

The Concept of Will and the Concept of Predestination in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

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I. The Concept of Will

1. The Concept of Will in Judaism

(Shalom Sadik, Ph.D.)

Shalom Sadik, Ph.D., was the first speaker at the conference of the Bavarian Research Center for Interreligious Discourses. Currently, he is senior lecturer at the University in BeerSheva. His topic was the concept of will in Judaism, which he opened with the differentiation between two connected, but not identical subjects: human will and divine will. The lecture focused on the analysis of theological positions regarding both forms of will and their relation towards one another. Sadik stressed the methodological point, that Judaism itself does not have a unified opinion on any philosophical subject. Learning from the positions and arguments of thinkers leads to the understanding of main opinions in Jewish thought at a certain time, however, this does not mean, that there is a definitive Jewish opinion which is valid for all times.

Judeo-Arabic was a language frequently used by Jewish thinkers for the writing of books between the 9th and the 12th century. Therefore, Shadik outlined the two main terms for will used in Judeo-Arabic: *irāda* (אראדה) and *meshaya* (משייה). For many thinkers *fikr* (פכר), which can be understood as cogitation, was essential for human freedom. Analyzing the positions of medieval philosophers such as Dāwūd al-Muqammiṣ (d. 937), Rabbi Saadya Gaon (882–942) and Rabbi Bachya (1255–1340) it becomes obvious that will was not regarded at that time as one of the divine attributes. R. Saadya Gaon came to the conclusion that the existence of a divine will cannot be inferred by the act of creation and it can only be learned that God lives, is powerful and wise. The human will for Saadya is a practical capacity, because human beings are capable of taking choices. Acts, which are based on the choice of a human being, are seen as human will. R. Bachya differs inasmuch as to say that cogitation (פכר) is the only capacity under human control, whereas the human will is subjected to God's power. The human will, therefore, is moved by divine will. Still, neither human will nor divine will play a crucial role in determining their respective action to some of the major philosophers before Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (1075–1141).

According to Sadik, finding a consistent position on human and divine will is even more complicated in the case of Maimonides (1138–1204). Maimonides described cogitation, not will, as the origin of human freedom. He understood the concept of will as a capacity that humans and other beings, like animals, have in common. Unlike animals, human beings can have real freedom due to their cogitation. They can reflect their own actions or decide to stop thinking about reasons for their actions. In the thought of Maimonides, will is the continuation of a process that starts with cogitation and moves the human to act according to his thinking. The concept of will in the thinking of Maimonides underpins the argument for the radical (naturalist) interpretation. Maimonides saw no similarity between divine and human will. While in his understanding human will is motivated by external aims, divine will is motivated only by itself. Therefore, divine will can change its direction according to itself. There are, however, some problems regarding Maimonides' definition of will: He understood will as a practical capacity that moves humans, spheres and animals towards their objectives. In some passages of his book *Guide of the Perplexed* this definition can be related to the divine will. Here, Sadik discussed the implications of a traditionalist in contrast to a radical (naturalist) interpretation on will, which can be differentiated in divine and human will. Maimonides did not attribute cogitation to the divine and he did not propose a divine form of cogitation that is different from human cogitation. Probably, Maimonides didn't want to attribute cogitation to God and understand it at the same time as the source of human freedom. The source of divine freedom for Maimonides was will. According to Sadik's interpretation, Maimonides had the radical opinion that God doesn't actually have free will due to his perfection. To have free will would imply having to go from an imperfect state of undecided will to a decided one, but this is not possible for God. According to Sadik, Maimonides' discussion on divine will can be a base for the definition of will as the source of divine freedom.

In the 13th century there was a significant transition, when the language of Jewish philosophy changed from Arabic to Hebrew due to the Reconquista. There were some losses in the process of translation: The specific meaning of the Judeo-Arabic term for cogitation, *fikr* (פכר), referred to the capacity of soul and was the origin of human freedom. For many thinkers, cogitation was the ultimate source of human freedom, because in their view it only exists in human beings and allows them to study, to think and to reflect. This term changed in its Hebrew translation to *מחשבה*, which was also the translation for the word estimation. This led to a shift in understanding. Estimation understood as a capacity of the soul that is common to humans and animals, and includes the instinct. The change in translation had influence on how Hebrew thinkers understood the opinions of their predecessors.

Even though the majority of Jewish thinkers thought of human will as being the origin of human freedom, the determinist Rabbi Hasdai Crescas (1340–1410) saw will as a crucial capacity which is completely unrelated to freedom. For him, will was the main capacity of the human soul and intellect. The human will can love God, what is the highest action of the soul. According to R. Crescas, human

will can determine if humans act according to the intellect or according to other internal and external causes. Will, however, cannot control the conclusions of the intellect. Human will can act like a truth doesn't exist, but it can't convince the intellect that another incorrect opinion is true. Therefore, religious commandments cannot contain opinions, they must be under the dominion of human will. However, humans are not truly free. They act on behalf of internal and external causes, which influence human beings and can be seen as psychological determinism.

Finally, Sadik took a look on the philosophical development in the modern period. The topic of human and divine will was not crucial in that time, which might cohere with the decline of Jewish philosophy. The modern philosophy on epistemology and the influence of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) can explain why there was little space for analyzing divine attributes. Furthermore, Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677) demonstrated the possibility of being a lay or non-religious Jewish philosopher. Leo Strauss (1899–1973) and Jeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994) are two of the representative modern thinkers, who gave human will a central spot in their religious theory. To understand Strauss' relation to religion, his opinion on divine will and his unique interpretation of Maimonides are essential. In later years Strauss saw Maimonides as a secret atheist. However, Strauss believed unchangingly that a personal God with free will is necessary for all religious belief. He could not conceive of a religion that is based on philosophical knowledge of God, who is too perfect to be free. According to Leibowitz, human will must choose to accept the religious commandments and to practice them, but not for supposedly logical reasons, because then they would become more important than the unadulterated obligation to God. The religious person aims to put the obligation to God above all other priorities. By using the human will without external reason, the person becomes free of the deterministic nature of the world. For Leibowitz, God is transcendent. This is the reason why human beings cannot differentiate between God's nature, his attributes or his will, and can only say what he cannot be or do.

