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FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a historical excurses into the nature of foreknowledge, thus, future contingent events with its concomitant temporal logic is a necessary component. As it concerns divine foreknowledge, must what God knows surely come to pass, which should lead to hard determinism, or there is provision for adjustment to accommodate human freedom, which should give rise to soft determinism? In other words, does divine foreknowledge amount to divine foreordination, if yes, what is the implication for freewill? Voices from different scholars on the issue, from a logical point of view are to aid us make contribution, as knowledge is a build-up continuum.

Keywords: Foreknowledge, Historical Perspective.

Historical Sketch of Scholarly Investigation/Contribution to Foreknowledge as a Form of Extrasensory Perception (ESP): An Introduction

Recorded History has shown that the quest to understand the mystery of ESP in a rational way is not a recent development of scientific age alone but dates back to the ancients. The father of History's (Herodotus) gives records of king Croesus of Lydia's interest to know the most reliable of oracles. This was not borne out of his interest to investigate and understand the workings of ESP but for advice for war plans. But the curiosity to understand foreknowledge which is an aspect of ESP was earlier than the time of Croesus. Foreknowledge, which is coined precognition since the advent of 19th century scientific investigation of the matter date back to 5th century BC in the writings of Herodotus. "It was, however, Anaxagoras, who introduced the word into philosophy. For Anaxagoras, the world is ordered, and the evidence of this shows very clearly in the human organism – the micro-cosmos. This order could not have come accidentally, but must be the effect of some mind – what he referred to as (nous) or mind" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.35). Plato concurs that "nature cannot be responsible for its own orderliness. Nature is on its own good, because it is the effect of the divine goodness. This goodness is so all embracing that it makes everything in the material world go according to some fixed laws" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.36). But what has ordered nature based on some fixed laws has to do with foreknowledge? According to this mechanistic worldview, an ordered nature could provide foresight and insight into the direction of things to come; from what is known the unknown can be extrapolated, leading to the knowledge of and preparation for

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

the future – a sort of divine providence. Following Plato’s train of thought, Aristotle turns out to be the first philosopher to take this issue in a different and deeper direction. Other philosophers considered to join Aristotle in this logical explanation cut across all epoch from the ancient to the contemporary, and they include Diodorus Cronus, Proklos, Boethius, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, Petrus Aureoli, Author Prior, Peter Geach, Gottfried Leibniz etc., among the philosophers chosen for this study.

Logical Approach

The logical approach to the understanding of ESP of the precognitive type is to begin with Aristotle. It is to be pointed out that discourses about knowledge not traceable to human five senses in the ancient and Middle Ages focused almost exclusively on foreknowledge, mostly in the area of divine revelation. Thus, the historical background of extrasensory perception in these two epochs might appear to be an examination of the nature of knowledge – foreknowledge in particular and its sources. This intellectual investigative attitude spilled over even into the modern period. It is mainly in the contemporary period of free secular thought that both the philosophers and the scientists could engage psychics (which hitherto would have attracted social disapproval and religious condemnation) in the investigation of ESP in a rational and empirical way. It is for this reason that we might not dwell much on scholar’s contributions to ESP in these three eras, except where very necessary, as that would narrow our focus to only divine foreknowledge (divine precognition). However, a brief analysis would be made on outstanding contributions to even the divine foreknowledge itself in these eras, as the resolution of some epistemic concerns of this study might derived some its answers from the contribution of these Ages. If divine knowledge is timeless and the source of precognition and ESP in general is the deity, as some pre-contemporary philosophers tell us, then some of the questions facing this study would have been partially handled.

Aristotle.

In his book – *De interpretatione*” (especially in chapter 9) he came up with the following question: if it is an absolute law, that in the case of two contradictory propositions, one is true, the other must be false, then it means, that whatever is, or will be, is necessarily fixed to be as it is. To explain further what he means, Aristotle gives an example; will there be a sea – fight tomorrow or will there not be? It is neither necessary that there will be a sea – fight tomorrow, nor that there will be no sea-fight tomorrow. What however is necessary is the disjunction, that the sea-fight will either take place tomorrow or will not take place tomorrow (Nwigwe, 1991, p.36).

