# BOOK SYMPOSIUM ON "OUR FATE": REPLIES TO MY CRITICS

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I wish to begin by thanking T. Ryan Byerly, Thomas Flint, Christoph Jäger, Penelope Mackie, and Philip Swenson for their extremely insightful and generous critical essays. I have learned a great deal from thinking about them, and attempting to reply to each of the essays.

## REPLY TO BYERLY

### Byerly's Critique

Byerly presents an original and challenging critique of the "incompatibility argument" — the argument or family of arguments that employ the notion of the fixity of the past (in some suitable regimentation) to yield the conclusion that God's comprehensive foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom to do otherwise. (The incompatibility argument is itself silent on whether God's foreknowledge is compatible with human agents acting freely; it would only imply this additional conclusion if acting freely were to require freedom to do otherwise, a requirement I dispute.)

He distinguishes between "direct" and "indirect" responses to the incompatibility argument. The direct responses attempt to show that a particular premise or supposition of the argument is false or question-begging or otherwise problematic. In contrast, Byerly focuses primarily on developing the indirect response. This starts with noting that all versions of the incompatibility argument attempt to prove a conditional: *if* God has exhaustive and infallible foreknowledge, then no human person is able to do otherwise than what he or she does. But now the proponent of the indirect argument contends that something must explain or ground the fact that God's having such foreknowledge renders it true that no human person is able to do otherwise. As Byerly puts it,

> Those who defend the incompatibility argument do not (and should not) wed their defense of this argument to the view that the ability to do otherwise is intrinsically impossible. … But, once it is granted that the ability to do otherwise is intrinsically possible, there is considerable pressure to affirm that if it does not obtain, something *explains why* it doesn't obtain. … If we grant this — that if no person has the ability to do otherwise, then something explains why this is so — then it will follow that every version of the incompatibility argument is committed to the claim that God's foreknowledge requires the existence of something that explains why no human person has the ability to do otherwise. (Byerly 2017, 4)

The final step in the indirect response to the incompatibility argument is to contend that God's having exhaustive and infallible foreknowledge does *not* imply the existence of something that explains or grounds the (putative) fact that no human has the freedom to do otherwise.

The basic intuition of the indirect argument is that if an agent is not free to do otherwise, something must ground of explain this; otherwise it is just mysterious. For example, we can understand why a person who is chained to her bed cannot get out of bed; the chains constitute an existing constraint that limits her freedom. Note that here, as in other cases where it is uncontroversial that an agent lacks freedom to do otherwise, the relevant constraint exists at the same time as the time at which the agent is alleged not to have freedom to do otherwise. But if nothing that intuitively constrains the agent exists at the time in question, then how can it be that the agent lacks freedom to do otherwise? After all, as Byerly puts it, human freedom to do otherwise is not "intrinsically" impossible.

In previous work (Byerly 2014), Byerly has argued that many of the best candidates for what could fulfill what I will call the "grounding requirement" are not adequate: the truth of God's beliefs, the beliefs themselves, and the truth of causal determinism. In his contribution to this book symposium, Byerly further develops this sort of indirect reply, and he considers two additional candidates for the grounding requirement: the fixity of God's beliefs and God's being in what I have called a "knowledge-conferring situation".

We can get the main lines of Byerly's style of argumentation by considering his way of dismissing the truth of God's beliefs as a candidate for fulfilling the grounding requirement (in the context of God's foreknowledge). Note that, if Jones does $X$ at $T_2$ and if God has the relevant kind of foreknowledge, it seems to follow, and Byerely here supposes that it does follow, that it was

true at some prior time — say, $T_1$ — that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$. But Byerly thinks it is implausible that this fact (that it was true at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$) explains why Jones cannot do otherwise than $X$ at $T_2$. And he offers an argument for this view. After considering various other options with respect to the explanatory relationship between "Jones does $X$ at $T_2$" and "It was true at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$", Byerly settles on this: Jones doing $X$ at $T_2$ explains why it is true at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$. But now (according to Byerly) we can see why it cannot be the fact that it was true at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$ that explains why Jones cannot do otherwise than $X$ at $T_2$. This is because Byerly supposes that explanation is transitive. Given this transitivity, it would follow (unacceptably) that Jones doing $X$ at $T_2$ explains why Jones cannot do otherwise than $X$ at $T_2$.

Byerly employs a similar style of argument (based on the transitivity of explanation) against the other candidates for fulfilling the grounding requirement. I will return to a consideration of the fixity of God's beliefs as a candidate, but first I will finish my summary of Byerly's critique of the incompatibility argument. He considers the possibility that a proponent of the incompatibility argument will grant the grounding requirement, but insist that *something* (perhaps unspecified) must fulfill it, because the premises of the incompatibility argument are so plausible (and the argument is sound). Byerly goes on to offer two "direct" criticisms of the incompatibilty argument (as I have defended it). Byerly writes:

> First, Fischer's preferred regimentation of the principle of the fixity of the past has it hat hard-type soft facts are part of the 'past' in the relevant sense, and so must remain fixed in any world accessible from the actual world (Fischer 26-31) But, this will imply that the fact that a certain inscription saying that Jones does $X$ at $T_2$ was true a thousand years ago is part of the 'past' in the relevant sense, and so must remain fixed when we consider what Jones can do. This is because various properties of the inscription, such as it's *being an inscription*, are hard features of it, just like God's belief that Jones does X at $T_2$ has the hard feature of *being a belief*, on Fischer's view. Yet, the resulting fatalistic consequences of true past inscriptions are not consequences Fischer wishes to wed himself to in the context of defending the incompatibility argument. (Byerly 2017, 11)