As seen in the lecture of Sadik, the concept of will underwent important changes in Jewish thought. It is not central in the Bible and lacks a clear definition. R. Halevi was the first thinker, who described human will as the origin of human freedom and saw the divine will as an important attribute. In the deterministic thought of R. Crescas human and divine will were sources of perfection. With the 20th century and the uprising of modern philosophy, a transition in thought came into being. Sadik ended with expressing his hope for more explanations on divine and human will, which can explain how divine will is necessary for answering classic theological questions such as the existence of miracles, providence and the purpose of the creation of the world.

This interesting first lecture led to a lively discussion about the relationship between will and intellect in the human cogitation. To what extent are human beings able to control their cogitation? According to Maimonides, they can choose to stop thinking. However, is a human being able to control the

intellect or is he/she controlled by the intellect? One possible answer is that human beings cannot control the essence of the intellect, but they can control their practical acts. A person can act as if he or she knows that it is true, so the practical part is controlled by will. The concept of will is not central in the biblical or rabbinical literature. But the phenomenon of human beings having a will and acting in ways, that are or are not in accordance with the divine will and the commandments, is a basic topic and therefore fundamental for further research.

2. The Concept of Will in Christianity (Dr. Johannes Grössl)

At present, Dr. Johannes Grössl is Assistant Professor of Fundamental Theology and Comparative Studies of Religion at the University of Würzburg. The topic of his lecture was the concept of will in Christianity. In a first step Grössl showed that already in antiquity and church history the term 'will' could be used in ambiguous manners. Also, there is a differentiation between human will and divine will. If the term is attributed to creatures, it can refer to (natural) desire, intentional behavior or rational choice. Linked to the concept of will are also the questions of freedom and free will.

Afterwards, Grössl explained the biblical and philosophical context of the debate. Hellenistic Judaism was influenced on one hand by Jewish tradition, on the other hand by Greek philosophy. In the biblical understanding, the answer to the call of the divine is independent of one's own intellect, so the tradition shows strong voluntarist tendencies. Greek philosophy, however, had strong intellectual tendencies. True freedom in Greek philosophy is understood as doing what is reasonable. The origin of Christian theology was formed by Hellenistic Jewish thinking and Greek philosophy, so it is not surprising that the Christian tradition started off with a strong leading intellectual concept of will and maintained it to medieval times, and in some theological schools even until today. In Greek philosophy there are two forms of will: the rational will in human mind, then again there is an irrational will, coming from desires and natural drives. Sometimes the irrational will takes over, what can be understood as a weakness of will. Grössl referred to Romans 7:15–20. For Paul, not all of the natural desires are sinful, but some are. Therefore, in the Christian tradition the disposition to sin lays in human pride. Greek philosophy was increasingly aware that this does not take moral responsibility into account. In a purely intellectual concept one is either not responsible because of weakness of will, or because of a flawed rationality, but never because of a morally wrong choice. But early antiquity also treated the question of morality already. There was the concept of *gnome*, that had a huge impact in the 7th century on Christian anthropology. *Gnome* designated agency according to the right understanding, which was later called 'gnomic will'. Even though emotional influences were regarded as negatively impaired reason that the person has no control of. However, one exception is the concept *menos* which means willpower and comes very close to the understanding of will in modernity. Moral accountability in Greek philosophy is often associated with lack of willpower. Thus, there is actually a three-part-philosophy: Reason, desires and emotions, and agency. But due to a belief in a natural order of all things, such in Platonism and Stoicism, the two-part-philosophy prevailed. Most church fathers and theologians of the first centuries were strongly influenced by Greek philosophy. As a consequence, the voluntarism in the Old Testament was often misunderstood. Paul's concept of the will was in continuation of the Old Testament, but the Greek language lacked the terminology to articulate this concept. According to Grössl, theologians such as Clemens of Alexandria (around 150–215) and Origin

(around 185–253/4) had a strong intellectual understanding, so human will was associated with reason. With Neo-Platonism came a major change in Greek philosophy, where the will was understood as ontological prior to the intellect, so that one can act against his own reason, which is found in Porphyry (around 234–305). This was adapted by Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who had a huge impact on the understanding of will in Christianity. He adopted the concept of original sin and thought of the will to be free only in its unfallen state. After its redemption by God through grace it will be free again. Important for Augustine is the concept of *voluntas*, which implies the ability to decide independently from the intellect. Human beings have some control over their cognitive faculties. In consequence, they can turn their cognitive faculties towards or against an object before the cognition occurs. This act of will is independent of intellect and emotion.

The controversy in church history about the differentiation of human and divine will shifted in in 6th and 7th century to the relationship between the divine and human will in Christ. The Council of Constantinople 381 claimed that Christ had two wills, one human and one divine, understood as two natural wills in him, that are undivided, inseparable and unmixed. This *dyotheletism* was made official Church doctrine, saying, that the human will has to submit to the divine will, so Christ did not have the power to sin. Maximus Confessor (around 580–662) influenced the understanding of theologians until today, saying, that Christ was fully human, including a creaturely free will, but without power to choose evil. Such a statement is only possible, if one accepts a compatibilist view of free will, which means that having a free will does not entail to choose between opposites. A variety of concepts are important in this discussion: *exousia / autoexousiotes* (which means self-determination), *thelema* (natural will), *proairesis; gnostic will* (the power to choose). From the discussion it can be learned that the Christian concept of will is not a libertarian one, however it stands in a complicated, but nuanced relationship to such a libertarian concept.

Another important and related discussion, Grössl referred to, is the one in Scholastics. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) argued that choice is a function of the will in light of a judgement by the intellect. The will moves the agent towards an action, which is determined by intellect. If human beings don't have power about the functioning of their intellect, they don't have power over their will. Duns Scotus (1266–2308) rejected this intellectualism of Aquinas, because the will would not be free. Will is not determined by the judgement of the intellect. For Scotus, free choice is to act according to the intellect or according to natural desires. Voluntarism was often rejected by what was later called principle of sufficient reason. For many thinkers it was unacceptable to regard the will as inexplicable and mysterious. Scotus lost the rational grounding for understanding why an agent acts as he does. Grössl stated that this may be the price to pay for advancing a theory of free will. There can eventually be no reason for an action, only the fundamental choice of the agent.