The truth value which is usually applicable to past and present propositions is what Aristotle wants to check if it could also be applied to future cases. He wants to know whether future events have fixed truth in them or unpredictable. If they have fixed truth, does it then not mean that they have been determined? Or, not necessarily so that events appear to have been fixed only when they have already taken place? In few words, Aristotle’s interest is in finding out whether the future

is open to adjustment or already fixed as the past. What follows from this puzzle is the consequent implications arising from it; one of the consequent implications if the future is fixed, is that we can do little or nothing about a fixed future in term of change; what will be will be – a fatalistic end indeed. Bringing logic to bear, Aristotle says that a judgment can be true either when it asserts a position that is confirmed to be the case or, when it disagrees with a position and that objection is check to be correct. A judgment made about what has already happened has the quality of having either of the truth values of “true or “false”, as it could be verified through empirical assessment. Since the temporal moment of the future has not yet presented itself for verification, the disjunctive truth value of either “true” or “false’ of such judgment is then not applicable to it but suspended. That is, it remains indefinite in the Aristotelian sense. In other words, the truth value about the future is uncertain or unknown. We are going to see how Aristotle’s contribution will influence later thinkers on time and extrasensory perception, and also the affiliate issue of determination and freewillism.

Diodorus Cronus

For the stoics, represented by Diodorus Cronus, the future is as fixed as the past; time lapses before future events is not an opportunity for change. As an avid dialectician, “Diodorus defined *the possible* (albeit) narrowly as what either is or will be true, and *the necessary* broadly as what is true and will not be false...he maintain that a *conditional* is true if and only if it is *never* the case that its antecedent is true and its consequent false” (Audi,1999, p.477). Diodorus’ logic is a build-up to whether future contingent events have truth value or not, as we are going to see. So let us hear what others of these epochs have to say.

Proklos

For the Neo-Platonists represented by Proklos, “Foreknowledge is the basic quality of every divine essence. Foreknowledge does not just simply imply, what is to be seen, but simply that which foresees” (Nwigwe, 1991, 42). Proklos goes on to say that one’s knowledge of divine foreknowledge depends on his nearness to the source. For another Neo-Platonist – Ammonias, “The gods are the source of time, and for that, are themselves not part of time. They are not subject to the categories of coming to be and passing away and because they are not in time, their knowledge is also not time – bound” (Nwigwe,1991, 43).

Boethius

For Boethius, “there is no past and no future: everything is present to him in his eternal now... divine knowledge is not foreknowledge, but present knowledge” (Nwigwe,1991, p.43). Divine foreknowledge is incompatible with human free choice (Audi, 1999, p.78). “This last leads Boethius to investigate the nature of time and the nature of God (Blackburn, 2005, p.44). If God according to Boethius exist only in the eternal now, does it mean that the past and the future are parts of the present; if there are no different temporal moments before God, what happen to the concept of future contingent events and knowing about them before hand? Or, is it that prophets of God privileged to Eavesdrop God’s mind – the source of all temporal knowledge, sees the future as the present? Can that explain the mystery of ESP despite the supposed time barrier? Boethius, in his book- *The consolation of Philosophy*, posits that “God’s relationship to time is different from

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

ours. He does not exist in time, but experiences our past, present and future as simultaneous moments in his eternal present. Thus, the actions you will perform in the future are already present to him, and they are known by him as your free actions” (Lawhead, 2002, p.143). Therefore, the issue of him determining our actions and depriving human freedom does not arise. Thus, divine providence does not lead to divine preordination. The past and the future coexist with the present before God and he perceives them simultaneously, while humans perceive them successively. So, sequence, the backbone of time that present time in succession before humans is broken when God, at elevated level of perception is concerned. We are going to see how Boethius analysis would influence other thinkers after him.

St. Augustine

St. Augustine is the first outstanding philosopher to examine the issue of Divine foreknowledge and human freedom in a full theological context. For him, foreknowledge and free-will are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist, as divine foreknowledge should not imply divine fore-ordination. God does not enforce everything he knows to happen, as that would deprive human freedom. If divine foreknowledge does not necessarily entail determinism, that is, God already deciding the order of things, then there is freewillism or alternatives within foreknowledge. Boethius before him (St. Augustine) concurs with the openness of the future, thus the future – foreknowledge comes with contingency but not with necessity. If this understanding could explain why not all prophecy do come 100% correct in every detail, we are going to see how the future then should be opened to intervention. For Augustine to buttress his point further, he explains God’s relationship with time that he created time and therefore does not exist in it. His attribute of eternity takes away succession of temporal moments before him. All the moments within time are known to God as one eternal present moment, (Augustine, 1986, p. 11.28.38). “In the mind of God, there is no “before” or “after”; there is only a “now” In “God’s experience” all events occur simultaneously(thus)...In God’s all-inclusive present, “future” events are taking place now. God didn’t foresee; he merely saw. Likewise, he doesn’t foreordain an event; he merely ordains (causes) what he sees happening. This, to Augustine, is what is meant for God to be omniscient and omnipotent” (Christian, 2002, p.248). Thus, God is not limited by sequences of time like humans; and He knows all human future’s actions but does not determine them as we have free choice for our decisions.

