

**A DEFENSE OF COMPATIBILISM OF
DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE WITH
HUMAN FREEDOM**

**A Rebuttal of William Hasker's
Incompatibilist Argument Concerning
Hard Fact/Soft Fact Distinction**

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Introduction

It is a notorious issue in both the histories of philosophy and theology whether human beings have free will. In the libertarian sense, free will is described as:

(FW) N is free at *T* with respect 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*.¹

The two ideas denying that human beings have libertarian freedom as described by (FW) are determinism and (logical) fatalism. Determinism claims that there are sufficient causes that determine a person's will while the latter claims that, without appealing to causation,

¹ William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 66.

an event will occur in the future simply because it was or is true that it will occur.² We may illustrate (logical) fatalism in this way:

(1) The proposition "Jones will mow the lawn at T_2 " is true at an earlier time T_1 .³ (Premise)

(2) It is necessary that Jones will mow the lawn at T_2 . (From 1, and the unalterability of the past)

(3) It is not within Jones's power to refrain from mowing the lawn at T_2 . (From 2)

(4) Jones is not free to mow the lawn. (From 3)⁴

Among those Christians who are willing to accept the libertarian view of freedom of the will, the situation is nevertheless equally dire. Because it is traditionally confessed that the Christian God is necessarily omniscient and we cannot mistake beliefs of God, in other words, His beliefs are infallible. Therefore,

(1a) God knew at T_1 that Jones will mow the lawn at T_2 .

(1b) If God knows that Jones will mow the lawn at T_2 , Jones will mow the lawn at T_2 .

Substituting (1) for (1a) and (1b), it is clear that essential divine omniscience and the unalterability of the past together entail a sort of fatalism, which is usually called theological fatalism. Acknowledging libertarian freedom, Christians baffled by theological fatalism come to a crossroad: incompatibilism which denies God's foreknowledge and affirms libertarian freedom, or compatibilism which argues that God's foreknowledge is compatible with libertarian freedom.

² Distinction between determinism and fatalism can be found in Bruce Reichenbach, "Fatalism and Freedom", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 111 (September 1988), 271, and William L. Craig, *The Only Wise God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), Introduction.

³ Throughout this paper, for any times T_a and T_b , a and b being natural numbers, T_a is earlier than T_b if $a < b$.

⁴ The numbering of statements in this paper usually refers to the original numberings. If it is assigned by me, it starts from (1), or it will be abbreviated in a self-explanatory way.

⁵ The masculine pronoun of "God" carries no other implications but the conventional practice only.

Major Compatibilism Positions

Classic Positions

Yet how can theological fatalism be circumvented? The answers given by compatibilists could be divided into two basic forms: Molinist and Ockhamist responses. Molinists argue that God foreknows a human free act in the future because He knows what a person will freely do if placed in a certain situation. In other words, not only God knows everything that will *actually* happen in the future (simple foreknowledge), but God also knows human free acts in every *possible world* (middle knowledge).⁶

The Bible seems to suggest this in certain passages, too. For example, in 1 Samuel 23:11-12, David asked God whether the people in Keilah would surrender him if Saul would besiege the city. God replied that they would, though the fact is that David left the city after God said so and thus Saul *did not* besiege the city. It can be noted that there are two counterfactual conditionals written in the subjunctive mood found in this example,

(5) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would besiege the city.

(6) If David stayed in Keilah and Saul besieged the city, the men of Keilah would surrender David to Saul.

According to Molinists, God's having middle knowledge entails God's having simple foreknowledge, since the actual world is one of the possible worlds. Thus, God's simple foreknowledge is based on God's middle knowledge, not the actual human acts in the future. Therefore, (1a), (1b), and (2) are true, but they do not jointly entail (3).