According to Grössl, we need to distinguish between the concept of will as a certain psychological inclination and as the power to choose, which is often called free will. An intermediate position between (radical) voluntarism and (radical) intellectualism states that there is a will that inclines persons to follow instincts and passions, and a will that inclines persons to do the rational. Even intellectualists assume, that sometimes the first will drops the second. Moderate voluntarists agree, but they believe that there is a higher order will, which can either be directed towards intellect or desires. Christian voluntarism emphasizes that persons have very little, but some power to choose their higher order wishes. So, there is a choice between reason and (a-rational) inclination. There are different levels of voluntarism. A person might choose an option presented by the intellect or let his or her actions be guided by desire or intellect. A third level of willing is vice and virtues. Vices are not identical with natural inclinations, but they are culturally and individually created instances. Virtues are habits, which are partially under human control. Persons with formed characters do not decide for good deeds, but they do perform them out of habit. Christian voluntarism includes the possibility of irreversible character formation through grace. This grace can do the transformation in a person.

One of the questions in the subsequent debate was, if there is absolute autonomy. The psychological research is clear in the fact, that human beings are influenced, inter alia, by their upbringing, the social environment and also hormones. Even if habits are influenced by surroundings, human beings are free in changing their habits. Even if persons are not free in their actions, they are free in their attitude towards the actions.

3. The Concept of Will in Islam (Prof. Dr. Heidrun Eichner)

Professor Dr. Heidrun Eicher, who is currently Professor of Oriental and Islamic Studies in Tübingen started her lecture by showing the problems of a discourse guided by “Western” concepts. 1. The concept of free will is not prominent in classical (Sunni) sources, therefore it is not guiding the autochthonous discourse. The Arabic term *al-qaḍā’ wa-l-qadar* is more accurately translated as ‘decree and destiny’ than as ‘free will and predestination’. 2. Islamic discourse properly speaking (*kalām*) emphasizes a theory of action, not psychology or psychological dimensions of decision making. The theological discourse nevertheless does not subscribe to determinism but rather to compatibilist solutions. 3. Nonetheless, determinist conceptions (about God and human actions) are prevalent in the ḥadīths, which are transmitted reports from the prophet. In the historical perspective two different discourses can be distinguished, according to Eichner. On the one hand there is a tension between destiny and God’s free will, and on the other hand there is the tension between freedom of God or God’s will and the will of human beings, which led into a theory of actions. Emanating from this discourse the lecture followed the question, how the Islamic theological discourse on a theory of action leads to an increased interest in psychological dimensions of (free) will.

As basis of the topic, the formation of relevant groups in Islamic theology was pointed out. The formation of rational theology is ascribed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who died in 728. In his treatise on divine decree (*qadar*), he understands arbitrariness and injustice of the authorities as the will of God, which the people should endure in patience. But he denied the authorities to justify their arbitrariness with the *qadar* of God. According to al-Baṣrī, evil cannot be ascribed to God, in fact every sinner is responsible for his or her own actions. Important for the formation of a corpus of traditionalist ḥadīth was the Abbasid Revolution in 750. During the revolution, sayings of the prophet related to the topic were used in-political contexts, what increased the awareness of scholars for their authentication. In the 9th century the written transmission was established. This led to a canonical collection of ḥadīth.

In Qur’ān the concept of will is ambiguous. Some Suras suggest, that God’s free will is opposite to the human free will. There are also deterministic tendencies, which stress God’s free will. There might be the question, if his will could extend to evil, e.g. [Q 6:2]: “It is He who created you of clay, then determined a term and a term is stated with him; yet thereafter you doubt.” The Qur’ān has also verses, which combine the will of God with divine guidance, e.g. [Q 16:93]: “If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but He leads astray whom He will, and guides whom He will; and you will surely be questioned about the things you wrought.” In Islamic theology, it is not only relevant to analyze Qur’ānic statements, but also statements on the concept in the ḥadīth. The ḥadīth have more deterministic tendencies than the Qur’ān, so that privileging ḥadīth as a source means privileging determinism over early *kalām* and *Shī’ī* theology. There are different theological opinions on this

subject in different intellectual milieus. The traditional determinism is supported for example by Wensinck. He doesn't think that the tradition has preserved ḥadīth-statements that include the idea of free will. In his statement he refers to canonical ḥadīth-collections which were formed in 880 and later. Van Ess on the other hand states that some traces are preserved in *Shī'ī*-sources, which need a historical and political contextualization. He refers, inter alia, to the works of ash-Shaykh al-Mufīd (948/50–1022). The emergence of rationalist theology is closely associated to this debate. According to Eichner, a conceptual refinement over time has to be noticed: Many theologians emphasize a "middle way." Therefore, they describe themselves as compatibilists, and espouse for an emphasis on a theory of action.

The perception of the concept within different Islamic schools of thought differ. The theological discussion is mostly led within the framework of the theory of action. The Arabic term *qudra* means 'the ability to act' and refers to a precondition for action within the atomist ontology, which also includes an atomist conception of time. On the human side there is a distinction between two forms of a theory of action: In the Mu'tazilī conception *qudra* precedes an action and therefore includes elements such as motivation, physical fitness etc. In the Ash'arī conception *qudra* exists together with action and free choice. It means to choose between options created by God in a given moment. There is not a causality extending between time A and time B. God himself creates the action. In the Islamic schools of thought the discourse on free will and determination is framed as decree and destiny and therein differs from the discourse in Christian and Jewish theology.

