

Foreknowledge requires determinism

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Abstract

There is a longstanding argument that purports to show that divine foreknowledge is inconsistent with human freedom to do otherwise. Proponents of this argument, however, have for some time been met with the following reply: the argument posits what would have to be a mysterious *non-causal constraint* on freedom. In this paper, I argue that this objection is misguided – not because after all there can indeed be non-causal constraints on freedom (as in Pike, Fischer, and Hunt), but because the success of the incompatibilist’s argument does not *require* the real possibility of non-causal constraints on freedom. I contend that the incompatibilist’s argument is best seen as *showing* that, given divine foreknowledge, *something* makes one unfree – and that this something is most plausibly identified, not with the foreknowledge itself, but with the causally deterministic factors that would have to be in place in order for there to be infallible foreknowledge in the first place.

There is a longstanding (and justly famous) argument that purports to show that divine foreknowledge is inconsistent with human freedom to do otherwise. Proponents of this argument, however, have for some time been met with the following controversial (yet compelling) reply: the argument posits, in the words of W.L. Craig, an “unintelligible” constraint on freedom. After all, proponents of the argument standardly concede that God’s prior knowledge of an event isn’t a *cause* of that event. Thus, how could God’s prior *knowledge* – even infallible knowledge – of what you do, in itself, make you *unable to refrain* from doing what you do? The thought here is that the argument commits us to what would have to be a mysterious *non-causal constraint* on freedom.

In this paper, I argue that this objection is misguided – not because after all there can indeed be non-causal constraints on freedom (as in the position recently defended by John Martin Fischer and David Hunt), but because the success of the incompatibilist’s argument does not *require* the possibility of non-causal constraints on freedom. More particularly: I contend that the incompatibilist’s argument is best seen as *showing* that, given divine foreknowledge,

something makes one unfree – and that this something is most plausibly identified, not with the foreknowledge itself, but with the causally deterministic factors that would have to be in place in order for there to be infallible foreknowledge in the first place. If there is divine foreknowledge of an agent’s action at all, then that foreknowledge and that action are thus effects of a common cause, viz., the relevant causal determination – and it is that determination that makes one unfree. Thus: divine foreknowledge can – *via* the incompatibilist’s argument – be proper *evidence* that someone isn’t free, without itself grounding (by causing) that agent’s lack of freedom.

My contention is that only this position can do justice *both* to the force of the foreknowledge argument itself, *and* to the intuition that there can be no mysterious non-causal constraints on freedom.

I begin by motivating the argument that divine foreknowledge and human freedom to do otherwise are incompatible – what I will sometimes simply call “the foreknowledge argument” – together with the prohibition on non-causal constraints on freedom. (Note: in this paper, “freedom” is simply shorthand for *freedom to do otherwise*.) The result, I contend, is that the foreknowledge argument comes out as significant evidence that divine foreknowledge presupposes (in Byerly’s words) a “deterministic mechanics”. I proceed by considering, in turn, positions on these matters recently defended by Pike, Fischer, Hunt, Craig, and Byerly.

1. Pike’s Argument – and the Constraint

It is perhaps salutary to begin with what would seem to be the inauguration of the modern discussion of the problem of free will and foreknowledge, Nelson Pike’s 1965 paper, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action.” Somewhat remarkably, Pike began that paper with an expression of a sentiment he seems ultimately to have rejected. Pike began as follows:

In Part V, Section III of his *Consolatio Philosophiae*, Boethius entertained (though he later rejected) the claim that if God is omniscient, no human action is voluntary. This claim seems intuitively false. Surely, given only a doctrine describing God’s knowledge, nothing about the voluntary status of human actions will follow. Perhaps such a conclusion would follow from a doctrine of divine omnipotence or divine providence, but what connection could there be between the claim that God is omniscient and the claim that human actions are [unfree]? (1965: 27)

Of course, the relevant asymmetry between a doctrine of providence and a doctrine of omniscience is *causal*: a doctrine of providence may specify the *causes* of one's actions – and not so for a doctrine of omniscience. In the end, however, Pike argues that “although his claim has a sharp counterintuitive ring, Boethius was right in thinking that there is a selection from among the various doctrines and principles clustering about the notions of knowledge, omniscience, and God which, when brought together, demand the conclusion that if God exists, no human action is voluntary.”¹ (1965: 27)

There are various ways of articulating the basic force of Pike's foreknowledge argument, and the purpose of this paper is certainly not to defend, independently, any such version; the purpose of this paper is more particularly to defend a certain picture of what one should say should one find the foreknowledge argument (in some relevant guise) persuasive. The key ingredient involved in any version of the (Pike-style) argument, however, is some version of the very plausible thesis of the *unpreventability* (sometimes also called the “fixity”) of the past. Informally, and abstracting away from certain well-known technicalities, we can articulate the relevant argument as follows (cf. Todd and Fischer 2015). First, the past is unpreventable: no one can prevent the past. This is the premise of the fixity of the past. But if God had a certain belief (about the future) at some past time, then the fact that God had this belief at that time is now part of the past. Thus, no one now can prevent the fact that God held whatever beliefs God did hold. But what necessarily follows from what is unpreventable is similarly unpreventable. But since God is essentially omniscient (and therefore infallible), it is necessary that, if God believes *p*, then *p*. Thus: if, say, 1000 years ago, God knew (and hence believed) that Jones would sit here in a few minutes, at *t*, then Jones can't prevent his sitting at *t*. After all: Jones can't now prevent the fact that God held the relevant belief, and it is necessary that, if God held that belief, he sits at *t*. Thus, Jones can't prevent his sitting at *t*. The argument plainly generalizes.

Having developed an argument of (roughly) this kind, Pike then comments as follows:

¹ The reader may have noticed that I have inserted “[unfree]” for the final word in the quote above; in fact, I am cheating here: what Pike says is “determined”. Pike further adds: “I should like to make clear at the outset that my purpose in rearguing this thesis is not to show that determinism is true, nor to show that God does not exist, nor to show that either determinism is true or God does not exist. Following Boethius, I shall not claim that the items needed to generate the problem are either philosophically or theologically adequate.” (1965: 27) It seems clear to me, from a reading of Pike's text, that Pike sometimes (admittedly unfortunately) uses “determined” as a synonym for “unfree” – thus, when Pike is saying that he does not mean to show that either determinism is true or God does not exist, what he *means* is that he doesn't mean to show that either human beings aren't free or God does not exist. At any rate, I think this interpretation of Pike is best in accord with the passage discussed shortly.

It is important to notice that the argument given in the preceding paragraphs avoids use of two concepts that are often prominent in discussions of determinism.

In the first place, the argument makes no mention of the causes of Jones's action. Say (for example, with St. Thomas) that God's foreknowledge of Jones's action was, itself, the cause of the action (though I am really not sure what this means). Say, instead, that natural events or circumstances caused Jones to act. Even say that Jones's action had no cause at all. The argument outlined above remains unaffected. If eighty years prior to Saturday, God believed that Jones would mow his lawn at that time, it was not within Jones's power at the time of action to refrain from mowing his lawn. The reasoning that justifies this assertion makes no mention of a causal series preceding Jones's action. (1965: 35)

There is something very much right about Pike's stance in this passage, and something also very much wrong – something that threatens to obscure what is right, and something Pike, I shall argue, never should have said.