Byerly goes on to write:

> Second, Fischer's defense of the claim that God's past beliefs are 'past' in the sense of being soft past facts with hard features relies upon a question-

able view of properties: namely, that when God holds beliefs at past times, God possesses the very same property that is possessed by human believers when they hold beliefs — viz., the property of *having a belief.* (Fischer, 30) This view will be denied, however, by many who think that properties are particualars and who would maintain, for example, that in each instance in which God holds a belief in the past, he exemplifies a distinct property — the property of having *this particular divine belief*, or *that* one, etc. It is highly questionable whether these latter properties are hard. (ibid., 12)

## Reply to Byerly's Critique

I shall first address Byerly's argument that the fixity of God's prior belief cannot fulfill the role specified by the grounding requirement. Recall that this argument proceeds by way of the transitivity of explanation. I do not deny this transitivity, but I would resist one of Byerly's crucial claims about explanation. As part of a *reductio,* he claims that Jones doing $X$ at $T_2$ explains the fixity of God's belief at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$. (The argument then proceeds from there to get to the absurd conclusion that Jones doing $X$ at $T_2$ explains why Jones is not able to do otherwise at $T_2$.)

I contend that the proper way to understand the fixity of God's belief at $T_1$ is something like this. God's belief has an element of hardness (temporal nonrelationality), this element would have to be absent were Jones to do otherwise (that is, it is a hard "kernel element," in my terminology), and no agent has it in his or her power so to act that some hard element of a fact about the past (i.e., an element that is in fact present) would be absent. And note that this fact — the conjunctive fact that specifies the fixity of God's belief at $T_1$) is *not* explained *simply* by Jones doing $X$ at $T_1$; further factors must be adduced to get to explain the fact about fixity. Thus, Byerly's argument from the transitivity of explanation that this candidate cannot fulfill the grounding requirement does not go through.

Byerley writes,

> … on Fischer's view (188, 231), the fixity of God's past beliefs is a feature they have simply in virtue of their having the more fundamental feature of being past (in the sense of 'past' operative in the principle of the fixity of the past. (Byerly 2017, 9)

But, as above, I do not claim that the fixity at $T_2$ of God's belief at $T_1$ follows *simply* from the fact that God's belief has a hard element (*i.e.*, that it is "'past' in the sense operative in the principle of the fixity of the past". Rather, it follows

from this point, together with two other crucial points: this hard element must have been absent at $T_1$, if Jones were to do otherwise at $T_2$, and no agent has it in his or her power at a time so to act that some hard element of the past relative to that time would not have been present.

Consider, now, Byerly's direct replies to the incompatibility argument. He points out that on my view, if Jones does $X$ at $T_2$, then a certain inscription (say, made in stone) a thousand years prior to $T_2$ must "remain fixed" when we consider what Jones can do, since the fact that the inscription existed is a hard-type soft fact about the past relative to $T_2$. This is because the fact in question has various hard properties, including the property, *being an in-scription*. But this is no problem for my view, since there is no obstacle to supposing that Jones can so act that a certain inscription, which was actually true, would have been false. Recall that the fixity of God's belief at $T_1$ comes in part from the fact that it has some hard element that would have to have been absent, were Jones to do otherwise at $T_2$. But the property of being an inscription, or even the property of being an inscription with its actual content, need not be absent, were Jones to do otherwise at $T_2$. This is a crucial difference from the context of God's foreknowledge. That is, the crucial hard element in the case of God's foreknowledge is a hard *kernel element*, whereas the hard element in the case of the inscription is not.

I turn, finally, to Byerly's contention that we should not think of God has having beliefs, but as having *divine beliefs*. He claims that having a divine belief that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$ is not plausibly construed as a hard property of God $T_1$. This is an interesting worry, and I am not sure exactly how to think about it. From my perspective, however, it should turn out that having a divine belief entails having a belief, in which case God believing at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$ is indeed a hard-type soft fact about $T_1$. A presupposition of the incompatibility argument, as it was first regimented in contemporary philosophy by Nelson Pike (Pike 1965), is that God's beliefs are not fundamentally different in nature from human beliefs; although they have the feature of being necessarily true, they are still beliefs in the same sense in which humans have beliefs.

## REPLY TO FLINT

*Flint's Critique*

I shall focus on Flint's subtle and insightful discussion of what he takes to be the "basic" fixity of the past principle, (FP). In his formulation (which I am happy to embrace), the principle is:

> (FP) For any action *Y*, agent *S*, time *T*, and fact *F* about the past relative to *T*, if it is true that if *S* were to do *Y* at *T*, *F* would not have been a fact about the past, then *S* cannot at (or just prior to) *T* do *Y* at *T*.

Flint begins by wondering why our prephilosophical intuition that the past is out of our control warrants (FP). He points out that if we were to accept a principle as "unrestricted" as (FP) appears to be, logical fatalism would appear to follow. I agree, and I wish to restrict (FP) to *hard* (temporally nonrelational) facts about the past. This is, after all, what is intuitively plausible; the intuition does not straightforwardly apply to such facts as "It was true at $T_1$ that Jones would do *X* at $T_2$".

But Flint finds (FP), restricted to hard facts, open to question, and he invokes Plantinga's famous example of Paul and the ant colony here. Plantinga has us imagine that some ants moved into Paul's yard last Saturday. Were Paul to mow his lawn this afternoon, the colony of ants would be destroyed. But, for some reason, God wishes the colony to survive. God knows that Paul in fact will not mow his lawn this afternoon. But if Paul were to mow, God would have foreseen his so acting, and (to save the ants) would have prevented their moving into Paul's yard last Saturday. Plantinga further supposes that Paul has it in his power this afternoon to mow his lawn. It thus appears that we have an example in which an agent (Paul) has it in his power at a time so to act that some hard (temporally nonrelational) fact about the past (that the ants moved into his yard last Saturday) would not have been a fact.

