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## Divine Foreknowledge and Human Moral Responsibility (In Defense of Muslim Philosophers' Approach)\*



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### Abstract

According to most Muslim philosophers, Divine foreknowledge, on one hand, is so inclusive that encompasses each and every minor and timed action of moral agents and because of the perfection of God in essence and attributes, any defects in His essence and attributes including any errors in His foreknowledge are impossible. On the other hand, these philosophers, like other defenders of free will, claim that significance of any kind of free will and responsibility of a moral agent depends on their access to alternate possibilities (PAP) and, consequently, their ability to refrain from or do an action simultaneously. This paper aims to deal with this highly debated and fundamental question that whether these two views are essentially in conflict with each other. To answer this pivotal question, based on a modified version of Frankfurt cases and Muslim philosophers' definition of free will, we attempt to defend their initial approach to eliminating the conflict between Divine foreknowledge and free will or moral responsibility and show that, firstly, this infallible knowledge is contingent on the agent's voluntary action, and secondly, despite the principle of alternate possibilities, the agent's moral responsibility does not depend on the person's avoidance of the forthcoming action.

**Key words:** foreknowledge, moral responsibility, free will, Frankfurt, principle of alternative possibilities (PAP)

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### **Introduction**

Undoubtedly, responsibility of moral agents in relation to other beings has been a prerequisite for moral and meaningful life. However, it had been constantly exposed to the threat of epistemic and functional deficiencies of the moral agent, on the other hand. The emergence of modern sciences, especially the advances in physics, neurobiology and psychology and development of descriptive accounts, rather than teleological theories, has given this threat a different appearance, a danger which appeared in the light of knowledge, will, or God's predestination about free will and, as a result, any kind of human responsibility.

Although, Islamic thinkers have not been very interested in independent discussion of moral responsibility, in addition to scattered discussions about the origin and limits of human responsibility, they have attempted to pay special attention to the problem of freedom of the moral agent struggling with the dilemmas such as divine foreknowledge and the necessity of causality; and they have tried to provide a coherent and compatible account of the problem. Since, according to Neil Levy and Michael McKenna, a discussion about moral responsibility has almost the same meaning as the discussion of human's freedom of action and free will (levy and McKenna, 2009, p.97)<sup>1</sup>, Muslims' attitude towards moral responsibility of the agents can be assessed in the light of their approach towards human's freedom regarding the divine providence and foreknowledge or causal necessity and determination in the phenomena of this world.

So, alongside the causal determinism, theological fatalism has also been proposed as a challenge against free will and moral responsibility of human agents. It is clear that the necessity discussed in causal determination of natural phenomena, as stated in the consequence argument (Van Inwagen, 1983, p.56), focuses on past events (P) and natural laws (L), and claims that according to the prior conditions of the world and the laws of nature, occurrence of an event different from what happened would be impossible. So, in causal determinism, "future" will be formed and determined by "past". But in fatalism which comes from divine infallible foreknowledge and providence – regardless of how the past was – future will be as it have to be. So, it seems that causal determinism confirms the correlation and causal ordering between the past and the future and denies its fatalism. But anyway, based on both of these beliefs – causal determinism and theological fatalism – anything that needs to be done would realize and, thus, it seems that concepts like free will and moral responsibility will be false and meaningless.

As mentioned, Islamic thinkers – who always concerned about human responsibility and duties before God – were also encountered with such threats in defending human's obligation and the freedom which is required for that. On one hand, philosophical principles like antecedent causal necessity or impossibility of making a preference without a preference of the nature of existence or existential states of possible being, have appeared as a threat to the freedom of moral agent. In such an attitude, recent part of human's act, i.e. "will", exceeds elements such as

imagination or strict passion that is seemingly out of the realm of agent's will. In other words, Muslim philosophers – like voluntarists – are encountered with this question that whether people's will in doing their apparently free act occur with other will or freedom? Clearly, if the will is occurred with will, and if that continues in the same way, then we encounter an infinite set of wills which is impossible and if these wills stop at a point, then it seems to contradict human's freedom of action.

