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FOREKNOWLEDGE AND NECESSITY

William Hasker

The modern controversy over divine foreknowledge and human freedom, begun two decades ago by Nelson Pike and A. N. Prior,¹ has yet to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Probably most philosophers who have considered the issue have reached their own conclusions, but no sort of general consensus has emerged. Furthermore, the principal arguments of the opposing sides in the controversy seem to pass by each other almost without contact, so that there is much discussion, but little apparent progress.

It is not immediately obvious why this should be so. There do not appear to be any systematic differences in philosophical style or methodology between the opposing sides which might explain their differing conclusions. Nor does the issue seem to be one which marks the difference between major competing world-views—like, for example, the controversies over scientific determinism or mind-body dualism. To be sure, the role of religious belief in the controversy cannot be denied, but it would be premature to explain the philosophical disagreements solely in terms of prior religious commitments.

While the issues surrounding the disagreement are complex, it will be argued here that what lies at the root of them is disagreement over a fundamental intuition or metaphysical datum—the intuition often expressed by saying, “You can’t change the past.” Perhaps no one involved in the controversy denies this outright, but there are wide differences about what its significance is perceived to be. And clustered around this fundamental disagreement are a host of other disagreements, problems, and perplexities, all combining to guarantee that a discussion of the topic rarely follows a straight path from premises to conclusion.

If this description of the state of the controversy is even approximately correct, it would seem that no simple, straightforward argument is likely to contribute much towards its resolution. Such an argument might, to be sure, capture effectively what one side in the discussion perceives as the grounds for its position. But the complexity of the surrounding issues, and especially the disagreement over a central intuition, make it unlikely that such a straightline approach will convince those who need to be convinced.

I believe, therefore, that an illuminating treatment of this topic must take a more subtle and dialectical approach. The aim must be to strip away, one by one, the surrounding complexities in order to reveal the core disagreement.

Formal arguments will have their role to play in this, but only as part of a larger process which seeks to elucidate the total philosophical context within which the arguments must function.

Specifically, the procedure in the present paper will be as follows: We shall begin with a brief, straightforward argument for the incompatibility of free will and divine foreknowledge. (Henceforth I shall refer to proponents of this view as *incompatibilists*, and to its opponents as *compatibilists*. This is the only way these terms will be used in this essay.) After a brief criticism, this simple argument will be replaced by a somewhat more complex argument for the same conclusion. This is followed by a discussion of this argument and of some clearly inadequate compatibilist replies to it. Here, also, we will consider briefly alternative ways proposed by incompatibilists for dealing with God's knowledge of the future—e.g., the doctrine of divine timelessness. Finally, we shall consider the strongest, most serious arguments advanced by the compatibilists in their attempt to overcome the argument for incompatibilism.

I. *Two Arguments*

As has become customary in this discussion, the arguments for incompatibilism will be presented in terms of specific examples; since the examples will not be unique in any way that is relevant to the soundness of the arguments, the results can easily be generalized. But philosophers who have become weary of following Jones through his interminable project of mowing the lawn will be happy to learn that a new example is in the offing: our concern in the following pages will be with Clarence, an aficionado of cheese omelets, and with the question, will Clarence have such an omelet for breakfast tomorrow morning, or won't he?

The first argument for incompatibilism begins by assuming that Clarence will, in fact, have a cheese omelet tomorrow morning, and it argues that Clarence's eating that omelet is necessary, hence not a matter of free choice. The argument goes like this:

- (A1) Necessarily, God has always believed that Clarence would have a cheese omelet tomorrow morning. (Premise)
- (A2) Necessarily, if God has always believed that a certain thing will happen, then that thing will happen. (Premise: divine infallibility)
- (A3) Therefore: Necessarily, Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow. (From 1,2)

This argument has some impressive merits. It is complete, with no suppressed premises, and as concise as one could ask. Its validity is beyond reasonable doubt, and it will be sound if any incompatibilist argument for this conclusion is sound. Yet its very conciseness works against its usefulness as a tool for

analyzing the controversy. The purpose of the argument, after all, is to say something about free will and therefore about what Clarence has it in his power to do—but these topics are present in argument (A) only by implication. Also, the first premise makes assumptions about the relation of God's knowledge to events in time, and these assumptions need to be made explicit so they can be examined. But the most serious deficiency of argument (A) concerns the modal operator in the first premise. 'Necessarily' here does not refer to logical necessity, as it does in the second premise; it is not claimed that God has the belief in question in all possible worlds. Rather, 'necessarily' in the first premise refers to the "necessity of the past"; God's having held this belief is *now* necessary because it has *already happened*. And it is this necessity which is, as it were, transmitted across the entailment stated in the second premise to appear again in the conclusion. But it is crystal clear that this notion, the idea of the necessity of the past, is the most crucial, difficult, and contentious element in the entire controversy. Clearly, an argument which is to throw light on the controversy must do more with this notion than baldly assert it.

With these considerations in mind, let us try another argument:

(B1) It is now true that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (Premise)

(B2) It is impossible that God should at any time believe what is false, or fail to believe anything which is true. (Premise: divine omniscience)

(B3) Therefore, God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From 1,2)

(B4) If God has always believed a certain thing, it is not in anyone's power to bring it about that God has not always believed that thing. (Premise: the unalterability of the past)

(B5) Therefore, it is not in Clarence's power to bring it about that God has not always believed that he would have a cheese omelet for breakfast. (From 3,4)

(B6) It is not possible for it to be true both that God has always believed that Clarence would have a cheese omelet for breakfast, and that he does not in fact have one. (From 2)

(B7) Therefore, it is not in Clarence's power to refrain from having a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From 5,6) So Clarence's eating the omelet tomorrow is not an act of free choice.

II. *Comments and Objections*

Clearly this argument could be further expanded; still, it can serve as a basis for analysis. It does meet the objections raised against argument (A): It speaks

explicitly about what it is in Clarence's power to do, it makes explicit the conception of divine omniscience which the argument assumes, and it deals with the necessity (or unalterability) of the past in a way which is at least somewhat less opaque than (A). We now proceed to some further comments on argument (B), together with some compatibilist answers to the argument.

First, note that the conception of free will implicit in (B7) is a libertarian conception; it can be formulated as follows:

(FW) N is free at T with regard to performing A = df

It is in N's power at T to perform A, and it is

in N's power at T to refrain from performing A.

(Note that 'power' is used here in such a way that if it is in a person's power to perform a certain action in given circumstances, there is nothing in those circumstances which prevents or precludes that action's being performed. This conception of free will is basic to the whole discussion: if it were held that free will is compatible with causal determination there would be no significant additional problem in reconciling free will with divine foreknowledge.)

It will be noted that arguments (A) and (B), while ostensibly about divine foreknowledge, refer explicitly to God's *belief*. The reason for this should be obvious: in general,

(1) N knows at T that P
entails

(2) (N believes at T that P) & P.

Now, the necessity asserted in (A1), and the unalterability asserted in (B4), are held to attach to God's past beliefs *because they are past*. But to assert that either (1) or (2) is thus necessary would be to assume that the state of affairs described by 'P' is itself necessary, *even if it lies in the future*. This of course is what the argument is trying to establish; it will not do to simply assume it as a premise. The arguments do however assume that God holds these beliefs *with absolute certainty* rather than probabilistically.

This is, perhaps, an appropriate place to mention an objection to incompatibilism which is fairly frequent: Sometimes we ourselves know what another person is going to do (say, in anticipating a friend's reaction to some situation which has arisen), and we do not suppose that our knowing this is incompatible with their acting freely—so why suppose such an incompatibility when it is God who knows? The short answer to this is that arguments (A) and (B) do not proceed from God's knowledge as a premise but from God's belief, and no one supposes that a human being's believing something entails the truth of what is believed. But there may be more to the objection than this. If Susan, his wife, knows that Clarence will have an omelet for breakfast tomorrow, it must be true not only that she believes this but also that she has *adequate evidence* for her belief (she knows about his addiction to cheese omelets, he came home yesterday

with a new hunk of sharp cheddar, and so on). And (it may be supposed) this justifying evidence must be sufficient to exclude the possibility that Clarence will *not* have an omelet; otherwise she could not be said to know that he will. In general, however, this need not be true. We often ascribe knowledge in situations where the justifying evidence is insufficient to warrant absolute certainty. And surely this is one of those situations: whatever evidence Susan may have is surely compatible with its being possible that Clarence will decide not to have an omelet tomorrow, and therefore with its being a matter of free choice whether he has one or not. If on the other hand the requirements for knowledge is strengthened to absolute certainty, then it is perfectly plausible to suppose that we never do have knowledge of future free actions.

Another frequent objection against incompatibilism is that this view wrongly assumes that God's prior knowledge of what a person will do *causes* the subsequent action. But if I know (for instance) that you are walking across the street, this does not *cause* you to walk across the street, so why assume that it is different with God? This is true enough, but a careful examination of arguments (A) and (B) will reveal that neither argument makes the claim that God's knowledge (or belief) causes the event which He knows. They merely assert that it is impossible that God should believe that an event will happen and yet the event not occur. And this is certainly true. But what, if anything, *causes* Clarence to eat the omelet is left as a problem for further study. (It may further be observed that (A) and (B) are both compatible with the assumption that God's belief is caused retroactively by the future action.)