In reply to this example (and similar examples), I have contended that Plantinga's claim that Paul has it in his power this afternoon to mow his lawn is question-begging, within the dialectical context in which it is asserted, that is, within the context of an evaluation of a "skeptical" argument about human powers (and their relationship to God's foreknowledge). Of course, it would be question-begging (Moore to the contrary notwithstanding) to reply to a Cartesian skeptic about our knowledge of the external world by simply as-

serting that I know that there is an orange tree outside my office window in Riverside, California. Similarly, it is question-begging to reply to a "free-will skeptic", or perhaps better, an incompatibilist about God's foreknowledge and human freedom to do otherwise, that obviously Paul has it in his power this afternoon to do otherwise, even though God exists and had foreknowledge of his actual behavior this afternoon.

The Cartesian skeptic grants that it is part of common sense that we sometimes know propositions about the external world; but she is challenging this element of common sense. The skeptical argument is strongest when it relies on other deep components of common sense to issue the challenge to another part of common sense. Perhaps the Cartesian skeptic will rely on the principle of Closure of Knowledge under Known Implication, together with the apparent fact that we cannot rule out that we are being deceived in certain ways (for instance, we cannot rule it out that we are brains in vats being stimulated to have false beliefs about the external world [and ourselves]). Similarly, the incompatibilist grants that it is part of common sense that we sometimes are free to do other than we actually do; but she is challenging this element of common sense. The incompatibilist (under consideration here) invokes a suitably restricted (FP), together with the claim that God's prior beliefs are hard facts, or a slightly revised version of (FP), together with the claim that God's prior beliefs have hard kernel elements.

In general, skepticism is most challenging when it questions part of common sense by employing other, apparently equally compelling, parts of common sense. It is always open to one to make the Moorean move in both the contexts of epistemological and free will skepticism, but this sort of move really is not an illuminating reply to skepticism, but simply a failure to take it seriously.

Flint has an interesting and nuanced reply to my response to Plantinga:

What are we to make of Fischer's criticism? Has Plantinga transgressed the bounds of the dialectically kosher? I don't think so. His suggestion, it seems to me, is simply that it's *reasonable* to think that his story is a possible one — that is, it's reasonable to believe that Paul could have genuine alternatives and those alternatives be related to past events in the way the story suggests. The story, I think, is much more part of a *defensive* strategy than an *offensive* one. Despite his well-known evangelical credentials, Plantinga's endeavor here is (or at least should be) merely apologetic. His story isn't (or at least needn't be viewed as) part of a missionary endeavor to convert the incompatibilist… Rather, he is saying something much more modest. (Flint 2017, 19)

Flint explains what Plantinga is (or can be read as) saying in the following way:

> Look, I know that *you* (the incompatibilist) don't think Paul in my story has
> the power to mow. But I'm inclined to think that he does. And if he does, and
> if the rest of the story were true, then he'd have the power to do something
> such that the ants wouldn't have moved in. I think this is a possible story.
> So I think I'm fully within my rights in denying (FP), and thus in rejecting
> your argument. The story may not move *you* to abandon your theological
> incompatibilism, but that's not what it was intended to do. Its aim was to
> show how one who's *already* a theological compatibilist can coherently (and,
> I think, plausibly) maintain that view when threatened by your (FP)-based
> argument. (ibid., 20)

Flint here raises some difficult and subtle dialectical issues. This is an illustration of something I have believed for a long time: that getting clear on dialectical issues — what can and cannot legitimately be assumed, who has the burden of proof, and so forth — is crucial for understanding many central disputes about free will and moral responsibility. Flint drives his point home further by offering a *tu quoque* argument on behalf of Plantinga. Flint rewrites the last few lines of Plantinga's story to motivate his contention that it is not "dialectically kosher" to assume *from the start* that (FP) is true:

> … if Paul were to mow his lawn this afternoon, then the ants would not
> have moved in last Saturday. But *for all we know — we can't at this point in
> the discussion just assume anything one way or the other* — it is within Paul's
> power to mow this afternoon. So we can't assume that there isn't 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. *And this means that we can't just assume that (FP) is true. But if
> it's not kosher to assume (FP), then the incompatibilist argument doesn't get off
> the ground.* (Flint 2017, 20, italics in the original)

Finally, Flint claims that I engage in the same sort of strategy (when responding to the argument for logical fatalism) as Plantinga employs (and I criticize). Flint quotes this passage from a paper by Neal Tognazzini and me):

> Consider, for example, the fact that the assassination of JFK occurred 49
> years before we wrote this paper. … this fact relating the assassination of
> JFK to our writing this paper was true even 49 years ago. And yet it seems
> like we did have control over this fact; in particular, if we had waited until
> next year to write this paper, then although it *was* (and is) a fact that JFK was
> assassinated 49 years before we wrote this paper, it *wouldn't* have been a fact.
> (Fischer and Tognazzini, 219; Flint 2017, 21)

But now Flint argues on behalf of a fatalist, "tutored by Fischer's response to Plantinga":

> It is obviously contentious whether (in the specific circumstances in question) Fischer and Tognazini do indeed have the power to wait until next year to write their paper!... The whole point of the fatalist's argument is to put into doubt whether we have the power to do otherwise with respect to ordinary actions — actions with respect to which we typically assume that we can do otherwise. It is obviously not dialectally kosher simply to assume, in Fischer and Tognazini's example, that they do have the power (in the relevant sense) to wait until next year to write. They appear to import ordinary intuitions about our powers into a context in which they are not entitled to bring such intuitions. (Flint 2017, 21)

Flint concludes this part of his critique as follows: "Unless, then, Fischer is willing to accuse *himself* of not keeping kosher in his response to the fatalist, he had best not level such a charge against Plantinga with respect to his reply to the theological incompatibilist." (Flint 2017, 21). In offering his *tu quoque* argument, Flint is essentially saying, if I may put it this way, "So's YOUR momma!"