On the other hand, it seems that the theological fatalism, that comes from the providence and will of God or Divine foreknowledge, has been a serious challenge to free will and human's moral responsibility from the standpoint of Muslim philosophers; because seemingly, certain and infrangible Divine foreknowledge is accompanied by unilateral act of moral agent and ruling out any possible alternatives.

### **Divine foreknowledge**

Divine foreknowledge has been an established and accepted topic among Christian and Muslim philosophers. For example, while there are significant differences among Islamic philosophers and theologians about quality of Divine foreknowledge of His essence and objects of the universe, most of them accept the knowledge of God in both cases. Some of them consider divine knowledge about His own essence and about the creatures as the essence of God and some other consider the knowledge about the essence as the essence, but His knowledge of creatures as the self-dependent forms and out of that, since some of them have accepted God's essential detailed knowledge of creatures, but some others have denied such knowledge and considered former detailed knowledge of creatures outside the essence and substantive, and others have completely denied former detailed knowledge and considered detailed knowledge of creatures to be in the same level of creatures but also as their existence.

Undoubtedly, the main origin of disagreement among the Islamic thinkers is over the nature and its material beings. For example, Sheikh Eshragh is one of those who consider the knowledge of material world as one of the stages of divine knowledge and believe that divine knowledge about the objects and creatures is direct knowledge (Sohrevardi, 1976, p.150-152). He thinks that incorporeal beings are directly known to God, material objects and natural creatures will also be known by God by the same direct knowledge. But oppositely, Ibn Sina considers the matter as a criterion of absence and basically he thinks it is impossible for us to have a direct knowledge about the nature (Ibn Sina, 1984, p.384-385). So, according to him, nature will not be counted as one of the stages of divine knowledge and divine knowledge of them was realized by their incorporeal forms at higher stages and not directly.

Ibn Sina thinks that divine knowledge is a kind of acquired, intrinsic and actual knowledge because, based on his approach, the objective system of the universe – the best system – is dependent to God's scientific system and His scientific system

is an obeyed one which is dependent to His excellent nature. God is knowledgeable about all His effects, because knowing about the cause, as He is the cause, would require knowledge of the effect, thus all kinds of beings are known to Him.

Mulla Sadra thinks that one of the fundamental elements of an object to be known by a knowing agent is presence that even will be the cause of the awareness known to him. By emphasizing the fundamentalist of existence and the gradation of being, he emphasizes that knowledge equals with existence and wherever there is a being, knowledge and consciousness are also realized there (Mulla Sadra, 1981, p.264-269).

According to Mulla Sadra, the first stage of divine knowledge is the status of providence which is the same as knowledge to essence and does not need a place. Creative foreknowledge means divine intrinsic knowledge to objects before creating them and this knowledge is the origin of the occurrence of the objects outside. Ishraqi philosophers deny the occurrence of such knowledge for God, but followers of Aristotelian philosophy accept the creative foreknowledge because it has causality and priority to objects, but they deny the inherency of this knowledge and consider that as those drawn forms added to the excellence imperative nature. This knowledge has an eternal necessity at the stage of nature, and in other words, it's the same as the existence of God that will cause the realization of the existence of possibilities. This process will be interpreted as the realization of objective system by scientific system; it means that since God's knowledge is the same as His nature and His nature is the cause of all objects, so, scientific-divine system of objects at the stage of imperative nature, is the cause of the realization of their objective system.

But the stage of decree is the stage of rational form of creatures which their realization will be done innovatively and timelessly. At this stage, time has no meaning, so making them is endowed with sudden description. Despite other philosophers – who consider these rational forms as possibilities and intrinsically heterogeneous act of the excellence imperative – Mulla Sadra considers them as a necessity to the imperative essence who will come to exist without any creation and any effect and due to this, he knows it as the face of God and not a part of this universe which is an act of God. Although these forms do not have a pure objectivity with the imperative nature, but they also do not have absolute otherness and so they are exempt from any kind of substantial, intrinsic and potential possibilities, and because of the absence of substance at this stage, the plurality of concepts in it does not result in multiplicity of stage.

