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OCKHAMISM

John Martin Fischer

There is a kind of argument, first formulated by Boethius, which seems to show that, if an essentially omniscient and sempiternal God exists, then there is no human freedom. Recently, Nelson Pike has presented a clear and forceful version of the incompatibilist argument.¹ I have attempted to defend the argument against one strategy of response—an approach which might be called “Ockhamism.”² In response to my attack on Ockhamism, Pike has insisted (correctly, I believe) that it is important to distinguish two different versions of the incompatibilist argument.³ Further, Pike argues that if one version of the argument is used, then my defense of incompatibilism against the Ockhamist response is incomplete in one respect, and if the other version of the argument is used, then my defense is incomplete in another respect. Pike thus concludes that what I had described as a “general challenge to Ockhamism” is “not so general after all,” and that insofar as the gaps in my argument remain, “Ockhamism lives.”⁴ Although Pike originally argued for incompatibilism, he believes that my reconstruction of his argument overlooks the force of the Ockhamist criticism of it.

In this paper, I shall consider each version of the argument for incompatibilism. With respect to the first version, I intend more explicitly to defend the argument and thus to provide the “piece of the puzzle” which Pike claims is missing. And with respect to the second version, I shall argue that if a component of my original argument, (the “incompatibilist’s constraint”), which is not chal-

¹Nelson Pike, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action,” *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965), pp. 27–46. For further references, see: John Martin Fischer, “Freedom and Foreknowledge,” *The Philosophical Review* 92 (1983), pp. 69–79, footnote 1.

²*Ibid.* A widely discussed contemporary defense of Ockhamism is: Marilyn Adams, “Is the Existence of God a ‘Hard’ Fact?” *The Philosophical Review* 76 (1967), pp. 492–503.

³Nelson Pike, “Fischer on Freedom and Foreknowledge,” *The Philosophical Review* 93 (1984), pp. 599–614.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 599–614.

lenged by Pike, is accepted, then the conception of God embodied in the kind of Ockhamism presented by Pike (following Adams) is incoherent in an interesting sense. In arguing that (relative to certain plausible assumptions) the Ockhamist position is untenable on either version of the argument, I shall defend the generality of my attack on Ockhamism. The notices of its demise were not, after all, premature.

I. THE FIRST VERSION OF THE ARGUMENT

On both versions of the argument, "God" is a role-indicator and "Yahweh" a proper name.⁵ Further, we assume that God is essentially omniscient and essentially eternal (everlasting). These are not, of course, the only essential properties of God. I shall discuss below certain other properties which it is plausible to think that God has, but the point here is simply that, whatever collection of attributes He can be said to possess, God is, at least, essentially omniscient and eternal. What distinguishes the two versions of the argument is a difference in their interpretations of God's essential attributes. In the first version, "God is essentially omniscient" is interpreted as a *de dicto* attribution: necessarily, whoever fills the role of God is omniscient. (In contrast, in the second version of the argument, the attribution of essential properties such as omniscience is *de re*: if Yahweh is God, omniscience is essential to the personal identity of Yahweh.) Further, we adopt the "fixed past constraint" on power attributions:

(FPC) It is never in any person's power at a time T so to act that the past (relative to T) would have been different from what it actually was.

⁵A role-indicator, or using Pike's term, a "title-phrase," is a descriptive term which is a nonrigid designator. That is, in each possible world it picks out the individual (if there is one) who fills a certain role (or occupies a certain position) in that world, and the individual need not be the same in the different possible worlds. The set of divine attributes specifies the role of God: it constitutes the descriptive content of the term "God." Although Pike used the term "God" as a proper name in his original paper, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," he used it as a role-indicator in his book, *God and Timelessness* (Schocken Books, Inc., York, 1970), arguing that this best reflects the ordinary and technical usage of the term in the Christian tradition (page 28). Also, Pike uses "God" as a role-indicator in "Fischer on Freedom and Foreknowledge."

I shall now present the first version of the incompatibilist argument very briefly.⁶ It follows from the above assumptions that, if Jones does X at T2 and Yahweh is God, then if Jones is free at T2 to refrain from doing X, then:

- (1) It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would have been God at T1 and would have held a false belief at T1, or
- (2) It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would have been God but wouldn't have held the belief He held at T1, or
- (3a) It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would not have existed at T1, or
- (3b) It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh (though existing at T1) would not have been God at T1.

(1) is ruled out by God's essential omniscience, and (2), (3a), and (3b) are ruled out by (FPC). If sound, the argument can be generalized to show that God's existence is incompatible with human freedom to do otherwise.