Another important point about arguments (A) and (B) is that neither one raises the question of *how* God is able to know future actions. One might argue that God can do this only if sufficient causal conditions of the actions already exist; thus a world in which such knowledge is possible for God is of necessity a deterministic one. Such an argument might possibly be sound, but its major premise is exceedingly difficult to establish. Alternative accounts of God's knowledge of future actions are available, accounts which do not involve the presence of sufficient causal conditions. (To mention two examples, God's knowledge might result through retroactive causation from the actual future events—or, he might know future actions in virtue of his knowledge of the "counterfactuals of freedom" (Plantinga).) The task of disposing of such alternative accounts is formidable enough to make the suggested argument unattractive. But, to repeat the point, neither (A) nor (B) relies on assumptions about how God is able to know what he knows.

There is one further objection to incompatibilism which should be mentioned here. The incompatibilist claims that if God foreknows a person's action, then the action is not free. But, it is pointed out, if God foreknows that some person will *freely* choose a certain action, what follows is that the action will be done

freely, which is the reverse of the conclusion desired by the incompatibilist. I mention this argument because I have heard it from reputable philosophers, but a moment's thought will reveal its vacuity. Certainly, "God believes that N will freely do A" entails "N will do A freely." But arguments (A) and (B) claim to establish that this same premise also entails "N will do A of necessity." And the new entailment does not cancel the old, nor does this argument do anything to undermine either (A) or (B). (In general, whenever it is claimed that "P" entails "Q," one can truly assert that "P & -Q" entails "-Q," but this has no tendency whatever to show that "P" does *not* entail "Q".)²

III. *Some Incompatibilist Solutions*

Before we consider still more objections to incompatibilism, it will be well to examine some of the solutions given by incompatibilists to the problem which is posed by the (alleged) success of their argument. That there is such a problem cannot be denied. There are a number of Scriptural passages for which the most obvious interpretation would seem to be that God knows in advance the free actions of human beings. And this also seems to be a fairly straightforward inference from the basic theological doctrine of divine omniscience. The incompatibilist who does not wish to reject these important elements of Scripture and theology must provide his own interpretations at these points. It lies beyond the scope of this essay to engage in a detailed examination of Biblical passages, but we will survey the various theological answers to the problem of divine omniscience and free action.

No doubt the most direct solution is simply to deny that free will, in the libertarian sense, exists at all. This is Jonathan Edwards' reaction to the argument—or rather, this was the prior conviction that made him receptive to the argument in the first place. It seems to me that much of the charm of Edwards' presentation of incompatibilism comes from the undisguised gusto with which he rams home the conclusions of his arguments. He does not (like Boethius and Aquinas) view incompatibilism as a problem for which a solution must be found. Rather, he finds in it a ready-made club with which to beat his Arminian opponents over the head. Do they find the consequences of his doctrine of predestination repellent and obnoxious? Very well, he will prove to them that the very same consequences follow from a doctrine which they themselves cannot deny, namely foreknowledge.

Most incompatibilists, however, have wished to affirm free will in precisely the libertarian sense which Edwards denied. The incompatibilist arguments claim to show that free will, in this sense, is incompatible with foreknowledge, so that to affirm free will one must deny foreknowledge. The problem is to show how this is compatible with divine omniscience.

It will be helpful to approach this problem by way of argument (B). The incompatibilist holds this argument to be valid, so if the conclusion is to be avoided at least one of the premises must be false. Since the incompatibilist is in no way willing to give up (B4), which affirms the unalterability of the past, the remaining possibilities are (B1) and (B2).

Suppose, then, that we deny (B1), the premise which says that it is now true that Clarence will eat an omelet tomorrow. To deny this is not to say that Clarence *will not* eat an omelet, but rather that it isn't now true *either* that he will eat one or that he will not. If Susan were to conjecture, on the basis of his known addiction to cheese omelets, that "Clarence will have an omelet tomorrow," then what she says may *come true* tomorrow morning but it isn't true now; as of now, there just isn't any truth about what Clarence will eat for breakfast tomorrow.

The view that there are no truths about future contingent events is traced back to Aristotle; it was adopted (with certain complications) by Thomas Aquinas, and has been revived in our day by A. N. Prior and Peter Geach.³ It has been my observation that philosophers often react against it with a vehemence that bears little relation to any demonstrated logical inadequacies.⁴ It is somehow bizarre, or outrageous, or just downright offensive to suggest that this view might be correct. It seems to me that this is an over-reaction. In all likelihood what is at stake here is not a matter of logical correctness or incorrectness, but rather a matter of terminology: just how shall we use the words 'true', 'truth' and so on?⁵ And it does not seem to me that our ordinary, pre-philosophical usage of these words clearly settles the matter one way or the other. (For example, we sometimes say of a prediction that it has "come true," which is not quite the same as saying that it was true all along. I note, also, that philosophically unsophisticated students do not, on the whole, find the Aristotle-Prior view especially odd or bizarre when it is presented to them in class.) So perhaps this is an appropriate point at which to invoke Rudolph Carnap's "Principle of Tolerance": "Let us be cautious in making assertions and critical in examining them, but tolerant in permitting linguistic forms."⁶

However this may be, it is clear that many theists will find this view unacceptable for theological reasons: it implies that there are significant aspects of the future, especially those concerning the future free actions of persons, about which God as yet has neither definite beliefs nor knowledge. Still, the view we are considering affirms God's omniscience; premise (B2) is accepted without reservation. The matters God doesn't yet know about are matters about which there isn't, as yet, any truth to be known. As soon as there are such truths, God will be the first to know!

It has been pointed out by Richard Swinburne that results which are essentially similar can be reached in another way, namely by modifying the definition of omniscience.⁷ There is an interesting parallel here with omnipotence: many phi-

losophers would now agree that God's omnipotence means that he has the power to do, not indeed everything, but everything which it is logically possible for him to do. Should we not, then, define omniscience by saying that God knows everything which it is logically possible for him to know? If we modify (B2) in accordance with this suggestion, the result is:

- (B2') It is impossible that God should at any time believe what is false, or fail to believe any true proposition such that his knowing that proposition at that time is logically possible.

It seems to me that (B2') has considerable appeal even apart from incompatibilism's problem with foreknowledge. It will be noted that (B2') does not affirm or presuppose that there *are* truths which it is logically impossible for God to know, but by leaving this possibility open it achieves a generality which is lacking in (B2) itself. And on the other hand, most compatibilists presumably do not want to claim that there are truths which God knows in spite of its being logically impossible for him to know them!

When argument (B) is modified along the lines of this suggestion (call the new argument (B')), the results are interesting. The revised argument starts out with (B1) and (B2'). The text of the next step is the same as that of (B3), but it is not derivable from (B1) and (B2'), because it is not known whether (B1) satisfies the restriction in (B2'). So we have

- (B3') God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow. (Assumption for indirect proof.)

(B4) through (B7) are taken over intact from the original proof. We then add:

- (B8') Clarence will act freely when he eats the omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (Premise)

This of course contradicts (B7), so we can proceed to the conclusion:

- (B9') It is not the case that God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From 3-8, indirect proof.)

This argument suggests what may be a promising strategy for resolving the entire controversy. Perhaps the compatibilist and the incompatibilist should begin by agreeing to accept (B2') as their definition of omniscience: this ought to be possible, since (as noted above) the formula entails nothing to which either party has reason to object. They will then proceed to resolve their differences about the validity of the incompatibilist arguments (B) and (B')—admittedly, not an easy task! But once this has been done, essentially complete agreement will have been reached; there will be no occasion (in view of the prior agreement to (B2'))

for any further disputes about the meaning of 'omniscient'.

There is another way of avoiding the conclusion of (B) which historically has won much more acceptance than the views we have been considering. The reference, of course, is to the doctrine of divine timelessness. It lies beyond the scope of this paper either to expound this doctrine or to defend it against objections.⁸ The doctrine of timelessness is frequently rejected as unintelligible, but attempts to demonstrate the unintelligibility do not seem to have been successful. Our present concern, however, is limited to seeing how the doctrine of timelessness resolves the problem of free will and foreknowledge.

Unlike the views just considered, the doctrine of timelessness affirms God's comprehensive knowledge of our future instead of removing from that knowledge events which are as yet contingent and indeterminate. But this knowledge is not, literally, *foreknowledge* at all; rather it is eternal knowledge, knowledge which exists at no time whatever, but only in the eternity of God's own timeless being. (Note that it is a cardinal error to consider God's eternal present as simultaneous with our present moment, or indeed with any moment at all of our time. Once this error is committed, the doctrine of timelessness collapses into chaos and contradiction.) By denying that God's eternal knowledge has a place in our time-sequence, the doctrine of timelessness removes an essential premise in the argument from foreknowledge to theological fatalism.

It is instructive to view this solution, also, in relation to argument (B). Once again, the definition of omniscience (B2) will have to be modified, this time to:

(B2*) It is impossible that God should believe anything false, or fail to believe timelessly anything that is true.

From this, together with (B1), we get:

(B3*) Therefore, God timelessly believes that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow.

But in order to avoid the deterministic conclusion, we must affirm instead of (B4) that:

(B4*) It may sometimes be true that God timelessly believes a certain thing, and yet it is in someone's power to bring it about that God does not timelessly believe that thing.

Here we see the importance of the point that God's timeless present is not identical with any moment of our time. If God believes *now*, at the present time, that Clarence will have an omelet, then it is already *too late* for Clarence to do anything that would prevent God from having had that belief. But, to repeat this once more, God does *not* (according to the doctrine of timelessness) believe this, or anything else, *at the present time*. Rather, he believes things timelessly,

entirely outside of our time-sequence. And what it is that God timelessly believes depends, in part, on what Clarence will freely choose to do tomorrow morning.