The third stage of God's knowledge is the stage of destiny. At this stage, sensual forms are known to God and, unlike the verdict stage which was the status of population and unity, this stage is the status of plurality and difference, because each of the sensual forms has its own special measure. Therefore, changing, multiplication, elimination, and proof will reach this stage. At this stage, each one has its own special time and there is no change in its transposition. In this regard, God's intimates who have full knowledge of the cause-effect system and the

features of this universe, never wish any kind of transposition; because they know that the system of this universe is infrangible.

Anyway, Mulla Sadra believes that God is an immaterial essence and we can't consider the material and variable nature of the universe as a stage of his knowledge. According to the followers of Aristotelian philosophy, matter and belonging to matter prevent things to be known. In this regard, material things can never be known directly and this rejects Sheikh Ishragh's theory that says material things are present before God. Obviously, if we think that God's knowledge of materials is realized in the world of ideas and on the tablet of elimination and substantiation by existing cognitive forms, this knowledge to materials would be explained in a justifiable way (Mulla Sadra, 1981, p.296). In fact, the way of knowing about material things is acquired by having relations with their scientific forms, and basically understanding materials is the same as these relations with immaterial forms in the world of ideas, so that materials are the attenuated and degraded stage of incorporeal truths and excellent creatures. So, according to the stages of divine foreknowledge and based on transcendental wisdom, we can state divine foreknowledge of objects, which has two main stages, as follows:

God's essential knowledge of objects which is a collective knowledge as well as detailed revealing.

God's detailed actual knowledge of objects which has two steps:

Detailed actual knowledge at the stage of reason which is completely exempt from change and conversion and we know it as the stage of decree, and divine tablet.

Detailed actual knowledge at the stage of self (soul) that always accompanies changes and revivals and is interpreted as tablet of elimination and substantiation.

Consequently, unlike Sheikh Ishragh who knew the world to be in two stages of material world and incorporeal world that both are known to God by their nature and God has presental knowledge of both, Mulla Sadra only believes in God's presental knowledge to the world of incorporeal things (including rational and ideal), while he does not accept such a knowledge for material world because all rational and ideal incorporeal beings have scientific existence and because of this they can show up in the presence of God. However, the parts of the material world are absent from each other and have no presence for themselves and can't have presence for others but themselves. In fact, the cognitive form of these materials which are incorporeal will become known and, as a result, the material things themselves will be known by accident.

Nevertheless, as we have seen in Nelson Pike's account, God is essentially omniscient and has this feature of absolute knowledge in all the worlds He exists in (Pike, 1993, p.130). Thus, it is impossible for God to exist but not know everything. In mere all-knowing, S is omniscient if and only if for each proposition P, S knows that P is true or false. But such a notion of knowing everything would not guarantee that whether the omniscient being makes any mistakes or not. This



omniscient being does not make any mistakes in any of his beliefs, although it had been possible that some of his beliefs to be wrong and he be not a person who knows everything anymore. But in assuming a God who knows everything essentially, not only he knows absolutely everything about the creatures and their moods and actions, but he might not be any being other than this. Therefore, no mistakes can't find a way in God's beliefs in any possible worlds, and apparently whatever is necessary for this intrinsic absolute knowledge should be realized anyway.

### **Freedom and human's moral responsibility**

Undoubtedly, the reaction of philosophers of ethics confronting this challenge is different depending on their stands on right action and moral necessity. By this challenge we mean the relation between freedom of will and moral responsibility of human beings with infallible divine foreknowledge. For example, from utilitarianist point of view, the compatibility of such an extensive knowledge with the responsibilities of moral agents will be acceptable in the case of profitability of others, because based on this perspective, the ultimate criterion of right action, mistake and moral necessity is the principle of profitability, therefore regarding moral agents responsible or praising or blaming them will be justified only by considering the consequence of the action, i.e. the amoral value which is made and general dominance of the good over the evil. So, if by praising or punishing the agent, some good results like public welfare would be achieved, then such an action would be justified, even if he didn't have indefinite and free will and in fact he didn't have such a responsibility. But considering the difficulty of determining humans' general attitude toward right action or moral necessity and basing it on human's psychological type, the relativity derived from different approaches would not produce any good results for this discussion and we will still encounter the challenge that God knew before our birth that what will happen in our lives and, on the other hand, God's beliefs are definitely true necessarily and so their falseness is impossible, therefore our current actions would be certain and inevitable and, consequently, responsibility or reward and punishment for them would be meaningless and nonsense. Undoubtedly, neither we can change this fact that "before our birth, God knew what would happen in our lives", nor the necessary truth of God's beliefs and nor this fact that "if, before our birth, God knew everything that would happen in our lives, then our current actions would happen anyway". It seems that this argument results in the denial of humans' free will and moral responsibility. According to Jorjani:

