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THE COMPATIBILITY OF OMNISCIENCE
AND INTENTIONAL ACTION: A REPLY TO
TOMIS KAPITAN

To claim that divine foreknowledge is inconsistent with divine agency has been pressed with increasing frequency of late, nowhere more forcefully than in a series of articles by Tomis Kapitan.¹ The basic idea is that genuine agency requires the agent's presumption of an open future, but that such a presumption is not rationally sustainable alongside an occurrent belief about how the future will turn out. I have examined this idea at length in the pages of this journal and found it wanting; now Prof. Kapitan has replied and (not surprisingly) found the idea salvageable.² In so doing, he has gone beyond earlier iterations of his position to develop what he characterizes as an 'improved statement' of the argument. Whether it is sufficiently improved to carry the day against omniprescient agency is, of course, the crucial question. In what follows I explain why I am no more persuaded by Kapitan's revised argument than I was by his original one.

Just as the basic idea behind Kapitan's objection to omniprescient agency is quite simple, the basic idea behind my counterobjection is also quite simple. Consider Kapitan's own summary of his position in the opening paragraph of his most recent article. The reason intentional agency 'requires an acknowledged ignorance about what the future holds', he avers, is that 'otherwise the future would appear closed relative to present knowledge with the desired state presented as either guaranteed (necessary) or ruled out (impossible)'.³ We can formulate the crucial claim here as

(1) X believes at t that $p \rightarrow$ X believes at t that $\Box p$,

where 'X' stands for any rational and self-reflective being, 'p' for any proposition of the form $I (= X)$ will A at t' ($t < t'$), and ' \Box ' for any modal operator which is at least strong enough that believing $\Box p$ amounts to

¹ 'Can God Make Up His Mind?', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 15 (1984), pp. 37–47; 'Action, Uncertainty, and Divine Impotence', *Analysis* 50 (March 1990), pp. 127–33; 'Agency and Omniscience', *Religious Studies* 27 (March 1991), pp. 105–21. Others who take this position include Richard Taylor, 'Deliberation and Foreknowledge', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (Jan. 1964), pp. 73–80, and Richard R. La Croix, 'Omniprescience and Divine Determinism', *Religious Studies* 12 (Sept. 1976), pp. 365–81.

² See my 'Omniprescient Agency', *Religious Studies* 28 (Sept. 1992), pp. 351–69, and Kapitan's, 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action: A Reply to David P. Hunt', *Religious Studies* 30 (January 1994), pp. 55–66.

³ 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action', p. 55.

regarding p as ‘guaranteed (necessary)’ and its complement as ‘ruled out (impossible)’ for purposes of one’s own agential endeavours. Now the obvious question to raise concerning (1) is why the mere belief that something *will* happen would thereby present it as *necessary*, or the belief that it *will not* happen thereby present its occurrence as *impossible*. One answer that suggests itself is that

(2) X believes at t that $(p)(p \rightarrow \Box p)$.

But (2) is hardly characteristic of every rational being’s doxastic practices (it is not characteristic of mine, at any rate); indeed, insofar as X’s belief that $(p)(p \rightarrow \Box p)$ rests on a modal fallacy endemic to popular arguments for fatalism (i.e. that $\Box q$ follows from p and $\Box(p \rightarrow q)$, an inference sometimes referred to as ‘Sleigh’s Fallacy’), (2) would actually count against X’s rationality. But if (2) is not characteristic of all rational beings, it is a mystery why all rational beings should nevertheless form beliefs in accordance with (1). The problem, in sum, is that Kapitan’s argument ascribes to all rational agents a doxastic practice whose most obvious motive – namely, (2) – is one that many (if not most) rational agents would assiduously deny.