There were different entanglements between Islamic Theology and (Aristotelian) Psychology. At around 800 the earliest layers of Mu'tazilī theology developed. The interplay with the early Graeco-Arabic translation movement are up to today unclear. Still, a psychological anthropomorphism in Mu'tazilī theology arose. At the turn of the millennium the theory of action and a faculty of psychology emerged, influenced by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āmirī (913–992) and Ibn Sīnā (980–1037), who is also called Avicenna. This was linked to a theory of internal senses. The scholastic tradition was then formed around the year 1200. In this time the Avicennian concept of God as necessary existent developed. The debate was focused on the contradiction of necessary action and the divine will. In 1250 the scholastic tradition and the Avicennian psychology found entrance into the *Shī'ī*-Tradition and became also known to the Sunni authors.

Al-Āmirī wrote the paper *Inqādh al-bashar min al-jabr wa-l-qadar*, where he explicitly discusses *kalām* positions in the framework of Neoplatonic concepts. He stated, that the *Shī'ī* Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and Abū Ḥanīfa (699–767) both agreed on a middle way, where action is combined with motivation. An action can result from necessity or voluntarily. The reason for an action out of necessity can lay either in force or in nature. If the action is voluntary, it can be caused either by thought (*fīkr*), then it is

intelligible, or by desire (*shawq*), which makes it sensible. In the 13th century al-ʿĀmirī's treatise circulated among the students and influenced thus the formative period of (modern) Muʿtazilī theology. An impact on the theory of will in the Muʿtazilī theology was made by al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who died in 1024. For al-Jabbār will is not identical with the object of a will. Furthermore, will is not identical to desire and wish. To love something, to agree, to choose or to be friendly to another person are states that are reduced to the state of will. Al-Jabbār stated, that will does not necessitate an action. Therefore, God's will is not pre-eternal. In the doxographical phase Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (873–936) and Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (850–934) thought of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and power (*qudra*) to be identical to the God's self. Will (*irāda*), however, was an action (*fiʿl*) and not identical with the self of God, because it can be negated.

For Eichner, a future field of enquiry is the conceptual refinement in doxographical reports and in Muʿtazilī concepts. Another interesting topic of research is the psychological anthropomorphism which contains a theory of divine attributes and a psychology of divine will.

In the discussion following, the important role of al-Fārābī (872–950) was also stressed. In his works he deals with the question of will and the role the human will on directing or misguiding the community. This field is intensively received. Maimonides stated, that everything that al-Fārābī writes is "pure flour" and can be trusted. Furthermore, it was pointed out, that talking about the concept of will includes free will, even though both concepts should not be equated. Further topics that should be dealt with in Islamic Theology are the qurʿānic discourse of the relationship between human and divine world and of the will of humans and the will of God.

Concluding Discussion on the Concept of Will

In the concluding discussion following the three lectures the differing concepts of will in all three monotheistic religions and related questions were discussed.

Debating historical questions first, it was pointed out that Maimonides stressed the idea that the incorporeal intelligences have an aspirational kind of love for the higher reality that they know. The spheres are moved by their higher intelligence. They are conscious and they move things and are responsible for that. They are in animals, in God and also in human beings. Therefore, a related topic might be the discussion of the relation between the will of animals and the will of God. Theological positions state, that the will of animals is subsidiary to the will of God. The animals don't disobey God's will at all. However, it is difficult to talk about what God pleases and how to behave according to his will, because maybe God doesn't want or need anything in particular.

Another important topic coming up was the concept of love. In medieval philosophy, there were two concepts of love: 1) The concept of love as related not only to will, but also to intellect. Love, therefore, has a function of knowledge. If one does not have knowledge, he or she cannot love, because only those things can be loved, that persons have knowledge of. Representatives of this opinion were Maimonides and al-Fārābī. 2) According to the other concept, love is a function of the will and not of intellect. These two asymmetrical positions show how thoroughly the concept of will is related to other concepts such as love and desire. Some theologians could not think of will without relating it to the concept of love. The concept of intellectual love was also prominent in Christianity in the neo-platonic tradition and also in eastern forms of Christianity, which were considered as deeply neo-platonic in the discussion. The relation of love and freedom was a matter vividly discussed. Love, one participant argued, is also matter of psychology and rationality, but the core of love is freedom. This can be seen in Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, but also in Maimonides. The participant pointed out, that one has to pursue that kind of love. Knowing who God is, a person is able to love God. Therefore, knowledge is the root of the love, and the love intensifies the knowledge. Love and knowledge are connected together. An integrated personality has both. Maimonides is an exponent of the rational mystic tradition. According to Maimonides, one seemingly has the free choice to follow dogmatic technique or pursue knowledge and learn what it takes to appreciate God properly in his manifestations of wisdom and creation. A possible relation between the two was shown by an interesting example: If a mother loves her child, is it a greater love if she can stop her love any time, or are love and freedom stronger, if she can't stop loving the child? This can be referred to the love of God. Is God's love greater if he can stop loving us or is his love based on his decision to love us? Could he have created a world and decided not to love us? This paradox can only be answered by saying that love does not need freedom at any time, but maybe it requires a character formation towards love. In the past, character formation involved free

action towards this formation. People form their character to being able to love one another. Subsequently, the will could be formed by the free will to be not free again. This is a new discussion of free will, which would involve character formation. One participant referred to Maimonides again, who thought of love as being determinist. According to him, a person either has love or doesn't have love. The persons don't have a choice to love or not to love and accordingly they can't use their free will on that. This discussion about the relation of will, love and freedom, demonstrated the difficulty of setting limits to this topic. The discussion participants agreed that on a conference about will the main focus should be laid on free will, but other related notions might also be taken into account. This correlates with the questions, which traditions should be taken into account. This difficulty can be found in every one of the three religions, since there is a variety of theological schools in history and, at the same time, different religious or denominational schools within every religion.

In their lectures, the researchers analyzed the positions of different theologians from various traditions. Therefore, the question arose, how they assess the interest of the different theologians in determinism. Reason for the question was the observation that for some of those figures, determinism didn't seem to be a significant concern, even though they contribute to a discussion about it. Examples therefore are Luther and Calvin, who consider themselves as determinists. They remark that they believe in divine determinism, and this might be important in the background, but they don't mention it often. It seems that Christian theologians are less interested in a global determinism, but rather in particular forms of determinism, like particular forms of divine grace for example. Al-Fārābī treated the topic thoroughly and Maimonides also estimated it as important. He wanted to establish the thought that God is not determined by his own perfection, but that he can act freely. Therefore, the idea of an open future is an important topic for Maimonides.

