

Article



Special Issue: Author Meets Critics: John Martin Fischer's "Our Fate: Essays on God and Free Will"

Endurantism, Fixity, and Fatalism

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Citation | Almeida, M. (2017). Endurantism, fixity, and fatalism. *Science, Religion and Culture*, 4(2): 47-55.

DOI | <https://dx.doi.org/10.17582/journal.src/2017/4.2.47.55>

Introduction

Nelson Pike is often credited with offering the most compelling formulation of an ancient argument against human freedom.¹ According to Pike, God's foreknowledge that we will perform some action is inconsistent with our freedom to do otherwise. If freedom requires the freedom to do otherwise, then God's foreknowledge undermines our freedom. Divine foreknowledge that we will perform some action makes alternative actions unavailable to us.

Perhaps the most compelling set of counterarguments to Pike's conclusion have been advanced by Ockhamists who distinguish *hard facts* and *soft facts* and argue that divine foreknowledge about what we will do is not a hard fact in the past.

... Ockham distinguished between two kinds of past facts. One kind of past fact is genuinely and solely about the past; we might call this kind of fact a 'hard' fact about the past. Another kind of fact is not both genuinely and solely about the past; such a fact is a 'soft' fact about the past. The key claim of Ockham is that soft facts about the past do not carry the necessity that attends hard facts about the past.²

God's foreknowledge is not a hard fact that is counterfactually independent of anything we *can do* now.³ Divine foreknowledge that we will perform some ac-

tion does not, on the Ockhamist account, make alternative actions unavailable to us.

John Martin Fischer has argued that the best versions of Pike's argument for theological fatalism depend on a principle of the fixity of the past. According to principles of fixity, the past—or significant parts of the past—are indeed counterfactually independent of anything we can do now. There are, most importantly, no true backtracking counterfactuals $p > q$ such that p is a sentence describing something I can do now—say, mow the lawn at time t —and q is a sentence describing God's foreknowledge that, say, I will not mow the lawn at time t . If God knows at 50 A.D. that I will not mow the lawn at t , then, according to Fischer, that knowledge is among the hard facts in the past. The hard facts in the past are all of those facts that are over and done with, and totally independent of anything I can now do.

The principle of the fixity of the past is not implausible—indeed I'm prepared to concede, for the sake of discussion, the principle of the *total fixity* of the past. The principle of the total fixity of the past entails that there are no facts in the past that are not over and done with in the sense described. There are no facts about the past that are not causally independent of anything we can do now. It follows from total fixity that the set of all past facts is just a set of hard facts.⁴ Total fixity of course entails that God's foreknowledge is among the hard facts.

My aim in the paper is to show that the arguments for theological fatalism from God's foreknowledge and total fixity—or any principle of fixity—are unsound. The problem with arguments from foreknowledge and fixity is the failure to directly address issues of persistence through times and worlds. But issues of persistence—the persistence of persons and objects—are central to the argument for theological fatalism.

The commonsense explanation of persistence is the *endurantist account* of persistence. Endurantism is the thesis that persons and objects persist through time by being wholly present at various temporal locations. According to endurantism I persist while driving to work by being wholly present in the car at each moment of the drive. There is no temporal part of me that enters the car at home that is diverse from a temporal part of me that exits the car at work. Similarly, ordinary objects persist through time by being wholly present at each moment. The table you see today in your living room is the table that was there yesterday. It is not a temporal part or temporal stage of the table diverse from earlier temporal parts or stages of the table.

Endurantism explains how the proposition that I mow the lawn at some time t and the proposition that I—that is, the self-same or identical individual—might have failed to mow the lawn at t are consistent with each other. Endurantism also affords a nice and natural explanation of how divine foreknowledge and the total fixity of the past are consistent with the proposition that I mow the lawn at t and the proposition that I might have—I could have or I had it in my power—not to mow the lawn at t .

