

religious liberty are insecure, and have only a pragmatic, not a principled basis. Whatever the faults of Corvino's criticisms of religious liberty, I fear Anderson and Girgis are committed, by their own lights, to restricting religious liberty far more greatly than Corvino proposes. This will place them uncomfortably close to the new Catholic integralists, who embrace a coercive establishmentarian politics with greatly restricted religious liberty for non-Catholics.

*Our Fate: Essays on God and Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer. Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 243. \$78 (hardcover).

ALICIA FINCH, Northern Illinois University

John Martin Fischer's *Our Fate: Essays on God and Free Will* is a compilation of eleven previously published essays on the topic of divine foreknowledge and human freedom (where freedom is understood as the ability to do otherwise than one does). With clear and accessible prose, Fischer relentlessly argues for the thesis that divine foreknowledge and human freedom are incompatible (a thesis that I will hereafter refer to as *incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub>*). Throughout the volume, he carefully considers various objections to his argument, paying particular attention to *Ockhamism*. Some of his more recent essays (co-authored with Patrick Todd and/or Neal Tognazzini) emphasize that the issue of *explanatory dependence* is central to the debate. In the end, it seems that although Fischer is convinced by the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> he is not troubled by it. Of course, no one familiar with his work defending *semi-compatibilism* should be surprised: Fischer has repeatedly argued that it is possible to be morally responsible for one's actions even if one lacks the freedom to do otherwise; he has further argued that, in the light of this possibility, there is no reason to be troubled by the lack of such freedom.

In what follows, I will summarize the previously published essays, pausing to evaluate the version of the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> on which Fischer relies. I will then explain why, despite some objections, I cannot do otherwise than recommend this book.

Over the course of the essays, Fischer considers three versions of the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub>: the "Transfer Version," the "Conditional Version," and the "Possible-Worlds Version." In "Scotism," Fischer critically evaluates Sir Anthony Kenny's "Scotistic" response to a Transfer Version of the argument, where (i) all Transfer Versions of the argument rely (implicitly or explicitly) on so-called "transfer principles" and (ii)



the “general feature of transfer principles is that they are what Timothy O’Connor has called ‘modal slingshots’; they shoot a modal property from one item to another (via a certain means).” (3) In this essay (and in the introduction), Fischer suggests that transfer principles are best avoided; he subsequently offers a Conditional Version of the argument—an argument that reappears, in one form or another, throughout this volume.

When presenting either the Conditional or the Possible Worlds Version of the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FP</sub>, Fischer invokes some basic assumptions:

‘God’ [is] the name of the individual who necessarily has the Divine Attributes. For the purposes of our discussion, the key attributes are (essential) eternity and (essential) omniscience. By ‘eternity’ I mean “sempiternal-ity”; God exists at all times. Further, God’s omniscience implies that (for any proposition *P*), God believes that *P* if and only if *P* is true. (2)

Moreover, he repeatedly asks us to suppose that “God (as conceptualized above) exists” and that “[S]ome ordinary agent Jones does some ordinary act *X* (like mowing his lawn) at time *T*2” (2). In addition, he notes that “Arguably, it follows from God’s essential omniscience and eternity that God believed at *T*1 that Jones would do *X* at *T*2 [where *T*1 is earlier than *T*2]” (2). Finally, Fischer relies on some variation on the principle of the “fixity of the past,” where this principle is, roughly, the thesis that the past is “over and done with” and, as such, it is too late for anyone to do anything about it.

When presenting the Conditional Version of the argument in particular, Fischer relies on a formulation of the principle of the fixity of the past relevantly similar to this:

(FP) For any action *Y*, agent *S*, and time *T*, if it is true that if *S* were to do *Y* at *T*, some fact about the past relative to *T* would not have been a fact, then *S* cannot at (or just prior to) *T* do *Y* at *T* (5).