II. The Concept of Predestination

1. The Concept of Predestination (Professor Lenn E. Goodman, Ph.D.)

The second day of the conference started with a talk by Professor Lenn E. Goodman, Ph.D., on the concept of predestination in Judaism. Goodman is an American philosopher. Currently he is an Andrew W. Mellon Professor in Humanities at Vanderbilt University. For his work and his political awareness, he received several prizes such as the Baumgardt Memorial Award and the Earl Sutherland Prize. Goodman started his lecture with the statement that Judaism is uncomfortable with the assumption of predestination. This suggestion originates from his research, the analysis of different sources such as the bible or rabbinical works. To prove his assumption and to make his biblical interpretation transparent, he firstly took a look at biblical passages. Relevant figures are the prophets of the Hebrew Bible. God said to Jeremiah (Jer 1:5): “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” When reading this passage, one has to realize, according to Goodman, that Jeremiah himself undercuts the idea of predestination. Jeremiah doubts his own capability, so that there is preparation needed, which is shown in the symbol of God touching Jeremiahs mouth. Jeremiah is expected to convey a message, but it is not a mere forecast of an inevitable event, but an admonition. Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible exposes the dynamic of an action by calling it the intent of those who must face judgement. The outcomes of actions, which are created willfully or unaware, can be changed. Prophetic warnings can lead to proper actions. The beginning of Isaiah 49 states, that the prophet is destined for his role, he can change the course of history, when he turns the heart of people and nations. Maimonides interpreted that Isaiah is not helpless in front of a determined destiny, his affirmation is rather based in trust of God, who sends him as a messenger and protects him. As a consequence, the understanding of a destiny changes to the idea of a God-given mission, which has to be accepted by the prophet, and people have to hear him. When looking at the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah it becomes evident that God has a plan and that his message serves his plan. But the message is only prescriptive and needs an active response from the person hearing it.

Goodman shifted from the question of the role of the prophets to the fate of the people hearing the prophetic message. An election can be assumed of those that are chosen to hear God’s message and are faulted for not listening of it. In Deuteronomy, Moses undercuts the idea of fate and fatalism. God’s imperatives are not hidden or out of reach, but within reach of human action. The future, as shown to the people of Israel in the desert is not fixed, but dependent on human choices. Maimonides (1138–1204) explained in his book *Guide to the Perplexed* that God has the power to alter human inclination, but he doesn’t do so. It is a core principle for God that he doesn’t choose to intervene, since this would

also make the sending of his prophets and giving the Torah obsolete. Human beings have the right for their choices due to free will and therefore they are subjects to commandments.

An important Jewish institution linked to the topic is Sabbath, which gives a foretaste of immortality. The day of rest is a touch of transcendence. Sabbath, according to Maimonides, attests God's reality and the providence that liberated Israel from slavery in Egypt. It therefore indicates not only God's work, but also God's freedom. He is free from his function and we also become beings that are worth being their own selves with their desires and needs.

Ancient myths have often connected thoughts of predestination with tablets of fate, which are inscribed eternally. The mosaic Torah reflects and rejects such a notion. When God informs Moses about the idolatry of the people of Israel, who worship the golden calf, Moses declines God's offer to become father of another nation that he could lead. He confesses and pleads for it, even though it has sinned against God, who recently liberated Israel from Egypt. Moses is ready to be erased from the book of God, so he is loyal to his people. Here Goodman showed the difference between ancient myths and the biblical understanding. In biblical understanding, fate is not inscribed eternally, the book of God can be changed, names can be deleted, perhaps by one's own choice as Moses offered. The past is fixed, but the future is open, and the present is the space of choice and action. Rashi (1040–1105), a great exegete, said that this implies that Moses is ready to be erased from the Torah. Another exegete thought, Moses was talking about the book of life, which is mentioned in Isaiah 4:3. According to Goodman, this means that Moses asks God to cancel his mission, if he could not forgive his people. Central is the thought that fortunes are revisable, an image, which is overlaid on images of destiny in the poem *Unetaneh Tokef* cited on Yom Kippur. Goodman cited the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who was a chief rabbi of the U.K. and lived from 1948 to 2020. He wrote a precise analysis of this poem, which can be described as one of the greatest poems in Jewish prayer. The judgement, pictured in it, is individual and moral, not communal or arbitrary. Sacks describes the situation of the judgement in a way, that in the end it is still possible to call out repentance in front of court. God forgives, if human beings repent and pray. He is still open to appeal. The poem, thus, doesn't deny the possibility of a final sentence, but it can be changed by prayer and repentance. Subsequently, Goodman analyzed the understanding of repentance. The theme of repentance is remarkable and distinctive in the Torah. Guilt is a topic in every society and has to be dealt with. There may be an internal sense of guilt, guilt can be rejected, transferred to others, seeing guilt in social structures or finding all humanity guilty. For Maimonides, the point in the Torah's guilt offerings was that every wrongdoer should reflect upon his sin. With doing so, the failing of the human being can be corrected, and God can forgive. This corresponds with the message which Moses received even in the face of Israel's failing. The worshipping of Israel seems unforgivable, but still, God forgives. In the Talmud, God can foresee all,

but the freedom of choice is given to every human being. Therefore, human beings can act with the power given by God, so they might act accordingly.

Goodman showed, that in Judaism there is no fixed concept of predestination. Hearts can be changed by repentance and listening to God's calling. The suggestion, that fate can be changed, is understandable when looking at the prophets and the story of the people of Israel in the desert where Moses pledges towards God to forgive its wrongdoing.