Fischer on Fixity

According to the traditional conception of God, the properties of God include essential omniscience, omnipotence, perfectly goodness and necessary existence. These are the *de re* modal properties traditionally ascribed to a maximally great being. Essential omniscience entails, at least, knowledge of every true proposition. It might entail in addition knowledge of every indefinitely true proposition and, perhaps, *de se* knowledge.⁵ Arguments for theological fatalism assume that the traditional God is also essentially sempiternal. Sempiternity is omnitemporality, or existence at every temporal location.

Nelson Pike's original formulation of the argument for theological fatalism implicitly assumes a power entailment principle. Power entailment principles state that what an agent can do, or has the power to do, at any time is closed under entailment. If an agent can do A and A entails B then the agent can do B . Power entailment principles are, of course, controversial.⁶ Raising my hand entails that $2 + 2 = 4$, for instance, but I cannot bring it about that $2 + 2 = 4$. Raising my hand also entails that I exist, but I cannot bring it about that I exist. There are, of course, a number of other innovative and convincing counterexamples to power entailment. Fortunately, the argument for theological fatalism does not depend on formulating an uncontroversial power entailment principle.

Fischer argues that better versions of Pike's argument replace power entailment principles with fixity of the past principles. The idea is to restrict what an agent can do at a time to actions that are counterfactually independent of the hard facts in the past. The initial version of the fixity of the past principle is (FP).

FP. For any action Y , agent S , and time t , if it is true that if S were to do Y at t , some hard fact about the past relative to t would not have been a fact, then S cannot at t do Y at t .

(FP) offers a necessary condition on what an agent can do at a time t . The restriction in (FP) is a necessary condition on what an agent can do in the relevant sense of 'can'.⁷ An agent S can do Y at t only if were S to do Y at t then every hard fact about the past might still have been a fact.⁸ According to (FP), S can, in the relevant sense, do Y at t even if in some of the closest worlds in which S does Y at t , some of the hard facts about the past are different.

Fischer does not deny that there are true backtracking counterfactuals of the form were S to do Y at t it would be true that some hard fact in the past relative to t would not have been a fact. He allows, that is, that it might be true in all of the closest worlds in which S does Y at t that some hard fact in the past is not a fact. So, of course there is a sense in which S can do Y at t despite the fact that doing Y at t is not counterfactually independent of hard facts holding in the past. But S cannot *in the relevant sense* do Y at t .

The relevant sense of 'can' is difficult to pin down precisely. In cases where performing Y is not counter-

factually independent of the past hard facts, S can do Y at t in the same sense, say, that S can leap a tall building in a single bound. There are worlds in which S does so, but those worlds do not show that S can in the relevant sense leap a tall building.

Fischer advances (FP) in support of a revised argument for theological fatalism. The argument of course stipulates that God has the traditional divine attributes including essential sempiternality. We suppose that God exists and that S actually does Y at t₂. It seems evident that the divine attributes entail that (1) and (2) are false.

1. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t₂, then God would have held a false belief at t₁.
 2. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t₂, then God would not have existed at t₁.
- (1) is false in virtue of God's essential omniscience and (2) is false in virtue of God's necessary existence. It is impossible that God believes a false proposition and it is impossible that God fails to exist. But consider (3).
3. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t₂, then God would have held a different belief from the one He actually held at t₁, i.e., God would have believed at t₁ that S would refrain from doing Y at t₂.

The backtracking counterfactual in (3) appears to be true. Indeed, the truth of backtracking counterfactuals like (3) have been taken as evidence that God's beliefs are *not* counterfactually independent of what we *can do now*.⁹ Nevertheless, Fischer argues—quite unexpectedly—that (3) and (FP) entail instead that S *cannot* refrain from doing Y at t₂.

... if (3) were true, then it would seem to follow in virtue of (FP) that S cannot refrain from doing Y at t₂.¹⁰

Here (FP) and (3) entail that S cannot refrain from doing Y at t₂. We might have expected the fact that S refrains from doing Y at t₂ and (3) to entail that (FP) is false. Roughly, the alternatives are the following: (i) if S could refrain from Y at t₂, then past foreknowledge wouldn't be fixed, but it is, so S cannot do that versus (ii) if past foreknowledge were fixed then S couldn't refrain from doing Y at t₂, but he can, so past foreknowledge isn't fixed.

