
5. Therefore, the future is not real.

Geach says that one might claim that there are two different senses of 'is going to be' so that (2) can be read as either:

(2a) Propositions about what is *really* going to be the case obviously refer to the present, not the future.

or

(2b) Propositions about what is going to be the case *if not prevented* obviously refer to the present, not the future.

Geach claims that the notion of '*prevention*' cannot be explained without appeal to the notion of 'what is going to happen'. Kvanvig differs with him and claims that this notion can be clarified in another way. He also asserts that Geach is confusing the two senses of 'is going to be the case', and that his response to the objection is inadequate.⁵⁰

Kvanvig concludes that the future is real, and that in order to be Omniscient, a

being must know about it. Kvanvig also criticises Swinburne for his denial of foreknowledge for an Omniscient Being.

Before we turn towards Kvanvig's observations and his criticism of Swinburne's limited doctrine of Omniscience, let us study Swinburne first.

Richard's Swinburn's Criticism of the Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience:

Swinburne argues that there is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and free will, if the traditional doctrine of Omniscience as formulated by Aquinas is accepted. According to Swinburne this incompatibility can have two aspects:

- i) that there is an incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will;
- ii) that there is an incompatibility between God's Omniscience and His Own free will;

The first objection if valid would show that man does not have free will; and the second objection if valid would show that a person could not both be Omniscient & Perfectly Free. The argument purporting to show an incompatibility between divine Omniscience and human freedom runs as follows:

If God is Omniscient then he foreknows all future human actions.

If God foreknows anything, then it will necessarily come to pass.

But if a human action will necessarily come to pass, then it cannot be free.

Augustine's solution to this objection is that human actions may be free even if they come to pass by necessity. Whereas Aquinas says that although it is true that 'necessarily' if God foreknows anything, then it will come to pass', it is false that 'if God foreknows anything, it will necessarily come to pass'. Only the latter yields the conclusion that man does not have free will.⁵¹

Discussing and criticising Aquinas, Swinburne gives the following understanding

of the concept of Omniscience:

A person P is Omniscient at a time t if and only if he knows of every true proposition about t or an earlier time that it is true and also he knows of every true proposition about a time latter than t , such that what it reports is physically necessitated by some cause at t or earlier, that is true.⁵²

On this understanding of the concept of Omniscience, P is Omniscient if he knows about everything except those future states and their consequences which are not physically necessitated by anything in the past; and if he knows that he does not know about those future states. Hence God is Omniscient in the attenuated sense, and this of course has resulted from His Own choice. Swinburne feels that Bible, or at any rate the Old Testament, contains implicitly the view that God is Omniscient only in the attenuated sense.

The God thus postulated brings about all things which exist (or permits them to exist) and in so doing knows what He brings about and knows what that will lead to, so long as He has brought about things which physically necessitate certain effects. Yet to maintain His freedom, He limits His knowledge of His own future choices.

Turning towards Swinburne, Kvanvig observes:

1. Swinburne is not anti-realist about future. He does not claim that there are no truths about the future, as does Geach. He simply holds that the knowledge of future free actions of individuals is not possible for anyone, even for an Omniscient being, otherwise they will not be free actions at all.

2. Swinburne does not think it necessary for a being to know all of the future, (*i.e.*, including foreknowledge of future free actions of human beings), to be Omniscient. He thinks that this lack of knowledge on the part of an Omniscient being, does not impair His claim of Omniscience.

3. These restrictions on what an Omniscient being must know in order to be Omniscient, does not arise from any metaphysical position concerning the ontology of future; they arise as a result of Swinburne's sceptical views about the possibility of foreknowledge of future free actions hence from a purely epistemological concern.

4. Swinburne believes in the *indeterminacy view of freedom* i.e., free actions of men, although influenced, are not necessitated by other agents or prior states of the world.

5. Swinburne argues that if persons are free then they are able to do otherwise than they actually do. Then no being *B* could be Omniscient in the traditional sense unless as a matter of fact no person ever chose to make *B*'s beliefs false. On the *Indeterminacy View* of Freedom, it will be a mere fortunate coincidence, and a theist would never claim God to be Omniscient in this uncertain way.

6. Swinburne does not suggest that we should discard the doctrine of Omniscience, he only recommends a better formulation of the doctrine. From the precedent of divine attribute of omnipotence where theologians such as Aquinas have been careful to explain omnipotence, not as the ability to do anything, but as the ability to do anything logically possible,⁵³ Swinburne suggests that on similar lines an account of Omniscience can be developed not as knowledge of everything true, but as knowledge of everything true which is logically possible to know. He thus rejecting 'the traditional doctrine of omniscience' formulates a '*limited doctrine* of omniscience' in the following words:

A person *P* is Omniscient at a time *t* if and only if he knows of every true proposition about a time later than *t*, such that what it reports is physically necessitated by some cause at *t* or earlier, that is true.⁵⁴

Swinburne claims that this doctrine preserves both the freedom of human actions

and the Omniscience of God. Criticising this limited doctrine of Omniscience Kvanvig observes:

1. That the basic supposition in Swinburne's thesis is the claim that knowledge of free actions of human beings is impossible. The reason is that if such knowledge were *possible*, but not *actual*, Swinburne would be forced to discard his view that there is an Omniscient being. Given that, a question naturally arises as to whether there is any good reason for thinking that such knowledge is impossible.

