

BOOK REVIEWS

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THE DILEMMA OF FREEDOM AND FOREKNOWLEDGE. By LINDA TRINKAUS ZAGZEBSKI. New York, Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. viii, 215.

This book is an informed, clear, and highly illuminating discussion of issues surrounding arguments for and against the compatibility of human freedom of action with comprehensive divine foreknowledge. Zagzebski provides a balanced treatment of the major approaches to resolving the problem (those of Boethius/Aquinas, Ockham, and Molina), offering brief but fairly careful expositions of the original medieval formulations as well as examining important contributions to the (rapidly developing) contemporary discussion. While arguing that there are shortcomings in each of these solutions as formulated to date, Zagzebski puts forth three new solutions, one an extension of the Boethian strategy, and the other two drawing upon recent attacks on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities and certain Transfer of Necessity principles. (Thus, despite her fascination with, and respect for the depth of, the foreknowledge dilemma, Zagzebski optimistically holds that the traditional theist has rather an embarrassment of riches for resolving it.) The thoroughness and clarity of the work could make it workable as the primary text even in an (upper-level) undergraduate course in which the students have some philosophical sophistication. At the same time, its originality and argumentative depth makes it indispensable for the philosopher currently thinking about the topic. There is much to commend, then, in this excellent study.

I will focus my critical comments on two of the components of Zagzebski's discussion that I found to be most interesting. The first of these is her contention that the Boethian move of ascribing an (atemporal) eternal mode of existence to God, while probably coherent and having independent motivation, does not really provide a full resolution to the problem (60 ff.). The problem with the temporalist view stems from the apparent fact that God's past belief about my future action is inalterable, simply in virtue of its pastness. Boethius suggests that if God's mode of existence is eternal, and hence atemporal, however, then the relevant notion of inalterability (or "accidental necessity") is no longer applicable. Zagzebski challenges this suggestion by maintaining that "the realm of eternity seems to be much more like the realm of the past than the future" (60), insofar as it is ontologically real and thus lacking a potency for some nonactual (eternal) state of affairs, such as God's being in a different mental state. This leads her to suggest that the eternity view needs to be supplemented in the following way (a way she takes to be implicit in Aquinas):

Since the primary object of God's knowledge is his own essence, and since his essence could not have been different, it follows that God's mental state of knowing is the same in all possible worlds. His knowing state would have been the same state even if contingent truths had been different. . . . (88)

However, I don't believe that Zagzebski has a convincing case for the claim that God's eternal state of knowing is inalterable with respect to future contingent truths in a manner analogous to the past, and so the rather perplexing suggestion entertained in the passage quoted does not seem necessary in the context of the foreknowledge dilemma. If we are to hazard any direct comparison of the eternal to the temporal mode of existence, surely it is (as the followers of Boethius have insisted) to the temporal *present*, rather than the past. God's knowing some present state of affairs is an immediate awareness of it *as it is occurring*. The (eternal) lack of potency of God's awareness with respect to a state of affairs incompatible with a future act of mine is not (in contrast with temporal foreknowledge) in any way a precursor to the occurrence of the act itself. As far as I have been able to tell, Zagzebski never addresses this (seemingly) natural response.

A second point at which I find myself at odds with Zagzebski is in her claim that one way in which we may circumvent the foreknowledge dilemma is by rejecting the "Transfer of Necessity" principle (TNP) underlying it. The form of the principle Zagzebski discusses may be represented as

$$\text{Nec}_w(p), \text{Nec}(p \rightarrow q), \vdash \text{Nec}_w(q),$$

where 'Nec_w' is the type of necessity we have termed 'inalterability'. Inspired by recent work by Michael Slote,¹ Zagzebski offers a counterexample to TNP for *causal* necessity, thereby casting some doubt, perhaps, on its validity for inalterability. However, her example actually has more affinity to the direct counterexamples to TNP for inalterability recently put forward by David Widerker and Kadri Vihvelin.² And the reason these examples succeed is that in them, the principle is used to try to transfer necessity from an event to another event *in its past* (that is, the event corresponding to the "p" slot in the formula above occurs *after* the event corresponding to the "q" slot). But what this should be taken to show is not that TNP—which Zagzebski acknowledges to be highly plausible—should be rejected, but rather that p and q must satisfy appropriate tem-

¹"Selective Necessity and the Free-Will Problem," *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982): 5–24.

²Widerker, "On an Argument for Incompatibilism," *Analysis* 47 (1987): 37–41; Vihvelin, "The Modal Argument for Incompatibilism," *Philosophical Studies* 53 (1988): 227–244.

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poral restrictions, so as to rule out the unwarranted implication that a future event may have some implications concerning events in its past (with respect to their modality). So formulated, TNP continues to pose a threat to the freedom-foreknowledge compatibilist.³

Finally, I should note that Zagzebski commendably attempts to address an aspect of the foreknowledge problem that is often neglected or evaded, namely, the question of how a temporal God could *have* infallible, comprehensive foreknowledge, given (as most contemporary philosophical adherents of this position hold) that the future simply does not exist (yet) and will not be a deterministic consequence of the present state of the world. Zagzebski rejects, in clear-eyed fashion, appeals to the alleged enlightenment offered by the theory of middle knowledge. Instead, she attempts to offer an imaginative model of how foreknowledge clearly could be possible under certain assumptions about “hidden” aspects to the structure of the universe (that is, aspects that are epistemically inaccessible to us, though of course consistent with our experience) (172–79). In this way, she lends credence to the *epistemic* possibility of foreknowledge. Unfortunately, I haven’t the space to evaluate her model and its bearing on the question of the coherence of the temporalist conception of God, but I believe that her brief remarks provide a good starting point for future discussion of this somewhat neglected topic in contemporary philosophy of religion in the Anselmian tradition.

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³For a fuller discussion of putative counterexamples to TNP, see my “On the Transfer of Necessity,” *Noûs* 27 (1993).

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ON BECOMING RESPONSIBLE. MICHAEL S. PRITCHARD. Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1991. Pp. x, 276.

Michael Pritchard announces from the outset of this ambitious book that he will be concerned with how morality develops in children. He aims in part to expose and remedy the limitations of some influential contemporary theories of moral development, namely those of Rawls and Kohlberg, and to explore the implications of different psychological theories for moral education. Beyond this, he proposes an account of morality, and in particular moral theory, that diverges in significant ways from the views of