How then does Kapitan propose to defend the idea that divine agency is incompatible with omniscience regarding the future? In my earlier critique of Kapitan’s argument I identified its key moves as follows:

- (3) X’s A-ing at t' is a case of (intentional) agency only if there is a time t such that X acquires at t an intention to A at t' ;
- (4) X acquires at t an intention to A at t' only if X’s A-ing at t' is regarded by X at t as an open alternative for him;
- (5) X’s A-ing at t' is regarded by X at t as an open alternative for him only if X is ignorant at t whether or not he will A at t' .⁴

I then argued that both (3) and (5) are false. Rather than recapitulating my arguments here, I shall simply focus on Kapitan’s latest attempt to buttress these two assumptions. His response in each case is to insist on the cogency of his earlier defence while adding a new defence. Though the new defence of (5) does have some merit, as we will see, neither it nor the other defences Kapitan offers in his latest essay is sufficient to rescue his argument against omniscient agency.

II

With respect to premise (3), Kapitan endeavours to rehabilitate the general principle (critical to his old defence) that intentions must be acquired at some point in time; but he also argues that, even if intending can occur in the

⁴ These three correspond to the premises, also numbered (3)–(5), on pp. 352–3 of my earlier paper. I have changed the way the relevant notion of openness is presented in (4) and (5) in order to clarify a matter that evidently confused Prof. Kapitan – see §III of the present paper, where the matter is discussed.

absence of acquired intentions, full-fledged intentional agency is impossible without acquired intentions (this is his new defence). If either defence succeeds, (3) is triumphant.

Regarding his old defence of the view that acquisition is essential to intention, one thing Kapitan adduces on its behalf is the empirical fact that human beings are 'not born with set goals, plans or rejections of alternatives already in place'.⁵ But even if this were true (and it is doubtful that it is, unless 'goal' is being used in a special technical sense), it is not clear what this contingent fact about human agents would imply for other agents such as God. What is needed for Kapitan's theological argument is not an empirical generalization from human agency, but an analysis of intentional agency as such.

Kapitan does in fact supply such an analysis, maintaining that 'intending *settles* the mind upon a particular course of action' and adding that

there is no 'settling' of the mind unless it were previously *unsettled*, or, at least, not already committed to a particular course of action. One intends only by becoming *resolved*, even when no antecedent deliberation is present, resolution being a temporal occurrence which results in a *modification* of behavioural proclivities. There would be no need to intend, no occasion for intending, were these proclivities already ensconced within one's motivational system. As such, C₁ [that acquisition at a time is essential to intentions] seems inescapable and it is not surprising to find it typically taken for granted.⁶

But surely Kapitan is here confusing intending with deciding. It is deciding that settles the mind on a course of action, while intending is (on such occasions) the aftermath of deciding. (I intend to phone my mother this evening. I am not now settling my mind to phone my mother – I did that two hours ago when I decided I would phone her.) Kapitan's argument therefore rests on a *petitio principii* which takes a characteristic essential to intention-acquisition (the mind's passing from an unsettled to a settled state) and makes it essential to intention itself, thereby begging the question against the possibility of intentional states in a perpetually settled mind. It is analytic that one *intends* only by *being* resolved; it is also analytic that one *decides* only by *becoming* resolved; but there is absolutely no reason to accept Kapitan's conflation of these tautologies into the claim that '[o]ne *intends* only by *becoming* resolved [emphases mine]'.⁷

I think that Kapitan would do well to concede that there is no conceptual connection between intention-possession and intention-acquisition. But if his old defence of (3) is rejected, there is still the new defence to be considered. Suppose that some intentions can be possessed without having been acquired. Nevertheless,

To *act* is to become related to various *particulars*, be these particular persons, objects, events, places or times, e.g., as when I played billiards with Henry at 4 pm yesterday

⁵ 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action', p. 58.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 57, 58.

afternoon..., and intentions... are action-guiding only insofar as they serve to direct effort within the spatio-temporal realm of events and objects, that is, within the actual world of particulars. Intentions whose action components – that which is to be done – embody reference to definite particulars may be called *specific intentions*, distinguishing them from intentions whose action component is purely general, say, to help the needy.... Even if an intention to help the needy, say, were innate, it would require a further specific intention to help that needy person over there and to do so now, and there could be no innate propensity to expend intentional effort in just *this* direction.⁷