I begin with what is clearly right. Pike is certainly correct that the argument makes no mention of the causes of Jones's action. The argument does not mention causation at all; no premise of the argument says, for example, that if God believes that Jones will sit at t , then something or other causes or shall cause Jones to sit at t . Thus, to reply to the foreknowledge argument with something like "But God's beliefs don't cause us to do what we do!" is to miss the point. The argument doesn't *say* that God's beliefs cause what we do; the argument doesn't say that anything causes us to do what we do. The argument (anyway as I shall have it here) simply says that (i) the past is unpreventable, (ii) God's beliefs are in the past, and (iii) unpreventability is closed under entailment. Thus again: Pike is clearly right to insist that the argument does not mention the causes of Jones' action. In response to any such "objection" to the argument, Pike can insist: well, which premise do you deny?

And yet. There would seem to be something wrong about Pike's stance in this passage, something connected to his initial feeling that the incompatibilist conclusion has a "sharp counterintuitive ring." In short, Pike was wrong to maintain that the supposition that "Jones's action had no cause at all" leaves the argument *unaffected*. Pike's stance in this passage leaves him vulnerable to the complaint that he is positing the possibility of *non-causal constraints* on freedom. Insofar as Pike allows that "Jones's action had no cause at all" – and yet *still* Jones is unfree – it seems as if Pike is maintaining that divine foreknowledge rules out freedom to do otherwise, even if the relevant human actions are completely causally undetermined.

But now we certainly have a mystery. We suppose that Jones's action (say, a decision to sit) is completely causally undetermined – as Pike says, perhaps uncaused *simpliciter*. Now we add something into the scenario that leaves Jones's action just as it was in that respect – completely causally undetermined. And yet we're told that what we've added now, by itself, implies that Jones is unable to refrain from that action. But then: what prevents him from deciding not to sit? What force constrains Jones to decide to sit? Ex hypothesi, no *causal* force constrains Jones to decide in this way. Thus, some *logical* or perhaps *metaphysical* force constrains Jones to decide to sit. But what on earth are these logical or metaphysical “forces” which allegedly constrain Jones – robbing him of his power to do otherwise?

It is thus at least somewhat understandable that William Lane Craig has long since regarded foreknowledge incompatibilism as “unintelligible”: Pike's position, he says, is “incoherent because actions which are causally contingent cannot be fated to occur; that is to say, apart from the influence of causes it is unintelligible to speak of an action's being constrained to occur one way... If an action is causally contingent, then what is this mysterious “fate” which necessitates that this action be performed rather than its opposite?” (1990: 42) The result, Craig thinks, is that we should approach Pike-style arguments as we might approach Zeno-style arguments for the impossibility of motion: we may not be able to say exactly *where* those arguments go wrong, but we are certainly justified in thinking that such arguments *do* go wrong. (1987: 68) (A similar theme is developed by Hunt; more on this below.) Similarly: we may not be able to say where Pike's argument goes wrong, but we are certainly justified in thinking it *does* go wrong: for that argument would amount to positing mysterious non-causal forces of “fate” that rob one of concrete powers to do otherwise. We should reject the possibility of such non-causal forces. And if Pike's argument requires the possibility of such forces, we should reject Pike's argument. How should the proponent of the soundness of the foreknowledge argument respond to this basic challenge?

2. *Two clarifications on non-causal constraints*

Before proceeding, however, we must clarify the prohibition on non-causal constraints on freedom. Consider the following. Jones is not free to be (not able to be) in two monogamous relationships at once. That is to say, something constrains Jones to be in only one monogamous relationship at a time. But there is no causal force that constrains Jones in this way; the constraint is what we might call “logical” or “metaphysical”: it is not metaphysically possible to be two monogamous relationships at once, and this is what constrains Jones's freedom to be in

two at a time. One might then suppose that there can be non-causal constraints on freedom, and Craig's complaint fails.

The objection is misplaced. Here we must distinguish between *basic* and *non-basic* actions. As this example brings out, there can of course be non-causal constraints on one's freedom to perform certain non-basic actions – complex actions with descriptions like *getting in two monogamous relationships at once*, or *drawing a square circle*. But the sort of freedom that is allegedly undermined by divine foreknowledge is much more fundamental; it is the freedom, for instance, to *try* to raise one's hand, or to *try* to lie, or to *try* to draw a square circle.² The foreknowledge argument purports to show that if God foreknows that Jones will not try to raise his hand at *t*, then Jones is not in fact free to try to raise his hand at *t*. In this connection, it is worth observing that though Jones certainly is (non-causally) constrained to not draw a square circle, he is (*ceteris paribus*) still free to *try* to draw a square circle. And it seems very plausible that if something prevents Jones from being able to *try* to draw a square circle (e.g., Jones's own belief that square circles are impossible), then *that* something has to *causally* impinge, in some way, upon Jones.

In a similar vein, one might suppose that the so-called "Frankfurt cases" provide support for the claim that there can be non-causal constraints on freedom. Very briefly: the Frankfurt cases are cases in which the presence of some "counterfactual intervener" implies that a given subject lacks the sort of freedom to do otherwise targeted by Pike's argument. Crucially, in the relevant cases, the counterfactual intervener is taken indeed to be a merely *counterfactual* intervener: this agent does not actually causally interfere with the relevant monitored agent at all. And yet the monitored agent lacks freedom to do otherwise. Thus, there can be non-causal constraints on freedom.

The Frankfurt examples are, of course, notoriously controversial. Without taking a stand on the success of such examples, however, I think we can see that, even if they *are* successful, they do not show that there can be the sorts of non-causal constraints on freedom seemingly envisaged by Pike. Notably, what would rob one of freedom in a Frankfurt case is still indeed broadly causal: it is the relevant agent's disposition to *causally intervene*, were one to be about to refrain from doing what that agent wants you to do. More to the point, observe that (state-of-the-art) Frankfurt cases involve the presence of a certain kind of device. This device is imagined to be able to detect a causally necessary condition for some later event's failing to happen; if this condition comes to pass, the device is then able to causally intervene in the actual course of

² If one thinks that *deciding to try* is more basic than *trying*, then one of course could substitute *deciding to try* for *trying* in the above.

events to cause the relevant outcome.³ Thus, what ensures that *nothing else can happen* in a Frankfurt-case is the presence of certain (fairly ordinary) *causal* mechanisms. These mechanisms appear to be nothing like the forces of “fate” seemingly envisaged by Pike.⁴ In short, whatever mechanism robs us the freedom to do otherwise under the assumption of foreknowledge, it is *not* the same mechanism at issue in the Frankfurt cases.⁵

The key point here is thus the following. In a Frankfurt case, what would (allegedly) undermine one’s freedom to do otherwise is at least *broadly* causal: the mechanism that undermines one’s freedom involves causation in what has been called the “alternative sequence”, even if it does not involve causation in the *actual* sequence. However – and this is the crucial point – Pike does *not* wish to say that God’s foreknowledge undermines freedom because it involves causation in the actual sequence, and presumably Pike *also* does not believe that God’s foreknowledge involves causation in the *alternative* sequence. In this respect, it would seem that Pike is positing constraints on freedom that are not even *broadly* causal – that involve neither causation in the actual sequence *nor* the alternative sequence. And now the basic complaint: surely any constraint on freedom must be at least *broadly* causal.

