

Alfonzo was an excellent student who had a particular interest in the fields of theology and philosophy. He had been raised a strict Catholic by his parents who were from the “Old World” and he had attended Catholic schools all of his life as did his two brothers.

After a particular spring semester in college, Alfonzo decided that he needed a change of scenery and decided to spend his summer travelling in Czechoslovakia. A beautiful country with friendly people and deep traditions, it was the land of Smetana and the Moldau River, of Franz Kafka and the novel “The Trial.” Alfonzo was looking forward to a wonderful summer vacation.

When he arrived one of the first things he did was go to the Prague State Opera House to enjoy a production of Don Giovanni as it had been produced in 1787. Mozart himself had conducted the premiere of this opera in this very opera house. Alfonzo was fond of beer and discovered Pilsner Urquell drinking it in his favorite bar, the Café Slavia.

But, despite the fact that he liked to have a good time, he was basically academically oriented. He decided to take a short course in advanced philosophy at the oldest and largest university in Prague; a medieval school started in 1349: Charles University. And it was there that he took a course from Professor Turhollow, a curmudgeon of a man who had a deep set of beliefs – his own.

Ostensibly open to others’ views and supposedly encouraging other students to develop their thinking processes, Turhollow, although intelligent, was a rather narrow man. If you disagreed with him you were, well, simply wrong in your view; especially if you could not rapidly present a counter-argument to his particular viewpoint.

It was during one of Professor Turhollow’s lectures that the subject of predestination came up. It was rather late in the lecture and Turhollow dropped

his façade of objectivity and blurted out, or more precisely mumbled: “There is no God, of course; and even if there were, free will on the part of humans would be just an illusion. If God is omniscient and knows if you are going to go down the road to the left or the road to the right, then you are not free to choose either right or left. No, either we are predestined and have no free will or God does not exist.”

That evening Alfonzo had an Urquell at the Slavia and pondered Turhollow’s statement. He knew of no way to refute the Professor’s view on predestination and felt dismay inside of himself. In the corner of the café he saw an older man that he recognized from the University although he quite couldn’t remember what he did there. After ordering his second beer he approached the man, sat down and started talking. One thing led to another and Alfonzo presented his intellectual struggle. Deep inside he knew that Turhollow was wrong, but he could not think how to refute his ideas.

The Old Man said, “You need to speak with Sibelius, the monk.”

“Who?” responded Alfonzo; “I have never heard of him.”

“He lives in a cave in the hills behind Strahov Monastery,” said the Old Man.

The next day Alfonzo travelled to Strahov Monastery, searched the hills behind the holy place and found the cave of the Monk Sibelius, who was seated with his legs crossed in front of the opening to the cave. Sibelius invited Alfonzo to sit down with him which he did. Alfonzo asked, “Dear wise monk. How can I possess free will while at the same time God knows what I am going to do?”

Sibelius was silent for a while and appeared to be staring down at the ground. Then he lifted his head and reached in his robe, pulled out a yellow lollipop complete with plastic wrapper and gave it to Alfonzo. The Monk said, “Here; enjoy this first.” Alfonzo took the lollipop, unwrapped it and put it in his mouth. It had a delicious citrus-lemon taste.

Then the Monk spoke: "Allow me to use an analogy. Imagine for a moment that you, Alfonzo, are the Supreme Being and you decide to create a man -- a man that has total free will. So you create him and then place him on a road that has a fork in it – a branch to the left and a branch to the right. You set up a camcorder pointed at the fork in the road and then tell the man to walk forward and choose which way he would like to go – either going left or right would be fine.

"So the man goes forward and chooses the road to the right, his actions being accurately recorded on your Special Supreme Being Camcorder.

"The power of omniscience, Alfonzo, is analogous to your camcorder. Before you replay the tape you know the video will be of a man choosing the road to the right. If you replay the tape over and over he will STILL choose the road to the right. But because you know this it does not change the fact that you created a man who is exercising the free will that you gave to him."

Alfonzo's eyes opened wide. "Of course," he exclaimed. "I never thought of it that way."

Alfonzo thought for a moment and then excitedly went on: "Please, wise Monk; how can it be proven that God exists?"

The monk went silent for a while, stared down at the ground, and then from his robe pulled out an orange lollipop.....