The reason specific intentions cannot be innate, Kapitan continues, is that they presuppose ‘information that is itself specific’, information which ‘must embody reference to definite objects, events, places and durations within its content’. But ‘such reference is possible only through interaction, presumably causal, with the particulars occupying related regions’. Since ‘[s]pecific information must be acquired’, and specific intentions depend on specific information, it follows ‘that specific intentions must be acquired’.⁸

Unfortunately, this new defence of (3) is obviated by an equivocation on the verb ‘acquire’. The expression ‘x acquires y (from z)’ may mean that (i) x *comes to have* y (though the instrumentality of z) – that is, x passes from a state of lacking y to a state of possessing y; alternatively, it may mean that (ii) x’s possession of y is *dependent on* or *derivative from* something (namely, z). Expressions of this sort may be true in sense (ii) without being true in sense (i). This happens, for example, when it is said that we acquire our biological sex-type from our father, or that gold acquires its malleability from its atomic structure, or that a certain tie-breaking kick acquires its status as the winning goal from the fact that no more goals were scored before time ran out – for in none of these cases does x exist in a y-less state and subsequently come to possess y.

Kapitan equivocates between these two senses in the following way. Premise (3) is useless to Kapitan’s overall argument against omniscient agency unless ‘acquire’ is interpreted in sense (i). But his new defence endeavours to establish (3) by showing that (a) intentional agency requires specific intentions, (b) specific intentions require specific information about particulars, and (c) specific information about particulars must be acquired through causal interaction with particulars. The problem is that, whatever one thinks of (a) and (b), there is no reason to accept (c) as an *a priori* constraint on information-acquisition if ‘acquire’ is restricted to sense (i). God is Himself the perfect counterexample: though an essentially omniscient being could never acquire information in sense (i) (for this would entail the absurdity that there was a time at which an omniscient being was ignorant of something), there is no evident reason why He could not acquire information in sense (ii). In fact, one standard way of understanding God’s beginningless knowledge of future particulars is that it is counterfactually

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 58–9.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 59.

dependent on the particulars themselves. Unless Kapitan can show why sense-(ii) acquisition is insufficient to account for specific information about particulars, he cannot interpret (c) in such a way that it supports premise (3). Any appearance of cogency the new defence may have is owed entirely to this equivocation between the two senses of ‘acquire’.

Neither the old nor the new defence of premise (3) is at all persuasive. We must now examine what Kapitan has to say on behalf of premise (5). While the failure of (3) is enough to warrant rejection of the argument for divine impotence based on that premise, warrant is a matter of degree and is always worth augmenting, as can be done in this case by demonstrating that premise (5) is just as unsatisfactory as premise (3).

III

Let me begin my discussion of premise (5) by identifying a couple of red herrings in Kapitan’s reply which might otherwise divert us from focusing where the issue is truly joined. The first of these is Kapitan’s complaint (registered on several occasions in the course of his paper) that I misstate and misinterpret his argument in sundry ways. Now it is true that my formulation does not coincide with his at every point, but the divergences are not (in my view at least) significant ones. At the beginning of my paper I made the following claim: ‘While the argument that follows is not identical to Kapitan’s, I believe that it captures the heart of his case against omniscient agency, and it is intended to be fully consonant with the various things that he says in his paper.’⁹ I still stand by that claim. To see why, consider briefly two examples of my supposed mis-reading of Kapitan’s argument.

First, he holds that my analysis of premise (5) corrects an earlier misunderstanding reflected in my treatment of premise (4), where the notion of openness first makes its appearance in the argument. The evidence for this charge is that I formulated premise (4) simply as

(4’) X acquires at t an intention to A at t’ only if X’s A-ing at t’ is an open alternative for X at t,¹⁰

whereas ‘what is required for intention is not so much that the action *be* open as it be *presumed* by the agent as open’.¹¹ Whether (4’) is indeed at odds with this requirement depends on what ‘open’ means when used in this premise. But this question is cleared up at the very beginning of my discussion of (4’), where I characterize the relevant concept of openness as requiring nothing more than an agent’s belief or judgement that an alternative is open,¹² a concept that I label ‘doxastic openness’ and explain to ‘depend

⁹ ‘Omniprescient Agency’, p. 352.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 353.