We thus arrive at what I propose to call “the constraint” on constraints on freedom:

No set of conditions can render one unable to perform some basic action at *t*, unless either (i) those conditions are at least a partial cause of what one does at *t*, or (ii) those conditions *would* (or at least *might*) be a partial cause of what one does at *t*, if one were about to perform some alternative action at *t*.

According to the objection, however, it is neither the case that God’s foreknowledge is even a partial cause of what we do, and nor is it the case that God’s foreknowledge is *counterfactually* such a cause of what we do (in the manner at issue in a Frankfurt case). According to the constraint (on constraints), God’s foreknowledge therefore cannot render us unfree. (Note: hereon, when I say “non-causal constraint”, I mean this as shorthand for a not-even-*broadly*-causal constraint.)

³ As in the so-called “buffer cases”; see, e.g., Pereboom 2001: 25, Hunt 2005, and Hunt and Shabo 2013; for discussion, see Franklin 2011, McKenna 2018, and Capes 2022.

⁴ Indeed, if the Frankfurt-cases *did* involve the presence of such seemingly “occult” powers, there is little doubt that defenders of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP) would immediately seize upon this fact to cast doubt upon the cases.

⁵ Notably, though Craig in many places strenuously maintains that non-causal constraints on freedom are “unintelligible”, elsewhere Craig *does* seem to endorse a Frankfurt-style argument; see Craig 2001: 261. Again: even if the Frankfurt cases are successful, they do not seem to provide evidence that the relevant constraints on freedom are possible – i.e., constraints on freedom, even in the absence of actual *or counterfactual* causation.

There is at least one other important philosophical context in which the possibility of non-causal constraints on freedom has arisen, and that is the literature on *time-travel* and freedom (cf. Sider 2002: 122 on “strange shackles”, and Tognazzini 2016 for discussion). In lieu of turning this paper on foreknowledge and freedom into a paper on time-travel and freedom, I am going to be brief. Consider the well-known *grandfather paradox*: if backwards time-travel were possible, then it would be possible for Tim to travel back in time and kill his grandfather – in which case he wouldn’t be there to travel back in time in the first place. And consider how Lewis (famously) attempts to dissolve this paradox. In short, Lewis defends the idea that there is a sense in which Tim *can* kill his grandfather (albeit also a more restricted sense in which he cannot); indeed, Lewis seemingly motivates this position by implicitly relying on exactly “the constraint” I have articulated above:

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. (1976: 149)

In short, on the assumption that time travel is possible in the first place (an assumption that is certainly dialectically vexed in the context of debates about the fixity of the past!⁶), it would seem as if there are only two positions one might take with respect to whether Tim can kill Grandfather that are consistent with the constraint developed in this paper. (1) Tim *can* kill Grandfather (after all, there are none of the usual causal constraints in the scenario) – he just *won’t* (cf. Lewis 1976). (2) Tim *cannot* kill Grandfather, since his killing Grandfather would be causally impossible given the relevant setup (cf. Wasserman 2017; for further discussion, see

⁶ For my own part, I would be reticent to grant that there are time-travel counterexamples to the constraint on constraints, precisely insofar as whatever intuitions support the fixity (i.e., the unpreventability) of the past – which I accept – themselves tell against the possibility of backwards time-travel. For this reason, I am skeptical of the dialectical force of some recent appeals to the possibility of time-travel (Swenson 2016, Wasserman 2021, 2022) to preserve the compatibility of foreknowledge and freedom. Notably, Markosian 2020 argues – plausibly, in my view – that given the so-called “dynamic” theory of time (itself defended in Markosian (forthcoming)), time-travel to the past is impossible. However, some may feel that the intuition that the past is fixed itself ultimately traces back to and relies on the dynamic theory in question. In other words: it may be that both the fixity of the past *and* the impossibility of time-travel to the past are both effects of a deeper common-cause: the truth of the dynamic theory of time. The connection, if any, between the fixity of the past and the dynamic theory is an important question, but one that must lay outside the scope of the current paper.

Wasserman 2018: Chs. 3 - 4). The position that is seemingly ruled out is the following: (3) Tim *cannot* kill Grandfather, although his doing so is indeed causally possible in the circumstances. Notably, however, I am not aware of anyone in the relevant literature who defends position (3) – that is, who defends the analogous Pike-style view that there can be non-causal constraints on freedom.⁷ This perhaps could be seen as providing further evidence for the constraint.⁸

3. Fischer

Perhaps no philosopher working on these issues in the aftermath of Pike’s essay has done more to defend the argument for foreknowledge incompatibilism than John Martin Fischer. Across a wide body of impressive work, Fischer has defended the basic thesis that the fixity of the past implies that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom to do otherwise. In one respect, I am in agreement with Fischer: foreknowledge is, as he has so persuasively argued,

⁷ Note: there is a complication for a comparison between the sorts of constraints on freedom envisaged by Pike, and the sorts of constraints on freedom standardly discussed in the time travel literature: in the latter contexts, what is typically at issue is again not a *basic* freedom, but a freedom to perform a complex action with a description like *killing one’s grandfather*. Arguably, however, we could consider a time-travel scenario involving basic freedoms, e.g. one on which Tim’s brain is being electronically monitored by a device that can detect tryings; thus, if Tim *tries* (or *decides*) to pick up a gun, that will set off an alarm, which will in turn prevent his parents from meeting, and him from being conceived. And now parallel questions will arise: can Tim *try* to pick up that gun? (I thank Wolfgang Schwarz for helpful discussion here.)

⁸ A final issue. An anonymous referee for this journal notes that some philosophers have felt that human freedom is impossible given a so-called “block universe” or “eternalist” theory of time. Literature developing this claim, however, is scant. However, if the idea here is that eternalism conflicts with freedom, because it implies that all of our actions are (non-causally) “fixed” in time (cf. Diekmeyer 2007 for discussion), this position may seem to be one that jettisons the constraint on constraints. However, my own view – echoing Page 2022 – is that there is no compelling argument from the truth of eternalism to the claim that there is no freedom to do otherwise. In particular, the sense of “fixity” at stake here seems in the end to reduce to nothing more than the “fixity” at issue in the claim that there are *truths* about future actions. In other words, the idea appears to be that (i) if eternalism is true, then there are truths specifying what anyone does or doesn’t do in the future, and (ii) if there are such truths, no one is free to do otherwise. (Cf. this construal of the issue in Miller 2013: 357). But then the culprit here is (ii): there is no persuasive version of the incompatibility argument at issue in so-called “logical fatalism”, unlike, I contend, the parallel argument in support of theological fatalism. (Here we can appeal to familiar soft/hard fact distinction; the observation that facts about what was true yesterday about what would be happening today are soft facts undercuts the former argument, but *not* the latter [see Todd 2013a for just one recent discussion].) However, it is of course open to the “logical fatalist” to make a move parallel to the one I make here, viz. to insist that there *is* an compelling version of the argument from prior truth to no freedom to do otherwise – and that this, together with the constraint, gives us strong reason to think that there can only be *truths* about the future to the extent that it is determined (in other words, that there can be no true future contingents). But in this case, the argument from eternalism to no freedom to do otherwise is in fact *consistent* with the constraint. My complaint with this argument is simply that the initial incompatibility argument is not compelling. (Incidentally, I defend the view that there can be no future-contingent truths [Todd 2016, 2020, 2021], but I do not endorse this *reason* for thinking that there can be no such truths.) A full discussion of these issues, however, must lay outside the scope of the present paper.

incompatible with freedom to otherwise.⁹ And yet in another important respect, I disagree with Fischer: there can be no non-causal constraints on freedom – *contra* his favoured position. In a crucial passage in his recent introductory essay (to a collection of his work on the foreknowledge problem), Fischer writes:

If I am correct in my argumentation above [that God could have infallible foreknowledge of indeterministic events], this would provide an alternative way of conceptualizing these matters. More specifically, God's foreknowledge would *not* require causal determinism, and thus the challenge to human freedom stemming from God's foreknowledge would *not* be coming from causal determinism. This could issue in embracing compatibilism about God's foreknowledge and human freedom, insofar as one believes (as Todd and others appear to) that the *only* reason God's foreknowledge would rule out human freedom is that it points to the *real* worry: causal determination.¹⁰ But I do not wish to suggest that the possibility of God's foreknowledge in a causally indeterministic world *must* lead to compatibilism; after all, one might believe that God's foreknowledge would in itself (or for some reason apart from being a sign of causal determinism) rule out human freedom.