However, in “Power over the Past” and “Foreknowledge, Freedom, and the Fixity of the Past,” Fischer admits that there is reason to doubt (FP). While Fischer does not concede the falsity of (FP), he is not particularly concerned to defend it. After all, as he points out, the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FP</sub> does not depend on the truth of (FP), even if it depends on the truth of *some* principle of the fixity of the past.

With this, Fischer goes on to offer a Possible-Worlds formulation of the principle and, of course, a Possible Worlds Version of the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FP</sub>. The relevant principle is:

(FP\*) An agent can at *T* do *X* at *T* only if there exists some possible world with the same past relative to *T* as the actual world in which the agent does *X* at *T* (111).

Given the preceding assumptions, it follows that:

God believed at *T*1 that Jones would do *X* at *T*2. Since God is essentially omniscient, His belief at *T*1 that Jones does *X* at *T*2 entails that Jones does *X*

at  $T_2$ . By the possible-worlds definition of entailment, in all possible worlds in which God believes at  $T_1$  that Jones would do  $X$  at  $T_2$ , Jones does  $X$  at  $T_2$ . So in any possible world in which Jones does not do  $X$  at  $T_2$ , God doesn't believe at  $T_1$  that Jones does  $X$  at  $T_2$ . It follows from (FP\*) that Jones does not have it in his power at . . .  $T_2$  to refrain from  $X$ -ing at  $T_2$ . (6)

Since this point about the agent Jones, his action  $X$ , the time  $T_1$ , and the later time  $T_2$  can be generalized to a point about any agent, any action, and any two (distinct) times, the Possible Worlds Version of the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> is complete.

Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that the Conditional Version of the argument is sound only if the Possible Worlds Version is. Next, let us consider that unless one challenges Fischer's conception of God, the Possible Worlds Version of the argument stands or falls with (FP\*). And now let us pause to consider what this principle amounts to.

First, it seems worthwhile to note that (FP\*) does not obviously capture the notion of the fixity of the past. Within the free will literature, the "principle of the fixity of the past" usually refers to the thesis that it is no longer up to anyone what happened in the past; this thesis is usually expressed in terms similar to these:

(FP'): For any agent  $S$ , any proposition  $p$ , and any time  $t$ , if (i)  $p$  describes a state of affairs that obtains prior to  $t$ , then (ii) it is not up to  $S$  at or after  $t$  whether  $p$ .

Fischer's (FP\*), by contrast, says this:

(FP\*\*): For any agent  $S$ , any proposition  $p$ , and any time  $t$ , if (i)  $p$  describes a state of affairs that obtains prior to  $t$  and (ii)  $p$  entails  $q$ , then (iii) it is not up to  $S$  at or after  $t$  whether  $q$ .

(where, I take it, (FP\*) and (FP\*\*) are equivalent.)

Of course, this point is relatively minor: it's not as if Fischer baits his reader by arguing for (FP') and then switches to (FP\*) when he presents his argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub>. Indeed, he explicitly says that the Possible Worlds version of the argument "gets its basic impetus from an insight from Carl Ginet: an agent  $S$  has it in his power to do  $X$  only if it is possible that  $X$  be an extension of the [actual] past" (6). Since Ginet's basic insight seems to be equivalent to (FP\*), Fischer seems to be suggesting that there is no need to argue for (FP\*). Moreover, whether or not we call (FP\*) the principle of the fixity of the past, what matters is whether it is *true*.

This brings me to my second, more serious point about (FP\*): its truth is not as obvious to everyone as it seems to be to Fischer. One could *argue* for its truth if one appealed to (FP') and a transfer principle, e.g.:

(Transfer): For any agent  $S$ , any proposition  $p$ , and any time  $t$ , if (i)  $p$  is true and it is not up to  $S$  at  $t$  whether  $p$  and (ii)  $p$  entails  $q$ , then (iii)  $q$  is true and it is not up to  $S$  at  $t$  whether  $q$ .

After all, the conjunction of (FP') and (Transfer) obviously entails (FP\*\*) (which, again, I take to be equivalent to (FP\*)). But Fischer emphatically rejects this strategy, insisting that the truth of (FP\*) is more obvious than the validity of transfer principles. Moreover, he is not at all convinced that transfer principles are valid. It is thus far better, according to Fischer, to assess the truth of (FP\*) directly instead of trying to derive it in a round-about way.