St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas’ contribution to foreknowledge is a synthesis of Platonic, Aristotelian, Neo-Platonic and Augustinian thoughts. In a similar manner like Aristotle, Aquinas brings logic to bear on the issue. For him, “A future contingent event cannot be an object of sure knowledge before it actually happens, for two main reasons – (i) As an event in the future, the possibility is still open, that it can happen in one way or the other – which remains, however uncertain. (ii) A future contingent event, does not yet exist in its cause and as a result it remains even for the divine knowledge uncertain” (Nwigwe,1991, p.53). According to him there are two types of future events, namely, (i) future events that are totally unknown. (ii) future events inherent or, that is already present in their causes – one that can be inferred from what is known about a thing, as one can tell

the fruit a seed would bear by just seeing the seed. So, foreknowledge that is not present in its cause is the one that cannot be inferred from what is known about a thing. Aquinas also differentiate two elements of foreknowledge and events: (i) knowledge of present events as objects of sure knowledge and (ii) knowledge of future contingent events that is not object of sure knowledge, as what is contingent is pregnant with uncertainties, but events already in the present can be known with certainty. So, we cannot tell with exactitude the veiled future in its state of becoming until it is unveiled in the present. So, too, the future is in a process of self-actualization to be realized in the present, as a process carries no certainty.

Moreover, different temporal moments are coalesced into the present moment when it comes to divine knowledge, as divine knowledge is not subject to temporal successions as human knowledge is; which is a legitimate deduction from Aquinas' thought. But does divine foreknowledge include knowledge of contingent events? Aquinas objects to it for the following reasons that "Everything known by God must necessarily be true. If so, God's knowledge in this case must be false, because the future has no reality in it already, and so cannot be known even by God" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.55). Aquinas' objection number 6 presented here as the second reason is the point that knowledge has to be knowledge of what is true, and since contingent knowledge is not yet a settled or certain knowledge it should not be link to divine foreknowledge. For him, knowledge should be equated with truth. The third reason which is Aquinas' objection 7, is that what is foreknown by God must necessarily happen. This means that a necessary antecedence in a conditional statement must produce a necessary consequence; "if God knows that something will happen that thing will happen" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.55). Let us take the fourth reason presented as Aquinas' objection number 10. "A future contingent event is open to possibility and for that reason cannot be an object of knowledge and more so, because it is not yet present in its cause" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.56).

The above four objections among others are the main reasons advanced by Aquinas of why divine foreknowledge should not include knowledge of future contingent events. Let us now see how cogent is Aquinas' argument, as his thought has serious implications for precognition and time. Starting with his objection 4, which is presented here as reason number one; that everything known by God must necessarily be true, for it is impossible that God knows something which is not true. For me, there are three elements of importance in the above statement, namely, knowledge, existence and truth value. Knowledge should be knowledge of something that exists either in the mind or in physical actuality. To say that God's knowledge of a thing is synonymous with the happening of that thing; that what God knows must surely happen, is analogous to saying that looking at a woman erotically by a man is synonymous with committing sexual act already, which is a contentious position; what should be reasonable is to say that God's knowledge of a thing means that the thing exists in God's mind, but not necessarily that he will bring that thing to pass in happening. The truth of what God knows should not be equated with coming to pass of those things in physical terms, because what is known exist in the mind, just as the erotic thought also reside in the mind but not actual commission of the act. If the need for truth of divine foreknowledge compels fulfillment of what is known, then divine foreknowledge is equal to divine fore-ordination; an open entry into hard determinism.

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

Future contingent knowledge belongs to knowledge that exists only in the mind since it is yet to manifest physically; what exist in the mind is contingent but not necessity. The evidence of true foreknowledge should be its fulfillment in time; otherwise, its claims are in suspension, indefinite in Aristotelian's word. If future contingent events deserve knowledge at all, then it should be known by God whose one of his attributes is Omniscience, contrary to Aquinas' that such knowledge is outside the purview of God. So, God should know ultimate end of things even if those things are in process of realization. If Aquinas' position that such knowledge should not be linked to divine foreknowledge because it is not yet present in its cause and therefore uncertain, (as the uncertainty of such knowledge would affect the truth value of God's foreknowledge which must always be true), is to be accepted, so, who then should have such knowledge? This is more so unacceptable as fulfilled prophecies; traceable to God as its source are forms of future contingent knowledge.

