Phil Religion: Freedom and Foreknowledge (Zagzebski)

Logical Fatalism

**Freedom and Control.** If nobody now can do anything about the fact that A will do something (including A themself), then A will not do that thing freely.

**Transfer of Necessity.** If nobody can do anything about P, and nobody can do anything about the fact that if P then Q, then nobody can do anything about the fact that Q.

**Necessity of Past Truth.** If P was true yesterday, then nobody now can do anything about the fact that P was true yesterday.

Let K be the proposition “A kills B next Saturday”.

1. K was true yesterday. (Assumption)
2. So nobody now can do anything about the fact that K was true yesterday. (1 + Necessity of Past Truth.)
3. Nobody now can do anything about the fact that if K was true yesterday, then A will kill B next Saturday. (Premise about truth.)
4. So nobody now can do anything about the fact that A will kill B next Saturday. (2 + 3 + Transfer of Necessity)
5. So A will not kill B freely. (4 + Freedom and Control)

(Zagzebski, p. 108)

Theological Fatalism

**Necessity of Past Belief.** If God infallibly believed P yesterday, then nobody now can do anything about the fact that God infallibly believed P yesterday.

1. God infallibly believed K yesterday. (Assumption)
2. So nobody now can do anything about the fact that God infallibly believed K yesterday. (1 + Necessity of Past Belief)
3. Nobody now can do anything about the fact that if God infallibly believed K yesterday, then A will kill B next Saturday. (Premise about infallible belief.)
4. So nobody now can do anything about the fact that A will kill B next Saturday. (2 + 3 + Transfer of Necessity)
5. So A will not kill B freely. (4 + Freedom and Control)

(Zagzebski, p. 109)

Theological Fatalism as an Argument against Theism

1. If there is an always all-knowing being, then no one ever acts freely. (Supported by the Theological Fatalism argument)
2. Sometimes some people act freely. (Premise)
3. So there is no always all-knowing being. (1 + 2)
Three Responses

Boethius

God is timeless. So really, God didn’t believe K yesterday. Rather, God believes K timelessly. 

Doesn’t the same fatalist argument arise for the assumption “God infallibly believes K timelessly”?

Ockham

“God infallibly believed K yesterday” isn’t really a fact just about the past: it’s a “soft fact”, that also depends on what the future is like. So people can still do something about it.

How can beliefs in the past depend on what the future is like?

Molina

- God knows every counterfactual of freedom: propositions like “If Jeff is in ... circumstances, Jeff will freely do ...”
- God knows what God creates.
- All true propositions follow from what God creates plus the counterfactuals of freedom, and God knows this.
- So God knows all true propositions.

How does this help? Which premise of the Theological Fatalism argument should be given up?