The doctrine of divine timelessness is surely a strange and difficult one, and nothing like a comprehensive assessment of it can be attempted in the present paper. But it does present a way, and perhaps (if the incompatibilist arguments are valid) the only way, to affirm consistently both that God has comprehensive knowledge of our future, and that we ourselves shall freely determine what, in certain respects, that future will be.

IV. *God's Beliefs as "Soft Facts"*

In a sense, everything to this point is preliminary to the main task of this paper. We have stated, in two different versions, the main argument for incompatibilism, rejected some clearly inadequate compatibilist replies to it, and reviewed various methods which are available to the incompatibilist for handling the theological problem created by his position. But the most serious and formidable replies to the incompatibilist arguments remain to be dealt with. All of these replies challenge, in different ways the use made by the incompatibilist of the fundamental intuition which lies at the heart of his position—the intuition, namely, that the past is necessary, fixed, and unalterable in some way in which the future is not. In the present section we shall examine the contention that God's beliefs about the future are "soft facts," while the next two sections deal with various claims about our power over the past.

The view that God's beliefs are "soft facts"⁹ accepts without question the intuition that the past is fixed, unpreventable and beyond our control in a way in which the future is not. As Alvin Plantinga puts it:

Although I now have the power to raise my arm, I do not have the power to bring it about that I raised my arm five minutes ago. Although it is now within my power to think about Vienna, it is not now within my power to bring it about that five minutes ago I was thinking about Vienna. The past is fixed in a way in which the future is open. It is within my power to help determine how the future shall be; but it is too late to do the same with respect to the past.¹⁰

So far, the incompatibilist is in hearty agreement, and it may seem just a small step from these remarks of Plantinga's to (A1), which affirms that God's believing that Clarence will eat a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow is necessary. But the compatibilist refuses to take this step. He points out, quite correctly as we shall see, that the necessity of the past must be restricted in its scope if it is not to generate some implausible and wildly counterintuitive consequences. For instance, what about

- (3) A new U.S. President will be elected in 1984?

This may or may not be true, but if it is true so is

- (4) It was true in 1976 that a new U.S. President would be elected in 1984.

This is in some sense a proposition about the past (I am writing this in 1983), but is it therefore necessary? Was it already "too late" in 1976 (and indeed long before that) for any of us to help determine who will be elected President in 1984? This of course is the problem of logical determinism or fatalism, and if fatalism is to be avoided (as intuitively it must be) there must be some way to exclude propositions such as (4) from those propositions about the past which are necessary, not within our power, and so on. We must, in other words, distinguish "hard facts" about the past from "soft facts."

One's first reaction is likely to be that there is something shady and disreputable about "facts about the past" such as (4). This proposition, we want to say, is not "really about" the past; it does not describe anything that "really happened" in the past. And this may well be true; intuitively there does seem to be a relevant difference between (4) and

- (5) Jimmy Carter was elected President in 1976

with respect to pastness. The problem is that while phrases like "really about the past" and "really happened" evoke an intuitive response, they are not sufficient to delineate the (supposed) logical distinction between (4) and (5) which qualifies (5) as a hard fact and (4) as a soft fact. And not all of the problem cases are as transparent as (4). Consider, for instance,

- (6) David said yesterday that Sandra will arrive tomorrow.

This seems to be really about the past, but what about:

- (7) David yesterday said truly that Sandra will arrive tomorrow?

If (7) is true, should we conclude that Sandra's arrival is already necessary, unpreventable, beyond anyone's control, and so on? And what about

- (8) Everything David said yesterday was true?

This, again, speaks about what happened yesterday, and (unlike (7)) it does not even entail any propositions about the future. Yet when conjoined with (6), which intuitively should be a hard fact about the past, it entails

- (9) Sandra will arrive tomorrow.

Just one other example will be considered: what shall we say about

- (10) Either David has already arrived or he will arrive tomorrow?

Assuming this to be true, is it a hard fact or a soft fact? The first disjunct by itself, if true, is a hard fact; the second disjunct, if true, is a soft fact. What then shall we say of the entire disjunction?

These examples show, I think, that the project of distinguishing between hard facts and soft facts is both necessary and non-trivial. And the compatibilist believes that this distinction can be used to thwart the arguments for incompatibilism. For, he argues, whatever other problems may be involved in the distinction, it should at least be clear that propositions "about" the past which entail propositions concerning the future—such as (4) and (7)—cannot be counted as hard facts.

But now consider once again

(B3') God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow.

If God is essentially omniscient—that is, if (A2) and (B2) are true—then (B3') entails

(11) Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow.

and this is clearly about the future, so (B3') cannot be a hard fact; it cannot be necessary in the sense in which many other propositions about the past are necessary.

Is this conclusion correct? Perhaps the answer to this must wait until we have devised an adequate criterion for distinguishing hard from soft facts. But it is not at all evident that the compatibilist is drawing the right conclusion from the situation. There seems to be no doubt that (B3'), unlike (4), is "really about the past"; it asserts that God has performed a certain mental act (or perhaps, been in a certain mental state) throughout all ages past. It is, in this sense, just as much a part of the past that God believed this about Clarence as that David said that Sandra would arrive tomorrow. It is true that God, unlike David, is essentially omniscient. But how is this relevant to the question of whether God's past beliefs, like David's past statements, are now fixed and unalterable? How does God's omniscience give us a power over God's past beliefs that we don't have over David's past statements? To be sure, it follows from God's omniscience that (B3') and (11) are either both soft facts or both hard facts, in spite of our natural tendency to think that (B3') is hard and (11) soft. But which way does the inference go—from the softness of (11) to the softness of (B3'), or from the hardness of (B3') to the hardness of (11)? This is what the whole controversy is about, and it is at least not obvious that the compatibilist's way of drawing the inference is the correct one.

But how shall we distinguish the hard facts?¹¹ A hard fact may be defined as

a proposition which is true (that is its factuality) and which is such that it is impossible that anyone should have the power to bring it about that it is false (that is its hardness, which in the most typical case is a result of its being about the past.) Our strategy here is to begin by delimiting a class of *future-indifferent propositions* whose truth or falsity cannot be affected by anything which happens after the present moment. The future-indifferent propositions which are true, along with some others, will then be our hard facts.

We begin by identifying a set of propositions which are “elementary” or “atomic” roughly in the sense of the *Tractatus* or the early Russell—propositions which say of some individual that it has a certain property, or of two or more individuals that they stand in a certain relation. (Many of these propositions will state that an individual has a property at a specified *time*; they will be of the form, ‘S has P at T’.) These elementary propositions will not include any whose most natural representation is as quantifications or truth-functions. (I am well aware that it is possible to contrive examples in which extremely complex propositions are represented in what appears to be simple subject-predicate form. For the time being all I am able to do is to rule out these examples on an *ad hoc* basis.) Having identified the elementary propositions, we proceed as follows:

- (C1) An elementary proposition is future-indifferent IFF it is consistent with there being no times after the present, and also consistent with there being times after the present.

The intuitive idea here is that a future-indifferent proposition must permit, but not require, that the entire universe should disappear and there be nothing at all after the present moment. One further point must be noted: the consistency mentioned in (C1) is to be determined through the ordinary methods of logical inference, without recourse to *de re* modalities, i.e. to truths about the essential properties of individual entities. The reason for this should be clear after a little reflection. Our aim is to delineate the future-indifferent propositions, those which are really about the past, and (C1) does this in the way noted. But it seems very likely that many if not all individuals have essential properties which imply things about them at times other than the present. Just what these essential properties are depends in part on which over all view of the world is true, but consider the following examples: If some form of scientific naturalism is true, then it is plausible that each spatio-temporal entity has essentially the property of *being such that it will continue in existence until it ceases to exist through natural transformations*. And these natural transformations both take time to happen, and leave something else in existence in place of the entity that has perished—so a presently existing stone (for example) has essential properties which are inconsistent with the world’s ceasing to exist at this moment. Yet intuitively this should have no bearing on whether “this stone has existed for

three billion years" is a fact about the past rather than the future. For another example: if theism is true, then each contingent individual has essentially the property, *being a creature of God*. But this entails God's existence, which in turn (since God is essentially everlasting) entails that there will be times after the present. If considerations of this sort are relevant to the notion of a future-indifferent proposition, then there will be few such propositions—but clearly, they are not relevant.

We now proceed as follows:

- (C2) A truth-functional proposition is future-indifferent if each of its component propositions is future-indifferent.
- (C3) An existentially quantified proposition is future-indifferent if each of its possible instances is future-indifferent.
- (C4) Any proposition equivalent to a future-indifferent proposition is itself future-indifferent.

Now we are ready for hard facts:

- (C5) Any future-indifferent proposition which is true is a hard fact.
- (C6) Any necessary truth is a hard fact.

Here we include truths which are logically necessary both *de dicto* and *de re*. In (C1) our concern was with those truths which are "really about the past," and (for the reasons given) *de re* modal principles are not relevant to this. A hard fact, on the other hand, is a proposition such that it is not possible that anyone whatever should have the power to bring it about that it is false, and to this *de re* modalities are relevant: no one (not even God) can bring it about that a given individual exists but lacks one of its essential properties.

Finally,

- (C7) Any proposition which is entailed by one or more hard facts is a hard fact.

It is interesting to see how these criteria handle the examples given earlier. Clearly (5) will be a hard fact whereas (3) and (4) will not. (That is to say: (3) and (4) appear not to be hard facts on the basis of the information which is presently available. But (in virtue of (C7)) they might turn out to be hard facts after all, if it turns out that they are entailed by some conjunction of hard facts. (And so for the other examples.) (6) will also be a hard fact, since it entails nothing about the truth or falsity of the embedded proposition. (7) is equivalent to

- (12) David said yesterday that Sandra will arrive tomorrow, and Sandra will arrive tomorrow.