It is worth noting that Fischer acknowledges some

well-known support for the view that God's beliefs are not counterfactually independent of what we can do now. But Fischer argues that these examples are all question begging. Consider, for instance, Alvin Plantinga's well-received "carpenter ants" counterexample. Plantinga argues that there is an action an agent can now perform which is such that if he were to perform it, God would not have believed that a colony of carpenter ants moved into Paul's yard last Saturday.

...if Paul were to mow his lawn this afternoon, then the ants would not have moved in last Saturday. But it is within Paul's power to mow this afternoon. *There is therefore an action he can perform* such that if he were to perform it, then the proposition [that the colony of carpenter ants moved into Paul's yard last Saturday] would have been false.¹¹

Fischer's objection is that the italicized sentence above begs the very point at issue. While it is intuitively true that it is within Paul's power to mow the lawn this afternoon—that is certainly the view that commonsense invites us to believe—it is just this received opinion concerning what we can do that the argument for theological fatalism calls into question. Indeed theological fatalism calls into question many powers and abilities that we commonsensically believe we have.

Fischer's dialectical move in response to these examples is fascinating in part because it leaves one wondering what could possibly count as showing that God's beliefs are not counterfactually independent of what we can do now. It is not enough, according to Fischer, to discover an action A which is such that (i) A is a paradigmatically something S can do and (ii) were S to perform A, then God would have held beliefs distinct from the one's he actually holds. Notice that (i) and (ii) are exactly what David Lewis offers in defense of the view that the time traveler *can* kill his grandfather.

Grandfather died in his bed in 1957, while Tim was a young boy. But when Tim has built his time machine and traveled to 1920, suddenly he realizes that he is not too late after all. He buys a rifle; he spends long hours in target practice; he shadows Grandfather to learn the route of his daily walk to the munitions works; he rents

a room along the route; and there he lurks, one winter day in 1921, rifle loaded, hate in his heart, as Grandfather walks closer, closer. . . . Tim *can* kill Grandfather. *He has what it takes. Conditions are perfect in every way: the best rifle money could buy, Grandfather an easy target only twenty yards away, not a breeze, door securely locked against intruders. Tim a good shot to begin with and now at the peak of training, and so on. What's to stop him?* The forces of logic will not stay his hand! No powerful chaperone stands by to defend the past from interference. . . . *In short, Tim is as much able to kill Grandfather as anyone ever is to kill anyone.*¹²

Emphasizing the time traveler's intuitive ability to kill his grandfather is central to Lewis's argument that he can do it. Can we seriously deny that Tim can move his index finger and trigger the rifle? That cannot be right. What more do we need to show that S can do Y at t and were S to do Y at t then some alleged hard fact about the past would not be a fact?

A second fascinating consequence concerns the evaluation of backtracking counterfactuals. Suppose God knows at 50 A.D. in world *w* that S will do A at t and suppose P is the totality of past facts in *w* up to time t. Is it true in *w* that S can do $\sim A$ at t? Fischer urges that S cannot do $\sim A$ at t since doing $\sim A$ at t would require S to do something that is inconsistent with some hard facts in P. Since the hard facts in P are fixed, it is false in *w* that S can do $\sim A$ at t. What would nicely explain why S cannot do $\sim A$ at t is that S's doing so would bring about the impossible. It would bring about the impossible given the unalterable facts about S's powers or abilities and the unalterable facts about the past. In order to do $\sim A$ at t, S would have to alter some fixed historical fact, and no one can do that. S would have to bring about a world in which S does something that is inconsistent with hard facts in P. S can't do that.

But this is not what Fischer says or holds. He says that we can entertain the possibility that S does $\sim A$ at t. What we are entertaining—S's doing $\sim A$ at t—is not impossible after all. Were S to do $\sim A$ at t, according to Fischer, then some hard fact about the past relative to t would not have been a fact. Nothing impossible would have occurred had S done $\sim A$ at t. What then explains why S can't do it? Presumably it's the principles of fixity that are supposed to explain why S cannot do $\sim A$ at t. But how, exactly?