Kvanvig argues: Given that Swinburne has admitted that true beliefs about the future are possible, he must maintain that the condition of justification which is necessary for a true belief to acquire the status of knowledge cannot be satisfied. So a being who had all true beliefs about future free actions would be quite lucky. Such a claim may influence the justification for the beliefs in question in two ways: i) that the element of luck would taint any belief about what a free individual will do; ii) that the problem of luck only affects, not all, but a maximal set of such beliefs so that only some of the members of the set of true beliefs are epistemically secure enough to be justified, but not the entire set. Kvanvig observes that Swinburne holds it only in the first sense and only the first sense can fit in with his move to his limited doctrine of Omniscience.

2. That Swinburne has made the emphasis on luck, the basis of his move from 'the traditional doctrine of omniscience' to 'the limited doctrine of omniscience' so he must defend this move; and that he can defend this move only by showing that the luck in question spreads over every possible belief about any possible free action. He says that to show that his emphasis on luck is true because whole collection of such beliefs cannot be held, will not be sufficient for this purpose. The question is not to show that the whole collection of such beliefs cannot be held true on the basis of luck, but to

show that it is true of every possible belief. Kvanvig claims that only in the later case, Swinburne's doctrine of Omniscience is proved.⁵⁵

3. Kvanvig says that Swinburne's thesis that justified beliefs are not possible regarding future free actions, can be defended in three ways:

i) The first is to affirm an infallibilist conception of justification. Kvanvig shows that to affirm this is simply a mistake "for if believing all and every truths about the future would be an accidental or lucky coincidence at best, God could not have the sort of evidence that guaranties the truth of what he believes."⁵⁶

ii) The second way to affirm the above thesis is by affirming God's essential Omniscience *i.e.*, "in order for a being to be God, He must not only know everything there is to know, but He must also be incapable of not knowing what there is to be known."⁵⁷ This approach presupposes that a) God must be incapable of error *i.e.*, no being is worthy of the title 'God' unless that being is infallible; b) and that at least He will not know the free actions of human beings for the knowledge of such actions can only be contingent and does not abort the possibility of mistake. Thus He must be essentially Omniscient, not just Omniscient; and in this sense of Omniscience a being cannot be required to know what free actions any individual will perform. Kvanvig also rejects this argument.

iii) The third and the final way, according to Kvanvig, to defend the claim that God need not know what free individuals will do in order to be Omniscient, is that future free actions have characteristics which prevent any individual from knowing that they will occur. According to Swinburne, a perfectly free individual is an individual who is not influenced in his choices by any causal factors, so he claims that justified beliefs about the future free actions of such an individual are impossible. Kvanvig says that this argument, if sound, may give some reason to

discard the traditional construal of Omniscience and accept Swinburne's limited doctrine in place; but it is not sound.⁵⁸

4. The fundamental intuition in Swinburne's account is that an Omniscient being need only know all that can be known, rather than all that is true. Swinburne argues for this from the analogy with the doctrines of omnipotence. Kvanvig claims that this analogy is not justified: "The analogy intended to support a limited doctrine of Omniscience is between feasible tasks and knowable truths and between unfeasible tasks and unknowable truths; but the analogy is crucially defective. Whereas an unknowable truth is still a truth, an unfeasible task is not a task at all."⁵⁹

From all this discussion Kvanvig draws the following conclusions:

I) That the reasons given by Swinburne for accepting his 'limited version of the doctrine of omniscience' are really the reasons for accepting the 'traditional doctrine of omniscience'.

II. His limitations are inadequate because the limitations imposed by the traditional doctrine are only apparent whereas the limitations imposed by limited version of the doctrine are real limitations on the knowledge of the being in question.

III. A being must know all truths in order to be Omniscient, and that includes knowing truths about the future free actions of human beings.

Let us turn to the third problem relating Foreknowledge and Eternity.

The concepts of Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom are also discussed in the perspective of the notion of God's Eternity. The Christian theological tradition has identified at least two senses of the notion of God's Eternity. First, that God is eternal is to say that the life of God has unending duration. God always has and will exist. This is the concept of 'Everlastingness'. Second, to say that God is eternal is to say that God is 'timeless'.

The both of these alternatives have implications of their own. For example, if God is ‘everlasting’ (rather than ‘timeless’) the doctrine of divine omniscience implies determinism. But if God is ‘timeless’, he cannot be omniscient at all. For, according to this doctrine, God is not only ‘out there’ and apart from the world of temporal objects and happenings, God is ‘out there’ and removed from *time* altogether. Thus, in this sense the doctrine of divine omniscience presents the most complete and strong assertion of divine transcendence.⁶⁰ Let us observe in some detail, the implications of the predicate ‘eternal’ in this sense.