There is a distinction, even if we cannot formulate it precisely, between hard and soft facts about times. A hard fact about a time is a "genuine," nonrelational fact; a soft fact about a time is "relational"—it is not only about the time, but also about another time or times. Both the incompatibilist and the Ockhamist agree that there is such a distinction. Further, both agree that (FPC) applies to all hard facts about past times; that is, both agree that one cannot ever act in such a way that a *hard* fact—a nonrelational fact—about some past time wouldn't have been a fact. And whereas the hard facts about the past are, in this sense, "fixed," both parties to the debate agree that *some* (though not all) soft facts about the past are not fixed.⁷ The disagreement lies in specifying the class of soft facts which are not fixed.

⁶The argument is spelled out more explicitly in Pike, "Divine Omniscience," and Fischer, *op. cit.*

⁷Thus, (FPC) is taken to have universal application only to *hard* facts about the past. Also, for examples of soft facts about the past which are, nevertheless, "fixed," see: W. L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion* (Encino, Calif.: Dickenson, 1978), p. 165; and Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz, "Hard and Soft Facts," *The Philosophical Review* 93 (1984), pp. 432–433.

An Ockhamist, then, may wish to block the incompatibilist's argument by employing the hard/soft fact distinction to defend (2), (3a), or (3b). In "Freedom and Foreknowledge," I offered an argument that Yahweh's belief at T1 should be construed as a hard fact about T1, and thus that it is not open to the Ockhamist to defend (2).⁸ Pike does not dispute this point. Also, on the *de dicto* interpretation of God's essential attributes, Pike provides no reason to doubt that the existence of Yahweh at T1 is a hard fact about T1, and so it doesn't seem to be open to the Ockhamist to defend (3a). But Pike correctly points out that I have offered no compelling reason to think that the fact that Yahweh fills the role of God at T1 is a hard fact about T1; thus, it might remain open to the Ockhamist to deny (3b).

Lacking an adequate characterization of the hard/soft fact distinction, it is difficult to resolve the question of whether (FPC) rules out (3b).⁹ I claimed, however, in "Freedom and Foreknowledge," that even if (FPC) doesn't rule out (3b), there is another justification for denying (3b).¹⁰ That is, even if the fact that Yahweh fills the role of God at T1 were a soft fact about T1, it is theologically implausible to say that a human agent could be free so to act that Yahweh wouldn't have been God. If this is so, then Yahweh's being God at T1 would be in the class of facts about the past relative to T2 which are, though soft, nevertheless, fixed at T2; and thus the incompatibilist's argument would be vindicated. In the first two sections of Pike's paper, he argues that I have not adequately defended the claim that to accept (3b) would be theologically implausible.

II. PIKE'S FIRST CRITICISM

Pike has two criticisms of my suggestion that (3b) be rejected as theologically unacceptable. I shall consider each of these objections in turn. The first criticism can be presented as follows. The incom-

⁸Fischer, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–78.

⁹For recent attempts to draw this distinction, see: Alfred J. Freddoso, "Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80, n. 5 (1983), pp. 257–278; and Hoffman and Rosenkrantz, *op. cit.* pp. 419–434.

¹⁰Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

patibilist might defend his rejection of (3b) by employing the principle:

- (P) If it were within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh held a false belief, was not omniscient and thus was not God at T1, Yahweh would not be worthy of worship.

But if the incompatibilist accepts (P), he must also accept the following principle, which is at least as plausible as (P):

- (Q) Yahweh would not be worthy of worship had He created (or even permitted) a universe in which no human action is freely performed.

But (Q), together with the assumption that Yahweh is God and thus worthy of worship, entails the falsity of incompatibilism. So, for the incompatibilist to adopt (P) would be self-defeating—his own argument would be undermined. Pike's point could also be put as follows. The incompatibilist must find reason to reject (Q); but if he does so, it seems that he must also abandon (P) and thus leave the rejection of (3b) unjustified.

I believe that there are various ways of responding to Pike's first criticism. In order to develop these responses, we must become clear about what exactly the relationship is between (Q) and incompatibilism. It will be convenient (and I believe clearly unobjectionable) to understand (Q) in its universally quantified form:

- (Q) A person would not be worthy of worship had he created (or even permitted) a universe in which no human action is freely performed.

Also, since "God" is a role-indicator, remember that "God exists" is to be interpreted as the claim that there exists someone who fills the role of God. Now, let us suppose that if God exists, He is worthy of worship and that (Q) is true. It follows that

- (I1) If God exists, then at least one human action has been (or will be) freely performed.

Pike says that such a result would imply that “Fischer’s incompatibilist thesis is false.”¹¹

Pike’s claim might be true, if my incompatibilist thesis were:

(I2) If God exists, then no human action is ever “freely” (“voluntarily”) performed.

But the conclusion of my incompatibilist argument is, strictly speaking:

(I3) If God exists, then no human agent is ever free to do otherwise than he actually does.

