

Boethius was
successful in his
argument that god
rewards

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' Boethius was successful in his argument that God rewards and punishes justly. ' Discuss (35) Boethius was a philosopher teaching at the end of the Roman empire, in his 40's he was arrested for suspected conspiracy with the Eastern Roman Empire and was eventually put to death at the age of about 44/45. Whilst in prison Boethius wrote his book, ' The Consolation of Philosophy' where he discusses in great depth with Lady Philosophy issues with God's omniscience.

In his writings, Boethius identifies an issue with God's foreknowledge, our personal autonomy and the impact of how we are to be judged as when we enter the life after this. He identifies that if God has foreknowledge and knows our future, He then knows what we are going to do which in turn removes the idea that we have freedom to do what we choose. He also sees that if we have no free will when it comes to our judgement we will be judged unfairly and unjustly as God will have caused us to do that evil or not intervened to stop us from committing that evil. There seems to be a considerable contradiction and inconsistency between God's foreknowledge and the existence of free will. ' (Boethius). Boethius in his book creates a dialogue with Lady Philosophy, a personification of pure reason, whilst he plays a naive questioner. Boethius starts by questioning whether we have free will or not to which Lady Philosophy replies. She appears to Boethius and reassures that as we have the ability to reason we must then have free will and this is due to fact that our reason is what we use to make judgements which enables us to make decisions.

However there are different classes of freedom, the most is when we are in contemplation and the least is when we are addicted our let our desires rule our head. This however creates another issue for Boethius, if we are free then we will be able to do what we like however if God knows what we are going to do then we must not have free will. It is impossible for God to be wrong as he is God and is omniscience. Lady Philosophy answers Boethius by replying that God is eternal in the sense that he is a temporal, existing outside the category of time itself.

However there is another definition of which Boethius thought was unsuitable. God is eternal and he has no beginning or no end, he always has existed and continues to do so. Boethius rejects this as he can't see how a temporal God can judge someone if he experiences time himself. On the other hand Boethius didn't consider the flaws of his definition of eternal God; a God that is outside the category of time is one whom cannot be personal, this also means that it doesn't fit in with the traditional religious view of God who keeps his covenant with his people and sends his son to save us.

But it also has its strengths such as it maintains the majority of the attributes of God, such as incorporeal and immutable. Boethius concluded from his characterization of an eternal god that God is like a bird flying over a man walking down the path, the bird can see where the man has been, where he is and where he is about to go all at once. This is a power that God is able to use due to him being outside of time, he can see everyone's past present and future simultaneously. His knowledge is total however not causal.

Boethius expands on his idea of divine foreknowledge and goes onto explain the different types of necessity; simple and contingent. Simple necessity is related to a person's nature so for example " man is a rational animal. " Whereas conditional necessity isn't tied to the objects nature so for example you see Socrates sitting down it is conditional necessity because it is not in his nature to sit down as he has freedom to stand up in the next moment. From this Boethius concludes that God's knowledge is total and not causal, he maintains that we have personal freedom and that God rewards and punishes us justly.

However through this though a temporal God can be seen as an un-caring and un-omnibenevolent as he cannot interact with us, he cannot answer our prayers, intervene with us and perform the miracles in the world. Conversely if we do not try to defend our personal freedom we also result in an un-loving and un-caring God. To conclude, I feel that Boethius was successful in his argument that God rewards and punishes us justly however in doing so moves away from an omnibenevolent God and towards a God who can only look on without helping us, it also undermines God's omnipotence as he cannot interact with us.