¹¹ ‘The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action’, p. 60.

¹² ‘Omniprescient Agency’, p. 359.

only on what the agent presumes or *believes*, not on whether the belief is true'.¹³ So my understanding of 'openness' as it functions in the argument was all along the same as Kapitan's, despite his suggestion to the contrary.

Second, there are a number of places where he disavows my representation of his position on the grounds that I fail to distinguish between occurrent and nonoccurrent mental states, a failure that leaves my formulations open to counterexamples which he escapes, given 'the not infrequent occurrence of forming an intention to A at t, acquiring a corresponding belief that one will A at t, and yet temporarily overlooking or forgetting both in the course of deliberating about an alternative'.¹⁴ For example, in discussing why he rejects my rendering of premise (5), he explains that 'the incompatibility claim is that an agent cannot, *qua* rational, simultaneously *access* the beliefs that (i) he will do a certain action A at a future time t and (ii) that his A-ing at t is yet an open alternative'.¹⁵ Now it is certainly true, as Kapitan avers, that the problem he wishes to raise for omniscient agency requires that the beliefs in question be occurrent (or 'accessed'). But this is irrelevant for two reasons: first, because the problem of prescient agency is so obviously restricted to occurrent belief that there is no need to bring nonoccurrent beliefs into the discussion at all (it is for this reason that 'belief' as it appears in my paper should simply be read as 'occurrent belief'); and second, because none of the objections I bring against his argument is based on cases of nonoccurrent belief or trades in any way on the distinction between occurrent and nonoccurrent mental states.¹⁶ These criticisms of my analysis therefore fail to advance Kapitan's cause in any way.

So much for the first red herring. The other is Kapitan's attributing to me a criticism that I do not in fact make. In unpacking (5), I broke down its antecedent into a rather complex conjunction which it is not necessary to reproduce here but one of whose conjuncts is the requirement (iii*b*) that the agent not possess at t a previously acquired intention to A. I labelled this expanded version of the premise '(5!)', and I pointed out that (5!) without (iii*b*) is false. For example, if I know that I am going to fail a student because I have decided to do so but have not yet implemented the decision by filling out the proper forms, a (iii*b*)-less (5!) yields the counterintuitive result that I have no reason to act on my decision – it is only when (iii*b*) is added to the mix that (5!) rules out this result. Kapitan calls this 'Hunt's First Criticism' of premise (5). The label would be appropriate, however, only if I attributed to Kapitan the principle that results from subtracting (iii*b*) from (5!). But this cannot be my position, since it is the entire (5!), including (iii*b*), that I put forward as the fifth premise of Kapitan's argument!

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 360.

¹⁴ 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action', p. 64.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 65.

¹⁶ For an account of how the tension between foreknowledge and agency can be mitigated by adopting a nonoccurrent conception of God's beliefs, see my 'Dispositional Omniscience', *Philosophical Studies* (forthcoming).

There are two reasons why I bother to consider the truth-value of this truncated version of (5!) at all. The first is to underscore how essential (iii*b*) is to the argument against omniscient agency, thereby justifying an exposition of (5!) which highlights that clause. The second is to ferret out what Kapitan's argument really is. Responding in his latest paper to my criticism of (5!) minus (iii*b*), Kapitan declares: 'As a criticism of anything I have said, however, this is off the mark. That X will A at t, or that X believes he will A at t', does not imply that X's intentions with respect to not A-ing at t' would not be efficacious.'¹⁷ But in the original article there are places in which Kapitan appears to be doing the very thing he now disavows, including the following passage:

What could motivate someone to undertake an action unless he or she sensed both a need for the required effort and a chance that it might succeed, and how could this happen *if* the agent already knew what is to take place? If it is going to occur, no need, and if slated not to occur, no chance.¹⁸

I quoted this passage in my earlier critique, noting that the line of reasoning it exemplifies underlies a popular (and fallacious) argument for fatalism. Now I think that Kapitan *does* flirt with fatalism and ultimately succumb to it.¹⁹ But I did not try to make the charge stick on the basis of the above passage: its fatalism is so very egregious that I simply assumed (rather charitably, I thought) that this could not be Kapitan's argument, and I proceeded on that basis to regard his considered position as one involving the complete (5!), including (iii*b*). Since my critical comments on (5!) without (iii*b*) were less an attack on Kapitan's position than a reason for construing his position so that it avoids the criticism, it is misleading to represent them as 'Hunt's First Criticism'.