Thus (Q) implies the falsity of the conclusion of my incompatibilist argument only if performing an action freely (or voluntarily) requires being free to do otherwise (in which case (I3) would imply (I2)).¹²

But following John Locke and more recently, Harry Frankfurt, I believe that one can act freely without being able to do otherwise.¹³ Consider, for instance, Locke’s example of a man who stays in a room without knowing that the door to the room is locked. It seems that he stays in the room freely (and might be held responsible for staying in the room) although he couldn’t have done otherwise. One can freely choose to do (and do) something which one would have been made to do anyway, had one been inclined to do otherwise.¹⁴ Thus I deny that (Q) implies the falsity of the pertinent incompatibilist thesis, (I3).

¹¹Pike, *op. cit.*, p. 605.

¹²In fairness to Pike, he did explicitly assume, in his original formulation of the argument, that acting freely requires freedom to do otherwise: “Divine Omniscience,” p. 33. Insofar as I claimed to be presenting a version of Pike’s argument, I should have pointed out that I wasn’t adopting this assumption; certainly, one need not accept it.

¹³John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, Ch. xxi, secs. 8–11; Harry Frankfurt, “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 46, n. 23 (1969), pp. 829–839. I defend the claim that acting freely doesn’t require freedom to do otherwise in: John Martin Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” *Journal of Philosophy* 79, n. 1, (1982), pp. 24–40.

¹⁴Of course, my claim here is controversial. For a discussion of the claim, see: Peter van Inwagen, “Ability and Responsibility,” *The Philosophical Review* 87 (1978), pp. 201–224; and Fischer, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 28–32.

And if a related principle,

- (Q') A person would not be worthy of worship had he created (or even permitted) a universe in which no human agent is free to do otherwise,

is proposed, I see no reason to think that it must be accepted (or that anyone who accepts (P) must also accept (Q')). Given the separation of acting freely from freedom to do otherwise, there is no reason to adopt (Q'). What is of value in the behavior of the man who stays in the room depends solely on the way in which he actually behaves—it lies in the actual sequence which issues in the man's staying in the room. The fact that he couldn't have done otherwise is irrelevant to the question of whether his behavior has value and thus, I believe, to the question of whether a person who created him is worthy of worship.

Admittedly, the claim that acting freely doesn't require freedom to do otherwise is controversial. So let us inquire more carefully as to whether incompatibilism would be false, if (Q) were true *and* (as Pike is assuming) acting freely did require freedom to do otherwise. On this assumption, the conclusion of the incompatibilist's argument would indeed be:

- (I2) If God exists, then no human action is ever freely performed.

And if (Q) were true, so also would be:

- (I1) If God exists, then at least one human action has been (or will be) freely performed.

Pike's claim then seems to be that (I1) implies the falsity of (I2). But it does not; both conditionals would be true if their common antecedent, "God exists," were necessarily false. So it doesn't follow simply from acceptance of principle (Q) that incompatibilism must be rejected (even if acting freely requires freedom to do otherwise). Rather, if one accepts both (P) and (Q), it remains open to conclude that "God exists" is necessarily false. And of course this conclusion is perfectly consistent with incompatibilism; the incompatibilist's

claim is that there is no possible world in which it is *both* true that humans act freely and that God exists, and this claim is in no way threatened by the claim that God exists in no possible world. In fact, if one had an argument that God's existence is incompatible with the existence of humans who act freely, one might well conclude that "God exists" is necessarily false. This conclusion might be thought to follow from the assumption that God would have to have the attribute of perfect goodness.¹⁵ I am not prepared here to argue that this position is clearly correct, but I am merely pointing out that it seems to be a position which is plausible and open to an incompatibilist.

In addressing Pike's first criticism, I have argued that acceptance of (Q) need not imply the rejection of incompatibilism. Thus, even if the incompatibilist accepted (P), and accepting (P) required accepting (Q), his argument would not have been shown to be self-defeating.¹⁶

III. PIKE'S SECOND CRITICISM

Let me now consider Pike's second criticism of my claim that (3b) should be rejected as being theologically implausible; this criticism

¹⁵The argument for this sort of conclusion might use a principle of diffusiveness of goodness similar to Aquinas's "Dionysian Principle." For a discussion of this principle, see: Norman Kretzmann, "Goodness, Knowledge, and Indeterminacy in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Philosophy*, suppl. v. 80, n. 10 (1983), pp. 631–649, esp. pp. 632–638. If perfect goodness is "diffusive of itself and of being," a God who is perfectly good would create beings who are good. But if whatever beings He created wouldn't act freely, then it might be reasonable to say that they would not truly be *good*. (Some version of this widely-held claim underlies the "free will defense" against the problem of evil.) Thus, it is at least plausible to think that God's perfect goodness requires the compatibility of God's existence with human freedom. So if one has an argument for incompatibilism, it is plausible to think that "God exists" is necessarily false, insofar as it is assumed that whoever fills the role of God is (at least) omniscient, everlasting, and perfectly good.