While I certainly appreciate his strategy (including his attempt to avoid contentious debates about the validity of transfer principles), I must confess that (FP\*)'s truth is simply not obvious to me. Indeed, when I try to evaluate (FP\*) without considering the truth of (FP') and the validity of (Transfer), I am at a loss. I offer this autobiographical information because I suspect that I am not the only one who is similarly confounded. Of course, I realize that others share Fischer's conviction that (FP\*) is obviously true. My point is this: while it may be reasonable for those who agree with Fischer about (FP\*) to endorse his claim that the Possible Worlds Version of the argument is superior to the Transfer Version, this would not be reasonable for everyone. Those of us who find (FP\*) convincing only if we derive it from principles like (FP') and (Transfer) might reasonably conclude that the Transfer Version of the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> is the best version available.

Instead of quibbling over how best to formulate the argument, though, it is worthwhile to consider how best to respond to it. As I have already mentioned, Fischer devotes more attention to Ockhamism than to any other response to the argument. I want to be clear, though, that he does not ignore other responses. For instance, in "Freedom and Actuality," he considers whether one could defeat the argument if one insisted that all propositions about the future are world-indexed; he (rightly) concludes that one could not. In "Putting Molinism in its Place," he argues that Molinism does not constitute a response to the argument, but rather *pre-supposes* such a response. Moreover, in "Engaging with Pike: God, Freedom, and Time" (co-authored with Patrick Todd and Neil Tognazzini), Fischer offers a brief survey of other responses to the argument, including atemporalism (according to which God is outside of time and, hence, does not have *foreknowledge* at all) and Open Theism (which he defines as "the thesis that there are things that happen that God has not always believed—and hence has not always known—would happen") (168).

Again, though, the response that receives the most attention is Ockhamism. Fischer follows the convention of presenting Ockhamism in terms of a distinction between "hard facts" and "soft facts." Quoting Nelson Pike, Fischer characterizes a hard fact as "'fully accomplished and over-and-done-with' at the relevant time" (131). A soft fact, by contrast, is "temporally relational." Following Alvin Plantinga, Fischer suggests that "it is a *mark* of a soft fact that it entails that a certain sort of fact . . . obtains in the future" (132). As characterized by Fischer, the "Ockhamist position

... is that (a) facts which only appear to be strictly about the past but are really also about the future do not carry the necessity of the past [i.e., they are not "fixed"], and (b) God's beliefs are precisely this sort of fact" (133). So, the fact that God believes at  $T_1$  that Jones performs  $X$  at  $T_2$  is a soft fact at  $T_1$ ; since it is soft fact, it is false that Jones can refrain from doing  $X$  at  $T_2$  only if there exists some possible world in which (i) God believes at  $T_1$  that Jones performs  $X$  at  $T_2$  and (ii) Jones refrains from performing  $X$  at  $T_2$ .

In "Ockhamism: The Facts," Fischer argues that even if certain facts about God's beliefs at a time  $T$  are soft facts (at  $T$ ), these facts have "hard features" (135). In order to illustrate this point, we can imagine that I—a non-omniscient being—believe at  $T_1$  that Jones will do  $X$  at  $T_2$ . Once  $T_1$  has passed, it certainly seems "over and done with" that I believed what I believed at  $T_1$ . Moreover, it seems that God's mental states are enough like ours that if God had a particular belief at  $T_1$ , it is over and done with at later times that God had that belief. Granted, God is omniscient and, hence, God's beliefs about the future entail that the future will be a certain way; this is why Fischer is willing to say that it was a soft fact at  $T_1$  that God believed Jones would do  $X$  at  $T_2$ . But even if this complex fact was soft, one feature of this fact—God's particular mental state at  $T_1$ —seems hard, and this hardness is a problem for the Ockhamist. In "Snapshot Ockhamism," Fischer offers an ingenious way to draw the distinction between hard and soft facts. In the end, though, he concludes that Ockhamism nonetheless faces insurmountable problems.