The following debate was vivid. The question arose, if there is not some sort of divine predestination which has to be differentiated more thoroughly from the understanding of destiny. Also, looking at other books in the bible, such as Ecclesiastes and Jonah, one can find tendencies of a Jewish understanding of predestination. Jonah tries to flee from his prophetic calling and seemingly can't avoid his fate of being a prophet. Goodman disagreed in saying, that the core of the story is that through repentance the people of Nineveh can avoid the divine sanction. God forgives them, which makes Jonah angry. God criticizes him for feeling sorry for a tree, but not for the people. This makes evident, that the day of atonement is close, repentance is efficacious, but the decree is not finally determined. Still, Jonah has no choice to do what he wants and to run away from God. It might be that there are people that are selected and chosen to serve for a certain purpose. This predestination cannot be changed. But, there has also a recognition to be noticed, which is caused by a moral transition not initiated by him being swallowed by the fish. It leads to a spiritual change and a change of heart in Jonah. Subsequently, another participant pointed out, that it is difficult to get a consistent concept from the scriptures, since they can always be interpreted in various ways. Another important contribution called attention to the different understandings of time: We, as human beings, have a linear idea of time, but it might not be the same for God. So maybe the presumption of a linear concept of time is not applicable. Another topic, that was also part of the fruitful discussion dealt with the question of salvation in Judaism, because in Christianity predestination is often linked to the idea of salvation.

2. The Concept of Predestination in Christianity (Professor Jesse Couenhoven, Ph.D.)

Professor Jesse Couenhoven, Ph.D., held the second lecture of the day, on the concept of predestination in Christianity. Currently, Couenhoven is Professor of Moral Theology at Villanova University. In his lecture, Couenhoven presented an ecumenical overview of what makes the idea of divine election attractive and contemptuous by regarding influential responses of Christian theologians. The thought of predestination throughout church history was quite controversial. Divine predestination still remains official teaching of the catholic and some protestant churches. Even outside of ecclesiastical contexts, talk of predetermined events is not uncommon. In love songs there is talk about “the one” or being made for each other for example. The central idea of predestination is, that God has a plan for creation, which he will surely accomplish. The Christian doctrine states, that God has eternally elected God’s people for salvation and ensures that this will come to pass through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. But two important questions have to be dealt with: If the destiny of salvation necessarily will come to pass, what sort of agency can human beings have and how does that correspond to the thought of human freedom? Is it fair that some people are destined for salvation? If God has created the world, then why is there suffering?

Many theologians have dismissed the concept of predestination, because it seems to cause trouble, while others still cling to it. Couenhoven continued by illuminating the reasons to deal with predestination given by the Bible. For many Christian theologians, it seems that scripture teaches predestination both implicitly and explicitly. Apostle Paul writes in the Rom 8:2–30: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” God does not only seem to have foreknowledge of upcoming events but directs these events such as the eternal destinies of those that are elected. Other passages of the scripture including texts in the Hebrew Bible don’t specifically mention predestination, but also treat events as being determined by God (e.g. Is 37:26). Theological advantages of predestination are: 1) Predestination includes belief in divine providence. Thus, creation and providence can be understood, and God’s plan will surely come to pass. This gives hope and assurance to human beings. 2) The plan of creation and salvation is in God’s hand. He can direct it according to his will. This leads to giving God honor and makes him seem great.

Challenges, that were faced by Christian proponents of predestination and their strategies to deal with it were shown on the example of Augustine of Hippo and Anselm of Canterbury. Augustine, who lived

in the time from 354 to 430, was the first philosophical theologian who developed a doctrine of predestination. His thought on the topic begins with reflections on Romans 9, where Jacob is referred to as the loved one, and Esau as the hated one. Jacob seemingly does not earn God's favor, but God bestows it, destining him to become, who he became. So, it is for Augustine not only foreknowledge, but divine providence. The thought, that predestination sets free, seems counter-intuitive, since freedom is connected with choosing between alternatives. Seeing Christ as the paradigmatic example that was chosen by God, Augustine thinks that being made part of God's self cannot be earned, but only bestowed. Predestination is an act of divine determination, a giving of identity. He understands freedom not in a libertarian manner, not to actualize choices, but predestination bestows freedom by bestowing the power to love well and to fulfill love in relationships. This is also an important differentiation from the understanding of fate. He also argues that predestination does not involve fatalism, because fatalism implies that human actions do not matter. He has a compatibilist conception of free will and moral responsibility. He sees both compatible with divine determination. Human agency is free and accountable, when human beings act willingly. When humans act out of love and for their own reasons, they have a significant kind of agency. When humans act willingly, they can be blamed or praised, because they themselves act. God's agency does not diminish human agency. Augustine therefore can be described as single predestinarian, but he did affirm that those that are not elected are necessarily damned. This raises important questions, to which Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) gave relevant answers. On the base of the story of Adam and Eve, Anselm saw God as the ultimate source of God's goodness. He thought that God wants to give human beings the same opportunity: Being unconditioned sources of own goodness. Only those, who can choose right from wrong without being conditioned to do so deserve to receive praise or blame for their state of will. Thus, Anselm took a libertarian position about freedom and responsibility. He defended a libertarian conception of predestination. If God's plan is to independently determine the direction of the own stories, God does not elect persons for specific roles in the story of creation ahead of time. The voice of human beings must be independent, if they are to be genuine conversation partners of God. Human beings are responsible for what they choose without necessity. Human beings are enabled to choose for themselves by God's grace, that takes the form of strengthening the love for justice. Therefore, it was impossible for Anselm to share Augustin's view on predestination. He made a claim for a different approach towards predestination. He understood predestination as the causal activity of God that is based on divine foreknowledge and is responsive to human choices. Since God foreknows human choices, he takes them into account, planning around them in order to responsively order the world towards divine ends. This view avoids determinism. God permits but does not want evil. He may foreknow human sin, but he does not interfere. This view speaks of divine self-limitation but does not neglect divine power. This enabled Anselm to make case for free will in a way that Augustine could

not. One challenge resulted from his position on divine foreknowledge, which makes it difficult to clarify what sort of choices human beings actually have. Since many libertarians have given up on predestination, the question arises, if Anselm's understanding of the term and his concept of predestination are convincing.