Whatever God knows that His creatures will not do is impossible for them to do, because otherwise, his knowledge would not be truthful. And any of their actions he knows they would be realized is necessary and certain to be done and impossible to avoid, otherwise God's knowledge would be ignorance. Therefore, humans' actions are based on two states: 1- impossible, 2- necessary; and whatever is not out of the scope of impossibility and necessity, will not be an optional action

and, as a result, what was the requirement of believing in the "creation of actions" would also entangle the opponents of this principle, though not for the creation of actions, but regarding the foreknowledge of God, which makes human actions necessary of impossible (Jorjani, 1991, p.154).

So, if you are reading this paper now, and at some past time ( $t_1$ ) God had an infallible knowledge that you will do exactly this action at this moment ( $t_2$ ), it seems that you'll not have an alternate against this foreknowledge which is necessarily true; because if you refuse to do the act and for example rest at  $t_2$  instead, then Divine foreknowledge had not been in accordance with the truth and this would result in ignorance and defect in Divine nature. On the other hand, according to some Islamic philosophers, freedom of the agent means "the agent is so that if he wishes to do something he will do that and if he does not wish he will not do" (Mirdamad, 2001, p.94; Ibn Sina, 1984, p.173; Mulla Sadra, 1981, p.307), therefore the absence of alternate possibility is equivalent to eliminating free will and freedom of action and, as a result, eliminating any kind of moral responsibility for the action performed.

Different answers had been proposed against this argument over time. One way to weaken this argument is to doubt in the content of the knowledge regarding the future. Since Aristotle, the value of the truth of possible future propositions have been argued by different philosophers, so that some of them have considered these theorems to be false, and some others have believed that these propositions do not have a certain truth value. Therefore, considering propositions that imply something will happen or some state will occur in future do not have truth value or false value and, thus, if P is such a proposition, then the sectional composition of " $P \vee \sim P$ " is neither true nor false. In fact, the truth value of these future propositions will be determined when the state in question occurs.

Some philosophers also believe that even if possible future propositions have truth values, God still does not know the future infallibly. By defending the theory of "openness of God", Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, and David Basinger emphasize that the Christian classic view about a God who knows the probable future is challenging and controversial in terms of philosophy as well as the Scriptures (Pinnock, 1994). By this approach, we encounter an open sense of God that if, on the one hand, it is demanded and loved by people, on the other hand, it completely has sensations, it is changeable and it will be affected and mortified against humans' decisions and actions temporally. Clearly, such a God would not have infallible foreknowledge which would probably be in contradiction to free will and human responsibility. In this view, though God has knowledge and awareness about everything that may be perceived logically, He does not have any infallible knowledge about the truth of all the propositions and, for example, He does not have an infallible knowledge about the case that you do not know whether tomorrow you would get up exactly seven minutes after your waking up or not.

But certainly this solution means accepting the defect and discarding the idea that God has absolute foreknowledge. Both when we deny the truth value of

possible future propositions and when we do not consider them belonging to God's infallible knowledge by assuming the truth value of the propositions, we have surrendered to the two-bound defect, just as philosophers like Khaje Tousi, in fact, deny the former knowledge of God by transferring Divine foreknowledge to a passive knowledge of a narrator and, therefore, succeeding its followed possible existence (Helli, 1984, p.239).