### *Reply to Flint's Critique*

Full disclosure: my wife is a (very) distant relative of Thomas Flint. As I wrote above, Flint raises important dialectical issues that are of central importance. But it is not so easy to evaluate them. First, he claims that Plantinga is not trying to present an example that will make an already-committed incompatibilist (who bases her incompatibilism on [FP]) give up her incompatibilism. Rather, Flint interprets Plantinga as offering an "apologetic" or "defensive" strategy, according to which he is presenting an example that shows how an already-committed theological compatibilist can help to render her position "coherent and reasonable".

But it is very difficult to understand exactly what is supposed to be going on here (dialectically speaking). It never was in doubt that compatibilism is "coherent". Further, the theological incompatibilist should concede from the outset that the "plausible" or "reasonable (from the viewpoint of common sense) view would be that (say) Jones has it in his power at $T_2$ to do otherwise, and Paul has it in his power this afternoon to mow his lawn. After all, theological incompatiblism challenges the common-sense view that we are often free to do otherwise. So, if the example of Paul and the Ant Colony is simply meant to show that compatibilism is coherent (logically possible) and reflects

common sense, I don't see how it does much philosophical work. Perhaps Flint thinks, as did the Green Bay Packers' coach Vince Lombardi, that the best offense is a good defense. But it is not clear that this maxim, even if true, applies here.

Think of it this way. Suppose Paul has been kidnapped and chained to his bed (by very heavy chains) at noon, and there is no one who can come to his aid in removing the chains this afternoon. Intuitively, under these circumstances, Paul cannot mow his lawn this afternoon. He is chained to his bed! Drilling down a bit, how can we explain the intuition that Paul cannot mow his lawn this afternoon? I would suggest this: it is a necessary condition of Paul's mowing that he not be chained to his bed, he is chained to his bed, and (intuitively) he has no control over this fact during the relevant period of time (this afternoon). That is, if he were to mow, he wouldn't be chained; but he *is* chained, and he has no control over this fact. The existence of the chains intuitively *contrains* Paul, eliminating his power to do otherwise.

Now consider Jones at $T_2$. God believes at $T_1$ that he would do $X$ at $T_2$, so it is a necessary condition of Jones not doing $X$ at $T_2$ that God believed at $T_1$ that Jones would not do $X$ at $T_2$. Further, God in fact believed at $T_1$ that Jones would do $X$ at $T_2$, and (intuitively) Jones has no control over this fact at $T_2$. The intuitive basis of the claim that Jones has no control at $T_2$ over God's belief at $T_1$ is that God's belief has a hard (temporally nonrelational) kernel element, and given that the hard past is over-and-done-with, no one has it is her power so to act that a hard element of some actual past fact would not have been present. Thus, it seems to me that when we see why we think that the chained Paul cannot mow this afternoon, it becomes plausible that Jones cannot do otherwise at $T_2$; at least we can see that the arguments are structurally similar. In both cases, it is a necessary condition of the agent doing otherwise that some actually obtaining condition *not* obtain, where it seems that the agent has no control of whether or not this condition obtains.

Flint writes that the intuitive idea that the past is fixed should have *some* tug on us,

> [b]ut, again, precisely where that tug should take us — precisely what philo-sophical principle we should see it as mandating — has been a much-de-bated issue in philosophical circles for a very long time. To suggest that the vague intuition most of us have regarding the fixity of the past obviously commits us to anything quite so controverisal as (FP) is surely not plausible. (Flint 2017, 20)

Of course, I think that the relevant understanding of (FP) includes the restriction to hard facts or facts with hard elements. So understood, I *do* find that the commonsense intuition that the past is fixed tugs me strongly toward (FP). If certain facts are fixed in part because of their mere pastness (in the relevant sense), they are fixed because they are over-and-done-with. Why would only *some* past facts then be fixed? Facts in the recent past are just as over-and-done-with as facts in the distant past, and micro-facts are just as over-and-done-with as macro-facts. (I thus find Flint's footnote 4 puzzling.)

The restriction of (FP) explains why I would seek to resist the fatalist argument, even while accepting (FP), and it explains why this is not *ad hoc*. It simply is not intuitive or part of common sense that a fact such as "It was true 49 years ago that JFK was assassinated prior to our (Neal Tognazzini and me) writing our paper" is "past" in the relevant sense — over-and-done-with. This brings me to an important dialectical point. I think that philosophical arguments, at least most of the time, should not be directed at folks who have already accepted one of the positions in question — say, theological compatibilism or incompatibilism. Rather, they should be aimed at fair-minded and reasonable *agnostics* about the issue under consideration. (For a further development and defense of this view, see Fischer and Tognazzini 2007.) I believe that a fair-minded and reasonable agnostic about theological fatalism would accept a suitably restricted (FP), but not an unrestricted (FP). Here, the consideration of the principle is *prior to* any views about whether the relevant agent is free to do otherwise; these views cannot permissibly come in at *this* point in the dialectic. But, having accepted a restricted (FP), a reasonable and fair-minded agnostic can be moved toward incompatibilism.