¹⁶In correspondence, Pike has informed me that he didn't intend to present the argument I have attributed to him in this section. Rather, his point is simply that, just as (Q) would need support if used in an argument, so also with (P). But if this is Pike's point, then I am puzzled as to why he claims that (Q) implies the falsity of incompatibilism. In any case, I believe that the argument of this section is certainly *suggested* by Pike's remarks,

concerns the justification of (P) itself. Pike's case of the Jones-Predictor—an ordinary human who believes all and only true propositions about Jones's behavior—is intended to show that “the possession of eternity and omniscience alone is not sufficient to preclude the possibility that although a given individual is God, it could be within the power of some human agent so to act that that individual is not God.” I absolutely agree with Pike on this point. I understand the incompatibilist to be saying this: if essential omniscience and eternity are included in a theologically adequate *total* set of God's attributes, then God's existence is incompatible with human freedom. Of course, there will not be general agreement about which attributes to include in the total set which is theologically adequate; but the incompatibilist's argument will be strong insofar as it is a sound argument relative to plausible and widely shared views about the specification of the total set of divine attributes. (Already, I have mentioned an argument which requires the assumption that God is perfectly good.) Also, a compatibilist defense will be weak insofar as it is tenable only relative to “thin” specifications of the total set of divine attributes.

Pike can be seen as challenging me to specify which other divine attribute—besides essential omniscience and eternity—in the total set licenses the rejection of (3b). This property should allow us to distinguish God from a mere Jones-Predictor—there should be an asymmetry between divine and mere human foreknowledge. I shall first attempt to specify the divine attribute which I believe justifies the rejection of (3b); then I shall briefly discuss the relationship of this property to worthiness of worship (and thus principle (P)).

In traditional theology, God is taken to be a “perfect” or “supreme” being. In Anselm's well-known formulation, God is “a being than which nothing greater can be conceived.”¹⁷ I take it then that the concept of God is the concept of the greatest possible being. Various philosophers have held that if God is the greatest possible being, then He must be, in some sense, “independent”; it is

and it is useful to see how an incompatibilist might respond to it (and to see that, contrary to Pike's claim, an incompatibilist need not reject (Q)). I provide support for (P) in the following section.

¹⁷Anselm, *Proslogium* II.

widely thought that there is some sort of conceptual connection between greatness and independence (and inferiority and dependence).¹⁸ Philosophers differ considerably on the nature of this connection and what sort of independence God has. Anselm claimed that God's greatness requires that the explanation of God's existence be within Himself—that He exist *a se*.¹⁹ If the explanation of God's existence were outside of God, then God would be dependent (and thus not supreme); hence, God must possess the property of "aseity"—self-existence.

Also, various philosophers have claimed that God's greatness requires that God exist necessarily—that God possesses the property of necessary existence. Whereas some (including Anselm) would interpret God's necessity as logical necessity, many adopt a different interpretation; on this interpretation, God's necessity consists in its being "factually" or causally impossible that God not exist—God's necessity is thus construed as a kind of "factual" or causal independence.²⁰ The properties of "self-existence" and "necessary existence" are standardly thought to be members of the total set of divine properties. To name the generic property of which these are more specific examples, I shall use the term, "independence."

I shall now develop what I believe is a theologically reasonable conception of independence which is appropriate to the view of God embodied in the first version of the incompatibilist's argument. Suppose that we explain the existence of a table by referring

¹⁸See, for example: Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," *The Philosophical Review* 69 (1960), pp. 41–62. Pike discusses Malcolm's position in: Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1970), pp. 138–142. As far as I can see, Pike does not here argue against the claim that a perfect *being* (as opposed to, say, a perfect dish) is, in some sense, independent; it is clear, however, that Pike is skeptical about the inference from perfection to certain divine attributes, including independence.

¹⁹Anselm, *Monologium VI*. Rowe presents Anselm's position clearly in: Rowe, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–11.

²⁰John Hick, "Necessary Being," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 14 (1961), pp. 353–369. Hick clearly adopts the view that God's necessity is not *logical* necessity; rather, God's necessity is some sort of "factual" or "causal" independence. I'm not sure whether this sort of necessity is to be construed as solely causal independence or a broader kind of independence. For a similar interpretation of God's necessity, see: Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 233–280.

to a carpenter's activity. The table is, in a clear sense, dependent on the carpenter: had the carpenter not engaged in the activity, this table wouldn't have existed. When an object's existence is in this way dependent on external factors, it is not the greatest possible thing. So if Yahweh is God, then Yahweh's existence cannot depend in a similar way on human action. That is, if Yahweh is God at T1, then it cannot be the case that if Jones were to refrain from doing X at T2, then Yahweh wouldn't have existed at T1.