Prophecy is claimed to be revelation by God, so, God has knowledge of it before its revelation to his messengers. It appears that Aquinas unwittingly portrays Gods as if he is human, when he in his objection 4 says that Gods knowledge of future contingent events "would be false because the future has no reality in it already, and so, cannot be known even by God" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.55). This is negligence of divine attribute of omniscience; If future contingents do not yet exist as reality to be known, and yet prophecies do come true, then it means that the so-called future do exist as the present in the divine mind to be revealed to the privileged ones. I can agree with him on his objection number 6 which is given here as the second reason; that "knowledge has to be knowledge of the truth". Certainty of what is known should remove what is known from the realm of contingent to the realm of necessity. Aquinas would have more support here since temporal succession is only applicable to humans but not God whose temporal point of view encompasses the future and the past in the present, where things are supposedly known with degree of certainty, if we are to go by some philosophers before him like Boethius and Augustine.

We are now to consider the third reason Aquinas thinks that God does not know future contingent events, presented here as his objection number 7. For him, "if God knows that something will happen, that thing will happen... if God knows something, then that thing must be" (Nwigwe,1991, p.55). This bothers on the necessity of antecedence giving rise to a necessary consequence. But why should this be a problem of God's knowledge of future contingent events? It is because Aquinas had earlier said that future's contingent events is not object of true knowledge; in other words, that it does not yet possess truth value. Aquinas does not want God to be associated with such knowledge which might be true or false since divine knowledge should be equated with truth only. Starting with the first section of this objection as presented here, that "if God knows that something will happen that thing will happen", there are two elements in the statement namely, what is known, and the knower. So, if God knows that it will rain tomorrow it must surely rain. It should be asked, what would make the rain event a fait accompli; is it the rain itself or the knower? Would the rain come on its own when its due time arrived or the knower has the capacity to activate it or deactivate it from raining, especially when the knower in this case, is an all-powerful being? Must what God knows surely happen or, there is a provision for him to change his mind which would also change course of events, since in addition to his omniscience

attribute, he is also omnipotent? Is divine foreknowledge equal to divine fore-ordination? That is, once God knows something he also makes it irreversibly to happen. Is it not possible that some things known by God come as his intention rather than his final decision? If foreknowledge is equated with fore-ordination, where then is the room for change that could arise from human interventions like through prayer? Or, is God passive to happenings thrust upon him or he is a factor in what is known and what will happen? Again, if what God knows is equated with foreordination, then determinism would be the rule of nature, yet Aquinas opines that

“Man is free...man has free choice, or otherwise counsels, exhortation, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments will be in vain. If the will were deprived of freedom...no praise would be given to human virtue; since virtue would be of no account if man acted not freely; there would be no justice in rewarding or punishing, if man were not free in acting well or ill and there would be no prudence in taking advice, which would be on use if things occur of necessity...” (Aquinas, *summa theologiae*, 1,23,1,3 & *summa contra gentiles*,111, 73)

The above citation shows that Equating foreknowledge with fore-ordination is incompatible with human freedom. God’s omnipotence can make or un-make events. Even humans do intervene against unpleasant revealed future, indicating that they are not helpless and passive to negative future events, but also do try to compel God by appeal for their desires to be answered, since God is considered to be the source of everything. Agreed with Aquinas and also with Aristotle before him, that what God knows is also absolutely necessary, but to the extent that omnipotence supersede omniscience, in the sense that despite what God knows his supreme power can change what he already knows. Otherwise, Aquinas’ thinking in this regard would amount to mechanistic hard determinism. If some humans called rain makers can stop forecasted rain from happening, is it God’ Omniscience that would be superior to his Omnipotence? In other words, should God knowledge of future contingent events make him helpless not to change course of events where necessary? I do not differ with Aquinas that knowledge should equate with truth else claims turn out to be false, but not necessarily. If all that God knows must happen then hard determinism would not only be applicable to humans but also to God himself, caging himself in impotence by implication, such that when appeals get to him for change of unpleasant future, his reply would be, “I have already known so nothing I can do” The necessity of truth of what is known seems to be Aquinas’ concern here, but knowledge of future contingent events should exist as soft determinism for this logjam to be broken, after all, experiences have shown that some humans have the capacity to change some course of events, despite prior forecast. The future should be seen as potential fact but not real fact until it actualizes in the present. What God reveals to his messengers is how the future *could* be, but not how the future *will* be, to give room to human freedom.