Recall Flint's assertion:

> The whole point of the fatalist's argument is to put into doubt whether we have the power to do otherwise with respect to ordinary actions — actions with respect to which we typically assume that we can do otherwise. It is obviously not dialectically kosher simply to assume, in Fischer and Tognazzini's example, that they do have the power (in the relevant sense) to wait until next year to write. They appear to import ordinary intuitions about our powers into a context in which they are not entitled to bring such intuitions. (Flint 2017, 21)

But we do not simply import ordinary intuitions about powers here. Rather, we claim that a restricted (FP) is plausible and reasonably thought to be licensed by common sense, whereas an unrestricted (FP) is *not*. Given this,

there is no argument on offer to the effect that Neal and I could not wait until the following year to write our paper — that sort of argument would require an unrestricted (FP). So, we are not inappropriately importing an ordinary intuition to the effect that we could have waited into a context in which a skeptical principle that calls this ordinary intuition into question has been put forward; rather, we are presenting to a fairminded and reasonable agnostic only the principle that is plausibly warranted by common sense and then seeing where the chips fall.

Flint offers an alternative way of thinking about the fixity of the past — one which putatively leads to incompatiblism about causal determinism and freedom to do otherwise but not God's foreknowledge and freedom to do otherwise; this is similar to the approach suggested by Philip Swenson, which I will consider below.

## REPLY TO JÄGER

### *Jäger's Critique*

Christoph Jäger's thoughtful critique forces me to come to grips with some fundamental questions about the incompatibility argument — questions I have not been fully aware of, and not addressed, thus far. Perhaps Jäger's key critical point begins with the claim that I contend that (say) God believes at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$ is a hard fact about $T_1$. But I also hold that "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" is a soft fact about $T_1$. Jäger essentially asks how I can accept both of these claims, given that hardness is closed under entailment, where this principle of closure is restricted to the entailment of contingent facts (that is, if $F$ is a hard fact about $T_1$, and $F$ entails that $G$ — a contingent fact — is a fact about $T_1$, then $G$ is a hard fact about $T_1$). Jäger further points out that if "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$," is indeed a hard fact about $T_1$, then I cannot maintain that the argument for logical fatalism is less cogent than the argument for the incompatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom — a claim that has been dear to my heart for quite some time.

### *Reply to Jäger's Critique*

Nelson Pike, in his pioneering regimentation of the incompatibility argument, denied that propositions can be true at times. He thought that the ar-

gument could get off the ground, even without this assumption. I am less certain that propositions cannot be true at times, and also that the incompatibility argument can go through without this assumption. In any case, as I have regimented the argument, it relies on the supposition that propositions can be true at times. But I have not explicitly addressed the question of what, if anything, *grounds* the truth at a time of a contingent proposition about the future relative to that time. And this is a vexing question.

I begin here by maintaining my implicit supposition in previous work that nothing temporally nonrelational—no hard fact—at $T_1$ grounds the truth at $T_1$ of a proposition such as "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$". Perhaps such facts need not be grounded at all. Or perhaps they are grounded by future facts, such as "Jones does $X$ at $T_2$". (On this view, truth supervenes on being, but it is not necessarily the case that truth at $T$ supervenes on being at $T$, as it were.) This possibility would seem to require eternalism, rather than presentism; but, although eternalism might be necessary, it doesn't appear sufficient to explain how the facts in question (prior truths about contingent future events) can be grounded, and it also raises problems of its own. Nevertheless, I start here with the assumption that "Jones does $X$ at $T_2$" entails "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$", without saying anything further about how (and whether) the latter truth is grounded. Note that, by denying that propositions can be true at times, and thus that contingent truths about the future can be true at prior times, Pike avoids having to address these issues about grounding. As I wrote above, I am unsure whether this sort of move is successful; in any case, Pike's regimentation of the argument (inadvertently) hides or obscures the issues about grounding.

So I begin with the assumption that "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" is not grounded in a hard (temporally nonrelational) fact that obtains at $T_1$. Now, if hardness is closed under entailment (in the way suggested by Jäger), and if "God believes at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" is a hard fact about $T_1$, then my claim that there is a crucial asymmetry between the incompatibility argument and the argument for logical fatalism is in jeopardy.

I agree with Jäger that, if one accepts that the fact about God's prior belief is a hard fact about the time at which it is held, and the relevant closure principle, then the asymmetry between the two arguments collapses. I have indeed suggested in some of my previous work, especially my early work on these topics, that God's prior beliefs should be considered hard facts about

the times at which they are held. (Fischer 1983. For an excellent discussion, see Todd 2013.) If God's beliefs are hard facts about the times at which they are held, then either one has to give up the closure principle or give up the asymmetry claim. If God's beliefs are hard, then I am inclined to give up the closure principle. This is because I am more confident that the logical fatalist's argument is problematic (on the assumption that the prior truths are *not* grounded in hard facts about the prior times in question) than that closure obtains. But I have no non-question-begging examples in which the relevant closure principle fails, which puts me in a somewhat less than comfortable dialectical position. (It must — or, perhaps, *could* — be noted that every position regarding God's foreknowledge and human freedom involves *some* discomfort, if only mild metaphysical indigestion.)

Because closure fails, I can maintain that "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" is a soft fact about $T_1$. And, because we are assuming (thus far) that this sort of fact is not grounded in some hard fact that obtains at $T_1$, there does not seem to be any reason to suppose that it is fixed and out of Jones's control at $T_2$.

