

*Plantinga on the compatibility of freedom  
and foreknowledge*

There are two main points to take away from the Plantinga reading.

The first is a criticism of the following sort of argument:

1. If God knows in advance that I will go to the pub today, then it is necessary that I will go to the pub today.
2. If it is necessary that I will go to the pub today, then I am not free to decide whether or not I will go to the pub today.

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C. I am not free to decide whether or not I will go to the pub today. (1,2)

Plantinga's criticism is that premise (1) is ambiguous. On one interpretation, the argument is invalid. On the other interpretation, the argument is valid, but (1) is false. So on either interpretation, the argument is unsound.

To fix this flaw in the above argument, we need the extra premise that it is necessary that God knows in advance that I will go to the pub today. (That is why Edwards' argument derives that premise from the necessity of the past; and that is why Plantinga's first point does not help with Edward's argument.)

So how would Plantinga reply to Edwards' argument? That's the second point to take away from the reading.

Plantinga, in responding to Pike's argument, endorses several principles like the following one:

It was within Jones' power at T2 to do something such that if he had done it, then God would not have held a belief that he in fact did hold at some earlier time T1.

This seems to imply that, at T2, Jones had a choice about something which has (in some sense) consequences for how things were at T1. And this seems to contradict the first premise of Edwards' argument: the premise that we have no control over the past.

Here Plantinga is following the 14th century English philosopher William of Ockham, who distinguished between two sorts of facts about the past. Intuitively, the distinction is between facts which are completely about the past, and facts which are partly about the past but also partly about the present and future. The view is that (i) facts about God's knowledge are in the second category and (ii) facts in the second category are exceptions to the general rule that we have no control over past facts.

Is this a convincing reply to Edwards?