For example, it would seem that the intuitive idea of the fixity of the past (suitably formulated) would imply that God's foreknowledge would threaten human freedom (quite apart from worries about causal determination), on the assumption that God's prior beliefs are hard facts about the past. If being free at *T* to do *X* requires a possible world in which the relevant agent does *X* holding fixed all the hard facts about the past relative to *T*, and if God's prior belief is a hard fact about the past, then it would seem that human freedom is called into question, quite apart from any assumption about causal determinism. (2016: 41)

First, it is worth bringing out Fischer's basic thesis in these passages. Fischer maintains that (i) God could have infallible foreknowledge that Jones will (decide to) sit at *t*, even though it is not causally determined that Jones will sit at *t*, and (ii) even if, in that scenario, it is not causally determined that Jones will sit at *t*, *Jones is not free to do otherwise* than sit at *t*. That is to say: even if what one does is completely causally undetermined, still, if God exists with foreknowledge, one

⁹ Amongst other important works, see Fischer 1983 and 1994; see especially Fischer's recent (2016) collection, *Our Fate*. See further Fischer's extensive co-authored work: Fischer, Todd, and Tognazzini 2009, Fischer and Todd 2011, Fischer and Tognazzini 2014, and Todd and Fischer 2013.

¹⁰ Todd 2013b; Todd 2014. In these papers, I briefly hint at the position more fully developed here.

is nevertheless not free to do otherwise. Hence again our basic mystery; here we have a non-causal constraint on (basic) freedom.

Now, how does Fischer attempt to justify this position? In effect, he does so by simply *repeating the foreknowledge argument*. Fischer's position, it seems, would have to be this. Suppose that what Jones does at *t* is causally undetermined, and other things are equal, and there is no infallible foreknowledge. Thus, Jones is free to otherwise. Now we "add in" God's foreknowledge. According to Fischer, this addition now renders Jones *unable* to do otherwise. But how? By making it the case that Jones's doing otherwise would now require that some "hard" (temporally intrinsic) fact about the past would be different. And – as Fischer has so often emphasized, and as I agree – no one can act in any way that would require that some hard fact about the past would be different.

But this simply repeats our mystery rather than dispelling it. We want to know what the *connection is* between this hard fact about the past and one's inability to do otherwise. In other words, precisely *how* does the presence of this hard fact (in the past) render one unfree? Or look at it this way. Perhaps we initially agree with Fischer that it is – at a first pass – implausible to suppose that one can act in such a way that would require a hard fact about the past to be different. Granted. Then again, if it is *also* granted that this hard fact about the past *neither in itself is nor implies* any sort of causal constraint on what one does, then exactly *how could* the presence of this hard fact about the past render one unfree? At best, we have a sort of standoff. Fischer is certainly *prima facie* right that one cannot act in such a way that a hard fact about the past would be different. But Fischer's position is significantly vitiated once it is granted that the presence of this hard fact neither is nor implies a causal constraint on one's action. That is, Fischer's position would then seem to be akin to the belief that the presence of this hard fact – and I am unsure how else to say this – throws up some kind of "metaphysical force field", preventing Jones from doing what he is *causally* unconstrained to do. And this is implausible. It is implausible that the presence of a hard fact in the past could render one unfree, unless that hard fact about the past is in some relevant way causally connected to what one does.

I recognize, of course, that Fischer will want to deny a commitment to this kind of "metaphysical force field"; my point here is to invite Fischer to engage further with the question: precisely *how* does God's belief, concretely, prevent Jones (say) from standing at *t*? Note: "By being such that it would have to be different, were Jones to stand" – what seems to be Fischer's preferred answer to this question – is in fact no answer to this question. Compare. Suppose Jones is in chains, which intuitively prevent him from standing. Suppose we ask: how do the chains prevent Jones from standing? And suppose someone says: "By being such that they

would have to not be there, were he to stand.” But this is at best an awkward reply to our question. Yes, in order for Jones to stand, the chains would have to not be there – and that certainly shows that Jones can’t stand. But if the question is how it is that the chains prevent Jones from standing, presumably the more natural answer is something like “by exerting a downward causal force on Jones”. Thus again: *how* does God’s prior belief prevent Jones from standing, according to Fischer? I am unsure of what else to offer Fischer here than “by exerting a downward metaphysical force on Jones”.¹¹

But here we must back up – and slow down. Arguably, someone sympathetic to “the constraint” on constraints can *accept* (at least some of) what Fischer says in the above. Recall that Fischer writes:

It would seem that the intuitive idea of the fixity of the past (suitably formulated) would imply that God’s foreknowledge would threaten human freedom (quite apart from worries about causal determination), on the assumption that God’s prior beliefs are hard facts about the past.

But we may agree with what Fischer says here, without commitment to any non-causal constraints on freedom. More particularly, I agree with Fischer that the fixity of the past *implies* that God’s foreknowledge “threatens” human freedom – if “threatens” simply means “is incompatible with” human freedom. Fischer is right: the fixity of the past does indeed imply that God’s foreknowledge is incompatible with freedom. (This is to say: Fischer is right that, if the past is fixed, then foreknowledge and freedom are incompatible.)

However, Fischer does say that the fixity of the past would imply that God’s foreknowledge would threaten (be incompatible with) human freedom, quite apart from “worries about causal determination”. But this statement is ambiguous. I agree that *it can be seen that* the fixity of the past implies that God’s foreknowledge is incompatible with freedom, without assuming causal determinism. But this is *not* to say that the fixity of the past would imply that God’s foreknowledge would threaten human freedom, even assuming that determinism is *false*. More to the point: when formulating the argument for foreknowledge incompatibilism, we certainly do not need to assume that foreknowledge requires determinism.

¹¹ There is one wrinkle here: Fischer of course maintains that foreknowledge is inconsistent with the freedom of Jones to *try* to stand. And Fischer could say that the reason Jones can’t stand (in this scenario) is that he can’t *try* to stand. But then parallel questions would arise about this trying: how does God’s prior belief prevent Jones from *trying* to stand (or perhaps *deciding* to try to stand)?

But this is *not* to say that when formulating the argument for foreknowledge incompatibilism, we may grant that foreknowledge *does not* require determinism.

