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Religious Studies (2018) **54**, 285–288 © Cambridge University Press 2017
doi:10.1017/S0034412517000300

It is logically impossible for everlasting God to fall into boredom

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Abstract: This article argues that everlasting God can *be* in boredom, but cannot *fall* into boredom. Hence, the argument by Andric and Tanyi (2017) in this journal that God could not be everlasting in time, because God would fall into boredom, is shown to be unsound, since it is logically impossible for God to fall into boredom.

To 'fall into boredom', as I am using the term, is (1) to become bored involuntarily, not being induced to be bored, either by oneself or by others. To fall into boredom is not the result of an intention, but something that comes over a person. She *finds* herself in boredom. And, is (2) for the boredom to result from previous mental states apt for producing boredom. Sarah has been banging nails into wood for several hours, at minimum wage. At some point, she *falls* into boredom. Her boredom is involuntary and results from her consciousness of the tedious and repetitive nature of what she is doing. Boredom comes over her.

It is logically possible for a person to *be* in boredom without, in my sense, having *fallen* into boredom. This would be what I will call 'induced boredom'. An example of directly induced boredom would be if there were an injection which when administered caused a person suddenly to be bored. If a person were administered the injection, she might be bored, but would not have *fallen* into boredom, since she was induced to be bored. Even if the injection was given against her will, this would not count as having fallen into boredom, since someone intentionally administered it. Or a person could, logically, have control of her mind so that she could just command herself to be bored. Again, she would have induced herself to be bored. She would be bored without having fallen into boredom. If a person decided to *make* herself bored by just sitting and doing nothing, I would count that as indirectly induced boredom.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412517000300 Published online by Cambridge University Press

So, there is a distinction between induced boredom and the boredom one falls into. Suppose Sarah accidentally falls on a syringe and accidentally is injected with a fluid that causes her to have psychological states apt for bringing on boredom. She becomes bored as a result. She has been induced by an external source to become bored, but the boredom is involuntary and the result of the right kind of psychological states. However, since the source of the boredom is an inducer, I will say that Sarah does not *fall* into boredom in this case, although bored. She has been induced into boredom.

God, let us suppose, is a perfect being who exists in time. That is, God is everlasting, existing from moment to moment. And let us suppose that God is like a person, being much closer to our paradigms of personhood than to what is not personal. So, God has something like conscious states, intentions, and, depending on your version of perfect being theology, emotions. Now, that God is personal does not imply that God has all the variety of conscious states that human persons have. One conscious state that humans have that God does not have is God becoming afraid for himself. God never becomes afraid of anything bad happening to Him. Also, if God is omniscient, God never is in a state of forgetting something. Humans can fall into a duplicitous state of mind. If God is perfectly good, God cannot fall into such a conscious state. So, there are states of consciousness God cannot get into even though he is person-like. So, from the fact that God is a person we cannot straight off conclude that God must be able to fall into boredom.

Could God everlasting *be bored* like other persons? It is logically possible for God to be in a state of induced boredom, namely, that induced by God on God. Consider this: God in his perfect wisdom and perfect goodness decides that now it would be very good for him to be bored for a given duration. So, God induces boredom in himself. God experiences the phenomenology of boredom, without the usual human lead-ups to boredom. We cannot rule that out a priori. Perhaps God is aware of the boredom of a great number of people just now, and wants to simulate boredom in himself along with them as a way of being close to them then. God wants to sympathize with their unhappiness, by sharing their phenomenological state of boredom. I am not sure that works, but we cannot rule out it being logically possible for God to induce boredom in himself for a highly commendable reason.

But maybe you think that God could not possibly induce boredom in himself, because God is perfect and boredom is something undesirable, something bad. So, a perfect being would not, could not, voluntarily take on something undesirable or bad for himself. Now, this assumes that boredom is intrinsically bad. However, boredom is not intrinsically bad. It is logically possible for a person to enjoy boredom, and value it positively. Some people enjoy having a bit of pain. It invigorates them, makes them feel alive, and stuff like that. In such a situation, there would be nothing bad about that pain. In meditation, I have experienced pain, sometimes strong pain, in my legs, with none of the negative attitudes