With these red herrings out of the way, let us turn to the real issues surrounding premise (5). As in his defence of premise (3), Kapitan reiterates his earlier position while adding a novel twist. The reiteration comes in response to what he calls 'Hunt's Second Criticism'. Roughly, the criticism Kapitan is referring to goes like this. A person (I claim) can hold a belief about what he will later intend to do without already intending to do it, a possibility brought out in a thought-experiment in which someone discovers a 'book of life' describing his future in great detail, including his suicide some years hence.²⁰ We can imagine that the repeated fulfilment of the book's predictions about his near-future provides this person with ample inductive evidence of the book's reliability, bringing him reluctantly to the conclusion

¹⁷ 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action', p. 61.

¹⁸ This passage, quoted on p. 364 of my 'Omniprescient Agency', comes originally from p. 105 of Kapitan's 'Agency and Omniscience'.

¹⁹ I press this point in my 'Prescience and Providence: A Reply to My Critics', *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (July 1993), pp. 428–38.

²⁰ The thought-experiment is taken from Alvin I. Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 192.

that he will indeed commit suicide just as the book relates. Does it follow that he already intends to commit suicide? Surely not: it seems as clear as can be that in this case he might well believe that he will (intentionally) do something without already intending to do it. But if this is in fact possible, how is it possible? There should not be any mystery about this. Believing and intending are different propositional attitudes, and there is no reason to think that the doxastic commitment produced by the former would guarantee the practical commitment required by the latter; nor would the point be vitiated if all propositions were the object of belief from eternity, as they would be for God, since the fact that belief fails to entail intention (even when the belief concerns one's own future acts) does not depend on the number and age of the agent's beliefs.²¹

Kapitan responds to this criticism by conjuring up a deliberator who, when asked whether he knows what he will decide, replies, 'No, not at this stage: I've not yet made up my mind'.²² But all this shows is that a deliberator who does not yet know what he will do, and won't know until he decides what to do, might explain his lack of prescience by citing the present inconclusiveness of his deliberations. It has no implications, so far as I can see, for deliberators who are differently situated (e.g. an agent in possession of his own 'book of life'). Certainly the example does nothing to establish the general principle that the openness necessary for intention-acquisition requires ignorance, or to support any conclusion about the constraints operating on specifically divine believing and intending. Nor can I find anything else in Kapitan's latest contribution which so much as begins to establish these results. The culminating paragraph in his response to my 'second criticism' maintains that

intentions are acquired against a background milieu of information, information that includes a more or less unarticulated sense that the future is 'open' with respect to a certain intentional effort and, by that very fact, that one is not yet committed or 'settled' upon it. A presumption of openness is at once a presumption of indecision and, *ipso facto* a presumption of uncertainty.... A sense of openness cannot coexist on a par with an equally vivid sense of intentional closure...²³

If there is an argument here, I cannot make out what it is. The first sentence says that intention-acquisition requires a belief that the future is 'open' (in the relevant sense) and rules out a belief that it is 'closed' (in the same sense); the third sentence adds that 'openness' and 'closure' (with respect to the same intentional object) are incompatible. Neither sentence says anything about how openness and closure are related to the belief (or lack thereof) that a particular action will occur, and so are worthless in supporting premise (5). The second sentence, on the other hand, does assert such a relationship: a belief in the openness of the future is *ipso facto* a belief in one's own ignorance

²¹ This recapitulates material from 'Omniprescent Agency', pp. 365–6. See also my 'Divine Providence and Simple Foreknowledge', *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (July 1993), pp. 396–416.