Here is the basic dialectical situation as I see it. We approach a set of idealized agnostics (as in van Inwagen 2006) about the argument that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom. Now, in the context in which we are presenting this argument to this group of idealized agnostics, we *also* ask our agnostics to remain agnostic on whether foreknowledge is possible in the absence of causal determination. That is to say, we do not ask the group of agnostics to assume that foreknowledge does require determinism, but nor do we let them assume that foreknowledge is indeed possible *without* determinism. On this question, they remain at least initially neutral, when evaluating the given argument. In this context, we present the following argument (suitably expanded) to our group of agnostics:

The past is unpreventable; God's beliefs are in the past; God is infallible; but what necessarily follows from what is unpreventable is unpreventable; so if God has prior beliefs about someone's actions, those actions are unpreventable.

In asking our group of idealized agnostics to consider this argument, we have *not* asked them to suppose that God's prior beliefs are held on the basis of deterministic causal conditions. Now, with Pike and Fischer, my contention is that, on the basis of this argument – and this argument alone – our group of idealized agnostics should assign a high credence to the claim that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise. That is: I believe that this argument does indeed show that foreknowledge incompatibilism is true.

In *this* sense, divine foreknowledge can be seen to threaten human freedom, quite apart from “worries” about causal determination. But this is not to say that divine foreknowledge does indeed threaten human freedom, even if divine foreknowledge does not require causal determination. For instance, suppose it occurs to one of our idealized agnostics to ask the following:

The foreknowledge argument certainly seems compelling, and I can't see anything wrong with it; I can't identify a mistaken premise in that argument. And yet: on the assumption of divine foreknowledge, what *renders us* unfree to do otherwise? This is still a mystery to me; indeed, it is so much a mystery that I am beginning to suspect that the argument must be going wrong somewhere, even if I can't say where.

We may then respond:

Well, as you saw previously, divine foreknowledge is indeed incompatible with freedom – so divine foreknowledge must require *something* that renders an agent unfree. Of course, it is implausible that divine foreknowledge *itself* could be the thing that renders an agent unfree; divine foreknowledge is no kind of *cause* of what anyone does. Thus, it must be that divine foreknowledge requires something *else* that makes an agent unfree – and this is causal determination.

Thus, although we do not *begin* with the assumption that foreknowledge requires causal determinism, we crucially also do not begin with the assumption that it does not – and then the strength of the foreknowledge argument *itself* gives us strong reason to think that causal determinism is indeed true in any scenario involving divine foreknowledge. (More on this shortly.) The upshot is this. If Fischer wants to defend his claim that foreknowledge rules out freedom to do otherwise, even if the relevant actions are causally undetermined, then it is not enough for Fischer simply to drive home the point that the foreknowledge argument is irrefutable. Perhaps it is! As I have argued above, however, the irrefutability of the argument is *consistent* with the constraint on constraints.

4. Hunt

Like John Martin Fischer, David Hunt has, over a wide range of impressive work, defended the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and the ability to do otherwise.¹² In most crucial respects, for our purposes, Hunt's position is exactly like Fischer's: divine foreknowledge (i) does not require the truth of causal determinism, but (ii) is incompatible with human freedom to do otherwise. Further, like Fischer, Hunt rejects PAP; thus, Hunt takes what he considers to be the "Augustinian" view that though God's foreknowledge renders our actions *unavoidable* (and hence we lack *freedom to do otherwise*), nevertheless God's foreknowledge leaves us *free in the sense required for responsibility*. Indeed, the only difference between the positions of Fischer and Hunt is ultimately extraneous to the topic of this paper; Fischer is a compatibilist about moral responsibility and causal determinism, whereas Hunt is a so-called "source incompatibilist", who maintains that determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility, even though alternative

¹² See Hunt 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2017

possibilities are not required for responsibility.¹³ Thus, Hunt still claims the mantle of “libertarianism”, and claims that God’s foreknowledge, though incompatible with freedom to do otherwise, nevertheless leaves intact “libertarian agency” – which Hunt takes to be the sort of freedom required for moral responsibility. “Libertarian agency”, for Hunt, is now simply divorced from the kind of freedom undermined by foreknowledge: the freedom to do otherwise.

Thus, all of the basic complaints I have developed above would also apply to Hunt’s position; Hunt is, I contend, implausibly committed to the possibility of non-causal constraints on the freedom to do otherwise. As Hunt writes,

Augustine’s way out, then, comes to this. Divine foreknowledge does indeed imply ... the future in unavoidable. ... But divine foreknowledge makes the future unavoidable without causing it or explaining it.

God’s foreknowing the murder may make it unavoidable, but it does so without making any causal contribution to the murder. (1999: 297)

And, again, here we clearly have a non-causal constraint on freedom to do otherwise. We could, perhaps, leave the matter there – but that would be to ignore what would seem to be a central theme of Hunt’s longstanding approach to the foreknowledge problem. In at least several different works, Hunt has vigorously developed the theme – seemingly also developed above – that it is wholly mysterious how divine foreknowledge, in itself, could make anyone unfree. It is worth considering a representative passage:

If the argument is indeed sound, an action which is in every other respect an ideal candidate for free agency can be deprived of this status merely by adding infallible foreknowledge to the mix. But this is preposterous on its face. How could a third-party’s knowledge of my future action, just by itself (and without special assumptions about the conditions under which such knowledge is possible), have any effect at all on the action,

¹³ It is perhaps worth mentioning, in this connection, that this point would seem to call into question why Fischer in particular *needs* – from his point of view – to argue that foreknowledge rules out alternatives, even in the absence of determinism. Fischer could preserve the central thing he seems to be most concerned to preserve (cf. Fischer 2012) – moral responsibility – while admitting that divine foreknowledge would rule out alternatives ultimately *by* requiring the truth of causal determinism. This is, to my mind, a much more plausible position for Fischer to take. Hunt, on the other hand, *cannot* both maintain human moral responsibility *and* the thesis that divine foreknowledge rules out alternatives in virtue of ultimately requiring determinism; according to Hunt, this determination would render us non-responsible.

let alone transform it to such an extent that it no longer qualifies as free? List everything that could possibly be relevant to whether an action A is an instance of free agency: that A is done willingly; that the will to do A doesn't flout any of the agent's second-order desires; that the agent can abstain from A should he choose to do so; that the agent is not acting under coercion or duress; that A is not causally determined by events prior to the agent's birth; that the agent is not acting in ignorance of relevant circumstances; and so on. Now assume that God has infallible foreknowledge of A. This assumption should leave A completely unchanged with respect to every item on the list. (1999: 20)

And yet: Hunt *agrees* that adding foreknowledge "to the mix" does indeed transform an action that was otherwise a perfectly good candidate for being *avoidable* to one which is *unavoidable* – one concerning which the agent was not *free to do otherwise*. Thus, *something*, Hunt contends, is "preposterous on its face", but *not* the argument that purports to show that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with the freedom to do otherwise. That argument, Hunt maintains, is not only not preposterous on its face – it is also sound. Hunt goes on:

The appropriate response to such an argument is aptly stated by William Lane Craig: "Fatalism posits a constraint on human freedom which is entirely unintelligible. Therefore, it must be false. Somewhere there is a fallacy in the argument, and we need only examine it carefully to find the error." Fatalism presents us with a conceptual puzzle, not a serious proposal for how the world is arranged. ... The argument for theological fatalism is too dubious to serve as a [reason for rejecting divine foreknowledge or libertarian agency]. ... The same is true for theological fatalism, if one agrees with Craig (and me) that the supposed incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom lacks all *prima facie* credibility. (1999: 20 – 21; cf. Hunt 2001: 81 for a similar passage)

But it is fundamentally unclear how Hunt can *approvingly quote* the passage at issue – a passage in which Craig is plainly ridiculing *Hunt's own position*. That is, in the passage at issue, Craig is concerned with the freedom to do otherwise, and the argument for "fatalism" is an argument that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with the *freedom to do otherwise*. It is precisely the suggestion that foreknowledge could imply the lack of freedom to do otherwise that Craig finds

“unintelligible”.¹⁴ Again: Craig thinks that, for these reasons, Pike’s argument lacks all *prima facie* credibility. Hunt, however, disagrees; indeed, for Hunt, Pike’s argument is sound, and shows exactly what it all along purported to show. Nevertheless, Hunt maintains, despite the fact that foreknowledge *does* (or would) make all of our actions unavoidable, it is nevertheless absurd – “not a serious proposal”, “preposterous on its face” – that foreknowledge could render us non-responsible.