Of course, there is a difference between the case of the table and that of Yahweh. It seems that the table is *causally* dependent on the carpenter's activity, whereas if Yahweh's existence at T1 were dependent, it would be counterfactually though not necessarily *causally* dependent on Jones's activity at T2. But I don't see how this difference is significant. Causal dependence and noncausal dependence are equally forms of *dependence* and, as such, are inconsistent with supremacy. After all, what makes causal dependence inconsistent with supremacy is that it is a form of dependence.

An object may be dependent on external factors, not only for its existence, but also for its having a property (or filling a role). Imagine that we explain the table's being brown by referring to a painter's activity. The table's being brown is, in a clear sense, dependent on the painter: had the painter not engaged in the activity, the table wouldn't have been brown. An object, then, may have "property-dependence" (or "role-dependence") as well as "existence-dependence."

It seems clear that a being who is supreme couldn't be existence-dependent. And if an individual who is the supreme being cannot be dependent, for His existence, on external factors, then insofar as a property is a "great-making" property—one of the properties in the total set of divine attributes—I believe that it is plausible to think that He cannot be dependent, for His having that property, on external factors. Thus, the individual who is God must have both existence-independence and role-independence.

So far, I have relied on what I believe to be clear features of the sort of independence which God is supposed to possess, but I have not offered an explicit definition of this notion. I am not prepared here to offer such an account of this difficult concept, but I believe that, on *any* adequate characterization, God's independence will imply that God is "counterfactually independent of possible

human action.” More carefully, God’s role-independence implies that, if an action X is in some agent S’s power and Y is God, then if S were to perform X, Y would still be God. On this sort of account, given that S refrains from mowing his lawn, that he can mow it, and that Yahweh is God, then if S were to mow his lawn, Yahweh would still be God. Of course, it may be *logically possible* that S mow his lawn and Yahweh gratuitously murder an innocent baby and thus not be perfectly good (and hence, not fill the role of God); but my claim is simply that the counterfactual, “If S were to mow his lawn, then Yahweh would still be God” is true. That is, given that Yahweh is actually God and thus actually perfectly good, the closest possible worlds in which S mows his lawn are worlds in which Yahweh is still perfectly good; this, of course, consistent with there being possible worlds (more remote from the actual world) in which S mows his lawn and Yahweh murders the baby.²¹ My claim, then, is that God’s perfection implies a sort of role-independence according to which an individual’s being God is counterfactually independent of any action which a human being can perform.

The notion of independence on which I am relying needs some clarification. It might be argued (as I suggested above) that if God is perfectly good (as well as omniscient, etc.), then He must create persons who act freely. But then an individual’s being God would seem to depend, in some sense, on the existence of other persons. That is, suppose that Yahweh is God; then it would appear to be true that, if no other person had ever existed, then Yahweh would not have been God. Does this make God “role-dependent?” Similarly, the properties of “being creator of the universe” and “being savior of mankind” might be included by some in the list of great-making properties. But an individual can have these properties only if he bears certain relations to other things. If Yahweh has these properties, shall we say that He is role-dependent?²²

Of course, I wish to maintain that an individual can have such

²¹I have been helped here by Phillip Bricker. For developments of the possible-worlds account of counterfactuals, see: Robert Stalnaker, “A Theory of Conditionals,” in N. Rescher (ed.), *Studies in Logical Theory* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1968); and David Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1973).

²²I am grateful to Nelson Pike and also Anthony Brueckner for raising these questions.

properties without being, in the relevant sense, “role-dependent.” My point is that it is a necessary condition of Yahweh’s being role-independent that His being God is counterfactually independent of *any action a human being can perform*. So the test for independence (of the pertinent sort) is the truth of counterfactuals whose antecedents specify actions that a human agent can perform: given that Yahweh is God and S can perform X, then if S were to perform X, Yahweh would still be God. Thus it might be true that if Yahweh hadn’t created free persons, He wouldn’t have been God, but still true that Yahweh is not, in the relevant sense, role-dependent. And this picture is plausible; it is reasonable to suppose that Yahweh’s being God might depend on His having created the universe, but *not* on whether or not Jones mows his lawn (or I order anchovies on my pizza).