But the other common solution that tends to read out and correct one party, i.e. infallible Divine foreknowledge, from the controversy claimed between Divine foreknowledge and moral responsibility of human, has attracted the late Muslim philosophers. In this Augustine approach, foreknowledge of God is an inclusive and comprehensive knowledge which is also attributed to human action, both to close, middle and far bases of that act like the power and freedom of choosing among alternate options (Mir Damad, 1995, p.472; Mulla Sadra, 1981, p.358; Mesbah, 2000, p.144). Therefore, although God knows our actions, this knowledge and awareness is a comprehensive and inclusive knowledge that includes all the preliminaries and accessories of that action. God knows that person A will do action B at time C, but because A will do B with his own freedom, the exact and complete implication of Divine foreknowledge is that "person A will do B at time C with his own freedom". Thus, a requirement of such knowledge is that A particularly will do B at C, and that action is not performed under compulsion or coercion but freely and consciously, because lack of such necessity is the same as having no other requirements like time condition or the condition of doing a certain action which is in conflict with infallible Divine foreknowledge.

But some philosophers like Taftazani have argued that this answer is not very helpful, for such an absolute and complete image of God's knowledge requires that He foreknows that what choice we finally make among the available alternatives, thus it is impossible for us to avoid that action. In other words, the agent which is designed to be free, is distressed and helpless to choose and actualize what is ultimately included in the knowledge of God, because tending and choosing an option other than what should be happened according to the Divine former knowledge will result in the fallibility of that knowledge and God's ignorance. So, for example, while God knows that Ali, with all his thoughts and tendencies, will finally eat eggs for breakfast tomorrow, in fact, he does not have any other choice to do otherwise. So, on the one hand, such an agent is free according to Divine foreknowledge and, on the other hand, he is bound and compelled to make a certain choice. Proposing this plausible solution, according which former knowledge of God includes the act of that person while including power and freedom as well, Taftazani rejects that as follows:

In this case, it is necessary that the act be done by the ability and freedom of the person, so that he may not be able to avoid that action, and that is what we mean by saying that such an image of action will finally bring the agent under compulsion;... optional action means that while intending to do something, the agent has also the ability not to do that action (Taftazani, 1989, p.232).



Besides this traditional and famous objection, sometimes other objections were also suggested. For example, according to one of these critiques, based on the theoretical framework of Islamic philosophers, our demand is the recent part of the complete cause and this means that the absolute cause is composed of different parts that one of them is our will and the other parts are things other than that. Now, the question is that why we should not regard the action involuntary, by considering other parts of complete cause (which are involuntary). If optionality of any part, is the criterion and permission for us to consider an action voluntary, then why we should not presume it compulsory and unavoidable based on the non-optionality of other parts? Definitely, it is not enough to say that the will is the complement of other parts and if it is absent, they will be remained at the level of incomplete cause. We can also make this claim for each and every one of those part; if the agent had freedom but any special condition or part of the cause were not actualized, the causes would not be completed and the action would not occur (Tavakoli, 2011, p.124-125).

Though according to Muslim philosophers' approach to the origins and requirements of voluntary action, both the critique of Taftazani and the critiques like the recent one are all justifiable, so such a fact like moral responsibility will be excluded, but by accepting the improvements in the common view of Muslim philosophers about the truth and requirements of the freedom of moral agent and building it on alternate and open possibilities for agent (Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP)), we can conquer challenges like former ones and we can also defend human's moral responsibilities.

#### **Frankfurtian Rule**

Harry Frankfurt challenges the common sense of freedom in PAP for moral responsibility in a seminal paper titled as "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibilities," (Frankfurt, 1969, p.829-839) and he tries, by his own famous examples, to show that we can easily imagine agents that, despite their obvious moral responsibility, they have not been able to act in any other way at all. So, while in some cases of hypnosis or internal determinism, we are encountered with conditions in which the agent is both forced to do a special action and also it is impossible for him to act in other way, and according to PAP, his moral responsibility is meaningless, it cannot be ignored, "in some cases, there are conditions that do not compel a person to do an action, but make it impossible for him to avoid doing that action and, after all, the agent would be considered responsible morally" (Frankfurt, 1969, p.830).

Therefore, based on Frankfurt approach, freedom and responsibility of moral agent is not necessarily bound to the principle of alternative possibilities and the ability to avoid the upcoming action. So, even if Divine former and infallible knowledge requires eliminating alternate possibilities and making actions unilateral for a person, still we can consider him significantly responsible from moral view for doing or not doing an action.