The concept of divine ‘timelessness’ includes “that God exists outside the stream of time; that his actions are timeless, though they have their effects in time; that his thoughts and reactions are timeless, though they may be thoughts about or reactions to things in time; his knowledge is timeless, though it includes knowledge of things in time; that there is no temporal succession of states in God.” Put in a different way we can say “that God has his own time scale; that there is only one instant of time on the scale; and everything which is ever true of God is true of Him at that instant. In a sense, however, that instant of time lasts for ever.” Most of the great Christian theologians from Augustine (354-430) to Aquinas taught this doctrine and best known exposition of this doctrine occurs in the 6th century Christian philosopher Boethius. His most quoted definition of eternity is that it is “the complete and perfect possession at once of an endless life.”⁶¹ Concerning omniscience Boethius held that:

If God is infallible and if God knows the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance, then no human action is voluntary;

At least some human actions are voluntary;

Either God is not infallible or God does not know how human beings will act prior to the time of action.

Boethius opts for the second alternative. He argues in the following manner:

To know something before it happens requires that one's cognitions be located in time relative to the thing in question;

A timeless being could not have temporally located cognitions.

A timeless being cannot know the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance;

God is timeless; therefore He cannot know the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance.⁶²

Swinburne thinks that though this doctrine provides Boethius with a neat solution of the problem of divine foreknowledge that since all times are present to God, God can just as easily see our future acts as other men can see present acts, there is no evidence for this doctrine of divine timelessness in Christianity before Augustine, nor is there any evidence in the Old Testament for it. He thinks that "like the doctrine of His total immutability, the doctrine of timelessness seems to have entered Christian theology from neo-Platonism, and there from Augustine to Aquinas it reigned. Duns Scotus seems to have rejected it and so did William of Ockham."⁶³

Swinburne thinks that the reasons for which the scholastics put forward the doctrine of timelessness were poor on two counts. First that it would provide backing for and explanation to the doctrine of God's total immutability. However, to Swinburne, this view seems to be mistaken. After all why should the theists advocate God's total immutability? The second reason is that it allowed them to maintain God's omniscience in the very strong sense. However, Swinburne does not think the doctrine of omniscience in the above sense (*i.e.*, in the sense that it includes knowledge of future free actions of human being) to be undetachable part of theistic tradition. He

further observes this doctrine to contain inner incoherence and also to be incompatible with most things which theism wish to uphold. Therefore, no need to incorporate the doctrine of timelessness to theism.⁶⁴

Pike's Analysis

Nelson Pike comprehends two items generating the problem for Boethius *viz.*, i) the claim that God is infallible, and ii) that God knows the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance. Analysing the problem, he identifies six assumptions or theses, as he calls them, working in Boethius's formulation of the problem. Boethius either approves them or any of them he will deny.

Assumption 1 : 'God is omniscient' is a necessary statement. Here, God appears as a 'title term' and the proposition as a whole is to be read as having hypothetical form [*i.e.* if God then omniscient.]

Assumption 2: Being omniscient means that the individual who is omniscient believes all true propositions. "In logical notation: $\forall x (O(x) \supset (\forall p (P \supset x \text{ believes that } P)))$ *e.g.*, if two plus two equals four, then if x is omniscient, x believes that two plus two equals four."

Assumption 3: It is part of the meaning of the predicate 'omniscient' that "if a given individual is omniscient, then that individual believes nothing that is false."

Assumption 4: "Omniscience is an essential property of any individual possessing it. If a given individual is omniscient, that individual would not be the individual it is if it were not omniscient. [For example] a statement of the form 'if x is Yahweh, then x is omniscient' is a necessary truth, if it is true at all."

Assumption 5: "Let this be a necessary truth that if a given individual is God, that individual has always existed and will always exist *i.e.*, that individual have duration

extending indefinitely both forward and backward in time.” (This is the assumption which, as Pike observes, Boethius will eventually deny as incorrect in formulating his solution).

Assumption 6: “If a given individual exists at a given moment in time, then in order to count as omniscient, that individual must hold any belief he holds at that moment in time. ‘N(x) (P) (T) (If x is omniscient and exists at T, then if x believes P, x believes P at T)’. Here ‘T’ takes times...as values.”⁶⁵

Yahweh is the name of God in Hebrew tradition as Allah is the name of God in Muslim tradition. Pike draws the implications of Yahweh’s foreknowledge at a time T_1 in the case of a hypothetical person Jones who ‘mows his lawn at a time T_2 ’, (eighty years latter than T_1) in the light of the above assumptions and attempts to reformulate the problem underlying Boethius’s concern. Pike’s reformulation of the problem is as under:

“(1) Yahweh is omniscient and Yahweh exists at T_1 ’ entails ‘if Jones does A at T_2 , then Yahweh believes at T_1 that Jones does A at T_2 ’ (Assumptions 2 and 6)

(2) If Yahweh is (essentially) omniscient, then ‘Yahweh believes P’ entails ‘P’. (The doctrine of divine infallibility from Assumptions III and IV.)

(3) It is not within one’s power at a given time so to act that both ‘p’ and ‘not-p’ are true.

(4) It is not within one’s power at a given time so to act that something believed by an individual at a time prior to the given time was not believed by that individual at the prior time.

(5) It is not within one’s power at a given time so to act that an individual existing at a time prior to the given time did not exist at the prior time.