God’s independence, then, is the basis for the rejection of (3b). If Yahweh is God at T1 (and thus independent) and Jones can refrain from doing X at T2, then it cannot be the case that if Jones were to refrain from doing X at T2, Yahweh wouldn’t have filled the role of God at T1. (3b) must be rejected, because it requires both that Jones can refrain from doing X at T2 and that if he were to refrain from doing X at T2, Yahweh would not have been God at T1. I believe that a being which didn’t possess this sort of independence would not be worthy of worship; thus I believe that principle (P) is true. I don’t know how to prove the claim that there is a connection between worthiness of worship and the sort of independence I have been discussing. Actually, this connection is not *required* by the argument presented above that God is independent; this argument relies on a connection between supremacy (perfection) and independence (and not worthiness of worship and independence). If one believes that the connection between supremacy and independence is clearer than that between worthiness of worship and independence, one could reject (3b) without referring to (P).

Of course, the connection between supremacy and independence might also be challenged, and thus one might deny that God is, in the sense I have specified, independent. I do not know how to establish that God is, in my sense, independent. All I can do is to place my position in what I take to be an extremely plausible theological tradition which claims that God is independent. Clearly, the sense of God’s independence in which it is logically necessary that

the person who is God be God is inappropriate to the conception of God adopted by the first version of the incompatibilist argument. And I don't see how one could adopt a weaker notion of independence, for instance, causal independence, without also adopting my notion of independence, according to which the identity of God is both causally and counterfactually independent of human actions.

Finally, assume that Smith is a Jones-Predictor at T1. Might it be within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Smith would have held a false belief at T1 and thus not have been a Jones-Predictor? Since the concept of a Jones-Predictor is not the concept of the supreme being, we needn't say that Smith is independent with respect to the property of having true beliefs about Jones (and thus the role of Jones-Predictor). So Jones can have it in his power so to act that Smith would have held a false belief and thus not have been a Jones-Predictor. And this is how it should be, if the asymmetry thesis is true, that is, if divine foreknowledge poses a deeper threat to human freedom than mere human foreknowledge.

In the previous section, I argued that accepting (Q) needn't entail the falsity of incompatibilism. In this section, I have (partially) defended (P) and also suggested that, given God's supremacy, the incompatibilist can justify his rejection of (3b) without recourse to (P). The rejection of (3b)—either via (P) or otherwise—can be given a firm theological footing which doesn't render the incompatibilist argument self-defeating. This completes my defense of the first version of the argument.

IV. THE SECOND VERSION: HARD-CORE SOFT FACTS

The second version of the incompatibilist's argument uses the *de re* interpretation of God's essential attributes: omniscience is essential to the personal identity of the individual who is God. If Yahweh is God, then any individual who is not omniscient would not be Yahweh. Following Pike's presentation, the argument proceeds as follows.²³ Given that Yahweh is God and Jones does X at T2, then if Jones can at T2 refrain from doing X, then:

²³Pike, "Fischer on Freedom and Foreknowledge," p. 13. For ease of discussion, I use Pike's numeration here.

- (1'') It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would have existed and would have held a false belief at T1; or
- (2'') It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would have existed but would not have held the belief He held at T1; or
- (3'') It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would not have existed at T1.

The incompatibilist points out that (1'') is ruled out by Yahweh's essential omniscience (and the assumption that one can't so act that a logical contradiction would obtain). Further, (2'') and (3'') seem to be ruled out by (FPC).

Pike agrees with me that (2'') is ruled out by (FPC).²⁴ Apparently, this is because Pike agrees that I have provided reason to think that Yahweh's belief at T1 is a hard fact about T1.²⁵ But he insists that, since I haven't provided any reason to think that Yahweh's existence is a hard fact about T1, it remains open to the Ockhamist to defend (3'').

One might be puzzled by Pike's willingness to reject (2'') but, at the same time, to claim that an acceptance of (3'') remains open. That is, the *basis* for the rejection of (2'') seems to be the hardness of Yahweh's belief at T1 that Jones would do X at T2. But if Yahweh's belief at T1 is a hard fact about T1 and given (FPC), then if (3'') is true, it follows that:

- (3''x) It is within Jones's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh wouldn't have existed at T1 and Yahweh would have believed at T1 that Jones would do X at T2.

((FPC) implies that if it is in a person's power, power to do X at T and F is a hard fact about the past relative to T, then it is in the

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Pike, *op. cit.*, p. 21. Pike says: "The answer is that although Fischer's 'general challenge' includes considerations to support a judgment of precisely this sort [that it is a hard fact about T1] as regards the status of the fact that Yahweh held the belief He held at T1, it is utterly silent on the question of whether Yahweh's existence is a fact of like kind."

person's power so to act that F would have been the case.) But (3"x) is ruled out by the assumption that one can't so act that a logical contradiction would obtain.