Let me cut to the chase. Hunt’s considered view would seem to be the following:

It is true that there are non-causal constraints on basic *abilities*, but it is wholly preposterous to suppose that non-causal constraints can affect an agent’s *responsibility*.

But I submit that this has things almost exactly backwards. What is in the first instance wholly preposterous is that there could be non-causal constraints on basic abilities. But having granted that God’s foreknowledge can indeed place an amazing non-causal constraint on what someone is *able to do*, it is not at all “preposterous” to think that God’s foreknowledge could then affect that agent’s *responsibility*. That is to say, it is implausible for Hunt to maintain that it is preposterous to think that foreknowledge could directly affect responsibility, if foreknowledge can directly affect one’s basic abilities. Whence the asymmetry? Indeed, if foreknowledge has the relevant “power” *in itself* to render what one does genuinely unavoidable, just as Hunt maintains, how can it plausibly be maintained that it is just *bizarre* to think that it could similarly render one non-responsible – that is, that thinking so is akin to accepting, say, Zeno’s paradox of motion? We might grant, with Hunt, that it is initially strange to think that mere foreknowledge, in itself, could render anyone non-responsible. (I submit that this is initially strange precisely *because* it is strange to think that foreknowledge could even render what we do *unavoidable*, but let us waive this point for the moment.) But once we *update* with Hunt’s own view – that foreknowledge constitutes what I earlier called a “metaphysical force-field” – the situation is, at

¹⁴ There is plainly a terminological issue here regarding the use of the term “fatalism”. Very briefly: for Hunt, the argument for “fatalism” concludes with the claim that we are *not responsible* (2017: 27), whereas for Craig, the argument for “fatalism” concludes merely with the claim that we are not *free to do otherwise*. It is then a different matter whether that implies something about “the freedom required for moral responsibility.” On Hunt’s construal, however, he can reject the argument for “fatalism” while *conceding* that the argument *does* show that we are not free to do otherwise; for Hunt, the argument for fatalism fails at the step from no alternatives to no responsibility. For Craig, however, that “step” is no part of the argument at all; for Craig, Hunt’s position is better described as one that *accepts* “fatalism”, but denies that the truth of fatalism implies that we lack the kind of freedom that “really matters” – the freedom (whatever it is) necessary for responsibility. Cf. Craig 2001: 109: “David Hunt’s provocative position is that fatalism is true – but not to worry, for fatalism is compatible with libertarian freedom!” At least as regards “fatalism”, my terminological sympathies are with Craig, though I shall not press the point.

least, now deeply confusing, and not merely “confusing” in the sense in which Zeno’s paradox is confusing. There are metaphysical force-fields! If metaphysical force-fields can eliminate someone’s ability to do otherwise, why not also their responsibility?

To elaborate. Consider what we might call “the problem foreknowledge raises for responsibility”. Now, it is clear how *Craig* can treat this problem “aporetically”, to use Hunt’s favoured term. (Roughly, to treat an argument “aporetically” is to treat it as an intellectually interesting puzzle that couldn’t possibly succeed in showing what it purports to show – e.g., that Achilles cannot outrun a tortoise.) After all, Craig thinks that it is bizarre to suppose that foreknowledge is incompatible with any pretheoretically plausible necessary condition on responsibility. However, Hunt will – as indeed everyone must – grant that PAP (i.e., having the ability to do otherwise) is indeed a pretheoretically plausible necessary condition on responsibility. (That PAP is extremely pretheoretically plausible has never been in dispute.) And Hunt maintains that foreknowledge makes it impossible that anyone should meet the condition laid down in PAP. Thus, Hunt’s position is that (i) foreknowledge *does* conflict with a pretheoretically extremely plausible necessary condition on responsibility – and yet (ii) the idea that foreknowledge conflicts with responsibility is nevertheless “preposterous on its face”. But this position is unstable: if foreknowledge does indeed rule out anyone’s meeting such a pretheoretically plausible condition on responsibility, then one is no longer justified in treating the problem foreknowledge raises for responsibility “aporetically”. This is, of course, not to say that that one cannot reject the problem; one might contend (for example, on the basis of the Frankfurt examples) that PAP is false, and so that even though foreknowledge rules out alternatives, in the end the problem foreknowledge raises for responsibility can be dissolved. Of course. My point here is the more limited one that one cannot continue treating this problem as a mere “puzzle”, once one grants that foreknowledge eliminates alternatives.

Of course, as I have argued, the better position for Hunt is the following: Craig is right that there can be no non-causal conditions which mysteriously render an action unavoidable; but divine foreknowledge does indeed – as Pike has shown, and as Hunt has tended to accept – entail that one’s actions are unavoidable; so it must be that divine foreknowledge entails that there are causal conditions which render one’s actions unavoidable. To such a view I now turn.

5. *Byerly*

One philosopher with whom I am *almost* in complete agreement with on these matters in T. Ryan Byerly.¹⁵ Byerly develops at length what he calls the *indirect* response to the foreknowledge argument (Byerly 2012, 2014, 2017). I summarize briefly. If the foreknowledge argument is sound, then (everyone will agree that) divine foreknowledge requires *something* that explains the absence of human freedom. However, as Byerly rightly argues, it is implausible that the thing which foreknowledge requires which could explain the absence of freedom is, in a sense, foreknowledge (or fore-belief) itself. Thus, far and away that most plausible candidate for what is both required by foreknowledge *and* could explain the absence of freedom is causal determination. So far, so good. At this stage, however, Byerly then develops the “indirect response” in question: we are, Byerly says, not really in position to know that divine foreknowledge indeed *does* require causal determination. Indeed, here Byerly points to certain “conciliatory stories” concerning how God could have foreknowledge without causal determination. Insofar as some model of how God could achieve the relevant foreknowledge in the absence of determination is plausible, we therefore have reason to suspect that the foreknowledge argument is going wrong *somewhere*.