(6) If Yahweh believes at T_1 that Jones does A at T_2 , then if it is within Jones's power at T_2 to refrain from doing A then either: (i) It was within Jones's power at T_2 so to act that Yahweh believed P at T_1 and 'P' is false; or (ii) it was within Jones's power at T_1 so to act that Yahweh did not believe as He did believe at T_2 ; or (iii) it was within Jones's power at T_1 so to act that Yahweh did not exist at T_1 .

(7) If Yahweh is (essentially) omniscient, then the first alternative in the consequent of line 6 is false (from lines 2 and 3).

(8) The second alternative in the consequent of line 6 is false (from line 4).

(9) The third alternative in the consequent of line 6 is false (from line 5).

(10) Therefore: If Yahweh is (essentially) omniscient and believes at T_1 that

Jones does A at T_2 , then it was within Jones's power at T_2 to refrain from doing A (from lines 6 and 7-9).

(11) Therefore: If Yahweh is (essentially) omniscient and exist at T_1 , then if Jones does A at T_2 , it was not within Jone's power at T_2 to refrain from doing A (from lines 10 and 1)."⁶⁶

We see that the problem as conceived by Boethius, clearly ends at the conclusion that if God exists, no human action is voluntary. (Though Pike does not attempt to formally reconstruct his concept of what a voluntary action is, he recognises a situation not- representing a voluntary action if it would be wrong to assign a person, say Jones, the ability or power to do other than he did.) Pike examines three attempts to deal with the problem before examining Boethius's solution. The first of these attempts is made by Leibniz.

Leibniz attempts to solve the problem on the basis of a distinction made between *absolute necessity* and *hypothetical necessity*. He observes that to say that an action is necessary or to say that it is not contingent or to say that it is not the effect of free choice, presupposes *absolute necessity*. What is foreseen is not necessary in the first sense, for necessary truth is that ‘whereof the contrary is impossible or implies a contradiction.’ Leibniz denies that the truth stated in the sentence expressing a contingent human affair (say for example ‘Jones does A at time T₂’) is a necessary truth. Given God’s foreknowledge and essential omniscience, all that follows is that the consequent is *true*, not that it is *necessarily true*. Criticising Leibniz, Pike observes that he uses the term ‘*necessity*’ in contrast with the term ‘*contingent*’ rather than using it in contrast with the term ‘*voluntary*’.⁶⁷

The second attempt which Pike would mention relates to Cicero. Pike states Cicero’s position on the problem of divine foreknowledge as follows:

“If all things have been foreknown: and if they come to pass in this order,
there is a certain order of things foreknown by God;

And if a certain order of things, then a certain order of causes, for nothing
can happen which is not preceded by some efficient cause.

But if there is a certain order of causes according to which everything
happens which does happen, then by fate all things happen which happen.

But if this be so then there is nothing in our own power and there is no
such thing as freedom of will;

And if we grant this, the economy of human life is subverted.”⁶⁸

According to Augustine, Cicero could not face this conclusion. He transposed the order of the argument as under and drew the conclusion that God does not have foreknowledge of human actions:

“If there is freewill, all things do not happen according to fate;

If all things do not happen according to fate, there is not a certain order of causes, neither is there a certain order of things foreknown by God — for things can not come to pass except they are preceded by efficient causes;

But if there is no fixed and certain order of things foreknown by God, all things cannot be said to happen according as He foreknows that they would happen.

If it is not true that all things happen just as they have been foreknown by Him, there is not in God foreknowledge of all future events.”⁶⁹

This account of the problem makes foreknowledge dependent on ‘a certain order of causes’. But given ‘a certain order of causes’, no human action is voluntary. Cicero’s solution of the problem consists in denying that future events and actions are the products of ‘a certain order of causes’. Hence, a denial of foreknowledge. The difference in the thinking of Cicero and that of Boethius and Calvin is that Cicero seems to make foreknowledge of what will happen in the future dependent upon God’s knowledge of the present state of the universe and on the conception of certain rigid causal laws governing the temporal events; whereas Calvin & Boethius envisage God’s foreknowledge of things in that ‘He sees them as actually placed before Him’. Criticising Cicero, Nelson Pike observes that the problem, Cicero addresses to is not the one we are discussing. “His ‘solution’ of the problem consists of denying a premise that is not involved in the issue”.⁷⁰ According to Pike’s analysis, the problem as conceived by Boethius does not involve any conception of ‘a certain order of causes’.

The third attempt at solving the same problem, relates to Arthur N. Prior. Prior argues:

“If God is omniscient and if God exists at a given time (*e.g.*, T_1), He can know at T_1 only what is true at that time (*e.g.*, at T_1).

If a given proposition is not true at T_1 , then even an omniscient being could not know it to be true at T_1 ...

the claim that a voluntary action will be performed in future (*i.e.*, at T_2) is neither true nor false (*i.e.* is *indeterminate*) at T_1 ...