The first conjunct, if true, is a hard fact, but the second is not, so neither is (12)

or (7) a hard fact. (8) is equivalent to

(13) $\neg(\text{Ep})((\text{David said yesterday that } p) \ \& \ \neg p)$.

When (13) is instantiated, the first conjunct will be future-indifferent, but for many values of 'p' the second will not. So (8) and (13) are not future-indifferent and, even if true, are not hard facts. In (10) the first conjunct is future-indifferent but the second is not, so (10) is not future-indifferent. It will however be a hard fact in virtue of (C7), if the first conjunct is true.

Now, what about (B3')? Is this proposition future-indifferent? In order to answer this, we need to know what is expressed by 'God'. Does it function simply as a non-connotative proper name, which serves to refer to the bearer but conveys no information about him? Or is 'God' like a title or a common noun in that it expresses something about the nature and status of the divine being?

My inclination is to say that the term 'God' as we ordinarily use it does indeed express, if not God's essence, at least our conception of God. In view of this I would say that a principle such as (A2) is not only necessary *de re*, in that it formulates one of God's essential properties, but is also necessary *de dicto* in virtue of the meaning of the term 'God.' If this is so, (B3') will *not* be future-indifferent, since it will entail (11), a fact about the future. But (B3') is by no means unique in this. Propositions such as "God spoke to Abraham," and even "God exists" will not be future-indifferent, for reasons analogous to those given in the discussion under (C1). If we use the word 'God' in such a way that God must be an essentially everlasting being, then any proposition which entails God's existence entails that there is no last moment of time.

Does this mean that "God exists," and "God created the universe out of nothing" are *soft* facts? The intention of the distinction between soft and hard facts was to distinguish between those propositions which are such that it might be in someone's power to make them false, from those for which this is impossible. But it's absurd— isn't it?—to suggest that anyone, even God, should now have the power to bring it about that God does not exist or that he did not create the universe out of nothing. Do we then need a third category of facts? A colleague suggested to me that besides hard facts and soft facts, there may also be facts sunny-side-up. By why stop there? Why not scrambled facts, poached facts, and even facts Benedict?

There is a better way. Consider the name 'Yahweh', which was used by the ancient Hebrews to refer to their God. They used this name (as a reading of Genesis will confirm) with no thought or connotation of such metaphysical attributes as essential omniscience, essential everlastingness, and the like. For a variety of reasons, this name for the deity is not in common use among present-day Christians or Jews, but nothing prevents us from reviving its use for a special purpose. And as we do so we will take care to avoid importing into

the name's significance such metaphysical notions as essential everlastingness. We will use the name, as the ancient Hebrews did, simply as a non-connotative proper name referring to that individual who in fact was, and is, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Given this use of the name 'Yahweh', the proposition "Yahweh spoke to Abraham," is a future-indifferent proposition; unlike "God spoke to Abraham," it entails nothing about the existence of times later than the present. But by the same token,

- (14) Yahweh has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow

is a future-indifferent proposition; unlike (B3'), it entails nothing about Clarence's breakfast tomorrow, or Clarence's existence tomorrow, or even about whether there will *be* a tomorrow. And since we are assuming that (14) is true, it will also be a hard fact.

Now the truth of (14), by itself, will not make (11) a hard fact. But now consider:

- (15) If Yahweh exists, Yahweh is God.

This proposition is not logically necessary *de dicto*: its truth is not implied by the meanings of the terms in which it is expressed. And the proposition will not be future-indifferent, because its consequent entails God's existence. But it is, in a sense, a necessary truth: it expresses an *essential property* of Yahweh. There is no possible world in which Yahweh exists but is not God; no one, not even God himself and certainly no human being, could bring it about that Yahweh exists but is not God. So although (15) is not a future-indifferent proposition it is, in virtue of (C6), a hard fact.

And now the denouement becomes clear. As hard facts, we have the following:

- (14) Yahweh has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow.
 (15) If Yahweh exists, Yahweh is God.
 (A2) Necessarily, if God has always believed that a certain thing will happen, then that thing will happen.

But of course, these jointly entail

- (11) Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow.

So (11), which is jointly entailed by a set of hard facts, is itself a hard fact: it is now unpreventable, so that it is utterly impossible that anyone at all, even God himself, should now have the power to bring it about that Clarence does not eat that omelet for breakfast tomorrow.

If the analysis of "hard facts" which we have given is sound, the incompatibilist

is triumphant. No doubt, however, it would be overly optimistic to expect the compatibilist at this point to fold his tents and steal silently away. For one thing our principles (C1)-(C7), while they are logically coherent and well-motivated, are certainly too complex to qualify as either obvious or self-evident. So the possibility remains that the incompatibilist may develop his own analysis of hard facts, according to which it will turn out that (11) cannot after all be derived as a hard fact.

But even if the claim that God's beliefs are soft facts must be given up, the compatibilist's resources are not exhausted. For compatibilists have also made claims about powers we have over the past—claims which do not depend on the distinction between hard and soft facts. To these claims we now turn.

V. *Counterfactual Power Over The Past*

The next compatibilist view to be examined holds that we have powers over the past of a rather special sort, powers which are most adequately expressed by counterfactual propositions. This view was first advanced by Alvin Plantinga, in his criticism of Nelson Pike's argument for incompatibilism,¹² and has since been endorsed by a number of other philosophers.

In Pike's article, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," a pivotal role is played by the following premise:

- (P6) If God existed at T_1 and if God believed at T_1 that Jones would do X at T_2 , then if it was within Jones' power at T_2 to refrain from doing X, then (1) it was within Jones' power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that God held a false belief at T_1 , or (2) it was within Jones' power at T_2 to do something which would have brought it about that God did not hold the belief He held at T_1 , or (3) it was within Jones' power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that any person who believed at T_1 that Jones would do X at T_2 (one of whom was, by hypothesis, God) held a false belief and thus was not God—that is, that God (who by hypothesis existed at T_1) did not exist at T_1 .¹³

Pike's argument contains three additional premises, each of which states that the kinds of powers attributed to Jones in subpoints (1)-(3) of (P6) are such that no one can have them; thus, he is able to conclude that under the stated conditions it cannot be in Jones' power at T_2 to refrain from doing X. The additional premises are as follows:

- (P3) It is not within one's power at a given time to do something having a description that is logically contradictory.

- (P4) It is not within one's power at a given time to do something that would bring it about that someone who held a certain belief at a time prior to the time in question did not hold that belief at the time prior to the time in question.
- (P5) It is not within one's power at a given time to do something that would bring it about that a person who existed at an earlier time did not exist at that earlier time.¹⁴

In his response to Pike's argument, Plantinga does not challenge the premises (P3)-(P5); he agrees that Jones cannot have any of the powers ruled out by those premises. Plantinga's challenge is directed at (P6), which he regards as false on the grounds that subpoints (1)-(3) of (P6) do not exhaust the possible ways in which Jones might have the power at T_2 to refrain from doing X. Pike himself had admitted, "I do not know how to argue that these are the only alternatives, but I have been unable to find another."¹⁵ Plantinga comes to his assistance at this point, pointing out not one but three additional alternatives (each corresponding to one of the subpoints (1)-(3)), each of which would enable Jones to have the power in question without violating the restraints imposed by premises (P3)-(P5). These additional alternatives are not, however, independent of each other, and for our purposes it will be sufficient to examine one of them—the one which corresponds to subpoint (2) of (P6).

In discussing this premise, Plantinga suggests that it is Pike's view that

- (PL51) God existed at T_1 , and God believed at T_1 that Jones would do X at T_2 , and it was within Jones' power to refrain from doing X at T_2

entails

- (PL53) It was within Jones' power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that God did not hold the belief He did hold at T_1 .

Plantinga, however, finds (PL53) to be ambiguous. It might, conceivably, mean the same as

- (PL53a) It was within Jones' power, at T_2 , to do something such that if he had done it, then at T_1 God would have held a certain belief and also *not* held that belief.

Plantinga goes on to say that "(53a) is obviously and resoundingly false, but there is no reason whatever to think that (51) entails it. What (51) entails is rather

- (PL53b) It was within Jones's power at T_2 to do something such that if he had done it, then God would not have held a belief that

in fact he did hold.

This follows from (51) but is perfectly innocent."¹⁶ Plantinga then goes on to discuss the situation in terms of possible worlds:

Suppose again that (51) is true, and consider a world *W* in which Jones refrains from doing *X*. If God is essentially omniscient, then in this world *W* He is omniscient and hence does not believe at T_1 that Jones will do *X* at T_2 .¹⁷

I think it is fairly clear what kind of power over the past Plantinga is attributing to Jones (and, by implication, to all of us). And we also can see where the plausibility of Pike's argument (a specious plausibility, according to Plantinga) comes from. We notice that God's having believed at T_1 that Jones will do *X* at T_2 is inconsistent with Jones' refraining from doing *X* at T_2 , and we conclude from this that it was not within Jones' power to refrain. What we fail to notice is, that if Jones were to refrain from doing *X* at T_2 then God *would not have believed* at T_1 that Jones would do *X* at T_2 . Our mistake is that we have changed our supposition about what Jones does (from acting to refraining) without changing our supposition about what God believed.

Note, however, that Jones' power over the past has to be formulated very carefully. Plantinga does not attribute to Jones the power to do something which would *bring about* that God, who at T_1 believed that Jones would do *X*, did not believe this at T_1 . Jones' having this power would be inconsistent with Pike's premise (P4). (It would also be inconsistent with Plantinga's own statements about the fixity and stability of the past, quoted in the previous section.)¹⁸ No, the power attributed to Jones is the power to do something such that *if he had done it, God would not have held* a belief that in fact he did hold. The counterfactual form is essential for stating this power that Jones has: it is *counterfactual power over the past*.

