

An argument for incompatibilism and two responses

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1 The core argument for incompatibilism

There are different ways to formulate arguments for the incompatibility of free will and divine foreknowledge. We'll be looking at (a slight simplification of) Warfield's way of doing it, which pretty closely follows the presentation in Jonathan Edwards' 1754 book, *Freedom of the Will* (an excerpt from this book is also on the course web site).

As with the consequence argument, we will use ACT as a name for some arbitrary future action of yours, that happens at some specified time – say, January 1, 2015. Here is the argument:

1. Necessarily, if God believes at some time t that p , then p .	Infallibility
2. If p is a truth about the past, then no one is free to make it the case that not- p .	Past
3. Necessarily, if no one is free with respect to p , and necessarily, if p , then q , then no one is free with respect to q .	Transfer
4. God believed in 1900 that ACT will happen.	Foreknowledge
5. No one is free with respect to the fact that God believed in 1900 that ACT will happen.	(2,4)
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C. No one is free with respect to the fact that ACT will happen.	(1,3,5)

A few points to note about this argument:

- Like the consequence argument, this is set up as a conditional proof: we assume foreknowledge plus some other principles and derive the conclusion that if God has foreknowledge of our actions, then we have no free will.

- As with the consequence argument, Warfield is right to note that we can't infer from the validity of the argument plus the truth of the premises that free will and foreknowledge are *incompatible*, since that says that necessarily, if God has foreknowledge, we have no free will. But we can make the same sort of repair here as suggested in that case: take the argument to show the incompatibility of foreknowledge with creatures of a certain sort — those that cannot change the past — having free will.
- It is sometimes said that there is no problem about free will and foreknowledge, because God's foreknowledge does not *cause* our actions. In one way, this is right — there is no easy argument from foreknowledge to determinism, for example. But this point does not appear to help with the above argument.

2 Molinism and Ockhamism

Today we will be focusing on two responses to this argument for the incompatibility of free will and foreknowledge.

The Ockhamist claims that the inference from (2) and (4) to (5) is invalid. This is because some claims seem to be genuinely past claims, but really are not; sometimes they are, in part, claims about the future.

Some intuitive examples of apparent-but-not-really past claims: it's being true yesterday that you would come to class; your roommate truly believing yesterday that you would come to class today.

Warfield suggests as one possibility this criterion for genuinely past claims: they do not entail the existence of any future time (any time future relative to the events which they are about, that is). By this criterion, facts about God's past beliefs are not genuinely future facts. Given that God's believing in 1900 that something will happen in 2015 entails that 2105 will come to pass (since, necessarily, God's beliefs are true), claims about the past beliefs of God about the future are not genuinely past claims.

So, if God believed in 1900 that I would do something in 2015, the following is not the case: I am not now free with respect to what God believed in 1900.

The Molinist, by contrast, rejects Transfer: sometimes we can have no free choice with respect to some fact which entails another, but still have free choice with respect to the second. This looks suspiciously like rejecting the No Choice Principle.

3 The problem of prophecy

Suppose that in 1900 God, or a divinely inspired prophet, decided to write down what you would be doing on 1/1/2015. Then we can put together a version of the above argument which replaces mention of God believing something in 1900 with God, or the prophet, writing something down in 1900. Even if it is credible to say that God's beliefs in the past are not genuinely past facts, it is ridiculous to say that an event of some letters being written on a page in 1900 is not a past fact — surely I cannot not have free will with respect to an event of writing in 1900; this sort of fact is about as past as it gets.

A reply: distinguishing the act of writing from the act of divinely inspired foretelling — why the latter seems to involve a belief about the future, and thus opens the door to the same kind of solution as the Ockhamist proposed to the original argument.

4 An argument against Molinism

A worry about Molinism, which Warfield develops at the end of the paper, is that it is inconsistent with the conjunction of incompatibilism and the belief in human free will. After all, if the Molinist is committed to thinking that it is inconsistent with the history of the world that ACT not occur, and yet that I have free choice with respect to ACT. But if the history of the world determines a unique future, and yet I'm free with respect to some future action, doesn't that mean that free will must be compatible with determinism.

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Some concluding worries about Ockhamism.

Two other solutions to the problem introduced: these are each ways of rejecting premise (4). One does so on the grounds that God is outside of time, and the other on the grounds that God does not know in advance which free actions we will perform.