

Predestination and epistemological fatalism essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Should the esteemed Precognisant Peg tell me today that my life will lead me to be a professor of Philosophy in Missouri then it has already been decided, independently of my own will, that this is what I shall do. Or so the theory goes. For epistemological fatalism to be true it must follow that if one foresees future events then those events are fated to occur. As a divine step from this Predestination places God as the great precogniser who sees all future events from the beginning of time and thus by his knowing everything then it must follow that everything is fated to happen in exactly the way he has foreseen. Once again, or so the theory goes.

The initial problem with epistemological fatalism is the lack of distinction given between knowing the future and causing the future. If we all at some stage have knowledge of the future it still cannot be said that we cause its occurrence, simply put - if I know that tomorrow is Sunday, since it is now Saturday, it does not cause it to be true. If this were the case then a precognisant 'democracy' would need to be established whereby tomorrow is only Sunday because that is what the majority of people 'know'. It would be unphilosophical to rule out the possibility that tomorrow could be Tuesday or in fact Chrisday simply because it has never yet happened in that manner, it is only by induction that we presume tomorrow will be Sunday because that is the way it has always been. Thus we can't actually know that tomorrow is Sunday at all but even if we could there is a huge difference between having knowledge of an abstract name which we attribute to the 24 hours following Saturday and having knowledge of actual future events let alone causing them.

Let us imagine that Precognisant Peg informs me of my future career and I, being of a devious disposition, decide to do my utmost to prove her wrong. Are we to believe that against all my efforts (for instance not studying philosophy or becoming a terrorist so that I can't legally enter the USA) I will at some stage be mystically transported to Missouri as a Philosophy lecturer? Now someone of a hard-line fatalist mind will say that if I do go against what she has said and never do make it to Missouri then that is what was fated to happen and her erroneous prediction was just another antecedent cause in my life. Now we have some options:

1: I suddenly and mystically get transported to Missouri.

2: Some higher force decided that my being misinformed was a necessary cause to my fated destiny as a terrorist.

3: Precognisant Peg herself did foresee that I would be a terrorist but decided it would be imprudent to tell me of such things and thus encourage me to be a criminal, which I could conceivably hold against her in a court of law and so end her career (but then would that also not be fated...?).

Option 1 defies all human reasoning (although philosophically that should not rule out its plausibility!). Option 2 indicates a higher force that has correctly precognised the future thus epistemological fatalism is intact as also with Option 3 where she correctly foresees the future and becomes a cause in it by an almost reverse psychology method.

So options 2 and 3 can be upheld within fatalism but now we must ask – did the knowledge of Precognisant Peg or the 'higher force' cause my becoming

a terrorist? Surely if it was fated to be then whether anyone foresaw it or not it would have happened anyway and thus any precognition was an extraneous event to its occurrence. If this were not the case then it would have to be held that all things can only happen if knowledge of their happening has gone before. Within the realms of humanity it is clear that this does not happen and thus Predestination is conceived whereby God replaces my dear friend as an omniscient Precognisant Peg.

Belief in God invariably revolves around his being all knowing of all events - past, present and future. This would fit in wonderfully with the idea that all things must be precognised for them to happen at all. Unfortunately it would make God responsible for evil, sickness, death and my becoming a terrorist! The view that God knows everything stems from a theological perspective and so to fit the concept of a 'good' God around this idea of predestination we must momentarily look to theology.

Let me try and set a suitable analogy for this situation. Imagine a sizeably long chute at a steep angle which I have arranged. The chute is just over two feet wide but towards the ground level it narrows sharply. I get a small steel ball which will fit into the chute with about a foot to spare on each side and just small enough to pass through the narrow exit. If we further imagine this to be a closed philosophical system in which I become a primary cause for this ball when I set it at the top of the chute. By my arrangement of the apparatus I can see that the ball will descend and eventually pass out by the one exit available to it. I know this before I let go of the ball and then I cause it to come to pass. What I do not know is the path this ball will take on its way down the chute. I can clear major obstructions but there will be small

<https://assignbuster.com/predestination-and-epistemological-fatalism-essay-sample/>

obtrusions along the way which will divert the ball to the left or right. Even still I can be 100% sure that the ball will leave the chute from the exit.

We can easily see these obtrusions as being things purposely unaccounted for and thus we can see them as analogous of a God given free will. Where I am (for all sense and purposes) ' God' in the above circumstance I have arranged it so that I can direct the ball to its definite endii without making the chute as narrow as the exit for its entire length. If this were the case I may as well just put the ball on the floor - but where would be the fun in that. The point is that theologically speaking there is a definite beginning (Creation) and a definite end (Eternity and the defeat of evil). If we look at the biblical view of things this is what we see - a God given destiny or perfect plan but it is man's decision to follow directly or divert and there is always opportunity to get back in line with this destiny (e. g. King David, Apostle Paul, Cain).

I don't believe that this compromises the view of God as omniscient. It is arrogant and pathetic of man to think that he can squeeze God into an anthropomorphic id. Having all knowledge is one thing but having the choice of all knowledge would be more powerful again requiring the kind of will power only an omnipotent deity could have. Thus I would see the term ' all-seeing' as more acceptable. If I were in an operating room with my (hypothetical) expecting wife and an ultrasound had been performed the doctor asks " Would you like to know if it's a boy or a girl?". Now I can see the screen, to find out the answer all I'd have to do is look a little closer and then I'd know but if, for whatever reason, I decide to remain ignorant I

haven't made myself any less of a man by denying myself certain accessible
<https://assignbuster.com/predestination-and-epistemological-fatalism-essay-sample/>

knowledge. Similarly we can't say that God would be any less divine by choosing not to foresee our every action and thus, in an epistemological view, not set our future in stone. It is he, surely, who gives us our potential to follow his perfect plan but not force us into it.

Consequently it is unsubstantiated to ask, " Why does God allow so much suffering?" when it is man who causes the majority of it. Even more unreasonable to deny his existence because of this when it is as a result of belief in God that we have a theological blueprintiii for ' harmonious' living upon which our constitutions are based. It can surely only be due to free will that we have strayed from this harmony. If God did choose to precognise all actions then possibly all men would live in happiness – however only in the same way that I can say this computer is ' happy'. If you wish to blame God for present circumstances based on his omniscience or choice otherwise then you must ask yourself whether you would prefer to be a happy puppet or a changeable but free human/terrorist?