THE SKEPTIC ARENA

November 21, 2015

Does God’s omniscience conflict with human free will?

by Wintery Knight

After nearly falling asleep halfway through Knight's essay, I managed to reach the comment section where the action perked me up. There was one comment by a rational person which was then attacked by 4 desperate Ghost Worshipers attempting to defend Knight's nonsense.

First the comment from the rational guy:

*NeuroProf*

*Actually, it is the logic of the respondents which is lacking. The father who*

*“knows” his son will take the cookie is not omniscient. The analogy is flawed. It is bait and switch.*

*Determinism, the opposite of free will, states that an outcome is guaranteed by some pre-existent conditions. Because God is all-knowing, God has complete knowledge of the conditions in place prior to a human being making a decision. If God knows the relationship of those preconditions to the decision, and if God’s predictions are infallible, then humans are denied free will.*

*Therefore, either John is wrong or Deuteronomy is wrong (or both are wrong). They simply cannot both be right.*

NeuroProf, nice work - and I would go with both being wrong.

Now for the pathetic flurry of retorts from Ghost Worshipers:

*TMD*

He begins by quoting NeuroProf:

*“If God knows the relationship of those preconditions to the decision, and if God’s predictions are infallible, then humans are denied free will.”*

*That is question-begging.*

TMD, NeuroProf's conclusion "humans are denied free will" followed directly from his two premises. "Question begging" occurs when one assumes their conclusion in their premise.

TMD, spending 10 minutes on a Wikipedia logic page isn't going to cut it, as your embarrassing misunderstanding of a fallacy just proved. All you really accomplished was to set yourself on fire.

*Under determinism, conditions determine an outcome. That is to say that given a certain set of conditions, the outcome must happen and cannot happen in any other way. Foreknowledge is to say that God knows what will happen, and that it will not happen in any other way.*

*Those two statements are completely different. To say that something must happen is to say that it will happen, but the reverse is not true.*

TMD, if God knows something is going to happen ... how could it not?

Checkmate TMD.

*We make claims all the time about what will happen in the future (e.g. Presidential election) but nobody is saying that their predicted outcome must happen.*

TMD, do you ever bother to think before you type? What do our claims have to do with God's foreknowledge? Or Determinism?

*Will is a different concept from must, and does not entail it.*

TMD, you said "entail." You know the lingo Dude, you just haven't got a clue how to use it. Like I said - 10 minutes ain't gonna cut it.

Now the next Ghost Worshiper steps into the batter's box:

*MikeB*

*NeuroProf, you have a point that the cookie analogy falls apart, since a dad does not know with the certainty that God does, regarding what is going to happen. He only has a really good idea.*

MikeB, how come you didn't address that to your fellow Ghost Worshiper TMD? He's the one who is confused on the issue.

*However, knowing – even with certainty – is still not causing.*

MikeB, can you quote where NeuroProf said that?

Because if you can't, you have created a Straw Man argument.

*A good example is you know that some event happened in the past. You did not cause these events to happen, but you still know with certainty that they happened.*

No MikeB, you don't. You believe that some event happened in the past. You can even be extremely certain that it happened. But you cannot know with certainty that it happened.

*God – being outside of time*

MikeB, now you're just spouting Creationist nonsense. The phrase "outside of time" is meaningless drivel. You can't explain what it means because that phrase has no meaning.

*knows the future the way we know the past.*

MikeB, how do you know that? Is that in the Bible? Did God tell you when you were down on your prayer mat?

*He knows with certainty what will happen w/o determining (ie causing) it.*

MikeB, even if that were true, the point that NeuroProf was making was that if God knows with certainty what will happen, then it is impossible for us to change or affect it, hence, no free will. So it doesn't matter whether or not He caused it.

Nice distraction technique ... but it failed.

Next!

*lovelyleblanc7*

*I remember my pastor saying that just because God predetermines doesn’t mean he predestines. Predetermination and Predestination are two different things.*

lovely, if you ever find yourself near a dictionary (highly unlikely, I know), you will discover that they are not 2 different things ... they are synonyms.

So your pastor is provably wrong, and you are wrong for spreading misinformation when all you had to do was take 2 minutes to look it up before embarrassing yourself on the internet.