We have devoted more space than intended for Aquinas’ argument because of the importance of the argument as it might aid to explain why some ESP like precognition do not come true either fully or at all. Then, now to the last reason here presented as objection 10, that “A future contingent event is open to possibilities and for that reason cannot be an object of knowledge and more so, because it is not yet present in it cause” (Nwigwe,1991, p.56). My reply

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

to this objection is already contained in my contribution to earlier objections especially the one just analyzed. But to highlight some points, future contingents opened to possibilities may not be an object of sure knowledge to humans in General but not to God and his prophets, otherwise, prophets would not be able to prophesy course of events that have truth values of either this or that. This objection could go well with ordinary humans who have limited view of things to come but not God who knows ultimate end of things despite the processes that could lead to that terminal end. For the fact that the future is open to possibilities does not opaque God's knowledge of its final end if God's attribute of omniscience is to be retained. Necessary to be noted before we leave Aquinas to someone else, is my position that God cannot be timeless and at the same time exist in the *present*, as the present is a temporal position or moment. Also, if what God knows implies necessity, I do not see the logic of saying that such knowledge is necessarily contingent, as is implicit in Aquinas explanation. Let us see in brief what William of Ockham has to say about divine foreknowledge.

William of Ockham

Ockham is best known for his principle of parsimony – the need to say what has to be said in a simple and concise way, without unnecessary elaboration, which is also called Ockham's razor, a reference for one to be sharp as razor, or be straight to the point. Arising from this point is Ockham insistence that "only individual objects of experience can afford us certain knowledge...conditions for truth being empirical verifiability" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.67). That "Everything in the world is contingent. Since this is the case, then only experience can tell us about the existence of things in the world and their properties" (Lawhead, 2002, p.189). Thus, Ockham is against any form of speculation beyond verifiable experience. Ockham traces most philosophical and theological problems to imprecision of language, making him to be the forerunner of the later linguistic turn in philosophy. For Ockham, future contingent events are known to God. Contrary to Aristotle's, Ockham says that proposition about future contingent events is either true or false but not indefinite – suspended. "Regarding Aquinas' teaching, that God knows contingent future events timelessly, Ockham thinks, that this type of doctrine destroys the temporality of things. Events in time, do not have one tense – value, but vary as the events they represent vary" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.68). Further on foreknowledge, Ockham says that God "knows future contingent events through his own essence. The divine essence is intuitive knowledge, and it is so perfect and clear, that it is reason enough for divine sure knowledge of past, present and future events" (Nwigwe,1991, p.68). From this last citation, Ockham *sharply* affirms God's knowledge in all three temporal moments, unlike others who postulated divine timeless knowledge.

But what difference is divine foreknowledge being intuitive to make when it comes to future contingent events knowledge? Is it because intuition comes as direct and immediate flash of awareness that Ockham thinks that divine knowledge of past, present and future could be encapsulated in one flash moment as divine essence? Moreover, Ockham says that "it is not necessary to ask about which side of the disjunctive proposition (whether a thing will be or not be) is true" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.68). But why not – why is such question not necessary in an important issue like foreknowledge? If God knows events contingently and contingent knowledge does not

make what is known necessary as he posits, why dodging such questions? His position on this matter is analogous to saying that it is not necessary to ask which side of a coin would fall, throw it first and the side that falls is the true contingent side, or still, that it is not necessary to ask in advance how the bridge would be crossed until one gets there. If these illustrations capture his stand, then, it does not speak well of his earlier admittance that God knows future contingent events, though intuitively. Not to bother to ask whether a thing will be or not be or, how it would be or not be, should indicate two things, namely that the person that is not concerned to ask, either already knows the outcome, or has no way of knowing it. So, is Ockham more correct that since generally we do not know future contingent events and have no way of knowing, that it is pointless bothering about it? If king Croesus of Lydia had reasoned like Ockham, then there would have been no need of him to consult the oracle of Delphi, which many others after him have done and continue to do. Also, the office of prophecy would have long closed for business but which is still bustling. The scientific and philosophical investigation of ESP would not even have been initiated, nor would daily forecast of events like weather be necessary, if asking of what will be or not be, is unnecessary.

It is normal human urge to ask such question. Even Emmanuel Kant admitted that much that though we might not have sure answers in such endeavour, yet it is an irresistible metaphysical curiosity that cannot be stopped. This last point of Ockham appears to be borne out of that orientation to knowledge based on empirical verifiability which is his background, and since future contingent events cannot generally be subjected to empirical verification, which seems to be the reason Ockham is not interested in such questions. And investigation into such area would definitely not sail through Ockham's scale of verifiability and parsimony.

As Ockham is not a philosopher that dallies over issues, in line with his principle of parsimony, let's sharply leave him to Petrus Aureoli.

Petrus Aureoli

Petrus Aureoli "imagined a way out of this problem of two-valued logic and the problem it presents for future contingent events, by supporting a three valued logic. For him, propositions about certain future contingent events are neither true nor false but have rather neutral values" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.71). Aureoli is not objecting to divine Omniscience including future contingent events but opines that such knowledge neither asserts nor denies anything about the outcome of a certain contingent event in the future. Ockham rejects his suggestion to be a solution to the issue and I support Ockham because God cannot sit on the fence on matters like this. However, Aureoli's idea has turned out to be the precursor of our present day *many valued logic*. We are to consider two more philosophers interested in logical argument on the issue of foreknowledge before moving to men of practical approach on the matter. The two philosophers are Author Prior and Peter Geach.