Let us suppose, now, that God's belief at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$ is (as I have argued in later work [Fischer 1986), plausibly thought to be a "hard-type soft fact" about $T_1$. Perhaps it is a soft fact insofar as it is not "future-indifferent as regards $T_1$": it entails that time continues after $T_1$ and, indeed, that some intuitively "genuine" or temporally non-relational facts obtain after $T_1$. On my view, it would be a hard-type soft fact insofar as it consists of an individual (God) having a hard property at $T_1$: believing that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$. Now, since "God believes at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" is a *soft* fact (albeit at hard-type soft fact), the closure principle is not engaged at all, and one does not have to say (for reasons of closure) that "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$) is a hard fact about $T_1$. And, given that this fact is not grounded by a hard fact that obtains at $T_1$, there seems to be no reason to suppose that it is fixed at $T_2$.

But now imagine that "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" must be grounded by some hard fact at $T_1$. Now the prior truth comes with problematic and heavy "baggage". If Jones were so to act at $T_2$ that "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$" would be false, then he would have to so act that *some* hard fact about $T_1$ — the grounding fact — would not have been a fact. On this grounding assumption, then, "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$"

must be considered fixed and out of Jones's control at $T_2$. After all, I have been supposing that no agent has it in his power so to act that some hard element of the actual past would have been absent. So, on the grounding assumption, the asymmetry between the incompatibility argument and the logical fatalist's argument disappears — at least in regard to fixity.

So, the issue of grounding turns out to be important (and largely hidden in earlier discussions of the incompatibility argument and the logical fatalist's argument). If grounding in hard facts about $T_1$ is not required for facts such as "It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$", then one can maintain that the incompatibility argument is sound, whereas the logical fatalist's argument is not. But if such grounding is required, then both arguments call into question human freedom to do otherwise. They do it in slightly different ways; in the case of the incompatibility argument, God's prior beliefs either are hard facts themselves or have hard kernel elements; in the case of the logical fatalist's argument, "It is true at $T_1$ that God will do $X$ at $T_2$" comes with hard baggage. Either way, Jones cannot do otherwise at $T_2$.

It is interesting to compare the three arguments: the consequence argument, the theological incompatibility argument, and the logical fatalist's argument, on the assumption of the grounding requirement we have adopted in this part of the discussion. In the consequence argument, the relevant premise about the past is indisputably a hard fact about the past. In the theological incompatibility argument, the relevant premise about the past is either itself hard or has a hard kernel element (a hard property). In the logical fatalist's argument, the premise in question is itself soft, but it comes with hard baggage. Here the hardness is not *part* of the relevant past fact (It is true at $T_1$ that Jones will do $X$ at $T_2$), but it is *linked* to that fact in a way that creates hard baggage via a kind of toxic entanglement. All three arguments then get to the conclusion that Jones cannot do otherwise at $T_2$ — and they are all fueled, in one way or another, by the fixity of the hard past

## REPLY TO MACKIE

### *Mackie's Critique*

Penelope Mackie raises two especially important issues for my approach to defending the argument for the incompatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom to do otherwise. First, she point outs that I believe that the

argument can be formulated without employing a Transfer of Powerlessness principle. Instead, I suggest other ways of developing the argument, including a version that simply employs a possible-worlds way of regimenting the intuitive idea of the fixity of the past:

> (FP*) An agent $S$ has it in his power at (or just prior to) $T$ in possible world $w$ to do $X$ at $T$ only if there is a possible world $w^\star$ with the same past as that of $w$ up to $T$ in which $S$ does $X$ at $T$.

Mackie further notes that a compatbilist might simply reject (FP*), and that at some points I suggest that incompatibilists "may simply help themselves to the … Fixity Principle… without attempting to derive it from other premises, a strategy she takes to be "suspipiciously like an attempt to gain the advantages of theft over honest toil." (Mackie 2017, 41) (I should point out that I am admittedly not excessively fond of toil, honest or not.) Additionally, Mackie points out that one argument (not offered by me) that attempts to prove (FP*) from more basic principles appears to depend on the Transfer Principle. (Mackie 2017, 40-1), and thus an argument that employs (FP*) — argued for in this way — would not have dispensed with the Transfer Principle.

She then considers my argument (based on a similar argument by Garrett Pendergraft and me: [Fischer and Pendergraft 2013]) for (FP*) based on practical reasoning and the "fixity of reasons". My argument here is based on examples with the structure of the *Salty Old Seadog* and *Icy Patch*, in which it seems that a compatibilist is committed to very implausible results about reasons for action. Here is *Icy Patch*:

> Sam saw a boy slip and fall on an icy patch on Sam's sidewalk on Monday. The boy was seriously injured, and this disturbed Sam deeply. On Tuesday, Sam must decide whether to go ice-skating. Suppose that Sam's character is such that if he were to decide to go ice-skating at noon on Tuesday, then the boy would not have slipped and hurt himself on Monday. (Fischer, *Our Fate* Introduction, 18; and Fischer 1994, 95)

Here I claim that a compatibilist who denies (FP*) must say that Sam has access on Tuesday to a possible world in which the accident didn't happen on Monday, and thus that Sam should take this as a reason to decide to go ice-skating on Tuesday. But this is just crazy. My basic point here is that a denial of (FP*) appears to lead to implausible results about practical reasoning in certain contexts.

*Reply to Mackie*

I agree with Mackie that some arguments for (FP*) employ the transfer of powerlessness principle. If these arguments are sound, then the transfer principle is (in conjunction with the other elements of these arguments) *sufficient* for (FP*). But we don't *yet* have it that the transfer principle is *necessary* in order to establish or defend (FP*). (My co-author and I make this point, and further discuss related issues, in [Fischer and Ravizza 1996].)