The fixity of the past is an important metaphysical feature of the actual world, according to Fischer, that restricts what we can do now. The problem is that we just do not assess backtracking counterfactuals in ways that keep fixed all of the hard facts that fixity principles insist are fixed. According to principles of fixity, God's past beliefs are among those important fixed facts. But when we assess the truth of backtracking counterfactuals—when we consider the closest worlds in which the antecedent of a backtracking counterfactual is true—we simply do not keep fixed God's beliefs. We do not keep those facts fixed in the way that we standardly keep past facts fixed when assessing backtracking counterfactuals. The way we keep past facts fixed in assessing backtracking counterfactuals is to treat them as counterfactually independent of what we do now. To be fixed is to be independent.

Compare the assessment of backtracking counterfactuals in the context of causal determinism. If it is causally determined that I not raise my hand, what would have happened had I raised it?

. . . at least one of three things would have been true. Contradictions would have been true together; or the historical proposition H would not have been true; or the law proposition L would not have been true. Which? . . . Of our three alternatives, we may dismiss the first; for if I had raised my hand, there would still have been no true contradictions. *Likewise we may dismiss the second; for if I had raised my hand, the intrinsic state of the world long ago would have been no different.* That leaves the third alternative. If I had raised my hand, the law proposition L would not have been true.¹³

If I had raised my hand then the historical facts that constitute the intrinsic state of the world in the past would have remained unchanged. Those historical facts are fixed and therefore counterfactually independent of what we do now. And of course they therefore do not affect what I can do now.

If God's beliefs are among the fixed facts in the past, we should expect them to be counterfactually independent of what we do now. And, in fact, as we will see, that is what we do find. We will also find that the counterfactual independence of those past facts does not constrain what we can do now.

Endurantist Tensing

According to endurantism, objects persist by having multiple locations through time. The entire persisting object—not a mere temporal part or stage of the object—is located at time t and then again located at time t' .¹⁴ Of course, endurantists agree that objects can and do undergo change from one time to the next. An ounce of clay might be cubical at time t and, at another time t' , the very same ounce of clay might be spherical. The question is how such ordinary change could happen. How is this commonsense view of persistence—the view that objects persist by being wholly present at various temporal locations—consistent with the fact that objects undergo change. How could one and the same identical object be cubical and spherical?

The simple solution seems to involve indexing properties of the clay to times. On this analysis we find that the piece of clay is spherical at t and cubical at t' . The tension in exemplifying both cubicality and sphericity is quickly resolved. The clay does not in fact exemplify either of those monadic properties. Instead it stands in two different relations to time. The clay stands in the *spherical at* relation to one time t' and in the *cubical at* relation to another time t . We could replace those relations with relational properties, if that seems more suitable. The clay would then have the relational properties bearing-spherical-at-to- t' and bearing-cubical-at-to- t . These are properties constructed out of relations. And of course the clay stands in both relations, or has both relational properties, at all times at which the clay exists. For any time t , it is true at t that the clay bears-cubical-at-to- t and bears-spherical-at-to- t' . The clay of course appears spherical at t and appears cubical at t' , but the clay at t is in fact *indiscernible* from the clay at t' . There is no property that the clay exemplifies at t that it does not exemplify at t' and vice versa. Since the clay at t just is the clay at t' , on this simple analysis, it is a consequence of Leibniz's law (of the indiscernibility of identicals) that it must exemplify the same properties at t and t' .

Endurantists do not in general endorse the simple account of how objects persist. Better accounts reject the proposal that the clay does not exemplify the monadic properties of being cubical or being spherical. A better alternative is to index the copula to times, or to 'tense the copula', rather than index properties to times. Instead of saying that the clay bears-cubical-

at-to- t or that the clay stands in the *cubical at* relation to time t , we say that the clay *is at t cubical* or the clay *has at t the property of being cubical*.¹⁵

Indexing the copula to times also permits us to say consistently that the clay is<at t > cubical and the clay is<at t' > spherical and, for that matter, the clay is<at n > F , for any time n and property F whatsoever. And again Leibniz's laws entail that the clay must have all of those properties at every time at which it exists, since the relation holding between the 'objects' existing at different times is the relation of identity.