Here is another way of seeing that one cannot hold Yahweh's belief at T1 to be hard and also accept (3"). Let us suppose, again, that "Yahweh believes at T1 that Jones will do X at T2" is a hard soft fact about T1. Obviously, "Yahweh doesn't exist at T1" entails the falsity of "Yahweh believes at T1 that Jones will do X at T2." So even if "Yahweh exists at T1" were a soft fact about T1, it would be a "hard-core soft fact"—a soft fact about T1 whose failure to obtain would entail that *some* hard fact about T1 wouldn't be a fact. And insofar as one believes in the fixity of hard facts, one must also believe in the fixity of hard-core soft facts. So even if my "general challenge" to the Ockhamist does not support the conclusion that the existence of a "person2" at a time is a hard fact about the time, it would support the conclusion that the existence of such a person is a hard-core soft fact about the time. (Pike introduces the notion of a "person2" as a person whose identity conditions include omniscience. His point is that this diverges from the ordinary notion of a person.) Thus, it is quite clear that anyone who wishes to accept (3") needs to deny that Yahweh's belief at T1 is a hard fact about T1; we must look for another interpretation of the position Pike develops.

V. GOD'S FREEDOM

In order to avoid the problem raised in the previous section, Pike must deny that he rejects (2") on the basis that Yahweh's belief at T1 is a hard fact about T1. Rather, Yahweh's belief is construed as "conditionally hard"; *given that* Yahweh exists at T1, His belief is a hard fact about T1. Equivalently, the hard fact is a "conditional fact": if Yahweh exists at T1, then Yahweh believes at T1 that Jones will do X at T2. Taking this conditional fact to be the hard fact allows one to reject (2") but accept (3"). This, then, is the sort of approach Pike has in mind; his claim is that this approach is a coherent option—one that he ascribes to Marilyn Adams.²⁶

²⁶I read a version of Section IV at the meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers in Santa Barbara, March 1984. Pike's response indicated to me that this is the appropriate interpretation of Pike's position.

Of course, Pike needs to argue that the hard fact is merely the conditional fact, and not its consequent; otherwise, my criticism in Section IV will be telling. But I shall not further discuss this issue. Rather, I shall argue that, on the *de re* interpretation of God's essential attributes, the position which Pike presents (on behalf of Adams) is *incoherent*, relative to a plausible specification of the total set of divine attributes. That is, if one rejects (2'') on the basis of the fixity of the past (even just the fixity of the conditional fact), then there is *no* coherent, minimally plausible conception of God, given the *de re* approach to God's attributes. Thus, my argument that (FPC) rules out (2'') is considerably stronger than it might appear to be.

My claim is that, if (2'') is rejected, then it would follow that the individual who is God is not omnipotent; God himself would lack freedom to do otherwise. But this sort of God would surely not be a theologically acceptable God. I shall argue that if (2'') is rejected, then God's essential omniscience and eternity are incompatible with God's omnipotence insofar as they rule out His freedom to do otherwise.

Consider the following argument, which is parallel to the incompatibilist arguments considered above. Suppose the Empire State Building does not fall at T2. It follows that Yahweh (being God) believes at T1 that it won't fall at T2. If Yahweh has it in His power at T2 to cause the Empire State Building to fall at T2, then:

- (1''') It is within Yahweh's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would have existed and would have held a false belief at T1; or
- (2''') It is within Yahweh's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would have existed but would not have held the belief He held at T1; or
- (3''') It is within Yahweh's power at T2 so to act that Yahweh would not have existed at T1.

(1''') is clearly unacceptable, in virtue of God's essential omniscience. And if (2'') is ruled out as above—in virtue of the conditional fact—then (2''') must also be ruled out; the fixity of the past, like facts about logic, constrains God as much as humans. Finally,

(3^{'''}) is ruled out by Yahweh's essential eternity.²⁷ That is, if Yahweh were to cause the building to fall at T2, He would exist at T2; but then by His essential eternity, He must also have existed at T1. On this plausible view, if Yahweh were to exist at a time, then He must exist at all times; in no possible world does Yahweh (who is actually God) simply pop into existence at a particular time. Further, if Yahweh has a certain belief at a time, then He has held the belief "for all eternity"; this is the conception of omniscience which Pike and Adams accept, and it implies that if Yahweh exists at a time, then He exists at all previous times.

Pike claims that one might reject (2^{''}) but accept (3^{''}); but the argument which I have just presented shows that if (2^{''}) is rejected, then God cannot be omnipotent. This is because (2^{'''}) must be rejected if (2^{''}) is rejected; and if (2^{'''}) is rejected, then God's essential omniscience and eternity (understood *de re*) are incompatible with His freedom to do otherwise (and thus, His omnipotence). So if (2^{''}) is false, then "God exists" is necessarily false, where God's properties include essential omniscience, eternity, and omnipotence. This is an interesting and strong result; of course, it has as a trivial consequence that the existence of God, so understood, is incompatible with human freedom.