To me, Fischer's assessment of Ockhamism seems more positive by the time he and his co-authors write "Engaging with Pike." Though Fischer never endorses Ockhamism, his (co-authored) description of the position seems richer and more nuanced than what he offered in the earlier pieces. In particular, he and his co-authors acknowledge that "the Ockhamist appeals to a claim concerning *explanatory dependence*" (170). Indeed, the Ockhamist insists that the order of dependence is crucial: if God believed at  $T_1$  that Jones would do  $X$  at  $T_2$ , God had this belief at  $T_1$  *because of* what Jones does at  $T_2$ ; in contrast, Jones does not do  $X$  at  $T_2$  because of what God believed at  $T_1$ . Moreover, "According to Ockhamist thinking, if one has the power to bring about that something *is* the case, then one has the power to bring it about that it always *was* the case that it *would* be the case" (170). From here, Fischer and his co-authors argue that if Ockhamism is tenable, eternalism is true, where "Eternalism is the thesis that past, present, and future objects all equally exist" (174). (I note that in the introduction to the volume, Fischer suggests that he and Todd have changed their minds about the relationship between eternalism and Ockhamism, but he does not explain why, exactly, they have done so. To me, this seems like a frustrating omission.)

In "The Truth about Freedom" and "The Truth about Foreknowledge," Fischer and co-author Patrick Todd respond to Trenton Merricks's charge

that the basic argument for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and freedom is question-begging. They also criticize Merricks's discussion of Ockhamism, suggesting that he has fundamentally misunderstood the position.

In the final essay reprinted here, "Omniscience, Freedom, and Dependence," Fischer and Neal Tognazzini argue that the responses to the argument for incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> offered by Storrs McCall, Trenton Merricks, and Jonathan Westphal are failures of philosophical engagement. According to Fischer and Tognazzini, these responses amount to little more than asserting that the argument is invalid or that one of the premises is false. In the spirit of charity, they suggest that perhaps these responses should be construed as either (i) attempts to motivate a "Moorean shift," whereby they are suggesting that we ought to be more confident in the compatibility of freedom and foreknowledge than we are in the soundness of the argument or (ii) Ockhamism by another name. Either way, they suggest, their interlocutors fail to offer a new philosophical response to the argument: the former is not really a philosophical response at all; the latter response is not new.

Given that (with the exception of the introduction) each essay included here has been previously published, one might question the wisdom of purchasing this volume. As I see it, the purchase is worthwhile for several reasons. First, some of Fischer's work on incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> is not easily available elsewhere. Second, it is convenient to have his most important papers on the topic gathered together in one place. Indeed, I can imagine an excellent course on freedom and foreknowledge that uses this volume and the 2014 volume he co-edited with Patrick Todd (*Freedom, Fatalism, and Foreknowledge*, Oxford) as the central texts. Moreover, by reading the papers in the order in which he presents them, one can gain insight into the progression of Fischer's thought and note the apparent influences of Todd and Tognazzini. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the introductory essay is outstanding. Fischer provides a comprehensive introduction not only to his own work on incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> but to the debate in general. As I have already suggested, the introduction brings his work on incompatibilism<sub>FF</sub> into conversation with his extensive work on semi-compatibilism. Perhaps most strikingly, he argues for the novel thesis that it is possible for God to be *certain* that a particular event will occur, even if that event occurs indeterministically (and, hence, is not determined to occur by the past, present, and the laws of nature), and even if God does not have direct apprehension of future events. While I myself was not convinced by the argument, I cannot deny that it was both clever and interesting, and that it demands a response.

In the acknowledgements, Fischer thanks Neal Tognazzini and Patrick Todd for encouraging him to put together this volume. In my view, anyone working on freedom and foreknowledge owes Tognazzini and Todd a debt of gratitude, because we should all be grateful that this book exists.