Now, consider what an omniscient God believes at 50 A.D. about the properties of the clay. The clay is cubical at a certain time t and the clay is spherical at another time t' , there is no question about that. But could God believe at 50 A.D. that the clay is cubical and that the very same clay is spherical? Certainly not, or at least not consistently. Being cubical and being spherical are intrinsic properties of the clay that are inconsistent with each other; nothing can be both. If God believes at 50 A.D. that the clay is cubical, then the clay cannot be spherical as well.

But we obviously do not want God's beliefs at 50 A.D. to entail that the clay cannot change from one time to the next. And endurantists offer an analysis of persistence according to which God can believe at 50 A.D. that the clay is cubical and that the clay is spherical. What God in fact believes is that the clay is<at t > cubical and that the clay is<at t' > spherical. These beliefs are perfectly consistent. God's beliefs at 50 A.D. that the clay is<at t > cubical is perfectly consistent with God's belief at 50 A.D. that the clay is<at t' > spherical. And of course it is perfectly possible that the clay is<at t > cubical and is<at t' > spherical. Given the endurantist analysis, God's beliefs do not preclude the clay from changing over time and exemplifying both of those properties.

Endurantism and Fatalism

In discussion of Fischer's argument for theological fatalism, we noted that if God believes at t_1 that S actually does Y at t_2 , then the propositions in (1) and (2) are false.

1. 1. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t_2 , then God would have held a false belief at t_1 .
2. 2. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t_2 , then

God would not have existed at t1.

Indeed, (1) and (2) are uncontroversially false. (1) is false because God is essentially omniscient and (2) is false because God exists necessarily. These are attributes of the traditional God stipulated in the argument.

The central question is whether (3) is true. Recall that Fischer urges that (3) is indeed true, but that (3) together with (FP) entail that S cannot refrain from doing Y at t2.

3. 3. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t2, then God would have held a different belief from the one He actually held at t1, i.e., God would have believed at t1 that S would refrain from doing Y at t2.

Were S to do Y at t2, it would be the case that a hard fact about the past relative to t would not have been a fact. The hard fact that precludes S from failing to do Y at t2 is God's belief at t1 that S does Y at t2.

But (FP) and God's beliefs at t1—granting that those beliefs are indeed hard facts in the past—do not in fact preclude S from refraining from doing Y at t2. Since Fischer grants that (3) is true, we know that there's a possible world w' in which S refrains from doing Y at t. And since God is essentially omniscient, God knows that there is a world in which S refrains from doing Y at t.

But the endurantist will ask how it is possible that one and the same identical person, S, has the property of refraining from doing Y at t in one world and the property of doing Y at t in another world. The problem of course is perfectly analogous to the problem of temporal persistence. The problem of temporal persistence was how the clay could have the property of being cubical at one time and the property of being spherical at another time. The simple solution recall was to analyze the monadic properties as implicitly relational properties. The better solution was to preserve the monadic properties and instead index *the having* of properties to specific times. Indexing the copula to times makes it possible for an object to have at t the property F and to have at t' the property ~F. Temporally indexing the copula preserves consistency. Temporally enduring objects can have both of those properties.

Temporally indexing the copula also permits God to believe at 50 A.D. that, over time, S does Y and that S refrains from doing Y. God cannot have both beliefs unless those 'doings' are somehow indexed to times. For instance, God might have the belief that S does<at t> Y and the belief that S refrains from doing<at t'> Y. The result otherwise—the result of indexing neither the 'doings' nor the properties to times—is *hyperfatalism*. If God believes at 50 A.D. that S does Y—rather than S does<at t> Y—then S cannot do anything inconsistent with doing Y at any other time in S's existence! Of course, even fatalists reject hyperfatalism and instead index 'doings' to times.

But temporally indexing the copula does not preserve consistency in cases of transworld change. It might be the case that the clay is cubical in one possible world w and the very same clay, at the same time, is spherical in another possible world w'. Similarly, it might be the case that S does Y in one possible world w and, at the same time, S refrains from doing Y in another possible world w'. Temporal indexing does nothing to rescue consistency in cases of transworld change for persons or objects. The analysis in (6) and (7) is as far as temporal indexing can go towards consistency.