Now, to be more familiar with Frankfurt algorithm, consider the example of "wretched mayor" that Fischer and Ravizza pointed to in "Responsibility and Inevitability" in 1991 and here we review it with a little change:

Let's suppose that Babak is really dissatisfied with the tax plans of the mayor of his city and because he thinks he has no choice to persuade him, he decides to kill him. Although these explanations seem unjustified and unacceptable, they are justified and acceptable for himself and, of course, Babak is neither hypnotized nor brainwashed and he is not under the pressure of someone else, but he has reflected with complete compassion and tranquility and has planned such a project to assassinate the mayor. He has also told his best friend – Ahmad – about his plan. Certainly, Babak is a bad guy but Ahmad is worse, because – due to his personal vengeance of the mayor – not only he is completely satisfied with Babak's plan, but also he considers a more dangerous plan. He worries that what if Babak be hesitant about his decision, so he embeds a component secretly in Babak's that makes it possible for Ahmad to control all his brain actions and, whenever needed, interferes with them. This component works by stimulating the brain electronically, and Ahmad, by putting this in his brain, aims to make Babak commit the assassination in case he gives up his first decision.

Anyway, Babak and Ahmad go to the Municipality Hall together, and according to the plan and without any doubt, Babak assassinates the mayor and Ahmed does not intervene in this assassination (Fischer and Ravizza, 1991, p.258-259).

Clearly, according to Frankfurt law in this case, Babak is morally responsible for assassination of the mayor and he deserves to be blamed, although he had no other alternate possibility and he could not avoid doing this action. Because if he gave up his decision, then the piece which is embedded in his brain by Ahmad will make him do the assassination. So, in the cases where the element undermining the responsibility affects the alternate process of the action, and the de facto process of the action is not affected by it, the agent will have moral responsibility for his action, although despite the PAP, he cannot act otherwise, because if it was not for Ahmad and his embedded component, still Babak would do the same action.

Now, we consider another example that different forms of it can be seen in the works of many proponents and opponents of Frankfurt. We call this example "Presidential Election".

Imagine that Reza is a dexterous neurosurgeon with special political tendencies. In 1996, during a surgery on Ali's brain for removing his brain tumor, he embeds a piece in Ali's brain experimentally for great political motives in the future in order to have control on and supervise his political and social activities. Ali knows nothing about it. Reza does this observation and control Ali's brain by his advanced and complicated computer. He applies the most supervisory on Ali's behavior during the 1996 Iranian Presidential Election. According to the considered plan, if Ali had tendency to vote for candidate A, in this case the computer will intervene by the piece inside Ali's brain, and persuade him to decide for candidate B and will vote for him actually. But if Ali decides independently and

to vote for B by himself, then the computer does nothing, but it continues this supervision on Ali's brain without Ali knowing that. Suppose that Ali independently decides to vote for candidate B, just as if Reza did not put the piece in his brain.

It seems that here we can also consider Ali to be morally responsible for his choice and action in voting for candidate B, and also we can think that he deserves reactional behaviors. However, we can see not only Ali could not act in other way but also he could not decide otherwise. But, in Frankfurt view, he is free in his de facto decision-making and according to his own reasons he has made such a decision consciously.

It is obvious that different Frankfurt examples are presented in an unusual setting; because more or less we are sure that commonly in our daily actions there are not conditional and unreal interferers like Reza (in presidential election case) and Ali (in wretched mayor example). But these unfamiliar examples all suggest this approved Frankfurt principle that, in any case, in common actions and behaviors in life, human's moral responsibility does not need agent's access to the alternate possibility<sup>2</sup> and bilateral control on his action and alternate action, but a minimum and unilateral control will also be sufficient for investigating moral responsibility of individuals. In other word, Frankfurt interferers do not play any roles in how de facto trends are triggered and we can easily cut them from the examples, so everything will return to the previous routine and will result in the same thing. Therefore, if a fact is unrelated to the nature of stating a man's action in this form, it seems mentioning it in evaluating the agent's moral responsibility is completely inappropriate and inconsiderable. Reza (in the example of 1996 presidential election) is apparently just a counterfactual interferer that if the agent had any tendency to choose and act otherwise, he would intervene and assure the desired result. Of course this does not happen and there will not be any manipulation or intervention by Reza. So, the counterfactual interferer that does not do any de facto action to affect the discussed causal trend, will be completely unrelated to the agent's moral responsibility; because moral responsibility is a subject about the occurrences of *de facto* trend – and not the occurrences of alternate processes.

