

Handout 1: Augustine's Formulation of the Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge

1. Augustine's Formulation

"since God foreknew that [the first human] was going to sin, his sin necessarily had to happen. How, then, is the will free when such inescapable necessity is found in it?"

– St. Augustine (c. 395 AD)

First Interpretation of Augustine's Formulation of the DFF

(Let A be any arbitrary action of yours today.)

P1. God knew long ago that you would do A today.

P2. If God knew long ago that you would do A today, then it was necessary that you do A today (in other words, "you had to do A today").

C1. Therefore, it was necessary that you do A today.

P3. If it was necessary that you do A today, then you did not do A freely (in other words, A was not a free action.)

C2. Therefore, you did not do A freely.

2. A reply suggested by Augustine:

deny P3 by holding that freedom and necessity are compatible (compatibilism):

"Simply because God foreknows your future happiness ... it does not follow that you will be happy against your will."

A Simple Compatibilist View of Free Will: an act's being pre-determined to happen (e.g., by the laws of nature or by God's foreknowledge) is compatible with the act's being free; for an act to be free, it is enough that the agent of the act *will* it or *want* it to happen (which can be true even if the act is pre-determined to happen).

Problems for Simple Compatibilism:

- (1) Locke-ed in a room that you want to be in;
- (2) Brain-Controlling Aliens

3. A stronger reply:

P2 is false; God's knowing that you will do A does not imply that it is a necessary truth that you do A.

- Compare: "If I weigh more than 150 pounds, then it is necessary that I weigh more than 140 pounds." FALSE.
- distinguish the "necessity of the *consequent*" from the "necessity of the *consequence*" (Aquinas; see Plantinga (1986: 236-237))
- P2 asserts the necessity of the *consequent*, but only the necessity of the *consequence* is true
- Compare: "It is necessary that if I weigh more than 150 pounds, then I weigh more than 140 pounds." TRUE.
- As a guide, try thinking of 'it is necessary that' as meaning 'it is true in all possible worlds that'.

Thus:

4. Reformulating the Augustinian Formulation

Second Interpretation of Augustine's Formulation of the DFF

P1. God knew long ago that you would do A today.

P2*. It is necessary that if God knew long ago that you would do A today, then you do A today.

C1. Therefore, it is necessary that you do A today.

P3. If it is necessary that you do A today, then you did not do A freely.

C2. Therefore, you did not do A freely.

What is wrong with this argument?

Second Interpretation (in symbols)

P1. K
P2*. $\Box (K \rightarrow A)$

C1. $\Box A$
P3. $\Box A \rightarrow U$

C2. U

Cf. First Interpretation (in symbols)

P1. K
P2. $(K \rightarrow \Box A)$

C1. $\Box A$
P3. $\Box A \rightarrow U$

C2. U