²² 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action', p. 64. ²³ *Ibid.* pp. 64–5.

of the future. But this simply asserts the very point at issue, without doing anything to defend the point in face of my counterargument. I just do not see any advance here over previous renderings of Kapitan's position, which were similarly question-begging.

This brings us to Kapitan's response to 'Hunt's Third Criticism', which involves an important addition to his earlier argument and represents his best hope for rehabilitating premise (5). That argument had defined 'doxastic openness' – the species of openness required by intentional agency – as contingency with respect to the totality of the agent's beliefs. For an omniscient being, the totality of whose beliefs constitutes the set of all truths, nothing would be contingent in this sense, and so nothing would remain doxastically open. I questioned, for my part, why a rational and self-reflective agent would regard the totality of his beliefs as the proper index set for determining openness. After all, everything is necessary relative to something, if only to itself. Whether relative necessity is at all interesting, then, depends on the index set – in particular, whether its members have any properties that are (i) relevant to intentional agency and (ii) closed under entailment (so that the properties are transferable to those propositions that are necessary relative to the original bearers of those properties). Now propositions about the past do have a property which is *prima facie* of just this kind, namely, *unavoidability*. Such propositions are necessary in the sense that no one (not even God) can do anything about their truth-value now; and if nothing can be done about them now, surely nothing can be done about those propositions that are entailed by them. A set consisting of propositions about the past would then seem to have the puissance required by Kapitan's argument, and a rational and self-reflective agent who saw that a proposition about his own future behaviour was necessary relative to his beliefs about the past might rightly regard that behaviour as unavoidable and find his agential endeavours hamstrung as a result. But there is no reason to suppose that a proposition which is necessary only relative to the agent's beliefs about the future would yield a similar agential collapse, unless the agent is simply being hoodwinked by Sleight's Fallacy or has some independent reason to regard the believed propositions as unavoidably necessary. In Kapitan's original argument, however, there was no suggestion that truths about the past could be counted on to entail all truths about God's future actions; in fact, the only propositions in the index set that did any work in the argument were propositions about the future such as

(3) I (= God) will do A at t'

(4) I (= God) will intend at t to do A at t'

(to employ the numbering from Kapitan's latest paper).²⁴ But unless one simply assumes at the start that these propositions are unavoidably necessary,

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 62.

there is no reason to think that they have anything interesting to transfer to those propositions that are necessary relative to them, and no reason to think that a rational agent who understands the situation aright would suppose them to have any agentially pernicious consequences. God's knowledge of such propositions should therefore leave His sense of doxastic openness unaffected, and Kapitan's argument against omniscient agency fails.

In response, Kapitan claims that the difficulty for divine agency cannot be contained by restricting the index set to propositions about the past, for it will simply crop up among those propositions as well. The reason is that these propositions include ones about past instances of divine foreknowledge, such as

- (1) I (= God) knew that I will do A at t'
- (2) I (= God) knew that I will intend at t to do A at t' .²⁵

If (3) and (4) are true, then so are (1) and (2); and if true, God believes them to be true. The set of God's beliefs therefore includes unavoidably necessary propositions about the past (to wit, (1) and (2)) which entail propositions about God's future actions (to wit, the original (3) and (4)), thereby transferring unavoidability to those propositions as well. Since (1)–(4) are schema accommodating all the future actions of an omniscient agent, nothing will remain unavoidable for such a being. So we can restrict the index set to God's beliefs about the past, as I require, and still get the complete collapse of doxastic openness.

Now I think that this represents a considerable advance over Kapitan's original argument – at least it would do so if amended in the following way. Restricting the index set to propositions about the past gets rid of a lot of propositions irrelevant to doxastic openness, but it does not get rid of all of them. Propositions about the past can be divided into so-called 'hard facts', such as 'I drank schnapps on 1 May 1994', which are true no matter what happens later, and so-called 'soft facts', such as 'I drank schnapps on 1 May 1994 for the last time', whose truth depends on what happens later (e.g. on whether I drink schnapps tomorrow). Only the hard facts about the past are now unavoidable and therefore relevant to agential openness. But (1) and (2) are paradigmatic soft facts about the past: whether God's past cognition of His future behaviour amounts to knowledge of the future depends on whether that cognition is true, and this depends in turn on what happens later. So (1) and (2) will not do the job Kapitan requires of them. What is needed is instead

- (1') I (= God) believed that I will do A at t'
- (2') I (= God) believed that I will intend at t to do A at t' .