Nor is Jones' power to affect the past limited to God's past beliefs. A world in which Jones refrained from doing *X* would necessarily be different from the actual world with respect to God's beliefs about what Jones would do, but it might well be different in other respects as well. For if God had foreknown that Jones would refrain from doing *X*, he might well have arranged other things differently than they are in the actual world. To take a historical example, if God had not known in advance that the Allied armies would be encircled at Dunkirk in June, 1940, he might not have prearranged the unusually calm weather which permitted the evacuation to be carried out with minimal loss of life. Thus, it may well be true not only that

- (16) If the allied armies had not been encircled at Dunkirk in June, 1940, then God would not have believed, prior to 1940, that this

would happen

but also that

- (17) If the Allied armies had not been encircled at Dunkirk in June, 1940, then God would not have arranged the weather prior to that time in the way in which he actually did arrange it.

In supposing that this sort of thing is possible (the particular example is my own) Plantinga is assuming a certain principle which I will call the *Principle of Foreknowledge and Providence*:

- (PFP) If God has always known that a certain person will perform a particular free action at a given time, then God may have acted at any previous time in the light of that knowledge in a way that is different from the way he would have acted if he had known that the person would perform a different action at that time.

It should be noted that (PFP) is not a direct consequence of the doctrine of foreknowledge or of God's essential omnipotence. It is, I think, conceivable that God might possess comprehensive foreknowledge but never allow himself to be influenced by it in choosing his course of action. It may even be conceivable that God *could not* determine his course of action in view of future events which may themselves, in part, be consequences of that very action. But these possibilities have little appeal for the believer in foreknowledge, because they do not give him the theological benefits which he wishes to derive from foreknowledge. Surely one of the main advantages of foreknowledge lies in the thought that God, having known in advance everything that will happen, has also prearranged circumstances in view of this knowledge, so as to secure the fulfillment of his ultimate purposes. If God's knowledge doesn't have this result, then (to put the matter crudely) what good is it—either to him or to us? So while (PFP) is not entailed by either foreknowledge or essential omniscience, it seems to be something that most if not all believers in foreknowledge would want to affirm.

But if (PFP) is accepted, the potential scope of our power over the past becomes very large indeed. To be sure, it may be that we are very seldom in a position to know, or even plausibly conjecture, that God has arranged things in a certain way because of his foreknowledge of some particular human action. (My example concerning Dunkirk is perhaps as plausible as most that could be thought of. But it involves assumptions about the justification of war in general, and about the righteousness of the Allied cause in World War II, which are highly contestable.) But it is also true that there are very, very few facts about the past which are such that we can confidently say that they could not have been different, had God foreknown that people would choose freely in ways differently than

they actually did choose. To take Plantinga's own example:

It is possible (though no doubt fantastically unlikely) that there is something you can do such that if you were to do it, then Abraham would never have existed. For perhaps you will be confronted with a decision of great importance—so important that one of the alternatives is such that if you were to choose *it*, then the course of human history would have been quite different from what in fact it is. Furthermore, it is possible that if God had foreseen that you would choose *that* alternative, he would have acted very differently. Perhaps he would have created different persons; perhaps, indeed, he would not have created Abraham. So it is possible that there is an action such that it is within your power to perform it and such that if you were to perform it, then God would not have created Abraham.¹⁹

So the scope of our power over the past is, potentially at least, very extensive. Yet this is still *counterfactual* power over the past, rather than power to *bring about* the past. As Plantinga says:

Possibly there is something I can do such that, if I were to do it, then Abraham would not have existed; but it is not possible—is it?—that I now cause Abraham not to have existed.²⁰

And his subsequent remarks indicate that, in his view, not even God now has it in his power to cause Abraham not to have existed. So much of the past may lie within our power, but it is counterfactual power and not power to bring about the past.

No one who is familiar with the literature can doubt that Plantinga has given us a fascinating and provocative account of divine foreknowledge and providence. Of necessity much has been omitted here, and even the points that have been considered invite far more discussion than space will allow for. So we will confine our critical discussion of Plantinga to one point: his distinction between counterfactual power over the past and power to bring about the past. As we saw, the thing Plantinga objects to in Pike's original argument is Pike's contention that

(PL51) God existed at T_1 , and God believed at T_1 that Jones would do X at T_2 , and it was within Jones' power to refrain from doing X at T_2

entails

(PL53) It was within Jones' power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that God did not hold the belief he did

hold at T_1 .

Plantinga is able to avoid Pike's conclusion only after he has replaced (PL53) with the "perfectly innocent"

(PL53b) It was within Jones' power at T_2 to do something such that if he had done it, then God would not have held a belief that in fact he did hold.

Now, is this replacement justified? Why did Pike suppose in the first place that (PL51) entails (PL53)? Was it a mere oversight, resulting from his failure to notice that (PL53b) is the correct conclusion to draw from (PL51)? One thing is certain: if (PL51) does after all entail (PL53), Plantinga's main argument against Pike is invalidated and he will have to begin all over again.

Another way to see the importance of this distinction is to compare Plantinga's view with our argument (B). If I understand Plantinga's position correctly, he does not deny any of the premises of argument (B). What he does deny is the validity of the inference from (B5) and (B6) to (B7). (This is, of course essentially the same inference as that from (PL51) to (PL53).) If the inference from (B5) and (B6) to (B7) is in fact valid, Plantinga will have to reconsider his whole position.

Philip Quinn, in a forthcoming paper discussing the Pike-Plantinga controversy, has suggested a way in which this question might be settled. If the incompatibilist could vindicate a logical principle of a certain type (I will call such principles *Power Entailment Principles*), he could then use it to justify such inferences as the one from (PL51) to (PL53). Quinn himself proposes two candidates for such a principle, of which the first is

(PEP1) If it is within S's power to bring it about that P and if that P entails that Q, then it is within S's power to bring it about that Q.²¹

(PEP1) is obviously false: Neil Armstrong's being the first human to walk on the moon entails that $2 + 2 = 4$, but neither Armstrong nor anyone else has ever had the power to bring it about that this arithmetical proposition is true. Nor are matters any better for

(PEP2) If it is within S's power to bring it about that P and if that P entails that Q and if it is contingent that Q, then it is within S's power to bring it about that Q.²²

For Neil Armstrong's being the first human to walk on the moon entails that there is a moon, but certainly Armstrong never had the power to bring *that* about. At this point Quinn gives up the search for a true Power Entailment Principle: he says, "I have been unable to discover such a principle, and I very

much doubt that there is one.”²³

The quest for such a principle has been taken up by Thomas Talbott in a recent paper. After reviewing the principle we have labeled (PEP1) and rehearsing its deficiencies, he proposes one of his own:

- (PEP3) If (a) it is within S's power to bring it about that P is true and
 (b) it is within S's power to bring it about that P is false and
 (c) P entails Q *and not-P entails not-Q*, then it is within S's power to bring it about that Q is true.²⁴

About this principle, Talbott says that it “seems not only true but obviously true. Where P and Q are logically equivalent, it could hardly be up to me whether or not P is true unless it were also up to me whether or not Q is true.”²⁵ It seems to me that this is absolutely correct. And since, given Plantinga's assumption that God is a logically necessary being, “P” is logically equivalent to “God has always believed that P”, it follows that (PEP3) *shows that Plantinga's position is wrong*.

Talbott recognizes this, but he still goes on to look for a stronger principle, because there are valid cases of “power entailment” which are not instances of (PEP3). For instance, my having the power to draw a triangle certainly entails my having the power to draw a plane figure, in spite of the fact that “I draw a triangle” and “I draw a plane figure” are not equivalent. And such a principle is indeed available: it is

- (PEP4) If (a) it is within S's power to bring it about that P is true, (b) P entails Q, and (c) Q is not a necessary condition of S's having the power to bring it about that P is true, then it is within S's power to bring it about that Q is true.²⁶

Talbott's proof of this principle is both elegant and conclusive:

If P entails Q, then it's within the power of a person S to bring it about that P is true *only if* at least one of these conditions is met: either Q is true *or*, if not true, then it's within S's power to bring it about that Q is true. Suppose, then, that P entails Q and it's *not* within S's power to bring it about that Q is true. It immediately follows that, unless Q is true, it's not within S's power to bring it about that P is true either; it follows, in other words, that Q is a necessary condition of S's having the power to bring it about that P is true.²⁷

Now, apply this to (PL51). Is God's having believed at T_1 that Jones would refrain from doing X at T_2 a necessary condition of Jones' having the power to refrain from doing X at T_2 ? If it is, then it follows immediately that Jones did not have this power. But (PL51) says that he *did* have such a power, so we are

forced to the other alternative: that Jones at T_2 had it in his power to bring it about that God did not hold the belief he did hold at T_1 . And this, of course, is just what (PL53) says. So (PL51) *does* entail (PL53); of that there can be no reasonable doubt. And by similar reasoning. (B5) and (B6) entail (B7).²⁸

These Power Entailment Principles show that, with respect to our power over God's past beliefs, the distinction between counterfactual power over the past and power to bring about the past collapses: it is a distinction which fails to distinguish. These principles do not, however, apply to such cases as our alleged power to act in such a way, that if we were to act in that way Abraham would never have existed. But there is another principle which, if true, would collapse the distinction in that case also. It is:

(PEP5) If (a) it is within S's power to bring it about that P and (b) if it were the case that P it would be the case that Q and (c) its being the case that Q is not a necessary condition of S's having the power to bring it about that P, then it is within S's power to bring it about that Q.