As Mackie acknowledges, I have offered the argument from the fixity of reasons for (FP*), so I don't simply leave it as a brute intuition, as it were (although more on this below). But she criticizes my argument as follows:

> Sam is deliberating, on Tuesday, whether to go skating on Tuesday. He has (and believes that he has) the ability to go skating on Tuesday. (Let us refer to this as 'the ability to go skating$_r$.') He believes that there is a possible world, the B-world, in which he goes skating on Tuesday, but there is no terrible accident on Monday. Moreover, (if Sam is a compatibilist), Sam believes that the B-world is one in which he *exercises* his ability to go skating$_r$. Nevertheless, Sam can be rationally certain, on Tuesday, that the B-world *will* not be actual (and will no be actual even if he exercises his ability to go skating$_r$.) For (whether he is a compatibilist or an incompatibilist) he knows that whatever he *can* do, anything that he *will* do will be an extension of the actual past. And the actual past on Tuesday includes, as he is aware, the accident on Monday. Given all this, Sam would obviously be crazy to take the fact that the accident does not occur on Monday in the B-world, plus the fact that the B-world is one in which he exercises his ability to go skating$_r$, as a reason for going skating on Tuesday. So he would obviously be crazy to follow the Accessiblity Principle [the principle that it is appropriate to take into account, in one's practical reasoning, reasons that obtain in any world that is 'accessible']. (Mackie 2017, 48-9)

Mackie asks, "How could rationality require *S* to take into account, in deciding whether to do *Y*, a world that she can be certain will not be actual even if she does *Y*? Yet that is exactly what the Accessibility Principle dictates." (ibid, 49) But I should have thought that in these contexts "actual" is being used *indexically*. That is, the words "actual world" do not rigidly designate a particular world. Suppose the world in which the accident occurs on Monday and Sam is deliberating on Tuesday whether to go ice-skating is *pw1*. Now it is quite clear that when he decides not to go ice-skating on Tuesday, this is an extension of the past in *pw1*. But it is *not* true that no matter what Sam were to do on Tuesday, this would be an extension of the past in *pw1*. The compati-

bilist is supposing that Sam *can* go ice-skating on Tuesday. Given a rejection of (FP*), this implies that Sam has access to a *different* possible world, pw2, and in pw2 the accident did not take place on Monday.

Recall that Mackie writes, "Sam can be rationally certain, on Tuesday, that the B-world *will* not be actual (and will not be actual even if he exercises his ability to go skating$_r$.)" The following is true: Sam can be rationally certain, on Tuesday, that the B-world will not be *pw1*, and will not be *pw1*, even if he exercises his ability to go skating. But he cannot be rationally certain, on Tuesday, that the B-world would not be the actual world, if he were to exercise his ability to go skating; that's because, under this counterfactual supposition, the actual world would be *pw2* (that is, "the actual world" would pick out *pw2* under the supposition that Sam goes skating on Tuesday.) I therefore maintain my position that the compatibilist (who denies [FP*]) is in an uncomfortable position: she must countenance reasons for action that we intuitively think are not appropriately considered as such.

Finally, I'm not sure that an argument is *needed* for (FP*). We have to start somewhere in our philosophical argumentation, and it seems to me that a principle such as (FP*) might plausibly be thought to be "basic" or "primitive", and not subject to proof by reference to even more basic ingredients. If a transfer of powerlessness principle is employed to support (FP*), why stop there? That is, what is the basis for the Transfer Principle? Again: it would seem that at least *some* elements of one's argument have to be basic, and I find (FP*) extremely plausible and a candidate for being basic, if anything is. (For the suggestion that [FP*] corresponds to a basic, intuitive conception of our agency and practical reasoning and also a conception that helps us properly to analyze Newcomb's Problem, see (Fischer 1994, esp. 87-110.)

## REPLY TO SWENSON

### Swenson's Critique

Full disclosure (again): I was Philip Swenson's dissertation supervisor at UC Riverside. (Of course, this does *not* imply that he learned more than I did from this interaction!) Swenson (in this paper and previous work [2016]) develops an important and fascinating way of defending the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom: the Dependence Solution, referred to above by Thomas Flint and developed, in an inchoate form, ear-

lier by Michael Bergmann (personal correspondence). (I present and discuss Bergmann's version of the dependence solution in *Our Fate*, 93-94). On this approach, one can defend the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom without thereby being committed to the compatibility of causal determinism and such freedom.

First, the ants are back! (They have not just colonized Paul's backyard, but this — and many other — discussions of the relationship between God's foreknowledge and human freedom. And living in Riverside, California, I know just how pesky ants can be.) To refresh your memory about the example of Paul and the Ant Colony, please refer back to my discussion of Flint's critique above. Swenson attributes to me (at least for the sake of discussion) the view that the Ockhamist can maintain that there is a possible world with the same hard past in which Paul mows. This is because I hold that the Ockhamist, or at least a certain kind of Ockhamist, will insist that God's prior belief that Sam will not mow is not a hard fact about the past (nor is it a fact with any hard kernel element). But Swenson is not clear that it is plausible that there is such a possible world:

> The conjunction of the following two facts appear to entail that Paul does not mow:
>
> (a)  God intended (for reasons independent of Paul) to keep the ants away from all mown lawns.
>
> (b)  The ants were in the lawn. (Swenson 2017, 54)

Swenson points out that (a) and (b) entail that Paul does not mow his lawn this afternoon, and thus there are no possible worlds in which (a) and (b) are both truth and Paul mows his lawn. Thus, an Ockhamist would have to say that either (a) or (b) is a soft fact, but Swenson finds this implausible.