Therefore, God does not have foreknowledge of human actions.”⁷¹

Pike observes Cicero and Prior’s analysis of, and solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge, not merely parallel in a number of respects to each other, rather he conceives Prior’s understanding of the issue to be precisely the same as Cicero. For example the arguments of Cicero and Prior share that “the doctrine of divine foreknowledge entails determinism.” According to both of these arguments, the doctrine of divine foreknowledge entails determinism by way of an intermediate thesis, specifically, “the claim that propositions describing human actions are true at times prior to the times that the actions are performed.”⁷² Concerning the solution, Pike observes, that they both solve the problem by denying the intermediate thesis *i.e.*, line 1 of Boethius problem (as reformulated by Pike) which reads: *Yahweh is omniscient and Yahweh exists at T_1 entails ‘if Jones does A at T_2 , then Yahweh believes at T_1 that Jones does A at T_2 ’*. Criticising & examining Prior’s view, Pike observes that it is not right to think that God’s foreknowledge needs evidence of grounds, for God’s foreknowledge has a special visionary nature and to insist on the above would be to disregard this difference. Referring Rogers Albritten’s ‘Present, Truth and Contingency’ which involves discussions on dating truth-values, Pike observes that “the whole idea of dating the truth-value of a statement in which a date is already assigned to a given event or action, is obscuristic and strange.”⁷³ In support of his

criticism Pike examines Prior's thesis that 'God's foreknowledge of human actions presupposes *the prior truth* of propositions describing these actions.' Examining different interpretations Pike observes that none of them support this thesis and that Prior's formulation of the problem involves an obscure thesis which is either irrelevant or trivially true and Prior's solution consists of denying this trivially true or irrelevant thesis.

Let us turn now towards Boethius's solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge.

Pike observes that the central point of Boethius's thinking is his thesis that God has no temporal extension. He further observes that it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that Boethius would also hold that God has no temporal position. Thus he would reject assumption 5 in the list of original assumptions and would conclude that "God's (infallible) beliefs cannot be dated nor can they be located in time relative to human actions."⁷⁴ Quoting a passage from Augustine's *City of God*, in which he sketches the picture of God and his cognitions operating in Boethius's thinking, Pike observes that for Boethius and for Augustine, "God does not look forward to what is future, nor at what is present, nor back to what is past".⁷⁵ A-temporal existence of God requires radical present tense description of God's knowledge and the verbs 'knows', 'sees', 'beholds' must be used in the present tense and must occur without time qualifiers (such as T_2 or T_1 or time-relative predicates *e.g.*, 'now' or 'before'.) Thus Boethius's solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge consists of a denial of God's foreknowledge of events and circumstances making up the temporal matrix. God beholds human actions timelessly; His knowledge is the knowledge of a never fading instant. This is why Boethius prefers to call God's attribute as Providence rather than Prescience or Foresight.

Quoting a passage from Augustine, Pike brings out two points: first that God's foreknowledge, and man's foreknowledge of a person's actions (say for example Jones') are parallel concerning deterministic implications. God's foreknowledge of a person's actions, in a similar way, does not entail determinism as man's foreknowledge of another's actions does not entail determinism. The second point which Augustine spots is that man's foreknowledge of a person's actions (say for example Jones') includes that what a man knows before a person acts is what the person is going to do 'with his own free will'. Augustine claims God's foreknowledge to be parallel to man's foreknowledge in this second respect too. The point which Augustine makes seems to be that 'God knows in advance that a given person is going to choose to perform a certain action at some specific time in future.' But this claim, on the set of assumptions mentioned earlier, is incoherent. Pike makes an analysis of both the above concepts of foreknowledge to show the incorrectness of Augustine's thinking. Pike says that divine foreknowledge is not parallel to ordinary human foreknowledge, for whereas the first entails determinism, the second does not. Pike says that Augustine also holds that divine foreknowledge, notwithstanding parallel in relevant respects to ordinary human foreknowledge of human actions, differs concerning the fact that while human foreknowledge needs rest on some evidence, God's beliefs do not rest on evidence. Pike distinguishes two kinds of infallibility: a strong sense, and a weak sense and further observes that Augustine's thesis (*i.e.*, parallelism of divine and human foreknowledge) implicitly contains the denial of the infallibility of God in the strong sense of the word. As we have seen, the problem of divine foreknowledge rests on two premises, *i.e.*, that God is infallible, and that God knows the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance. Boethius tries to solve the problem by denying the second premise on the base of his denial that God is a temporal being. Whereas

Augustine seems to solve the problem by denying the first premise through his claiming a parallelism between divine and ordinary human foreknowledge of human actions.

Pike attempts to investigate the traditional theological doctrine of ‘timelessness’ from different angles to identify the logical status of the statement ‘God is timeless’ as it occurs in theological statements and finally reaches the conclusion that the doctrine of ‘timelessness’ does not lend itself to justification. Pike observes that “it is extremely hard to understand why the doctrine (of timelessness) has had a place in traditional Christian theology.”⁷⁶

Linda Zegzebski in *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge*, discusses the problem in the form of following dilemma:

“Either God knows what we do before we do it, or we do it freely, but not both. For if God's knowledge and his being God are in our past, we cannot alter them, and if God is infallible, we cannot make his past belief turn out to have erred, and so we cannot do other than God foreknows that we will do.”⁷⁷

Linda, arguing that older solutions to this dilemma are to varied degrees inadequate, offers new solutions, and suggests finally that philosophers have misconceived the problem Foreknowledge poses. She considers the three chief older solutions, Boethian, Ockhamist, and Molinist and observes that

“Boethians claim that God is timeless and so the dilemma does not truly arise: If His Knowledge of our future is not in time, it is not in our past.