Is (PEP5) true? I believe it is, and I believe that an argument for (PEP5) which parallels Talbott's proof of (PEP4) would be a sound argument. Such an argument would, however, encounter certain complexities (such as the so-called "counterfactuals of freedom") which are not present in the case of (PEP4). And our central concern in the present section is with our power to bring about God's past beliefs, not with our power to bring about good weather on the English Channel or the non-existence of Abraham. So while I believe that (PEP5) is true, I shall forbear at this point any further attempt to prove it.

But concerning (PEP3) and (PEP4) there can be no reasonable doubt. And given those principles, there can be no reasonable doubt, either, that if we are to have the power to act in ways other than those in which God has always believed we would act, we must also have the power to bring it about that God has not believed the things which in fact he always has believed.

VI. *Preventing the Past*

Do we have power over the past? Among the very few philosophers who have considered this question and given an unequivocal affirmative answer must be numbered George Mavrodes.²⁹ We do indeed have power over the past. This power is not limited to the counterfactual power over the past discussed in the previous section; it is the power to directly, and indeed causally, bring about past events and also to prevent past events. And the past events to which this power extends are not limited to those involving God's knowledge or belief

about future events; rather, the power in question is quite general, so that in principle we may be able to bring about or prevent all of the same kinds of events in the past that we are able to bring about or prevent in the future. (A qualification is needed here. Mavrodes does not necessarily want to claim that we *actually have* power over all of these past events. He is, in fact, quite cautious in his claims about the powers which we actually have over past events; his point is that we *could* have such powers, that there is nothing *logically incoherent* in the idea that we might have them. There may very well be specific reasons why I cannot (for example) prevent Abraham's birth, just as there are specific reasons why I cannot swim from San Francisco to Honolulu. Mavrodes' claim, however, is that there is nothing logically incoherent in supposing that I might have either of these powers.)

One more point needs to be added. It might be supposed that Mavrodes is claiming merely that we may, now, have the power to bring about those past events which *have already occurred*, and to prevent those events which have already failed to occur. Such powers as these would be remarkable enough, involving as they do retroactive causality. But Mavrodes is claiming more than this: in addition to the powers just mentioned, he claims that we also have the power to bring about past events which have *not* occurred, and to prevent events which have *already* occurred.

In making these claims, Mavrodes is attacking the arguments for incompatibilism in a profound and fundamental way, by rejecting the fundamental intuition on which all such arguments are built—the intuition of the necessity of the past. If he is right in rejecting this intuition, then incompatibilism cannot be defended. And on the other hand, it seems likely (and this is supported by the arguments in the previous sections) that no compatibilist position which does not reject this intuition can succeed.

It will not be necessary to compare Mavrodes' position in a detailed way with the incompatibilist arguments which have been featured in this paper. For Mavrodes does not just nibble around the edges of premises such as (A1) and (B4); he rejects them outright. And without these premises, or others like them, the argument for incompatibilism cannot get off the ground. What remains to be done, then, is first to *understand* Mavrodes' claims about our powers over the past, and secondly to *assess* those claims, to determine as best we can whether they are true or false.

What would it mean to bring about the past? What sort of power is this? I think it makes a difference here whether we are thinking of the power to bring about past events which have in fact taken place, or of the power to bring about events which might have taken place in the past but which in fact did not. Understanding the first kind of power is not difficult, if we are prepared to contemplate the possibility of retroactive causation: it is the power to perform

an action some of whose consequences are events in the past. Do we ever exercise this power? Mavrodes' claim is that we do this every day of our lives. For by performing any free action, I bring it about that God has always believed that I would perform that action, and by freely refraining from an action I prevent God from having believed I would perform it.³⁰ (These are the only specific examples of power over the past to which Mavrodes commits himself. It may be reasonable to assume that he would accept the Principle of Foreknowledge and Providence, and thus would agree that we sometimes have the power to influence the past indirectly in the way suggested by Plantinga. I think that Mavrodes would also want to say that there may be any number of other ways in which we have power over the past, only we don't at present know what those ways are.)

But how shall we understand that other kind of power, the power to bring about events which might have taken place in the past but which in fact have not? In answering this question I shall proceed somewhat indirectly. We shall first consider several interpretations of Mavrodes' claim which might appear somewhat plausible, but which must be rejected. Only then will we turn to what I think is the correct interpretation of that claim. My reason for this roundabout procedure is that I find that claim to be extremely difficult to interpret, and I hope that consideration of several inadequate interpretations will help to motivate the acceptance of the correct one. (Readers who find claims about bringing about the past to be unproblematic are therefore invited to skip over the next few pages until they reach what they view as the "correct" interpretation!)

One way of understanding this power is suggested by the counterfactual power over the past discussed in the last section: the power to bring about past events which have not in fact occurred may simply be the power to do something such that, if I were to do it, an event which in fact has not taken place in the past would have taken place.

This is absolutely correct, but also totally unilluminating. We saw in the last section that Plantinga conceived of counterfactual power over the past as an *alternative* to power to bring about the past: he thought it possible to affirm our counterfactual power over God's past beliefs, while accepting Pike's premise

- (P4) It is not within one's power at a given time to do something that would bring it about that someone who held a certain belief at a time prior to the time in question did not hold that belief at the time prior to the time in question

But we have seen that the notion of counterfactual power over the past as an alternative to power to bring about the past is a snare and a delusion: the compatibilist, if he is to be consistent, must affirm our power to *bring about* the past, and if counterfactual power over the past is something less than this it is not the power we need if compatibilism is to be true. If on the other hand

counterfactual power over the past is simply *the same as* power to bring about the past, what is gained by the change in wording? And why make a point of describing just our powers over the *past* in counterfactual terms, rather than all of our other powers? Why not describe my power to greet the postman as the power to do something, such that if I were to do it then the postman would be greeted by me? Such a description would not be inaccurate, but what would be gained by it? I conclude, then, that while it is not inaccurate to describe our powers over the past in counterfactual terms, there is no reason to suppose that such a description conveys any additional illumination or brings us any closer to understanding what such powers really amount to.

Plantinga, to be sure, also suggests a second possible interpretation of our power to bring about God's past beliefs. It is, he suggests, conceivable that Jones' "power at T_2 to do something that would have brought it about that God did not hold the belief he held at T_1 " might be interpreted as Jones' "power, at T_2 , to do something such that if he had done it, then at T_1 God would have held a certain belief and also *not* held that belief."³¹ But this has nothing to recommend it as an interpretation of Jones' power. The reason for this is not simply that such a power would be logically absurd, for it may well turn out that the power to bring about God's past beliefs *is* logically absurd; indeed the incompatibilist believes that it is. But *this* interpretation of Jones' power would not perform, and would not even seem to perform, the function which it has in Pike's premise (P6). That premise enumerates three different kinds of powers, such that if it were possible for Jones to have powers of one or more of these kinds, it would be possible for Jones to be acting freely even though God knows beforehand what Jones is going to do. But the power to bring it about that God both has and does not have a certain belief would not fulfill this role: even if Jones (absurdly) had this power and exercised it, it would still be true that God believed at T_1 that Jones would do X at T_2 (although it would also be true that God did *not* have that belief), and so it would still be impossible for Jones to refrain from doing X at T_2 .

So this suggestion is unacceptable, yet reflecting on it may suggest to us yet another possible interpretation of our power over the past. For why is it that Jones (apparently) lacks freedom with respect to doing X at T_2 ? The answer is, because there is a circumstance which obtains (namely, God's having always believed that Jones would do X at T_2) which logically *precludes* Jones' refraining from doing X at T_2 , and since it is not possible for Jones to refrain from doing X at T_2 it is also not possible for him to do X freely. (Let's call circumstances of this sort *precluding circumstances*.)

Now, the precluding circumstances which affect our lives are not by any means limited to God's past beliefs. And perhaps considering how we deal with some other kinds of precluding circumstances will help us to see how Jones might be

free to refrain from doing X even though God has always believed that he would do X. Suppose, for example, that I am going on a trip to Romania, and in order to get the most out of my visit I promise myself that I will take the opportunity to converse with as many Romanians as possible. But there is a snag: I have never learned Romanian. However a remedy is available; some intensive work at my friendly neighborhood Berlitz school will soon equip me to carry on a passable conversation. It may be helpful to state this situation formally:

- (18) If at T_1 N had never learned Romanian, and it was in N's power at T_2 to converse freely in Romanian, then it was in N's power to bring it about that whereas it was true at T_1 that N had never learned Romanian it was no longer true at T_2 that N had never learned Romanian.

It should be noted that in order to have the power in question N must be able to bring it about that a certain past-tense proposition—in this case, "N has never learned Romanian"—is true at one point in time but false at a later point in time. But now consider:

- (19) If at T_1 God had always believed that Jones would do X at T_2 , and it was in Jones' power to refrain from doing X at T_2 , then it was in Jones' power to bring it about that whereas it was true at T_1 that God had always believed that Jones would do X at T_2 it was no longer true at T_2 that God had always believed that Jones would do X at T_2 .

