

Omniscience, Freedom, and Mystery

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The text published below¹ is the translation of a part of this published article: *Il Dio che rischia e che cambia: introduzione all'Open Theism*, in *Nuovo Giornale di Filosofia della Religione* (2018), online.

https://www.filosofiadellareligione.it/images/Bibliografia/PDF/Migliorini_Dio_che_rischia_introduzione_allOpen_Theism_DEF.pdf

The issue of omniscience is one of the most debated in contemporary Analytical Philosophy of Religion. However, what is often lacking in this discussion is a deep understanding of the dilemma of omniscience and human freedom within a complete epistemological (what can we really say about the divine and the world), metaphysical and theological framework. For example, it is often forgotten to frame some issues within a clear definition of the notion of mystery.

I defined what we can mean by “mystery” in this forthcoming article: *Trinity and Mystery. Three Models: Aquinas, Leibniz, and Hegel*

In the same article (and also in the first article mentioned above) can be found a reflection on the analogical use of terms, which involve the terms (the notions) of “freedom” and “omniscience”. This use, therefore, could make possible to develop the following argument:

(from the article *Il Dio che rischia e che cambia*, paragraph 5.1)

About omniscience and human freedom, hypothetically, an unexplored path in today’s debate within Analytical Philosophy of Religion and Open Theism supporters, consists in formulating an argument *ex suppositione* very similar to the strategy developed by Aquinas (in line with a venerable apologetic tradition) on the Trinity: given that God exists and is necessarily omniscient in order to be God, and assuming that human beings must be free (in a libertarian sense), we can say that, until the two concepts (omniscience and human freedom) are not evidently in contradiction between them, they remain compatible *ex suppositione*. God knows how in his beatific vision (in his complete theology), but to us the “how” is not given.

We do not know exactly how they are compatible (because we lack the detailed and precise explanation of how divine knowledge and his causation take place: we just talk about them with analogical terms), but a doctrine that is not proven to be contradictory (and here ockhamism and molinism can certainly help to block the argument in favour of the contradictoriness)² can be believed as true. Problems arise where it is assumed that the definition of omniscience and the definition of human freedom are one the negation of the other: at this point we would have no escape from a manifest contradiction (and the doctrine would be contradictory *ex suppositione*).

¹ English version not revised by a proofreader.

² Cf. D. Migliorini, *L'ockhamismo nel dibattito analitico contemporaneo sull'onniscienza divina. Un bilancio*, in «Laurentianum», n. 56, 2015, pp. 33-86; D. Migliorini, *Prospettive del molinismo nel dibattito contemporaneo sull'onniscienza divina*, Verifiche 44 (2015), pp. 71-106.

However, in order to avoid the contradiction, the *analogical use of terms* could be emphasized, recognizing that the knowledge (and his science) of God is infinitely qualitatively different from the human one (due to His simplicity), and that also about human freedom we only have an analogical concept, never completely precise. In the *necessary* ambiguity of the analogical use of terms, therefore, we would also have the possibility of their reconciliation (given that the analogy never allows to express a real contradiction).

The choice between *dialectical theology* (within which a large part of non-standard theisms fall, which in turn are based on the *univocity of being*, therefore of ontological categories) and *analogical theology* is impervious. In fact, it seems that we cannot choose between accepting dialecticity or affirming analogy. If it is recognized that in *Open* and *Classical Theism* the terms freedom, omniscience (etc.) are used with approximation – not having a clear (univocal) concept of neither – then the reconciliation between omniscience and human freedom would be a *non-problem* for theism.

If this is true, the entire theoretical enterprise carried out by *Open Theism* would consist of an awkward attempt to dispel a mystery. A mystery that, on the contrary, can remain credible where it is recognized that the reconciliation between human freedom and divine omniscience (in the analogical use of these terms) is *beyond reason* but not *against reason*.