Author Prior

According to Author Prior, "Every event happens in time, and this is part of the ontological structure of time itself. Time as well as the events it represents is contingent. The contingency of things, shows in the changeability which we find in nature (thus)...a proposition about a future contingent event is not yet – i.e., definitively true or false" (Nwigwe,1991, p.73). Like Aristotle

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

before him, the future is then opened to alternative possibilities, which deserves no truth value. The events in the past unlike the one in the future are closed to change because such events and time are already bound up together. For Prior, sentences change their truth values with time because meaning of sentences have close connection with specific events and times. From what could be glimpsed from Prior's thoughts in this opening paragraph, there are no facts yet about events that have not yet come to be, but truth-value of sentences reporting events in the past is fixed. Prior's position in a way, is an affirmation of Aristotle's position of the necessity of the past while the future is contingent. What Prior's tense logic bordering on the temporal moments of the past, present and future, (bound-up with events as the contents of these temporal moments) narrows down to are the followings, as sieved by Nwigwe, that:

- (i) Future events have no existence in any form, because nothing exists before its actual existence.
- (ii) There are no timeless truths because propositions respect the temporality and contingency of actual events in the world.
- (iii) The truth value of a proposition depends on its verifiability i.e., is subject to empirical justification.
- (iv) Something can exist only if it is a fact – concrete fact; that can be justified with sufficient evidence (1991, p.77).

Let us now see the cogency or otherwise of the above points drawn from Prior's thought on foreknowledge. Starting with the first point that future events have no existence in any form before their actual existence; is existence only in physical terms? If the future has no existence at all in any form, how can we account of prophecies (precognitions) that do come true? If the future could be foreseen, that means that it already existed to be foreknown; if a foreseen future gets fulfilled, is that not a sufficient evidence that the future exists in some form before its actual existence? Agreed with him in parts on number two point that there are no timeless truths because propositions respect temporality and contingency of events, but not only actual events in the world. Very likely, Prior's actual events in the world are physical events in the material universe known through our physical senses, when ESP is an evidence to the contrary.

His number three point that the truth value of a proposition depends on its verifiability, is verificationists' laden. One can only agree on this point if verifiability could mean confirmation or fulfillment or evidence including those of precognition. If a psychic or a prophet says that Titanic ship on its maiden sail will sink and it comes to pass and Prior accept such fulfillment as verifiability, then one can agree with him on that point. The number four point that existence of something depends on concrete fact that can be justified with sufficient evidence, needs to be treated with caution. If existence depends on concrete fact, then more clarification is required; once again, are prophecies that come true and whose fulfillment should be sufficient evidence, to be considered as concrete fact? To accept only material things perceptible with the senses as concrete facts (which appears to be Prior's standard) robs existence of its completeness. Thus, incorporeal entities like numbers, time, space, dreams etc., would be denied existence, even when there are sufficient evidences to prove their beings. This empiricist's notion of concrete facts is subject to

objections and need reappraisal. I think a safer position should have been that existence depends on fact accompanied with evidence but not to qualified existence or the evidence with the word "concrete". Gilbert Ryle tries to take a somewhat safer position that 'statement in the future tense cannot convey singular (specific), but only general truth'. For me, things in the realm of ideas cannot be subjected to the kind of verification Prior demands, yet they exist. His requirements for things to be considered as facts are only suitable to empirical sciences. What could be said about Prior's contribution in this regard is that his intellectual background of British empiricism has deeply coloured his intellectual outlook of things in general and foreknowledge in particular.

Peter Geach

Unlike Mc-Taggart but concurring with Prior, Geach believes that time is real. As an avowed Christian, he buttresses his position with the creation story which took place in time. If time is real then speaking in tense forms of past, present and future is apt in describing divine knowledge, otherwise there will be no meaningful explanation of God's relationship with the world which exists in time. Contingency, which concerns events that may or may not happen (indeterminate events) and change are relational with the nature of time itself and consequently foreknowledge, yet God remains changeless to be able to be the creator of the world intrinsic with change and time, thus, every change begins with what is already permanent. The world is not static but dynamic with time, thus "events in time do not happen simultaneously, but successively, and this is evident in the structure of the language we use" (Nwigwe, 90). Therefore, the notion of divine timeless knowledge of his creation propagated by Aquinas is rejected by Geach, thus also God's knowledge of things is bounded in time, as "we cannot talk about what God knows timelessly, but must simply use the tenses about facts and events, which we mean to report regarding what God knows" (Nwigwe,1991, p.91).