### **Examining Frankfurt argument**

Now the question is that whether Frankfurt has been successful in violating PAP and other similar principles that make moral responsibility dependent to the ability of the agent to do an alternate action?

To answer this question, regardless of some ambiguities that require another time to examine, we saw that according to Frankfurt examples and their main claims, agent's free will and moral responsibility are not dependent to the alternate possibility and the agent's ability to avoid de facto action at all. To evaluate this claim, consider the examples below. First, we review "accident!":

"Ahmad starts his car and begins to drive. He does not know that a criminal band has broken his car so that if he wants to stop his car or turn or ... after

setting it in motion, he could not do that. While he is driving unaware of the defect, he reaches a pedestrian who is accidentally the one who he hates him and at that moment he is passing across the street. Ahmad does not even think for a moment to stop, turn, or reduce the speed, he just goes on and hit the pedestrian and kills him."

As we can see in this example, if Ahmed wanted an alternate action, he did not actually have such control and opportunity. However, he could decide not to collide with the pedestrian by his car. But, in "accident2", this criminal gang not only wrecks his car but with the help of a dexterous neurosurgeon, they also control all Ahmad's brain waves by a chip in the car near Ahmad's head, in order to dissuade him when he is making such a decision by which he wants to avoid doing that action. Of course, Ahmad himself makes the decision which is desired by the gang and collides with the pedestrian because of hatred and grudge.

In this example, Ahmad has lost the external alternate possibility and also he does not have the power to make the required decision to do the alternate action. He even cannot decide to prevent this accident. Now, in the last example "accident3", Ahmad is driving with the same previous condition, i.e. in a car that cannot reduce its speed, cannot stop, and cannot turn because of the technical defect made by others and also the actions and reactions of his brain and as a result, his decisions and choices are completely under the control of the criminal gang. But exactly a few seconds before reaching the place of accident, he becomes aware of all these conditions by one of his friends who was related to that gang and makes sure that at least in this special condition, he cannot make any decisions opposed to the desire of the group and the accident, so he continues to drive passively without any thinking or decision and at last he collides with the pedestrian.

As it is clear, in all three cases, contrary to the PAP, the agent cannot avoid his action. But do we think the agent does not have any freedom and is free of moral responsibility in all those three examples? Our moral intuition says that, contrary to the PAP, in the first and second examples, despite that moral agent has had not a practical alternate available and he was not able to change the surrounding world, he is completely responsible morally and must be blamed. In "accident1", he could decide not to collide with the pedestrian but he did not because of his malice and wickedness and so in the counterfactual trend, even if the car was not defective, still the accident would happen and in other words, the technical defect in the car has not made a real and determining effect on agent's action. In "accident2", although Ahmad neither can change the direction or speed of the car, nor make a decision to do that, he thinks that he has the power of thinking, choosing and making decisions and finally he makes the decision to collide with the pedestrian by his own will and desire and, therefore, he is responsible for his unpleasant action. But comparing the second example and "accident3", we can see the bug of Frankfurt algorithm according which the existence of alternate does not play any roles in moral responsibility. Although external and annexed alternate (like the first

example) and even internal and side alternate (like the second example) are not necessary for realizing agents freedom and moral responsibility, but undoubtedly it is necessary that the agent thinks that he has available such alternates in a counterfactual process and if he wanted he could decide on an alternate action and perform it. So, in the third example in which agent does not have any alternates and he himself is aware of such a condition, we cannot consider him to be responsible for the accident morally.

So the objection of Almaqased's commentator (Taftazani) regarding Muslim philosophers is based on this irrelevant assumption that the freedom of moral agent needs the de facto and external occurrence of the alternate action and the mentioned action being in double and triple direction, while the imagination of the existence of such an alternate and so a person's deliberate and conscious decision to do something will suffice to count it to be volitional. So, in the recent solution of Muslim philosophers, even if the truth of Divine foreknowledge is dependent to the determination of a special action and the lack of its alternates for the person and as a result practically he is not able to avoid his behavior, but as much as he thinks he has accessible and open alternates and despite the possibility to choose and do it, he chooses the action of de facto trend, this suffices to consider him to be free and responsible. So, contrary to Taftazani, determining what belongs to Divine foreknowledge and agent's lack of real access to the alternates of his actions will not require an individual's compulsion and necessity.