6. S does<at t> Y
7. S refrains from doing<at t> Y

It is obvious on inspection that the propositions in (6) and (7) are inconsistent. S cannot both do<at t> Y and refrain from doing<at t> Y.

There seem to be two options available to the endurantist. We could simply deny that possible worlds overlap with respect to individuals. S exists, we can stipulate, in one possible world w and his counterpart S' exists in another possible world w', and S ≠ S'. Since there is no transworld identity we have no problem with the consistency of (6) and (7). Those propositions become on proper analysis (6') and (7').

- 6'. S does<at t> Y
- 7'. S' refrains from doing<at t> Y

It's obvious on inspection that (6') and (7') are consistent. S is diverse from S', so both propositions could be true. But endurantists might instead argue that possible worlds do overlap with respect to individuals—that objects and persons in fact endure across worlds—and index the exemplification of properties

to *both* times and worlds. To preserve consistency in the exemplification of properties across times and worlds, endurantism analyzes (6) and (7) as (6'') and (7'').

6''. S does<t, w> Y.

7''. S refrains from doing<t, w'> Y.

(6'') and (7'') are the most natural analyses for those who find endurantism—the commonsense account of persistence—an appealing position. Since w is diverse from w', (6'') and (7'') are perfectly consistent. The analysis makes it possible for S to endure though change and worlds. Indeed it is true in every possible world in which S exists that (6'') and (7'') are true.

The endurantist analysis that yields (6'') and (7'') has the major advantage of showing why the fixity arguments for theological fatalism are unsound. Consider the propositions in (1), (2), and (3) above. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t2, then God would not have a false belief and God would not cease to exist. (1) and (2) are false under the analysis in (6''). The only proposition that concerns us, once again, is (3).

3. If S were to refrain from doing Y at t2, then God would have held a different belief from the one He actually held at t1.

Consider what God actually believes at time t1 in our world w. God has the belief in (8), since it is true that S does<t2, w> Y, where w is the actual world.

8. God believes at t1 that S does<t2, w> Y.

Now let w' be the closest world to the actual world in which S refrains from doing Y at t2. Were S to refrain from doing Y at t, then w' would be actual and it would be true that S refrains from doing<t2, w'> Y. So, God also has the belief in (9).

9. God believes at t1 that S refrains from doing<t2, w'> Y.

The beliefs in (8) and (9) are consistent and God actually has both beliefs. The fact that God believes at t1 that S does<t2, w> Y does not entail that God does not believe at t1 that S refrains from doing<t2, w'> Y. Indeed, (8) and (9) are true in every possible world in which God exists. This is because S does<t2, w> Y and S refrains from doing<t2, w'> Y are true *in every*

world, just as S does<at t> Y and S refrains from doing<at t'> Y are true *at all times*.

We should conclude that (3) is false, and that the argument for theological fatalism is unsound. If S refrains from doing Y at t, then God would have exactly the same beliefs he actually has. Indeed, there would be no change at all in God's beliefs. This is exactly the sort of result we should expect if God's beliefs are among the fixed facts of the past. If endurantism is true, then God's beliefs are counterfactually independent of what we do now, just as all historical facts—all intrinsic states of the past—are counterfactually independent of what we do now.

There are additional reasons to expect God's beliefs to be counterfactually independent of what we do now. The traditional God exemplifies essential immutability and essentially aseity—God cannot undergo change and is necessarily independent of creation—so God's beliefs cannot undergo change and they cannot be affected by any actions we undertake.

Can S refrain from doing Y at t2 in the relevant sense of 'can'? According to (FA), S can refrain from doing Y at t2 only if were S to refrain from doing Y at t2 then every hard fact about the past might still have been a fact. And given the commonsense account of persistence in endurantism, that of course is true. Were S to refrain from doing Y at t2 then God would have exactly the same set of beliefs he actually has. There is no reason to believe, then, that S cannot refrain from doing Y at t2 in any sense of 'can'.