Interestingly, Geach does not "however, think that God knows the future as an existing reality on its own right. God knows the future by directing it. He is a provident God, and his knowledge directs itself, for that very reason, to the future. In another context, Geach thinks that the way God knows the future is analogous to the intentional act of man" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.90). So, is divine knowledge similar to a cause that gives rise to happenings as effects? Moreover, does God's foreknowledge of events brings those events into being to buttress Geach's point that God does not know the future as existing reality on its own right but his knowledge directs the coming into being of the future? Affirmation to the above interrogatives would confirm Geach's assertion that "God knows the future by controlling it" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.94). Can God not also change the future he knows in the process of directing it, or is there no room for the change of the future because divine knowledge of the future and existence of the future happens simultaneously, as Geach could be interpreted? Geach affirms it that "Things and persons do not exist in the future, (but) only waiting to be brought into existence. For Geach, all predictions about the future, especially through the agency of any magical beliefs is meaningless" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.94). But does meaningless in this context have truth value of true or false? If prediction through magical agency comes true, would Geach still considers it as meaningless? The issue here is not in making case for magic or not, but the cogency of Geach's position in context; in other words, what is questionable here is not so much of magic as appropriate source of prediction as to what Geach considers as 'meaningless'.

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

It should be noted from Geach's postulation that what brings things into existence is mere God's knowledge of them as he directs it; and how does he direct it? Is it by willing, by pronouncement, for instance of, "let there be" Either way, divine knowledge then, is synonymous with intentional act that brings things into being. Does this not appear an incongruous thought of an avowed Christian who should be familiar with biblical prophecies? If the future does not exist on its own right, how do prophets of God foresee the ones that come to pass in time but not immediately as God know it? If God's knowledge of the future is equated with intentional act of immediate happening or coming into being of things, then there would not be time lapse for prophecy to come to fulfillment. In fact, the prefix of the word prophecy would become useless if divine knowledge is synonymous with directing things into existence. The future as revealed by God to his prophets would happen at the same time as it is revealed, which should mean that there is no time lapse between divine foreknowledge and divine manifestation. Or, would Geach also say that prophets' knowledge of the future directs and brings foreseen events into being similar to God's knowledge of things being synonymous with coming into existence of things? It is necessary to ask in case prophets do not only prophesy what already exist in the mind of God but their very act of prophesying is what brings events into being. If so, prophecy about the future should be viewed as a process leading to the creation of events but not the events already existing in the mind of God. Also, what about prophecies that do come in the form of hypothetical proposition of "if, then" format? This type of conditional prophecy should mean that God already knows how the future *could* be if certain things are not done the way he wants, as such prophetic warnings are common in the Bible.

If his knowledge is synonymous with intentional acts, then there would be no room for such prophetic warnings, because his knowledge would be such that the foreknown future would automatically releases divine action of coming into being of such future known by God. However, Geach's denial of the existence of an independent future is not for nothing but for the reason of human freedom, which would be impossible if the future already exists. This is the way Geach thinks that the openness of the future for alternative possibilities can be guaranteed, as could be exemplified in human's desire for prevention of undesirable events. In line with Geach's thought, if the future exists on its own and is pre-known without allowance for change, human freewill would be in jeopardy, "because there is a logical connection between what is known and the happening of the thing. Wittgenstein writes, that the freedom of the will is guaranteed in the fact that, future events are not yet known...because there is a logical necessity that binds the knower and the known"(Nwigwe,1991, p.96) This point would be well assimilated if we accept Geach's position that mere divine knowledge is the cause of everything; the implication being a dire one, that God should be held responsible for both bad and good acts because this line of thought gives the reading that all that happens result from what God knows. The conclusion is definitely not what Geach intends and he has to look for a way out. In line with Aquinas' earlier position, though framed differently, Geach finds solution in the explanation that "natural phenomena may be bound with the law of cause and effect, but the human agent has a will whose nature is to be open to alternatives. Because the will has this nature which justifies the view that it is free, Geach reasons that even though God's will is the cause of all things; yet God's will allows events in their own contingency –i.e., he allows them their freedom" (Nwigwe,1991, p.100).