Of course, this improved Frankfurt solution will encounter other challenges. In fact, human's delusions and imaginations also belong to Divine former and infallible knowledge and so only because agent mistakenly thinks he has an alternate available is not a criterion to consider his action voluntary, because this delusion is also inevitable and necessary in the light of infallibility of Divine foreknowledge. Although this predestined defect will limit our approach, we can say that at last this delusion which is inconsistent with the reality will put a kind of freedom of action and freedom in front of the moral agent, a situation we cannot see in the examples lacking such an illusion. In fact, the agent who thinks he may not lie at  $t_1$ , while according to Divine foreknowledge he lies at  $t_1$  and also the mentioned illusion and the result of it are infallibly known by God, will be different from the agent who may not perceive such an opportunity because of the inevitable insanity of lying.

Moreover, about the second defect, we should consider this point that the voluntary action merely means freedom annexation and agent's will about the former parts leading to the realization of action, not that there is not any other sources except for will or freedom. So, completeness of this cause depends on the fact that all its voluntary and involuntary components should be present such as the later cause of part, i.e. agent's will. But the point is that the former sources of this will are involuntary and, as a result, the moral agent can also be attributed to those involuntary and defective causes while it is also attributed to the description of will, and in other words, in fact, will doesn't have willing and inevitably it is



encountered with a will which itself is a result of some completely involuntary components. However, as mentioned before, human intuition distinguishes the action bases on the agent's conscious will and desire despite all involuntary components from the action that is exclusively precedent to a collection of voluntary and urgent sources and origins. There is a difference between the person who despite a preliminary imagination, sometimes unwillingly and involuntarily, has wrongly acknowledged the benefits of lying, and after some deliberation has finally decided to tell a lie, with the person who has to lie because of a mental illness or by the threat of an external agent. This amount of freedom of action is sufficient to call former action voluntary and the latter involuntary. In addition to this, in the interwoven network of beliefs, desires and wills, the occurrence or permanence of these components are voluntary and conscious affairs, although sometimes their sources are unlikely. With the help of former beliefs and desires, a man organizes many of the basic values and beliefs and after that, despite the opportunity of evaluating and measuring these propositions, by insisting on them, he can lead to desires and wills compatible with them.

### **Conclusion**

As we have seen, we still can defend the approach of Muslim philosophers and we can believe that while doing human's voluntary and free actions, what belongs to the infallible Divine foreknowledge is a voluntary action in addition to the set of its accessories and descriptions including the description of action being voluntary. But because of this improvement, we will have to be on the other side of the beliefs of these philosophers that think freedom and moral agent's responsibility do not have basis on the freedom in choosing and mutual and maximal direct action, but sometimes our moral intuition regards the agent as responsible for action, with no de facto alternates available. Of course in modifying Frankfurt examples, we should consider that, although according to the Frankfurt argument, the agent's lack of ability to avoid a special action plays no role in explaining why the action was done by that person and whether he is responsible or not, it is necessary that the alternate absence needs to be unknown to the agent and still he should think that he may possibly avoid doing that action. So moral agent's responsibility is dependent to the fact that despite eliminating external alternates and unnecessary of internal practical alternates like alternate decision making, the man needs to be able to organize an incorrect belief about the ability of direct action or avoiding his own action, and this minimal definition of freedom and ability which are required by moral responsibility will not be in conflict with infallible Divine foreknowledge.

### **Notes**

1. Although, some philosophers, like Ted Warfield, think that the controversy about these two having the same meaning has not been reasonable, potential compatibility of operative moral responsibility with causal determination does not require the

- compatibility of free will with the antecedent causal necessity. see: T. Warfield, "Compatibilism and Incompatibilism: Some Arguments," In the Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics, ed. M. Loux and D. Zimmerman, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.621.
2. I For futher consideration about agent's ability to act in other way and don't making moral responsibility on such a possibility see:  
- Daniel C. Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will, Worth, Wanting*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, pp. 131-152

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