Ockhamists argue that though God is in time, His Foreknowledge falls into a class of past facts ---- "soft facts" ----- which do not constrain the freedom of future actions.

Molinists contend that God's Foreknowledge does not restrict human freedom because it is based on His "middle Knowledge," a pre-creative grasp of what creatures would freely do if placed in appropriate circumstances."⁷⁸

Her objection to Boethianism is that eternal Knowledge is enough like past knowledge to create a dilemma like that of Foreknowledge. Against Molinism, she contends that there are not enough pre-creative truths about creature's free actions for God to base all His Foreknowledge on these.⁷⁹ Linda finds current attempt to distinguish "hard" from "soft" facts, sterile. This does not solve the Foreknowledge problem, because no account of hardness and softness on which God's beliefs are soft facts is significantly simpler, more illuminating, or more broadly explanatory than any which makes them hard.⁸⁰ Ockhamism argues that we have "counterfactual power" over God's past beliefs, that is, "that even if we will in fact do S at t , we have power at t to do not- S and had we been going to do not- S , God would have believed so before t ."⁸¹ Linda argues at length that there can be no such power.

Conclusion: It has been commonly understood that Divine Knowledge, even though eternal and inclusive of foreknowledge of free human actions, does not restrict human freedom. But the philosophers and theologians both in the Muslim and the Judaeo-Christian tradition have pointed out that apparently the doctrine of Omniscience of God does not cohere with the doctrine of freewill of man. Examination of the different formulations of the problem as well as solutions attempted by Christian theologians/philosophers leads us to the conclusion that Saint Thomas Aquinas' formulation of the doctrine of omniscience in an absolutist manner (i.e., Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience) makes it incoherent with the concept of human freedom. History of Christian thought on this problem is basically formulation and reformulation

of this doctrine in different ways. I agree with Swinburne that there is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will, if the traditional doctrine of Omniscience is accepted. That the basic fault lies in its absolutist approach. Swinburne asserts that it is contrary to Biblical teachings as well. On the base of my understanding of 'Islamic View of Omniscience and Human Freedom' I believe that the correct formulation of the concept of Omniscience must include an indeterminate aspect concerning free choice of a human action.⁸²

NOTES & REFERENCES

¹ Kretzmann, Norman. (1966) Omniscience and immutability, in: Baruch A. Brody (Ed.) (1974) **Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach**, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 366. (Norman Kretzmann is *Susan Linn Sage Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Cornell University*. Brody has reprinted this article from *The Journal of Philosophy* 63 (1966).) The problem was formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas in the first part of his *Summa Theologia* but as Brody states in his Introduction to Part-III, Professor Kretzmann has re-emphasised and reformulated this problem in his own words. *Ibid.*, p.334. Professor Kretzmann states as a footnote that "the principle of Immutability is regularly supported by one of two arguments. (1) *From Supreme Excellence*: A perfect being is a supremely excellent being; thus any change in such a being would constitute corruption, deterioration, loss of perfection...(II) *From Complete Actualisation*: A perfect being is a being whose capacities for development are all fully realised. A being subject to change, however, is in that respect and to that extent a being with an unrealised capacity for development, a being merely potential and not fully realised, a being in a state of process and not complete; hence not perfect...The

principle of Immutability is a thesis of orthodox Christian theology, drawn from Greek philosophy...” Ibid., p. 366.

² Brody, Baruch A., (ed) (1974) **Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach**, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall) 335. Brody in his introduction to Part-III states that one version of this problem is found in St. Augustine but is clearly fallacious. Aquinas reformulates this problem which is presented as 2nd version of his formulation in this article.

³ Boethius (c. 480-524) wrote his *De Consolatione Philosophiae* when he was in the prison waiting for the execution of his death sentence. It consists of five books. It is in the fifth *i.e.*, last book that Boethius discusses the Problem of man’s free will and God’s Foreknowledge and attempts to show that the doctrines are not inconsistent. Minio-Paluello, Lorenzo. (ed) s. v. (1962) Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus, in: **Encyclopaedia Britannica**.

⁴ Kenny, Divine foreknowledge and human freedom. in: Brody, (Ed) (1974) **Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach**, 405. (Article is actually a revised version of a paper read at Liverpool in 1960 and afterwards published in Anthony Kenny, (1969) *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New York: Double Day). Reference given in this para from *Suma Theologiae*, actually reads “Ia, 14, 3, 3” which is not correct. The correct reference is *Suma Theologiae*, “Ia, 14, 13, 3”. Cf. Anderson, James F. tr. (1963) **Treatise on God**, (translation of some selected parts of Part-I from *Suma Theologiae* by St. Thomas Aquinas), (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall) 93.

⁵ Kenny, Divine foreknowledge and human freedom, in: Brody, 405. Kenny almost reproduces this problem in Aquinas’s own words. Cf. Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, Objection 3 of 13th Article 93.

⁶ Ibid., 405.