*Predetermination is contingent upon already knowing the decision that we will make out of our own free will, since God is not bound by time.*

lovely, see NeuroProf's explanation to learn why your reference to "our own free will" is wrong; and the phrase "God is not bound by time" is complete gibberish. As I explained to MikeB, you can't explain it because it has no meaning.

And now for our final contestant ...

*rightwingnutsandbolts*

*Actually, the Bible does not ascribe free will to all people.*

Rightwing, good point. The Pharaoh certainly didn't get to exercise free will when God "hardened his heart."

*It states that there is no one who seeks God or to do his will under his or her own power. Only when God has quickened the person with his Spirit can there be any possibility of choosing to follow God.*

Rightwing, I guess that explains Muslims and Hindus, huh?

I wonder if He'll ever "quicken" them? Or just let them burn?

*Some may argue that one doesn’t need the Spirit in order to do good works, to make a right choice instead of a wrong one.*

Hey Rightwing, that's me! I would argue that.

*But that fails to see God’s understanding of what constitutes a good work.*

Rightwing, I've seen some of the things in the Bible that God considers good work ... and I wasn't impressed.

Remember in Hosea 13:16 when He ordered His goons to murder all the women in the city including their innocent fetuses?

He obviously considered that good work. But what is more interesting is that ... you do too, don't you Rightwing?

Of course you do. You Ghost Worshipers wouldn't dare to criticize any evil that your invisible ghost does, no matter how horrible and inhuman.

*Motivation is essential in God’s eyes. Without the Spirit, no one can come to God. They may honor God with their lips, but their hearts will be far from him. And out of the heart proceeds all kinds of wickedness.*

Rightwing, and as history proves much of that wickedness has been motivated by Holy Books.

*Another thing that is standing in our way is that we cannot understand what it’s like to live beyond the third dimension.*

Rightwing, that might be because no one has proven that there is anything beyond the third dimension.

*The reason God can see the end of all things is because he is outside of time and not bound by it.*

Rightwing, now you're just spouting nonsense like the others. First define time, then try to explain how anything, even your invisible ghost, could be "outside" of time. You might as well be speaking in tongues for all the sense you're making.

*Our “finite” beings cannot fathom how this can be,*

Rightwing, and yet you feel competent enough to tell us about it. How did you come by this knowledge? Does the Bible say that God is "outside of time?"

Because, as far as I can tell, 'you people' are just making all this crap up.

*but only in this way could we understand how God knows all things without resorting to determinism.*

Rightwing, in what way? You said "in this way." What way?

Now you're making about as much sense as TMD did earlier.

SUMMARY

Here are 4 people who were given a good explanation by a commenter named NeuroProf but refused to accept it because it contradicted their religious beliefs. So all 4 tried to defend their imaginary friend with nonsense.

And these comments ... were the sad result.

<http://winteryknight.wordpress.com/2013/09/26/does-gods-omniscience-conflict-with-human-free-will/>

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Patent granted for inflatable space elevator

A Canadian company has been granted a United States patent for the design of a 20-km-high tower that would stand more than 20 times higher than the world’s current tallest building, and would act as a launch pad for space flight.

While Outer Space proper is considered to begin around 100 km, this tower is just beyond the 19 km “Armstrong Limit”: the point at which atmospheric pressure is so low that your bodily fluids would boil off without a protective suit.

The freestanding space tower concept is held rigid by pressurized gas and would allow spacecraft and people to be lifted to a level in the atmosphere requiring less force to launch.

Promoters say that the tower would utilize completely reusable hardware and save more than 30% of the fuel of a conventional rocket.

Astronauts would ascend to the top by electrical elevator. From the top of the tower, space planes will be able to launch in a single stage to orbit, returning to the top of the tower for refueling and reflight.

Landing on a barge at sea level is a great demonstration, but landing at 12 miles above sea level will make space flight more like taking a passenger jet.

Last year a Japanese company announced long-term plans to work toward a far more ambitious goal: a tower 96,000 km high (or one-quarter of the way ... to the moon).

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FAMOUS QUOTES

Anonymous

"If I made a million tiny robots and programmed them

to love me, to worship me, to sing songs praising me

and to weep at the sight of my perfection,

you’d call me, at least, twisted.

If, however, I made a million tiny robots with free will,

and then demanded they love me,

worship me, sing songs about me,

weep at the sight of my perfection,

and threatened them with eternal torment if they chose not to,

you’d call me God."