Swenson goes on to draw the following moral of this story:

> The best way to respond, I think, is to say that all the business about temporal relationality was beside the point. What matters is dependence. The Dependence Solution allows for the claim that Paul is free to mow his yard. This is because 'the ants were in the yard' is plausibly explained by Paul's choice [and not the other way around]. Thus it need not be held fixed. Its lacking temporal relationality is neither here nor there. (ibid., 55)

So on Swenson's approach, which embraces the Dependence Solution, we can hold that (a) but not (b) is fixed (i.e., out of Sam's control this afternoon). On the Ockhamism I was considering, we hold fixed (b) but not (a). Of course, I

am no proponent of Ockhamism, but was merely attempting to explore op-
tions open to someone who accepts this doctrine, in the context of a specific
example: Plantinga's Paul and the Ant Colony example. And note that (a) is
no part of the example, as Plantinga presents it.

But perhaps Swenson will say that an Ockhamist solution should be ex-
pected (and, indeed required) to generalize to a version of the example that
includes (a), and I would agree with this point. I believe that the Ockhamist
should say that (a) is a soft fact about last Saturday, since it is not over-and-
done-with last Saturday (or this afternoon). The problem for this sort of move
is that it is not clear why (a) is not over-and-done-with last Saturday, since
it does not entail that time continue after last Saturday, and is thus "future-
indifferent" relative to last Saturday. So it is not straightforward to motivate
the claim that (a) is a soft fact about last Saturday employing resources based
on temporal relationality. I think that this is a really good and interesting
problem that Swenson raises for Ockhamism, a view that I, of course, am
keen to criticize as well.

### Reply to Swenson's Critique

But why not accept the Dependence Solution? I simply find the fixity of the
hard past ([FHP] in Swenson's notation, and [FP*] in mine), extremely plau-
sible; it is, no pun intended, *hard* for me to jettison this highly intuitive pic-
ture. We think of the future as a garden of forking paths — paths that branch
off one fixed hard past. But, we do not think that the future and past are sym-
metric in this way; intuitively, we do not think that there are multiple pasts
that are parts of paths we genuinely can take into the future. (I try to moti-
vate this picture of practical reasoning and our powers in Fischer 1994, esp.
87-110.) So I find it extremely plausible that the hard past — the past that is
genuinely over-and-done-with now — is now out of my control; I do not have
the power so to act that it would have been different, and I do not have access
to a possible world in which it was different. So, for me, it is dependence, and
not hardness, that is neither here nor there, with regard to fixity. I just do not
see how it is plausible that Sam has access this afternoon to a possible world
in which the ants had not moved in last Saturday; after all, they DID move in
last Saturday.

To use an example from American football, the Atlanta Falcons "choked"
terribly and lost the last Super Bowl in the fourth quarter to the New England

Patriots. I know that they would love to do something about this now; the Falcons would love to have access now to a possible world in which they did not lose the Super Bowl. But there is just nothing they can do about it, insofar as the game is now over-and-done-with. Even if we added information about God's intentions — for example, perhaps God (like Donald Trump) is a big New England Patriots fan, and intended prior to the game that the Falcons not win the Super Bowl (if the game takes place at all). That is, we can add in an intention that is parallel to the intention envisaged by Swenson in the Ant Colony Case. This would be neither here nor there. The Falcons cannot now do anything about their disastrous Super Bowl loss. And Hilary Clinton cannot now do anything about her political strategy in her campaign against Donald Trump. These facts are hard facts about the past — cold hard facts, I suppose — and thus out of any human agent's control now.

Consider Paul this afternoon. The proponent of the dependence solution claims that he can mow his lawn, and thus he can so act that God would not have believed last Saturday that Paul would mow this afternoon (or that he has access this afternoon to a possible world in which God didn't believe last Saturday that Paul would not mow this afternoon). But why is it dialectically permissible simply to assume that Paul has the power this afternoon to mow his lawn, given that such a power would require the hard past to be different? If God's prior belief or the ants moving in last Saturday *depends* on Paul's not mowing, this is interesting, but why does this bear on whether Paul has the power on Saturday to mow his lawn? In general, if $p$'s obtaining depends on my not doing $X$, and I am free to do $X$, then I have control over $p$'s obtaining. So far so good. But if $p$'s obtaining depends on my not doing $X$, and I am *not* free to do $X$, then the mere fact that $p$'s obtaining depends on my not doing $X$ does *not* establish that I have control over $p$'s obtaining. The proponent of the Dependence Solution cannot simply help himself to the claim that S has the power to do $X$, despite S's not actually doing $X$; this, after all, is precisely what is at stake.

My point might be put as follows. Even given the dependence Swenson identifies, if an agent S's doing otherwise would require a fact such as the ant's moving in not to have been a fact, then it is problematic simply to assume that S can do otherwise. So we have again arrived at a point in the evaluation of the arguments at which it has become clear how important the dialectical issues are, and it is not clear to me that adverting to dependence (explanatory

dependence of the sort Swenson has in mind) really gets us very far. What we have, on the Dependence Solution, is this: some hard facts about the past have an *additional feature* — they are explanatorily dependent on the relevant future action. But why would this in itself imply that the agent has control over the hard facts in question? After all, in order to possess this sort of control, the agent must have the power to do otherwise, but it would be entirely question-begging (in my view) simply to assert that the agent has this sort of power, given that the power in question would require access to a possible world in which the hard past is different.

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