The parallelism between (18) and (19) is close and (I believe) also instructive. In one case, it is N's never having learned Romanian which precludes his conversing in that language; in the other case, it is God's always having believed that Jones would do X at T_2 which precludes his refraining from doing X. In each case, if the precluding circumstance can be removed (i.e., if the past tense proposition which was formerly true can become false), the precluded action may become possible. In the case of N this can probably be done, but what about Jones? Here there is a complication. If the "believer" in (19) were anyone other than God, we might be able to persuade him to change his mind, and after the change of mind it would no longer be true that he had always believed that Jones would do X at T_2 . But with God, things are somewhat different: by hypothesis, whatever God believes at one time he believes at all times, so the only way for Jones to bring it about that God has not *always* believed that Jones would do X at T_2 is for him to bring it about that God has *never* believed this. This is true enough. Nevertheless, I maintain that the power attributed to Jones in the consequent of (19) is indeed the power that Jones must have if he is to be free in the face of God's prior belief: it is the power to bring it about that

God has not believed the things which in fact he always has believed.

At this point certain objections can be anticipated. Some one will say, "But that power would be the power to *change the past!*" I agree; I can think of no better expression for describing the kind of power mentioned in the consequent of (19). "But," the objector continues, "that is absurd; *no one* could possibly have the power to change the past!" Again, I agree; I am in no way an advocate for powers of this kind. But, I add, a reader of the writings of George Mavrodes might easily receive the impression from certain passages that this philosopher *does* advocate the power to change the past. One of his examples is the coronation of Elizabeth II as Queen of England, and he asserts repeatedly that this event may even now be preventable. He explicitly rules out "sensible" interpretations of this, such as our now discovering that her coronation in 1953 was invalid due to some technicality. "No," he says, "I mean that, assuming that she has been Queen for many years, we might now be able to do something which would bring it about that she has never, up to the present time, been Queen."³² But if she has in fact been Queen for many years, and we can now bring it about that she has never been Queen, would that not be to change the past?

I said that a reader of Mavrodes might receive this impression, but I must add at once that it would be a mistaken impression. Mavrodes explicitly rules out powers of the kind implied by (19)—the power to bring it about that there was "a time at which it was true that *E has occurred*, and a later time at which it was not true that *E has occurred*."³³ And he lays great emphasis on the difference between the power to *change* the past and the power to *determine* the past—to *bring about* or to *prevent* past events. It is the latter power, and not the former, that he wishes to affirm.

Now it is my contention that by admitting that we cannot have powers of the kind specified in the consequent of (19)—powers describable as powers to alter the past—Mavrodes in effect concedes the central premise of the incompatibilist argument, as expressed, for example, in

(B4) If God has always believed a certain thing, it is not in anyone's power to bring it about that God has not always believed that thing.

Mavrodes, however, would disagree; he holds that our inability to *change* the past, in the sense indicated by (19), is completely irrelevant to the necessity of the past as this is affirmed by the incompatibilist. For, he goes on to say, no one can change the future, either.³⁴ We can, to be sure, change our plans for the future, but the future itself—roughly, the set of states of affairs subsequent to the present that actually obtain—is what results after all such changes have been made. So to say that we can't change the past marks no genuine contrast and is not to the point.

I think this is a red herring, but we must follow it up briefly lest someone be

led astray by it. First, with regard to the argument of this paper, it may be said that the expression, "changing the past" is of no importance whatever. I have argued that if compatibilism is to be true we humans must have powers of a certain kind, the kind specified in the consequent of (19). These powers, I agree, are aptly characterized as powers to change the past. But this characterization is of no importance for my argument: what matters is not what these powers are called but whether or not we have them. So far as the argument is concerned, they could be called powers to bring about the past, or powers to prevent the past, or powers to facilitate the past, or anything else you like. Now, if someone defines a set of powers which could be aptly characterized as powers to change the future, and shows that some important philosophical point hinges on whether we have these powers or don't have them, then the question of whether or not we can change the future will be of philosophical interest. But so far as the present argument is concerned, the question simply does not arise.

That really should be sufficient, but I am going to abandon for a moment the formal context of my argument and comment on the notion of "changing the past" in its broader cultural context. For us in this culture (I cannot speak about others) it seems natural to think of the past as a determinate totality of some kind, consisting of all the facts and happenings up until now—it includes everything that would be written about in a complete history of the entire universe. Having before our minds the idea of such a totality, a natural question is whether anything can now be done to change it—and the answer we all give (including George Mavrodes!) is that it cannot be changed. Now the question about whether the future can be changed doesn't seem to be a natural question in the same way—I don't think I have ever so much as encountered it, except in the writing of philosophers. To be sure, if we think of the future as a determinate totality—say, as written in the book of Fate, or as a plan in the mind of God—then it makes sense to ask whether it can be changed—can we erase some of the writing in the book, or induce God to change his plan? But outside the context of such religious or philosophical doctrines, I submit that we simply don't operate with the idea of the future as a determinate totality. The future is seen rather as a realm of possibility, where all sorts of things *can* or *might* happen, but in which only the hazy outlines are discernable of a few things that *will definitely* happen. But in general, the future isn't made yet, so what sense would it make to talk about *changing* it? So in this context also, I want to say that the question of changing the future is one that does not arise.

Let us briefly review our progress to date. We are trying to understand Mavrodes' claim that we can have power over the past—in particular, power to prevent events which have in fact already occurred. We considered the possibility of expressing this power in counterfactual terms, and we saw that this move gives no help whatever in our attempt to understand what such powers might

be. We also considered, and rejected, the notion that the power in question might be the power to bring it about that a certain event *both* has and has not occurred (e.g., to bring it about that God both held and did not hold a certain belief). Finally, we considered the possibility that the power might be the power to bring it about that whereas it was true at one time that a certain event had occurred, it was at a later time no longer true that this event had occurred—for example, to bring it about

that whereas it was true at T_1 that God had always believed that Jones would do X at T_2 it was no longer true at T_2 that God had always believed that Jones would do X at T_2 .

I believe, and have argued above, that this is indeed the kind of power we must have if we are to be free in the face of God's past beliefs, i.e. if compatibilism is to be true. Nevertheless, this cannot possibly be the correct interpretation of Mavrodes' claim about our power over the past. For Mavrodes repudiates powers of the kind specified above—powers describable as powers to change the past—and nevertheless he continues to claim that we may have the power to prevent events which have already occurred—for example, he claims that someone may, even now, have the power to prevent Elizabeth's coronation as the Queen of England. So the question becomes acute: *How is this claim to be understood?*

I believe the right way to understand it is this. When he says that someone might even now have the power to prevent Elizabeth's coronation, he means that there may be a kind of action such that (1) someone has, or could have, all of the abilities, personal qualities, etc. which are requisite for performing such an action, and (2) such an action, if performed in 1983 or later, would have the effect that Elizabeth would never have become Queen. Mavrodes does not, however, think that it is possible that the actual world, the state of affairs which actually obtains and contains everything which has happened up to the present moment (including Elizabeth's coronation), should also contain this preventing action.³⁵ It's not now possible that someone *actually will* prevent Elizabeth's coronation, given that she has in fact been crowned, any more than it's now possible that I should converse in Romanian, given that I have never learned Romanian. Just as my failure to learn Romanian precludes that act of conversing, so Elizabeth's coronation precludes that act of preventing. There is, however, an important difference between the cases: the condition of my never having learned Romanian is one that can be removed, so that even though it's not *now* possible for me to converse in that language, this may well *become* possible in the future. But Elizabeth's coronation *cannot* be removed from our past history, for that would be to change the past. So in this case, the circumstance which precludes the preventing action is permanent: it will not and cannot be removed.

But how can Mavrodes say that someone *might* perform the preventing act,

or that someone may have the *power* to do so? We have to keep in mind that there is a sense of 'power' according to which a person's powers (normally) remain more or less constant, while the possibilities of their being exercised come and go.³⁶ If I complete my project of learning Romanian, I will have the power to converse in that language, but I will be able to exercise that power only when I am in the company of another Romanian-speaker. Now, let's suppose I am being questioned about my abilities. (The questioner is a Japanese exchange student who is working hard on learning his English modal auxiliaries.)

"Can you carry on a conversation in Romanian?"

"Yes, I can; actually I'm fairly fluent."

"Excellent! Please demonstrate your ability!"

"Well, I can't do it *now*. I mean, you don't speak Romanian, and neither does anyone else who is present."

"But you just said that you *can* converse in Romanian."

"No, but you didn't understand me. When I said that I *can* converse in Romanian, I didn't mean that I can do it *now*. What I meant was that I *could* converse in that language, *if* there were someone else present with whom to do so. Now do you see?"

"Ah, so! Thank you very much!"

It should be clear by now that when Mavrodes says that we *can* prevent Elizabeth's coronation, he is using this word as I used it when in my first reply I said that I can converse in Romanian—not as I used it in my second reply, when I said that I cannot do this in the absence of other speakers of the language. His 'can', like mine, is really a 'could...if.' And what goes for 'can' goes also for 'power.' And understanding this, we can also understand how Mavrodes can say that we have the power to prevent Elizabeth's coronation even though (as we have seen) it is not possible, given that she was in fact crowned, for us to exercise that power.

At this point a pattern has begun to emerge—a pattern which the reader may already have identified. It is, in fact, the beginning of a familiar dialectic which results when a soft determinist is invited to discuss free will. Perhaps someone has committed a misdeed, and the soft determinist is asked whether the person could have done otherwise. The answer is that nothing compelled the commission of the misdeed, and that the culprit could have acted otherwise if he had willed to. Ah, but could he have willed to? He could have, if his character had been different than it is. But could *that* have been different? It could have, if some of his experiences earlier in life had been different...At some point, a hard determinist (or a libertarian) breaks in to say that, at each stage, what would have to have been different in order for the person to respond differently *could not* have been different, and that therefore the supposed "freedom" to act otherwise is an illusion. It is not my present purpose to enter into this dialectic. My purpose,

rather, is to point out that the uses of 'can', 'power', 'ability' and similar words which generate this dialectic are *exactly the same* as the uses of these words employed by Mavrodes when he is explaining our power to prevent the past.