But consider the strongest principle of fixity, the principle of the total fixity of the past. The principle of the total fixity of the past entails that there are no facts in the past that are not over and done with. It follows from total fixity that every past fact is a hard fact.

TF. For any action Y, agent S, and time t, if it is true that if S were to do Y at t, some fact about the past relative to t would not have been a fact, then S cannot at t do Y at t.

If (TF) is true, then for any agent S and time t, the set of accessible worlds for S at t is just the set of worlds that overlap with respect to the actual past up to time t. We can think of the set of accessible worlds for an agent S as determining what S can do at a time t in the relevant sense of 'can'. The set of accessible worlds

for S at t, then, are worlds that branch off the actual past. Every accessible world for S at t has the very same past and not simply the same hard facts. Every possible world for S at t must therefore be consistent with the actual past.

If S were to refrain from doing Y at t, would the actual past be any different at all? Would any past facts be different from the way they actually are? The answer is no. Let possible worlds w and w' branch off the actual past. Suppose that in w' S refrains from doing Y at t2 and in w S does Y at t2. Suppose further that an omniscient God exists in the actual past of these possible worlds and believes infallibly at t1 every true proposition. Does it follow that human freedom is affected in any way? The answer is again no. What God believes at t1 is that S does<w, t2> Y and that S refrains from doing<w', t2> Y. These beliefs are both true and nothing S does in any possible world is inconsistent with these beliefs.¹⁶

Conclusions

The endurantist analysis of persistence is independently motivated. So the endurantist argument against theological fatalism is not ad hoc. The indexing of 'doings' to times is already accepted in every formulation of the problem of theological fatalism. It can hardly be complained that the endurantist solution indexes doings to worlds as well as times, since that is independently required for endurantist analyses for transworld individuals.

We could, of course, reject the transworld identity of individuals in favor of worldbound individuals. This amounts to the view that no individuals exist in more than one possible world. But the argument for theological fatalism would fail again. God's beliefs at t1, as noted above, would then be that S does<at t2> Y and S' (some counterpart of S) refrains from doing<at t2> Y, where $S \neq S'$. There is no inconsistency in those beliefs, so the fact that S' refrains from doing<at t2> Y does not entail that God's beliefs are not identical to his actual beliefs.

Endurantism aims to explain how an individual S can persist—genuinely persist as the self-same individual—through change over time and across possible worlds. The endurantist explanation of individual persistence also explains how an omniscient being can have consistent beliefs about the very same individual through change over times and across possible worlds.

The endurantist account of individual persistence thereby explains what goes wrong in arguments from principles of fixity to theological fatalism.

Acknowledgment

Many thanks to Mark Bernstein for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Endnotes

[1] See Nelson Pike, 'Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action', *Philosophical Review* 74 (1965) 27-46.

[2] See John Martin Fischer, 'Soft Facts and Harsh Realities: Reply to William Craig', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1991) 523-539.

[3] On one reading of Pike, God's foreknowledge is counterfactually independent of what we can now do. If the set of actions we can perform is $S = \{X, Y\}$, then God's foreknowledge F is counterfactually independent of what we can do just in case $X \square \rightarrow F$ and $Y \square \rightarrow F$. Of course there might also be some action Z that you perform in some possible world such that $Z \square \rightarrow \sim F$. But Z is therefore not in the set S of actions you can perform. Ockhamists deny that God's foreknowledge is counterfactually independent of what we can do, so Ockhamists would not exclude Z from S.

[4] I assume there is no Russell paradox in stipulating a set of all past facts.

[5] There are several problems here that I can't address. There is a problem with an omniscient being's knowledge of indefinitely true propositions, propositions that are true under some, but not all, admissible precisifications. There are larger worries for indefinitely definitely true propositions, and other higher order vague propositions. There is also a familiar concern with quantifying over all true propositions. The collection of all true propositions is too big to be a set. The domain of true propositions would have to be a class or some other kind of collection. Norman Kretzmann has argued that an omniscient being could not have de se or first-person knowledge of individual agents—the knowledge that Jones has when, for instance, he knows that he's in the hospital (even if he fails to know that Jones is in the hospital). See Norman Kretzmann, 'Omniscience and Immutability

ty', *Journal of Philosophy*, 63(14) (1966): 409–421 and Patrick Grim, 'Against Omniscience: The Case from Essential Indexicals', *Noûs*, 19(2) (1985) 151–180. See also John Hawthorne, 'Vagueness and the Mind of God', *Philosophical Studies* (2005) 1–25.