At some level of analysis, I agree entirely with the picture here presented. The central complaint I have with respect to Byerly’s discussion concerns his tendency to *forget about the foreknowledge argument itself*.¹⁶ To explain. My sense is that, according to Byerly, once we properly appreciate the fact that the foreknowledge argument is sound only if foreknowledge requires a “deterministic mechanics”, we should simply now *bypass* the foreknowledge argument, and simply consider *directly* the claim that God could only have foreknowledge on the basis of causal determination. Indeed, Byerly notes (and I agree) that there is a strong inductive argument that God’s foreknowledge would *have* to be achieved via causal determination – for, as Byerly helpfully brings out, the only method we are really familiar with whereby someone can achieve knowledge of the future is on the basis of one’s beliefs about (i) the present and past and (ii) the laws of nature. On Byerly’s picture, the *real* question is simply the success or the failure of this

¹⁵ One other philosopher is Dean Zimmerman. In a recent exchange with W.L. Craig, Zimmerman quickly articulates the basic approach developed in this paper. Briefly: Craig (2011) accuses Zimmerman’s (2009) “Yet Another Anti-Molinist Argument” of being committed to exactly the kind of non-causal constraints Craig sees in Pike’s argument; Zimmerman (2011) replies by saying – correctly in my view – that his argument does not really rely on the possibility of non-causal constraints. For our purposes: Zimmerman contends that proponents of the Pike-style argument do not conclude that foreknowledge places non-causal constraints, but instead conclude that, since such constraints are impossible, foreknowledge of a non-determined action is also impossible. My basic reply: Zimmerman is right on the philosophy, but wrong on the sociology; Pike, Fischer, and Hunt – some of the most prominent defenders of the relevant argument – do indeed think the argument supports the possibility of non-causal constraints. Hence this essay.

¹⁶ I make this point very briefly in Todd 2015.

style of inductive argument: the question is simply whether we are or are not independently justified in thinking that God's foreknowledge would require determinism. On one side we have the inductive argument in question; on the other side, we have the "conciliatory stories" mentioned by Byerly, and the recognition that there may be "ways of knowing" available to a metaphysically perfect being with which *we* are entirely ignorant. As Byerly writes:

The foregoing defense of the claim that the truth of causal determinism is the best proposal we know of for that which is both required by divine foreknowledge and explains the absence of freedom depends crucially on the claim that there indeed is a powerful argument that divine foreknowledge requires the truth of causal determinism. So, I must now turn to that argument. The best argument I know of for the claim that divine foreknowledge requires the truth of causal determinism is an inductive argument based on our knowledge of how foreknowledge of contingent claims about the future is obtained. (2014: 50)

By his own lights, however, Byerly should agree that his claim about "the best argument" in question is simply false. Having made precisely the points he has so elegantly made, Byerly should now recognize that this sole inductive argument is *not* the best argument that foreknowledge requires determinism. It would now be more accurate to say that the "best argument" that foreknowledge requires determinism is a *cumulative-case* argument – it is (i) the inductive argument mentioned by Byerly, together with (ii) *the foreknowledge argument itself*, together with "the constraint" developed above, i.e., together with the claim, defended by Byerly, that the foreknowledge argument is sound only if foreknowledge requires determinism. The point here is simply that once we see that the foreknowledge argument is sound only if foreknowledge requires a deterministic mechanics, the plausibility of the foreknowledge argument *itself* gives us corresponding reason to think that foreknowledge *does* require a deterministic mechanics.

Byerly, however, seems to miss this key point. Indeed, Byerly makes the (to my mind astonishing) claim that the inductive argument in question (together, of course, with the claim that determinism explains non-freedom) can be thought of as "recasting the foreknowledge argument more compactly." (2014: 66) But this simply will not do. The foreknowledge argument is a very powerful argument that makes essential appeal to the plausible idea of the unpreventability of God's past beliefs – and the inductive argument in question nowhere even mentions anything like the unpreventability of God's past beliefs. Indeed, it is obvious that if one wanted to communicate (say) to some novice student how Pike's foreknowledge argument

works, it would be patently unsatisfactory to present the inductive argument in question as a “compact version” of Pike’s argument. Further: there is no good sense in which it follows from the mere fact that argument A is sound only if argument B is sound that argument B can thereby be said to “recast argument A in other words”. In sum: as said at the outset, we must do justice *both* to the foreknowledge argument, *and* to the constraint on (non-causal) constraints on freedom. Byerly does justice to the latter, but not the former. Thankfully, seeing the foreknowledge argument as itself *reason* to think that foreknowledge requires determinism does justice to both.

6. *Three options*

By way of summing up, it may help if we construe the positions discussed in this paper in terms of an inconsistent triad:

1. The foreknowledge argument shows that foreknowledge and freedom to do otherwise are incompatible.
2. Possibly, there are true future contingents (esp. claims about what people will do, when what they will do is not causally determined), and an infallible being who knows those truths. (In other words, foreknowledge doesn’t require determinism – and so doesn’t require causal constraints.)
3. Necessarily, there are no non-causal constraints on freedom to do otherwise.

We can then reason in some one of the following ways:

Pike/Fischer/Hunt: (1) and (2), therefore not (3).

Craig/Byerly: (2) and (3), therefore not (1).

Author: (1) and (3), therefore not (2).

My view and the Pike/Fischer/Hunt view agrees on (1), but disagrees on (2) vs. (3). In other words, holding fixed (1), we can then take that as reason to abandon (2), or instead (3). My position here is clear: (3) is much more plausible than (2), and so accepting (1) should, in conjunction with (3), lead one to abandon (2). It is vastly more plausible that there cannot be “metaphysical force-fields” than that there *can* be infallible foreknowledge of the undetermined

future – which even the firm proponents of which concede to be extremely mysterious.¹⁷ (More on this below.) On the other hand, my view and the Craig/Byerly view agrees on (3), but disagrees on (1) vs. (2). In other words, holding fixed (3), we can then take that as reason to abandon (1), or instead (2). And here I can make similar points to those just made. The foreknowledge argument in question moves from what seem to be very natural, very pre-theoretically plausible claims (e.g., that no one has a choice about the past, etc.) to the conclusion that, given foreknowledge, there is no freedom to do otherwise. And all attempts to rebut the argument on its own terms seem to fail.¹⁸ For these reasons, (1) is much more plausible than (2), and so accepting (3) should, in conjunction with (1), lead one to abandon (2). The upshot: my view is preferable to both of the others.

Let me now pause to note the following. I have compared my view to both of the other views. But let us now compare these two views to one another. These views agree on (2), but then disagree about (1) vs. (3). In other words, holding fixed (2), we can then take that as reason to abandon (1), or instead (3). I have, of course, already explained why I do not think (2) *should* be held fixed. But still: if I *do* hold (2) fixed, then I think that we should take this as reason to abandon (1), not (3). This is because, in my judgment, though (1) and (3) are both very plausible, (3) is more plausible than (1). Thus, if I *did* come to believe (2) – perhaps on the basis of authoritative testimony, or something similar – then I would conclude that, because there cannot be mysterious non-causal forces of fate, the foreknowledge argument must be going wrong somewhere. This appears to be exactly the position recommended by Craig. Thus, on my view, the mistake made by Pike, Fischer, and Hunt is to rank (2) above (3). The mistake made by Craig, however, is to rank (2) above (1).

My assessment of the overall dialectical situation is thus as follows. My view ranks above the Craig/Byerly view (because (1) beats (2)), which in turn ranks above the Pike/Hunt/Fischer view (because (3) beats (1)). In other words, holding fixed (1), we should reject (2). Holding fixed (2), we should reject (1). And holding fixed (3), we should reject (2). In no case, then, should we reject (3). That leaves (1) or (2). (1) is more plausible than (2). We should reject (2).