In church history there were many attempts to develop and to balance the positions of Augustine and Anselm. Augustine's approach was taken up by Thomas of Aquinas and Jean Calvin. Their interpretations were controversial but influential in the Western theology. Anselm's positions were famous in the east and have become increasingly popular in the early modern and modern west. However, Augustine and Anselm left aspects undeveloped. Augustine didn't answer the question of God's attitude towards those, who are not elect. This was discussed in the period of reformation, when Martin Luther and Jean Calvin endorsed double predestination. The divine plan by God was to elect some for heaven, some for hell. But the reformers stood also in the tradition of previous discussions, which tried to develop Augustine's thinking, for example by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.

The concepts of freedom, foreknowledge and determination are controversial until today. Therefore, the debate on divine foreknowledge continues. It seems to imply the necessity, that a person acts in a certain way. Some Christians have denied divine foreknowledge as incompatible with creaturely freedom. A significant development began in the 18th century, when Friedrich Schleiermacher defended the perspective of universal salvation, referring to Origen. This had an increasing influence on Christian theology.

Predestination, according to Couenhoven, has a much broader heritage and is influenced by the attempt to revive the impact of the doctrine. Recent assessments offer possibilities for dialogue, also with Judaism and Islam. Couenhoven stated, that there are cautionary notes which have to be taken into account: We cannot know details about a divine plan. Therefore, one should be cautious with assurances. He argued, that theological determinism may be defensible, and the topic of predestination might offer valuable insights. It poses deep questions about what people hope for and how they see themselves in relation to the divine. People like to think that they are in control. In the middle of a pandemic, Couenhoven pointed out, we have to ask, how much control we actually have and want. Perhaps it would be better, if we are not the ultimate authors of history, but under the direction of God, who is wiser and more loving.

3. The Concept of Predestination in Islam (Professor Catarina Belo, Ph.D.)

The last lecture of the conference was held by Prof. Catarina Belo, Ph.D., who is a specialist in medieval Islamic philosophy. She is Associate Professor of philosophy at the American University in Cairo. She started her lecture by emphasizing the importance and central position of predestination in Islamic thought. Predestination is related to God's power to determine his creation as well as present and future events. Therefore, it applies to God's omnipotence, which is an attribute of God that is differently emphasized by theologians. It includes the power of God to create the world, things and events. Creation is not only a past action but implies that God is still creating new events and human actions. In the past, this was also the starting point of a debate among theologians and philosophers about God's power and attributes. Theologians concluded their arguments from reading of Qur'ān and Sunna, while philosophers mostly referred to the arguments of ancient Greek philosophers. Theologians and philosophers debated about the meaning of the terms of agent and cause when applied to God. God's power is one of the major attributes alongside goodness and knowledge. The interpretations of these attributes varied, however. The view on his attributes and his power to determine events led to the trouble with understanding of human freedom and human responsibility. If God determines events, humans are not the cause or the agents of actions. As a consequence, they can't be and cannot be made responsible for the actions. Thus, they should not get rewarded or punished for their actions or deeds. This gets in conflict with the qur'ānic view that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked in this life and in the afterlife. There are two ways of looking at the issue: One can look at the human nature, and ask, if humans are free or predestined by God. But the answer depends on God attributes. Therefore, scholars stress the importance of articulating the God's attributes and his nature rather than defining human nature. For them it is important to put the focus on God's omnipotence and power. If human beings are not free, they cannot be held accountable, what affects God's justice of rewarding and punishing human beings. Thus, it is important to define the attribute of justice.

After analyzing the close relation between the concept of predestination and the divine attributes, Belo illustrated the issue as coming up in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth. There are different Arabic terms used in Qur'ān for expressing measure. Some of them are also referring to God's omnipotence and power. Several qur'ānic Suras are using the term *qadar* (54:49) "Fairly all things have been created in proportion and measure." This can be understood as divine prediction. Some Suras also stress the human responsibility, saying that human beings can freely choose their actions. Still, Belo pointed out, the question of human freedom is discussable. God would not be just, if there was no human freedom, because, according to the Qur'ān, God punishes and rewards the actions of human beings. Therefore, human beings are responsible for what they do. Another verse in the Qur'ān also shows this (36:54):

“On that Day no soul will be wronged in the least, nor will you be rewarded except for what you used to do.” In this quote, which refers to the day of judgement, God is seen as just, but also as clement. Accordingly, human beings choose their actions and are measured by them. From dealing with human freedom and responsibility, Belo turned to the aspect of God creating faith in persons. Even the question of faith, which is relevant for salvation, implies God’s action. Tied to that is the important thought of the sealing of the heart to faith.

In the ḥadīth, which contain the deeds and sayings of prophet Muḥammad, the notion can be found that events are predetermined before they happen, that they are written down beforehand. One motif is the predestination in the womb. According to Montgomery Watt, some Suras in the Qur’ān emphasize omnipotence and predestination, while others focus on human responsibility. A predestinarian tendency can be found in the ḥadīth, which may be influenced by the pre-Islamic literature. Here, destiny is important. It is understood as a personal force that must be reckoned with, but which is not attributed to God.

Moving to Islamic theology, Belo distinguished between the articles of faith and the principles of action. Latter are referred to more frequently in theology. They are linked to the five pillars of Islam, which are the assertion of faith (*shahāda*), prayer (*ṣalāh*), almsgiving (*zakāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*) and pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). In addition to those practical actions, there are the principles of faith, which are the belief in God and his attributes, the prophets, the angels, the sacred books and the day of judgement.