If (FPC) provides a reason to reject (2^{''}), then incompatibilism is vindicated and Adams's Ockhamism is seen to be untenable, even on the *de re* reading of God's essential attributes. The only ways I can see of avoiding this result would be to claim that God is not essentially eternal, that God is immune to the fixity of the past, or that God isn't omnipotent. But none of these alternatives is even vaguely attractive.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is important, as Pike usefully argues, to distinguish between two conceptions of God. On the first conception, the attribution of

²⁷It is quite clear that both Marilyn Adams and Nelson Pike assume that God is not just eternal but *essentially* eternal. Adams says, "The two features of the concept of God which are important for Pike's argument and with which I shall be concerned are *essential* everlastingness and *essential* omniscience." (Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 494). Pike commits himself to the assumption of essential eternity (which is actually implied by his notion of

essential properties to God is *de dicto*; on the second, it is *de re*. Also, it is true, as Pike points out, that if the only attributes God is thought to have are essential omniscience and eternity, then one cannot show conclusively that God's existence is incompatible with human freedom. My approach in this paper has been to embed these attributes in a more robust, plausible set of divine attributes. I have argued that, relative to the first conception of God, incompatibilism can be defended against Ockhamism; Pike's challenge to complete the incompatibilist's argument can be met by assuming that God has a certain sort of *independence*. Further, I have argued that, relative to the second conception of God, acceptance of the fixity of God's prior belief renders Ockhamism untenable. Even on the weaker interpretation of the fixity of God's belief (according to which it is the conditional fact which is held fixed), there is a fundamental incoherence in claiming that the person who is God has the essential properties of omniscience, eternity, and omnipotence. Thus, if one has reason to accept the fixity of God's prior belief, one will conclude that, on the second conception, a theologically adequate God can't exist.

Finally, I wish to make a few remarks about the scope of my results. First, I have been discussing only the temporal interpretation of God's eternity. If one is convinced by the above arguments that incompatibilism is true—or even that “God exists” (where “God” is understood in one of the ways discussed above) is necessarily false—this needn't lead one to atheism. Rather, this may lead one to reject (for instance) the temporal in favor of the atemporal understanding of God's eternity.²⁸ Of course, the conclusions about God reached above apply only to the interpretations of God's properties adopted above.

Second, the arguments have presupposed (FPC)—the fixity of hard facts about the past. The Ockhamist's project is to block incompatibilism by putting certain crucial facts in the “soft-fact category.” My arguments have addressed the Ockhamist; but there is

essential omniscience) in “Divine Omniscience,” p. 31. Further, it would seem entirely implausible and *ad hoc* to claim that, although God's other attributes are essential in the *de re* sense, eternity is not.

²⁸There is a development of this conception of eternity, with its implications for human freedom, in: Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “Eternity,” *Journal of Philosophy* 78, n. 8 (1981), pp. 429–458.

another critic of incompatibilism, a critic who rejects the fixity of even hard facts about the past.²⁹ Such a compatibilist could *accept* my argument in “Freedom and Foreknowledge” that God’s belief must be a *hard* fact about the past, but reject (FPC) and therefore deny that God’s prior belief is a fixed fact about the past. I have not attempted in this paper to argue against such a compatibilist. Rather, I have been concerned to show that a certain sort of Ockhamist response to the incompatibilist—that suggested by Adams and developed, at least as an open possibility, by Pike—is unacceptable.³⁰

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²⁹For such an approach, including examples which are intended to refute (FPC), see: John Turk Saunders, “The Temptations of ‘Powerlessness,’” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1965), pp. 104–107; and Alvin Plantinga, “On Ockham’s Way Out,” unpublished manuscript. Also, see: Martin Davies, “Boethius and Others on Divine Foreknowledge,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 8, n. 4 (1983), pp. 313–329.

Of course, it is assumed here that one can identify hard facts as “genuine” or “non-relational” facts—facts which are *only* about the relevant times and then ask whether such facts need be “fixed.” That is, the question of which facts are the “hard” facts can be separated from the question of which facts are “fixed,” and (FPC) makes the substantive claim that all hard facts about the past are fixed. The claim that even hard facts about the past needn’t be fixed—the denial of (FPC)—is made by certain compatibilists about *causal determinism* and freedom to do otherwise (“multiple-pasts” compatibilists). Ockhamism is (at least initially) attractive to the extent that it is a less radical position than multiple-pasts compatibilism.

³⁰I have benefitted from discussions with Anthony Brueckner and Phillip Bricker. I am very grateful to Nelson Pike and Anthony Brueckner for comments on an earlier draft. My work on this paper has been supported by a Fellowship for Independent Study and Research from the National Endowment for the Humanities.