[6] Phil Quinn, 'Plantinga on Foreknowledge and Freedom'. In J. E. Tomberlin & P. van Inwagen (eds.) *Profiles: Alvin Plantinga* (Dordrecht-Holland: D. Reidel Publishing, 1985) 271–287.

Thomas Talbott, 'On Divine Foreknowledge and Bringing about the Past', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 46, (1985) 455–469.

[7] The exact sense of 'can' and 'cannot' in play in these discussions is both fascinating and extraordinarily elusive. I argue below that the right sense in which S cannot bring about p at t is in fact that p is false in every possible world accessible to S at t.

[8] I make the standard assumption here that the negation of the would-counterfactual $\sim(A \square \rightarrow \sim B)$ is the might-counterfactual $A \diamond \rightarrow B$.

[9] See Alvin Plantinga, 'On Ockham's Way Out', *Faith and Philosophy*, 3, (1986): 235–69.

John T. Saunders, 'Of God and Freedom', *The Philosophical Review*, 75, (1966): 219–225.

[10] See John Martin Fischer, 'Foreknowledge, Freedom, and the Fixity of the Past', *Philosophia*

[11] See Alvin Plantinga, 'On Ockham's Way Out', *Faith and Philosophy*, 3, (1986) 254 ff.

[12] See David Lewis, 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel' *American Philosophical Quarterly* (1976) 149 ff. Italics throughout are mine.

[13] See David Lewis, 'Are We Free to Break Laws?' *Theoria* 3 (1981) p. 114. See also his 'Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow', *Nous* 13 (1979) 455–476. My emphasis.

[14] Some objects do not persist by enduring, of course, such as events and processes, baseball games, concerts and the like.

[15] See Mark Johnston, *Particulars and Persistence* (Princeton: Princeton University Ph.D. dissertation 1984) and his 'Is There a Problem about Persistence?'

Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supp. vol. 61 (1987) 107–135. See also Frank Jackson, 'Metaphysics by Possible Cases' *Monist* 77 (1994) 93–110, David Lewis, 'Tensing the Copula', *Mind* 111 (2002) 1–14, and Sally Haslanger, 'Endurance and Temporary Intrinsic' *Analysis* 49 (1989) 119–25.

[16] Some endurantists, of course, are presentists. What if we tried to formulate the argument for theological fatalism on the presentist assumption there exist no persons or objects that are not present. There exist, in particular, no past persons or objects and there obtain no past states of affairs or facts. The argument for presentist fatalism must argue that a state of affairs that obtained at t1 but does not obtain at t2—viz., God's believing that S will do A at t2—is nonetheless at t2 a hard fact that constrains what S can do at t2. How could a state of affairs that *does not obtain at t2* be a hard fact that constrains what S does at t2? How could a hard fact that does not obtain constrain what anyone can do at t2? Compare an analogue to presentism from actualism about possible worlds. Suppose it is true in some possible, non-actual world w that God believes that S does A in the actual world w'. Grant that God is infallible in w and that God's belief in w entails that S does A in the actual world w'. Could a state of affairs that obtains in some possible, non-actual world w—but in fact does not obtain—constrain what S can do in the actual world w'? Isn't it obvious that it could not? S's behavior in the actual world w' can only be constrained by facts or states of affairs that obtain in w'. Similarly, what S does at t can only be constrained by facts or states of affairs that actually obtain. What S does at t cannot be constrained by some fact that *did obtain* but presently doesn't. Note that God does not believe at t2 that S does A at t2 until S does A at t2. But compare Michael C. Rea, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 84, No. 4, (2006) 511–524 and Michael Rea and Alicia Finch, 'Presentism and Ockham's Way Out', *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 1–17.