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412517000300 Published online by Cambridge University Press

towards it that I usually have. The pain then is for me just another phenomenological content to be aware of in my meditative practice. No anguish, no desire to be rid of it. Just being aware of it. So, pain need not be intrinsically bad, although it is almost always bad because of the anguish that it normally creates as a reaction to being in pain. Just so, for example, somebody might have been hyperactive for many hours so that when she finally becomes bored she is delighted for this to have happened. Now she can rest and recuperate from the over-activity. In such a circumstance, there need be nothing bad about the boredom at all. I conclude that boredom is not intrinsically bad. What is bad is human dissatisfaction with boredom, when boredom is something unwelcome, causing unhappiness, discomfort, uneasiness, and the like. I conclude that it should be logically possible for God to experience induced boredom, to experience the phenomenology of boredom without its being a bad state of mind. God might induce boredom in God for a good purpose with no bad side effects.

Well, what now about falling into boredom? Could God everlasting ever just *fall into boredom* from being tired of doing what he has been doing for so long? Here I want to argue that it is logically impossible for God to *fall* into boredom.

One reason is that falling into boredom is something that happens to a person involuntarily. Since God is perfect God cannot be in a state simply because he involuntarily slipped into it. God will have perfect control over his mental states, from moment to moment, in the sense that God will be in each mental state only if God wants to be in it. If God wants to respond emotionally to human suffering, for example, he will be in a responsive state because he wants to be in it. The state is triggered by human suffering, but God does not simply *fall* into sympathy involuntarily. God becomes sympathetic because God wants to be so, and makes himself responsive. Perfect God cannot slip into any mental state involuntarily. Therefore, God cannot simply *fall* into boredom. But suppose God wants to fall into boredom because doing so at a certain time would be a good thing. So, God decides to allow himself to fall into boredom, perhaps by making himself have the appropriate pre-boredom conditions and then allowing himself to fall into boredom. This, though, would be like the case of Sarah, the source of whose boredom is an inducing element – an injection, making her boredom an induced boredom. Or it could be indirectly induced boredom like that of someone who decides to sit and do nothing in order eventually to become bored. So, if God decides to make himself have the appropriate pre-boredom conditions and then knowingly allows himself to be in boredom, God will have induced boredom and not have fallen into boredom. Nothing could count as God falling into boredom.

But there is a deeper reason why God cannot fall into boredom. This reason requires looking closely at the roots of falling into boredom in the first place in human beings. Falling into boredom is the result of unfulfilled *self-regarding needs*. A person falls into boredom for reasons such as these:

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She loves to be busy all the time. She falls into boredom because she can think of nothing to do just now to keep her busy.
She likes to think of herself as having many interests. She falls into boredom because she can think of nothing that interests her just now. This threatens her self-image.
She wants only to have fun playing with her brother. He does not want to play with her. Disappointed, she wants to do nothing else. She falls into boredom.
She loves variety. She has been doing the same thing for a few hours. She falls into boredom.

In each example, boredom is preceded by a self-regarding need, and that need is not being met. There is an experience of a *lack*, a dissatisfaction of a self-regarding need that precedes and leads to falling into boredom. Without such a need, there is no falling into boredom.

Having a self-regarding need is not the same as having a desire. One might have a desire to fulfil such a need, but one can also have a desire not for the sake of such a need at all. That would be when one's desire is not for anything self-regarding, but purely for the good of others. In doing so, one does not have to have a *self-regarding need* to act for the good of the other. One then acts purely from a desire for the good of the other without any self-regarding desire for oneself.

God is perfectly good. This does not only mean that God acts perfectly towards others. It means that God has no self-regarding needs, only desires for the good of others. God lacks nothing and needs nothing for himself. God acts for the good of others not because he has a *self-need* to do so, but does so for the needs of others, acting purely for *their* sake, from love and concern for the other. And God is always acting solely for the good of others. That is the meaning of perfect goodness. Since God has no self-needs, God has no unfulfilled needs. But, to fall into boredom requires experiencing a lack, having self-regarding needs unfulfilled. So, God cannot fall into boredom.

This reasoning applies to God everlasting within time. In a recent issue of this journal, Andric and Tanyi (2017) argued that God could not be everlasting in time, because God would fall into boredom. Since it is logically impossible for God to fall into boredom, God can be everlasting in time, as far as their argument goes.

Reference

Andric, Vuko & Tanyi, Attila (2017) 'God and eternal boredom', *Religious Studies*, **53**, 51–70.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412517000300 Published online by Cambridge University Press