Am I saying that Mavrodes is a soft determinist? Certainly he does not want to be and does not intend to be. But would it not be a striking confirmation of the incompatibilist's thesis if it turns out that a compatibilist who wishes to affirm our power *over* the past but to deny our power to *change* the past, finds himself compelled to use crucial terms like 'can' and 'power' in a way which generates "free will" only in the soft determinist sense and not in the libertarian sense of that term?

What I have been saying about Mavrodes in this connection will apply to other compatibilists as well. Take Plantinga, for instance: when he affirms that

(PL53b) It was within Jones's power at T_2 to do something such that
if he had done it, then God would not have held a belief that
in fact he did hold

does he really think it possible that the actual world, the world which in fact contains God's belief that Jones would do X at T_2 , should also contain Jones' refraining from doing X? Assuredly not, for this would mean that a belief of God's would be false. Is it possible, then, that Jones can bring it about that the past does *not* contain that belief of God's? This also is impossible, for it would involve changing the past. But how then can Jones have the power to refrain? The answer is that Plantinga, like Mavrodes, is using 'power' in a general sense here, the sense in which I use it when I say that I have the power to converse in Romanian, though my exercise of that power may sometimes be precluded by the absence of other speakers of that language. Similarly, Jones has the power to refrain from doing X, and no doubt does so on many occasions (a life of continual X-ing would probably be pretty monotonous!), but his refraining therefrom on this occasion is precluded by God's belief that at T_2 he will in fact do X.

And what is true of Mavrodes and Plantinga will, I believe, turn out to be true of other compatibilists as well. When their positions are analyzed as far as they can be, it will turn out that either they affirm our ability to alter the past (and I know of none that does affirm this), or they speak of our "powers" in the soft determinist sense, the sense such that it may be in my power to do something even though precluding circumstances make it impossible that I should actually do it.

Let me reinforce this by pointing out that the compatibilist position very clearly *is* a variety of determinism according to some quite standard definitions of determinism. According to Richard Taylor, for instance,

Determinism is the general philosophical thesis which states that for

everything that ever happens there are conditions such that, given them, nothing else could happen.³⁷

And Brand Blanshard says

By indeterminism I mean the view that there is some event *B* that is not so connected with any previous event *A* that, given *A*, *B* must occur.³⁸

It is quite clear that, in the light of these definitions, the views of compatibilists such as Mavrodes and Plantinga qualify as a version of determinism rather than indeterminism. Of course, they may want to say that these are not the right definitions of determinism and indeterminism. But if so it is up to them to tell us what the right definitions are, and why we should prefer them to those given by Taylor and Blanshard.

VII. *Conclusion*

We have examined some arguments for the incompatibility of free will and comprehensive divine foreknowledge, and rejected some ineffective replies to those arguments. We have seen how theists who affirm this incompatibility deal with the resulting theological problem. We then considered the distinction between “hard facts” and “soft facts,” and developed an analysis of that distinction according to which “God believed that *P*” will be a hard fact even if “*P*” is a proposition concerning the future. We then examined the contention that our power over the past is counterfactual power rather than power to bring about the past, and we saw that this attempted distinction collapses—demonstrably so in the case of power over God’s past beliefs, but probably in all other cases as well. Finally, we considered the most profound and fundamental challenge to the incompatibilist arguments—the challenge which rejects altogether the necessity of the past. We saw that this rejection, when pressed to its conclusion, requires that we have the ability actually to alter God’s past beliefs—to bring it about that whereas it has always been true that God has always believed a certain thing, it will now no longer be the case that God has always believed that thing. We also saw that compatibilists do not in fact affirm this. Instead, they use crucial terms like ‘can’ and ‘power’ in a way which in effect commits them to a soft determinist conception of free will. And so the incompatibilist analysis of the situation is strikingly confirmed: those who seek to maintain the compatibility of free will and foreknowledge are in the end forced to abandon, implicitly if not explicitly, the libertarian conception of freedom with which the discussion began.

It was noted at the beginning of this essay that the controversy over free will and foreknowledge has failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion. It is my hope

that compatibilists who read the essay will find that their positions have been fairly represented, that their arguments have been addressed, and that relevant questions have been raised. If so, then perhaps we can proceed together in the task of answering those questions.³⁹

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NOTES

1. Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," *Philosophical Review* 74 (1965), pp. 27-46; A. N. Prior, "The Formalities of Omniscience," *Philosophy* 32 (1962) pp. 119-29.

2. Here and throughout this essay I use the expression "'P'" to refer to the proposition that P.

3. See A. N. Prior, *Past, Present and Future* (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 128-36; Peter T. Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 40-66.

4. Perhaps an exception should be made to this for Alfred J. Freddoso ("Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983), pp. 276-78), who does offer specific criticisms of Prior's scheme. I believe the criticisms can be answered, but there is no space to go into this here.

5. In "It Was To Be" (*Papers in Logic and Ethics*, ed. P. T. Geach and A. J. P. Kenny, Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1976, pp. 097-108), Prior discusses the two conceptions of truth and the resulting logical systems. The two systems are not quite intertranslatable, but the truth-conditions for assertions in each system can be explained in terms of the other.

6. See Rudolph Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology," in *Meaning and Necessity*, Enlarged Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1956), p. 221.

7. See Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 172-78.

8. See the author's "Concerning the Intelligibility of 'God is Timeless'," *The New Scholasticism* 57 (1983), pp. 170-95; also Eleonore Stumpf and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1981), pp. 429-58.

9. This view was introduced into the modern debate by Marilyn McCord Adams ("Is the Existence of God a 'Hard' Fact?" *Philosophical Review* 76 (1967), pp. 492-503); and has been adopted by (among others) William Rowe (*Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, Belmont: Wadsworth, 1978, pp. 162-65); Alfred J. Freddoso ("Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983), pp. 257-78); and Alvin Plantinga ("On Ockham's Way Out," unpublished). This solution stems historically from William of Ockham; it is no accident that both Adams and Freddoso are Ockham scholars. For an argument that this "Ockhamist" solution cannot succeed, see John Martin Fischer, "Freedom and Foreknowledge," in *Philosophical Review* 92 (1983) pp. 67-79.

10. "On Ockham's Way Out," III, p. 11. My thanks to Professor Plantinga for permission to quote from this as yet unpublished paper.

11. By far the most thorough treatment of this topic to date is Alfred J. Freddoso, "Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism." While I adopt a somewhat different approach and terminology,

my results at almost all points are consistent with Freddoso's.

12. *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper, 1974), pp. 66-73.

13. "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," p. 34. In this and subsequent quotations from Pike and Plantinga, the original numbering of propositions is retained, with initials added to indicate the source.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

16. *God, Freedom, and Evil* pp. 70-71.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

18. There is an apparent inconsistency in what Plantinga says about this. He is clearly committed (in view of the considerations cited in the text) to the view that (PL53) is false and cannot be entailed by (PL51). Yet he says that (PL53) is "ambiguous," seeming to leave open the possibility that, if properly interpreted, it might turn out to be true after all. Perhaps this can be reconciled by attributing to Plantinga the view that (PL53), while false if interpreted strictly, may nevertheless be taken to be an inaccurate and somewhat misleading way of ascribing to Jones the power which is more perspicuously expressed by (PL53b).

19. "On Ockham's Way Out," IV, p. 26f.

20. *Ibid.* VI, p. 29.

21. Philip L. Quinn, "Plantinga on Foreknowledge and Freedom," forthcoming in *Profiles: Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James E. Tumberlin and Peter Van Inwagen (Dordrecht, D. Riedel), IV, p. 17. In this and subsequent quotations from Quinn and Talbott, schematic propositional letters have been changed to upper-case to conform to the style of the present essay.

22. *Ibid.*, IV p. 18.

23. *Ibid.*, IV p. 18.

24. Thomal B. Talbott, "On Divine Foreknowledge and Bringing About the Past," forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, I, p. 5. It will be noted that Talbott uses 'P', 'Q', etc. in such a way that their substituends are not *sentences* but rather *noun phrases* which refer to propositions.

25. *Ibid.*, I p. 5.

26. *Ibid.*, I p. 7. Talbott credits William Rowe with assistance in formulating this principle.

27. *Ibid.* I p. 7.

28. Yet another true Power Entailment Principle, discovered independently by the author, is the following:

If (a) it is within S's power to bring it about that P and (b) "P" entails "Q" and (c) it is false that Q, then it is in S's power to bring it about that Q.

29. See his "Is the Past Unpreventable?" in *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. I, no. 2.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 144f.

31. *God, Freedom and Evil*, p. 71.

32. "Is the Past Unpreventable?" p. 139.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 137: Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out," III, p. 12; Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 55f.

35. Mavrodes makes it clear ("Is the Past Unpreventable?" pp. 143-44) that a world in which someone performed an action in 1984 or later which prevented Elizabeth's coronation, would of necessity be a world in which Elizabeth was not in fact crowned in 1953. Such an act of prevention could occur only in a world which differs from the actual world with respect to events which already lie in the past.

36. See Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers*, p. 97.

37. Richard Taylor, "Determinism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. II p. 359.

38. Brand Blanshard, "The Case for Determinism," in *Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science*, ed. Sidney hook (New York: Collier, 1958) p. 20.

39. I wish to thank George Mavrodes for comments on an earlier version of this paper, as well as for his collaboration in a lengthy correspondence which has been the source of many of the ideas contained in it.