Since God is infallible, His believing that p entails p , so that (3) and (4) are

²⁵ *Ibid.*

just as necessary relative to (1') and (2') as they are to (1) and (2); what's more, (1') and (2') are at least *prima facie* hard facts about the past, unlike (1) and (2). Kapitan can therefore make his point without loss (and with considerable gain) by switching from (1) and (2) to (1') and (2').

There are two things that should be noted about this new argument. The first is that it is a new argument: there was nothing in Kapitan's earlier writings to suggest that the trouble with divine agency ultimately rests on God's beliefs about His *past beliefs* rather than His beliefs about His *future actions*. The second thing to note is that the superiority of the new argument over the old does not mean that the new argument actually succeeds, only that it does not fail quite so badly. Whether even (1') and (2') carry any adverse consequences for (3) and (4) is a controversial question, one which has been exhaustively discussed but hardly resolved in the course of the debate over theological fatalism, the aporia which pits divine foreknowledge against (libertarianly) free agency.²⁶ Those who follow the lead of William Ockham maintain that (1') and (2') are also soft facts about the past and so irrelevant to the openness of (3) and (4), while other strategies for blocking fatalism with respect to (3) and (4) are available to those who reject 'Ockhamism'.²⁷ It is not necessary to enter into that vexed discussion here, however, since the only point relevant to present purposes is that Kapitan's latest effort to save his argument ties its fate to the debate over theological fatalism, a debate which is not likely to go in ways favourable to his position. This is something one would hardly have guessed from earlier statements of his position.

Interestingly, Kapitan concedes that restricting the index set to hard facts about the past 'might succeed in blocking the foregoing derivations', but he maintains that doing so

seriously distorts practical thinking. The latter is typically Janus-faced: agents do not face the future with a blank slate, but with a relatively rich set of expectations based on acquaintance with the past. It is in light of this set, a set that includes future-tensed expectations, however vague, about the future, that agents deliberate, plan, and commit themselves to various undertakings. The attempt to purify the index set on the presumed contingency, therefore, is committed to an implausible picture of intentional agency.²⁸

But it is not at all implausible. Let the Divine Agent face the future with all His beliefs, including 'expectations based on acquaintance with the past'; let Him even engage in deliberation, etc., in light of His total beliefs. The question is which of these beliefs will seem to Him to undercut the openness

²⁶ For the classic contemporary statement of this dilemma, see Nelson Pike's 'Divine Foreknowledge and Voluntary Action', *Philosophical Review* 74 (Jan. 1965), pp. 27–46.

²⁷ I develop an Augustinian alternative to Ockhamism in 'Augustine on Theological Fatalism: the Argument of *De Libero Arbitrio* III. 1–4', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (forthcoming). See also the three solutions to the problem of theological fatalism presented by Linda Zagzebski in her *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²⁸ 'The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action', p. 63.

of a future action just because it entails that action. Beliefs whose objects are hard facts about the past might plausibly have this effect on a rational and self-reflective agent, but beliefs that are not of this sort are not even in the running, absent some independent reason for regarding their objects as unavoidably necessary. If excluding these beliefs from the index set for doxastic openness 'seriously distorts practical thinking', it can only be for an irrational agent in the grip of Sleigh's Fallacy.

In conclusion, the only feature of Kapitan's latest defence that shows any promise is his new argument (half-hearted as it is) that God runs afoul of premise (5) in virtue of His beliefs about His own prior beliefs. But this move just brings out how dependent that premise is on the ongoing debate over theological fatalism. And even if that debate were resolved in ways favourable to (5) (an unlikely prospect), there is still the failure of premise (3) to thwart the rehabilitation of Kapitan's case against omniscient agency.

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