To summarize Geach's thought in all regarding foreknowledge, is to begin with his basic thesis that the description of temporal events must necessarily take cognizance of the tenses. Arising from this is the point that divine knowledge cannot be timeless, as time itself is an ontological component of events. This is in contrast to Aquinas' that "the tenses do not apply, when God's eternal knowledge is the case, because what we call future is present to God" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.104). Aquinas' position appears to be a contradiction because the present itself is a temporal moment, thus God's knowledge cannot be said to be timeless. And Geach refutes Aquinas' assertion from a different angle because for him, "the events themselves which God sees are not eternally true, being contingent things themselves. If God saw them as eternally true and present to him, we who see them as changing and contingent would be under delusion. To avoid this, Geach and Prior suggest that the rule of tense apply even in the cases of which report is made regarding what God knows and will" (Nwigwe, 1991, p.104). Another important point of Geach's thought concerning divine foreknowledge is his position that what God knows is the causes of everything, as God's knowledge of the future is said to be directing and controlling events simultaneously. The logical implications of this position create a lot of problem for him as we have seen but he tries to wriggle out himself by falling back on a solution similar to Aquinas in trying to differentiate natural phenomena intrinsic in the principle of causality, and God's will (intention), that gives room for contingency of events, consequently freedom for change. Thus, the future does not contain fixed truth waiting to be realized.

Leibniz/Newton

There is something interesting, in including Leibniz and Newton in the argument for foreknowledge in general and future contingent event in particular. And that is how God gets to know everything. "Leibniz defends the principle of sufficient reason as the basis for contingent truths, as opposed to the principle of contradiction, which he asserts is the foundation of necessary truths" (Ariew, 2000, p.xiii). Leibniz goes on to posit God's knowledge of future contingent events, unlike Aquinas who objected to it on the ground that contingent events is pregnant with uncertainty, thus, it should not be within the purview of God, whose knowledge of things come with truth value. But for Leibniz, "hypothetical necessity is that which the supposition or hypothesis of God's foresight and preordination imposes upon future contingents. And this must necessarily be admitted, unless we deny, as the Socinians do, God's foreknowledge of future contingents and his providence which regulates and governs every particular thing" (Ariew, 2000, p.36). But, is Leibniz's assertion of God's foresight and preordination not going to result in determinism, leading to infringement on human freedom? Leibniz response with assurance that "God has foreseen everything. He has provided a remedy for everything beforehand. There is in his works a harmony, a beauty, already pre-established" (Ariew, 2000, p.10).

But for Newton, "God sees all things by his immediate presence to...all things in the universe, as the mind of man is present to all the pictures of things formed in his brain" (Ariew, 2000, p.5). And Newton adds that, "God perceives things, not by his simple presence to them, nor yet by his simple operation on them, but by his being a living and intelligent, as well as an omnipresent substance...God discerns things by being present to and in the substances of the things themselves...God perceives things, not by means of any organ, but by being himself actually present everywhere..." (Ariew, p.12, 33&75).

ABASIOKURE NKEREUWEM
FOREKNOWLEDGE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN APPRAISAL

With the above last citation, we come to the end of scholars' contribution to the understanding of divine knowledge in general and foreknowledge in particular, in a logical manner, to be followed by a short remark about virtually all the learned men reviewed in this regard.

It cuts across nearly all of them that the explanation for the mystery of foreknowledge must fit into logical rules of argument otherwise the argument for foreknowledge is rejected despite evidence of common experience to the contrary, thus Peter Geach (as we have seen) says that "human freedom is guaranteed by the fact that the future is not pre-known because there is a logical connection between what is known and the happening of the thing. In that same train of thought, Wittgenstein writes that the freedom of the will is guaranteed in the fact that future events are not yet known, because there is a logical necessity that binds the knower and the known". These positions are objectionable to some extents, because what it means is that humans are not free because many predictions have been coming to pass, since a pre-known future does not guarantee human freedom, which in reality is not correct.

Only few of them think that foreknowledge is not synonymous with fore-ordination, i.e., that knowing the future does not necessarily demand that what is foreknown must happen as God has power to change what is foreknown or, that it is at God's discretion to allow what has been foreknown to stand or change. Honestly speaking, it is a very difficult argument that only practical or common experiences should decide which is correct because Geach's school of thought can retort to the second segment of the argument that God should have also known that he would later use his power to change his mind, since his foreknowledge should be about ultimate or terminal end of things. Lastly on the logical argument for or against divine knowledge of future contingent events, it is necessary to say that that logic itself has its origin in assumption. Thus, it might not solve this problem. To demand that common experiences must fit into logical rule, else the falsity of a position is not the right path to issues like the one in context, as it is analogous to telling a person that the name you bear is not correct except you act like the meaning of the name, which is not applicable. A pragmatic approach should be the way out as the logical argument's requirements overlook the fact of common experience. For me, what God knows come to his messengers as "how the future *could* be" but not "how the future *will* be". Thus, the future as revealed to humans is probable or potential, to give allowance for change and for human freedom, while the ultimate future remains known to God alone.

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