Laying this groundwork, Belo went on to describe the positions of selected Islamic schools of thought. Islamic theology, unlike Christian theology, is not dogmatic. There is no institution that decides which doctrine or position has to be adopted. 1) The first theological school to look at was the one of the Qadarites. It was an early theological movement whose name comes from the Arabic term *qadar*. The Qadarites referred to the importance of human actions and human freedom of action. According to their teaching, all good comes from God and all evil is perpetrated by human beings, because God cannot do any evil. Furthermore, power belongs to God as well as to human beings. Also, they thought that belief is an act performed by human beings. They mostly denied God’s foreknowledge of human actions. This had political consequences insofar, as also the caliphs should be held accountable for their actions according to the Qadarites. However, researchers do not know, if it was a united religious or a political group. One prominent figure was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642–728). He believed in human agency and God’s knowledge of future events, even though God does not determine them. Still, he thought that some events in human life are determined by God. 2) The Mu’tazila was a school of rational thought that was founded in the 8th century. One of their principles was the conviction that human beings have responsibility for their actions, which implies human power and freedom to act. Human beings create their own acts and, therefore, are responsible for them. Moreover, the Mu’tazila

thought of the Qur'ān as a created entity, which is not the eternal word of God, because only God himself is eternal. However, not all early schools took a libertarian position. The Jabarites, for example, believed that human actions are controlled by God through predestination. The Mu'tazila also had strong opponents to their perception of the Qur'ān as created. The Ash'arites for example argued that the divine attributes mentioned in Qur'ān should be taken literally. God creates all things, also human actions including voluntary actions, and there is no other cause of things than God. Therefore, there was a divergence between Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites regarding different Suras and theological positions.

There is a variety of views among the Islamic philosophers, which Belo briefly mentioned at the end of her lecture. The philosophers followed different philosophical systems such as platonic or neo-platonic theories. Al-Kindī defended the understanding of *qadar* and providence. He had a compatibilist position, stating that human beings have freedom and God can do no evil. Al-Fārābī thought, that things can happen in different ways. For him, liberty of all voluntary acts includes possibility rather than necessity. When coming to describing future events, human beings can describe truth or falsity, but the contingency of God's foreknowledge does not prevent possibility. Ibn Sīnā, in contrast, was a determinist, who defended predestination, so that in his view everything is ultimately determined by God.

In her conclusion Belo pointed out, that the notion of defined determination of events and also human responsibility can be found in Qur'ān. Early theological schools, like the Qadarites, defended human freedom. The Jabarites stressed God's determination of events, while for the Ash'arites God's omnipotence which does not undermine his justice was essential. The tendency towards stressing human free will and action can be seen in medieval Islamic theology. However, later schools favored God's omnipotence by saying that he is the only agent. This has influenced philosophers like Ibn Sīnā.

The following debate started with the question, whether the Qur'ān is more predestinarian than Jewish and Christian scriptures. The predestinarian tendencies of Qur'ān were explained with the faith of pre-Islamic Arabs, which also influenced the ḥadīth. Also, the relationship between predestination and political behavior was a topic of discussion, since predestination can lead people to fatalism and to acceptance of political situations as wanted by God. In consequence, this might result in political quietism. Then again history has also shown that people believing in predestination have strong convictions and can also be called into action to prove that they are destined for good. An example hereof are the Calvinists with their economical drive.

Concluding Discussion on the Concept of Predestination

The concluding discussion started with a debate about including the eastern Christian theology of the church fathers into the discourse on human will and predestination. This would make the comparison very fruitful and lead to a certain balance in the debate. Also, to analyze the eastern Christian tradition, be it Greek or Oriental, is important, because the Christians in the east would not understand the Latin medieval and modern discussion of predestination and justification, since they have a completely different background and theological understanding than western theology. Therefore, this tradition should be considered when talking about Christian perspectives on will and predestination and in the volumes about will and predestination which are going to be published.

It was pointed out that the distinction between predestination and determination is very helpful. The meaning of will and predestination, the two key words of the conference, can vary within the different religions and cultures. So even if the terms within one's own religion seems clear, they might mean something else in another. To understand another person's usage of a term better it should be defined clearly and made transparent. Otherwise there might arouse misunderstandings that could easily be avoided.

Moreover, the questions and discussions on freedom, determination and personality, which were linked the discourses about Christology and the nature of Christ in Antiquity, led to the development of concepts of freedom, determination and personality in the western philosophy. There are important books, for example by Theo Kobusch, which show that the debates about Christ were repeated some centuries later in the debates on the meaning of human freedom. This again led to the birth of the modern philosophy on freedom. Similar debates can also be found in Judaism and in Islam. Many concepts which started in the Christological debate in church can be found again in early Muslim times. An example hereof is the discourse about the nature of Qur'ān. The question if the Qur'ān is eternal or created is comparable to the similar question concerning Jesus Christ. These parallels, as well as the consequences of early debates for later philosophical developments, have to be taken into account.

Also, the earlier discussion was pursued, if the belief in predestination can lead to quietism, when predestination is linked to determination. The historical example of the Calvinist tradition demonstrates the opposite, because it is deeply predestinarian and at the same time rich with revolutionaries like Jean Calvin. Also, the puritans quit England after killing the king, established their own city-states in the new world and had a revolutionary war. This doesn't seem to be combinable with the thought of quietism at all. However, there is the conviction in Islam, that the death of a person is the will of God. This can also be the case when family members pass away. The religious belief seems to be very relevant in political camps as well. This must not be connected to the topic of predestination but can involve the worry of people about a secular kind of regime for example. The result is not

necessarily quietism, but an acceptance of the circumstances. Strongly linked is the stereotype, that people, who believe in predestination, are passive. This stereotype, however, needs to be overcome. A person who believes in predestination can have a precise idea of his or her role in God's plan and thinks of him- or herself as a vehicle, a tool or a weapon to implement that plan. Therefore, this person can also be very militant, very reformist, but also be an example in some way. That is why the thoughts of an individual or a group about a divine plan have to be taken into account, and also which role they think they are supposed to be playing in it.

It has to be pointed out that there is a weak concept of predestination, which has to be differed from the strong belief, which often sets predestination equal to determinism. Strong libertarians, like open theists for example, interpret predestination or biblical verses of predestination with providence. Thus, God can guarantee that his goals are satisfied in the long term, but he cannot guarantee or foresee in which way they are going to be achieved. So, God plans ahead for every contingency, in other words, he has a plan for every contingency. There are multiple levels of predestination, some of them are stronger than others. There are libertarian conceptions and compatibilist understandings that also have different levels within themselves. Furthermore, the distinction can be made between predestination and divine determinism. It is possible to be inclined towards a concept of predestination, which is more about ultimate ends, and not defend a concept of divine determinism, which would mean that everything is determined by God. This distinction is worth highlighting, since it underlines the different notions that are inherent to the concept of predestination.