⁷ Anderson, James F. tr. **Treatise on God**, p. 93-4. William Ockham (c.1290-1349) thinks that the problem of God’s foreknowledge and future contingents arises for Christian theology as a

result of its acceptance of the philosophical claim that some things are both future and contingent. Adams, Marilyn McCord. / Kretzmann, Norman. (Eng. Trans. with intro. & ann. 1969) Translators' introduction. in: William Ockham, **Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents**, (New York: Meredith) 3.

⁸ Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, 1a, 14, 13, 2, p. 93

⁹ Baruch A. Brody is the Leon Jaworski Professor of Biomedical Ethics and director of the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy at Baylor College of Medicine. He is also a professor of philosophy at Rice University and director of the Ethics program at the Methodist Hospital.

¹⁰ Brody, ed. (1974) **Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach**, 335. Brody takes this formulation of the problem from the writings of Jonathen Edwards. But he gives no reference to any specific writing. This seems to be a restatement of the problem formulated by St. Aquinas at Objection 2 of 13th Article of his *Suma Theologiae* as mentioned above.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 405; Cf. Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, question XIV, art. 13, reply to objection 3, p. 95.

¹² Bradley, Raymond. / Swartz, Norman. (1979) **Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy**, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 237.

¹³ Kenny, Ibid., p. 407; Cf. Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, question XIV, art. 13, objection 2, 93.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 407; Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, p. 93-4.

¹⁵ Ibid. 409.

¹⁶ Ibid., 409.

¹⁷ Ibid., 409. Numbering of premises mine. Cf. Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, question XIV, art. 13, Objection. 1, 93.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ According to Aristotle, necessity applies only to true past and present propositions, not to future propositions of contingent facts. *Ibid.*, p. 410.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 411.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 413.

²² Jonathan Kvanvig Ph.D., Professor And Chair, University Of Notre Dame.

²³ Dr. Plantinga received his M.A. degree in 1955 from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1958. From 1963 to 1982 he taught at Calvin College and then at the University of Notre Dame He is author of the following books: (1967) *God and Other Minds*; (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*; (1974) *God, Freedom and Evil*; (1980) *Does God Have a Nature?*; (1992) *Warrant: the Current Debate*; (1992) *Warrant and Proper Function*.

²⁴ Hasker, William. review of Kvanvig, Jonathan L. (1986) *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God*. in (January 1989) **The Philosophical Review**, 125-127.

²⁵ Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, (general answer to objections in art. 13), p. 94.

²⁶ Brody, ed. (Introduction to part-III). in: **Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach**, 336.

²⁷ Arthur (A.N.) Prior (1914-1969) was one of the foremost logicians of the twentieth century. He made contributions both to the history of logic and to modern formal techniques. A significant achievement was the foundation of tense logic. He also made important contributions to intensional logic, particularly in the influential posthumous work

²⁸ Charles S. Pierce (1839-1914) American Philosopher and Polymath.

²⁹ Brody, (Introduction to part-III). in: **Readings in the Philosophy of Religion** 336.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 336.

³¹ Anderson, tr. **Treatise on God**, 93-4. See note 6 above.

³² Kvanvig, Jonathan L. (1986) **The Possibility of an All-Knowing God**, (England: Macmillan Press), 33. Kvanvig says that an interesting feature of this definition is that it allows an

Omniscient Being to believe false propositions, so long as the Being also, and justifiably, believes their contradictories.

³³ Luis de Molina, Spanish Jesuit, one of the most accomplished and learned figures in the 16th century revivalist movement. He published a doctrine on predestination, grace, freewill etc. The basis of this doctrine is what is called his concept of *scientia media*. The general consensus is that "scientia media" was a phrase not simply used, but coined by Molina. *Scientia media* is the way by which God explores and knows with absolute certainty what the human 'free will' will infallibly do by its own innate liberty if it be placed in such or such circumstances. Molina presented this doctrine in an attempt to reconstruct Thomist doctrine. According to Aquinas a future free action is known by God by virtue of His decree for it cannot come into existence unless God decrees its existence. Molina considers this doctrine a subversion of human freewill and tries to find a means whereby God knows a future free act before and independent of Divine decree. *Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics*. ed., (1908), s.v. "Molina".

³⁴ Kvanvig, **The Possibility of an All-Knowing God.**, xiv.

³⁵ Ibid., 167.

³⁶ Cf., *ibid.*, 168.

³⁷ Hasker, review of **The Possibility of an All-Knowing God.**, 125-27.

³⁸ Kvanvig, **The Possibility of an All-Knowing God**, xiv.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60-67. Kvanvig says that Chisholm (Roderick M. Chisholm, 1917-1999, late Professor of Brown University) dilating on the question that does a Propositional Theory imply Private Proposition, claims that each person knows directly and immediately certain propositions that imply his own individual essence. What he draws from this as a corollary is that no one knows any proposition that implies the individual essence of anyone else. Analysing the matter Chisholm presents a theory of *de se* awareness which involves two distinct features: i) it abandons the propositional view and, ii) it posits an order of awareness from self-awareness to

other-awareness. Kvanvig observes that by “accepting the distinction between *direct* and *indirect* grasping and by refusing to posit contingent first person propositions, we can avoid both the problem for Chisholm’s property theory and the purported problem of private propositions for the propositional view of the objects of intentional attitudes.” Kvanvig offers a new propositional theory which affirms the following principles concerning the nature of propositions that: i) propositions are necessary beings composed of properties which are bearers of truth-values; and, ii) that the contents of the intentional attitudes of believing and knowing are propositions. The attitudes of believing and knowing are directed towards propositions. Belief is a triadic relation between an intentional attitude, a proposition, and a particular manner of accessing the proposition. The particular feature of the theory that enables us to avoid the problem of private propositions is the distinction between direct and indirect grasping.