¹⁷ Note: there are *two* mysteries at issue in (2). The first is that there could be true future contingents in the first place; many philosophers, of course, maintain that the truth of a future contingent would involve a mysterious kind of metaphysical arbitrariness (cf. Todd 2021: Ch. 1.). But even granting that there *are* true future contingents, there is a considerable *further* mystery at issue in the claim that someone could infallibly know them. There are, then, two different ways of denying (2): one way denies that there could be true future contingents; the other way allows that there are true future contingents, but denies that they could be (comprehensively and infallibly) known. I prefer the former way, but nothing in this paper turns on which way of denying (2) that we adopt.

¹⁸ For a recent look at some classic responses, see Vicens and Kittle 2019: 8 – 22.

7. Loose Ends

Return to what I called “the constraint” on constraints:

No set of conditions can render one unable to perform some basic action at t , unless either (i) those conditions are at least a partial cause of what one does at t , or (ii) those conditions *would* (or at least *might*) be a partial cause of what one does at t , if one were about to perform some alternative action at t .

But contrast this (very plausible) thesis with the following (simplified) thesis:

No set of conditions can *show* (be evidence that) one is unable to perform some basic action at t , unless those conditions are a partial cause of what one does at t .

Now, *this* constraint is manifestly implausible. More generally, it is obvious that the fact that p can be strong evidence that q , even if it is false that p in any sense explains q . For instance: the fact that the science textbook says that the atomic number of hydrogen is 1 is excellent evidence that the atomic number of hydrogen is 1, but it is certainly *not* the case that the atomic number of hydrogen is 1 because the textbook says it is. So similarly here. I have argued that divine foreknowledge can constitute conditions which *show* – via a Pike-style argument – that one is unable to perform some basic action at t , but this does not commit me to the (implausible) claim that divine foreknowledge is a partial cause of what one does at t .¹⁹ Consider further the following:

No set of conditions can *entail* (or *imply*) that one is unable to perform some basic action at t , unless those conditions are a partial cause of what one does at t .

And this constraint is implausible as well. After all, a set of conditions could plainly entail that one is unfree *by* entailing the further fact that there *are* causes of what one does. That is, suppose there are some conditions C . Now, these conditions do not function even as a partial cause of

¹⁹ I have defended a parallel thesis about the so-called “manipulation arguments” for incompatibilism about responsibility and determinism (Todd 2013c, 2017, 2019); I argue that the incompatibilist who advances the relevant argument should maintain that the given manipulation *shows* that the agent isn’t free, but isn’t in itself what *makes* that agent unfree. There are some crucial differences, however, between this case and the one at issue in this paper – but I must set these issues aside.

what one does; nevertheless, these conditions obtain necessarily only if something *does* causally determine what one does. Thus: the obtaining of conditions *C* entails that one isn't free, but it is false that the given conditions *cause* what one does. Again: this is exactly what I believe we should say about the case of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. Foreknowledge is incompatible with freedom, but is not what explains non-freedom. However, this does not mean that foreknowledge is *epistemically* irrelevant to freedom. Critically, foreknowledge *does* (or would) explain why we have a certain kind of persuasive *argument* for non-freedom – but the fact that *p* provides us with a good argument for *q* does not imply that *p* explains *q*.

8. Concluding Reflections

We began this essay with Pike; it is perhaps fitting that we should end with Pike. Long after his original paper had generated an avalanche of work on freedom and foreknowledge, in his 1993 paper, “A Latter-Day Look at the Foreknowledge Problem,” Pike wrote:

It is hard to see how any theory concerning the source of God's knowledge could provide a solution to the foreknowledge problem. This is because the problem is generated by a single claim, viz, that God holds infallible beliefs about future human actions. How God comes to hold such beliefs would thus appear to be irrelevant. (1993: 153)

In this essay, I hope we have come to see how Pike's stance here is partially right – yet partially wrong. The problem is indeed generated by that single claim, and yet what Pike says is irrelevant is not; if the source of God's knowledge of the future does *not* require causal determination, then something is going wrong with Pike's argument.

In this light, a full treatment of the topic of foreknowledge and freedom would have to grapple with the varied historical and contemporary attempts to specify *how* God could have knowledge of the undetermined future.²⁰ For my own part, my view is that recent attempts to

²⁰ This is a theme much emphasized by Freddoso (1998). I hasten to add: when grappling with these attempts, we should not lose sight of the foreknowledge argument itself. That is, once we realize that if the source of God's foreknowledge does *not* require causal determination, then something is going wrong with Pike's argument, it is perfectly legitimate to reason as follows: since nothing *is* going wrong with Pike's argument, God's foreknowledge requires causal determination. Again, to miss this key point is to fall into the position (exemplified by Byerly) I have criticized above.

specify how God could have such knowledge have gone badly astray.²¹ And this is for the following simple reason: these attempts at saying *how* God knows what God is meant to know have presupposed what compatibilist views should deny, viz., that there is *any answer at all* to the question of how God knows what God knows. In my judgment, the most plausible position for the compatibilist about foreknowledge and freedom is the one (unsurprisingly) ably defended by Plantinga (1993): the only “answer” to the question of how God knows that *p*, for any *p*, is *by being essentially omniscient*. There is, according to Plantinga, absolutely no *mechanism* whereby God knows what God knows. The problem of specifying “how” God knows that *p* is nothing further than the problem of specifying how it is that *p* is true. Thus, if there can be *truths* about the undetermined future, then God knows those truths. On what basis – or how? On no “basis” – and there is no “how”. God just *does* know these truths.

In fairness to Plantinga, I cannot say that I see that this is impossible. And yet: I am certainly not prepared to grant that it *is* possible; the question of its possibility is, perhaps, entirely beyond our powers of modal insight.²² So let us take stock. On the one side – the incompatibilist side – we have arguments backed by the most sober and compelling philosophical judgment: that no one could have any choice about the past, and that no one could infallibly know the future except to the extent that it is determined by the present. On the other side, we have sheer mystery – albeit mystery supported, perhaps, by some combination of theological necessity and (alleged) divine revelation. Whether we should prefer the former or instead the latter is a question I must leave for another occasion.²³

²¹ In the modern discussion of the foreknowledge argument, it has more or less been taken for granted that one cannot (or should not) appeal to “backwards causation”; see Wasserman 2019, however, for a recent appeal of this kind. I certainly cannot take up this issue here, but I believe it is a mistake to invoke backwards causation in the context of the foreknowledge problem. Byerly (2014) offers what he calls a “time-ordering” account of the mechanics of foreknowledge; very briefly, my complaint here is that (difficulties about defining “determinism” to one side) the time-ordering account is in fact a version of theological determinism. More recently, Fischer (2016: 31 - 45, 2021) has developed what he calls a “bootstrapping” account of God’s knowledge of the undetermined future; here I agree with my criticisms of that account stated in Fischer’s text (to which Fischer tries to reply). There are, of course, other, older suggestions – e.g., the one implied by Molinism (cf. Freddoso 1988) – the liabilities of which are already well-known. A further note: one might reasonably wonder how the question of how God knows the undetermined future interacts with the recently much-discussed “dependence” response to the foreknowledge argument (cf. Merricks 2009 and 2011, Swenson 2016, Law 2020, Cyr and Law 2020, Cyr forthcoming). My sense is that the “dependence response” – insofar as it is any kind of unique response to the argument – is not so much an answer to the “source” question; rather, it is a position that (*inter alia*) says that there *is* an answer to the source question that does not involve causal determination. A full discussion of these issues, however, must await a different paper.

²² Cf. also Wasserman’s (2019) discussion of Craig 1987: 123.

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