⁴¹ Ibid., 170.

⁴² Ibid., 4.

⁴³ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1- 2.

⁴⁵ Concerning the second of these Kvanvig observes that “some philosophers argue that some sort of determinism follows from allowing that the future is real. Even so, at least this much is true: the claim that the future is real is not the same claim as that the future is determined; hence it must be shown that there is an entailment relation between the two...” Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁶ Peter Geach is one of the foremost contemporary British philosophers. His areas of interest are the history of philosophy, philosophical logic, the theory of identity, and the philosophy of religion.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13

⁵¹ Swinburne, Richard. (1977) **The Coherence of Theism**, (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 167-68.

⁵² Ibid., 175.

⁵³ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 175..

⁵⁵ Cf., Ibid., 16.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸ Cf., ibid., 19.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁰ Pike, Nelson. (1970) **God and Timelessness**, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), p. ix-x.

“A corresponding set of problems and issues also arise as a further implication concerning the logical relations between ‘eternal’ and ‘omnipotent’ and the logical relations between ‘eternal’ and ‘person’.” Ibid., p. x. Nelson Pike is Professor UCI Department of Philosophy.

⁶¹ Swinburne, Ibid., 216.

⁶² Pike, Ibid., 53.

⁶³ Swinburne, Ibid., 217. Ockham thinks that “the problem arises for Christian theology as a result of its acceptance of the philosophical claim that some things are both future and contingent. Ockham takes it to be part of Christian doctrine that God has infallible knowledge of future contingents.” Ockham attempts to develop a view regarding truth and future contingents to solve the problem. “Fatalism is a view whatever happens must happen of necessity and whatever does not happen of necessity does not happen at all...Thus fatalism denies that any events, actions or states of affairs are contingent...Many philosophers, including Aristotle, have thought that this highly implausible conclusion could be deduced from apparently impeccable principles of logic. In his *De interpretatione*, Chapter 9, Aristotle argues for this conclusion... The central point in Ockham’s replies to these arguments is to

preserve the Doctrine of God's universal foreknowledge in the face of apparent need to deny that every singular proposition is either determinately true or determinately false in the special case of singular future contingent propositions." Adams, Marilyn McCord./ Kretzmann, Norman. (Eng. Trans. with intro. & ann. 1969) Translators' introduction. in: William Ockham, **Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents**, 3-13. Marilyn M. Adams is Horace Tracy Pitkin Professor of Historical Theology and Norman Kretzmann is *Susan Linn Sage Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Cornell University*.

⁶⁴ Swinburne, *Ibid.*, 219-20.

⁶⁵ Pike, *Ibid.*, 54 -56.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 59 -60.

⁶⁷ Pike presents Augustine's analysis of the concept of 'necessity' in his support. Given God's foreknowledge of human actions, the actions are necessary. But according to Augustine, "the form of this conditional is 'P implies Q', and not 'P implies N(Q)'. 'Q' in the [later] consequent of this conditional is the claim that human actions are not voluntary..." *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63. Pike states this argument with reference to Augustine's *the City of God*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷² 'That human actions are products of certain order of causes' is the intermediate thesis in Cicero's case'. *Ibid.*, 66. And according to Gale's interpretation of Prior's argument in order for God to know at T_1 what Jones does A at T_2 a sufficient evidence or grounds is necessary upon which to base a well-reasoned prediction about what Jones does A at T_2 . *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 71. Reference here, as mentioned by Pike, is to Albritten, Rogers. (1957), Present Truth and Future Contingency, written in reply to Taylor, Richard. The Problem of Future Contingency, both articles in: **The Philosophical Review** (1957).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. xii

⁷⁷ Brian Leftow, (1992) review of Zegzebski, Linda T., The Dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge. in **Ethics** (October 1992) 163.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 164.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

⁸¹ Ibid., 164.

⁸² For my views on Islamic view of Divine Omniscience and human freedom please see the following:

- Hafeez, Abdul. 1999, Freewill and predestinarian verses of the Qurān, in: **Hamdard Islamicus**, 4, (Karachi, Pakistan) 97-105.
- Ibid. (2000) The antinomy of free will and the appointed term (Ajal Mussamma), in: **Hamdard Islamicus**, 4, 63-68;
- Ibid. (2002) Allah's Omnipotence and freedom of will for man, **Hamdard Islamicus**, 1, 31-40.
- Fāzli, Abdul Hafeez. (2005) Iqbal's view of Omniscience and human freedom, **The Muslim World**, USA, 125-45.
- Fazli, Abdul Hafeez, Islamic view of Omniscience and human freedom, sent for publication to **JICMR, CMCU**, Georgetown University, USA.