On the other hand, Ockhamists insist that the word "necessary" in (2) is a special one, called accidental necessity, and in this light, (2) does

⁶ This idea of middle knowledge is originally developed by a Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535-1600) who writes that "in virtue of the most profound and inscrutable comprehension of each free will, [God] saw in His own essence what each such will would do with its innate freedom were it to be placed in this or in that or, indeed, in infinitely many orders of things – even though it would really be able, if it so willed, to do the opposite." Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge (Part IV of the Concordia)*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), Disputation 52, par. 9. Cited in Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 16.

not follow from (1a) and (1b). The reason is that, though (1a) seems to be a true proposition in the past, T_1 , the truth of (1a) in fact depends on a future event, i.e., the future event at T_2 whether Jones will mow the lawn.⁷ Bruce Reichenbach calls propositions like (1a) "future-relational facts."⁸ He gives an example to illustrate this. We all know that Luther was born in 1483. This is something in the past and we cannot alter it. In this case, the notion of unalterability of the past applies. However, by writing the paper after a certain date, Reichenbach can bring it about now that: Luther had a certain property, namely "Luther was born more than 503 years before Reichenbach wrote his paper." It is obvious that Luther did not get this property until the time Reichenbach wrote. Hence, "Luther was born more than 503 years before Reichenbach wrote his paper" is not strictly about the past. The notion of unalterability of the past does not apply and this proposition does not share accidental necessity.

Now, we may find that propositions like "Luther was born more than 503 years before Reichenbach wrote his paper" are different from propositions like "Luther was born in 1483." The former one whose truth value depends on future human free acts, i.e., it is within somebody's power to bring about the cases, is referred to as a soft fact. The latter one whose truth value does not depend on any future facts – hence nobody at T_2 can alter this past fact at T_1 – is called a hard fact. Therefore, according to Ockhamists, (1a) is a soft fact and its truth depends upon the truth of the proposition "Jones mows the lawn at T_2 ". Then, there should be no accidental necessity in (2) and thus (2) does not follow from (1a) and (1b).

⁷ This distinction is originally given by William of Ockham (c.1285-1349) and the necessity is necessity *per accidens*, or accidental necessity. He writes that "[some] propositions are about the present as regards both their wording and their subject matter. Where such [propositions] are concerned, it is universally true that every true proposition about the present has [corresponding to it] a necessary one about the past... Other propositions are about the present as regards their wording only and are equivalently about the future, since their truth depends on the truth of propositions about the future." See William of Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, trans. (with Introduction, Notes, and Appendices) Marilyn Adams and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), 46-47. Also cited in Hasker, 13 and Alvin Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out," *The Concept of God*, ed. Thomas Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181.

⁸ Reichenbach, "Fatalism and Freedom," 283.

Contemporary Positions

In defense of Molinism, a major compatibilist Alvin Plantinga⁹ applies the possible-worlds semantics to the concept of counterfactual conditionals of freedom. The semantics is actually a suggested method to explain the truth of the counterfactual conditionals. It is needed because the antecedents of the counterfactuals, say "David stayed in Keilah" in (5), did not in fact occur, and many people are puzzled over how the truth of (5) can be known when the antecedent does not obtain. Plantinga suggests that a counterfactual conditional is true if some possible world in which the antecedent and the consequent are both true is more similar to the actual world than any in which the antecedent is true and the consequent false.¹⁰

For the counterfactual expressed in (5), we may consider the following two propositions:

(7) David stays in Keilah and Saul besieges the city.

(8) David stays in Keilah and Saul does not besiege the city.

If (7)-world is more similar to the actual world than (8)-world, according to Plantinga, we may say that (5) is true.

In the Ockhamist camp, there is a bifurcation. The first one, supported by some philosophers, is the claim of George Mavrodes that we *may* have power over the past. His position is that there is nothing *logically incoherent* in the idea that we might have the power.¹¹ One can bring it about that God has always believed that she would perform an action, and by freely refraining from an action she can prevent God from having believed she would perform it.¹²

⁹ Since Alvin Plantinga has also discussed and defended a contemporary Ockhamist position based on his notion of counterfactual power over the past (see below), he is more often referred to as an Ockhamist, though. Thomas Flint calls proponents of counterfactual power over the past Plantingians and I would follow this practice in this paper. See Thomas Flint, "In Defense of Theological Compatibilism," *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (1991).

¹⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), ch.9. Also see Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 25.

¹¹ George I. Mavrodes, "Is the Past Unpreventable?" *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1983): 131-46. Also see Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 116-19.

¹² Mavrodes, "Is the Past Unpreventable?" 144-45. Also see Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 118.

The other position is held by Plantinga,¹³ that we have counterfactual power over the past. Counterfactual power over the past is formulated as:

(CP) It is within a person's power at T_2 to do something such that if she were to perform it, then God would not have held a belief that in fact she did hold at T_1 .

The nuance of counterfactual power over the past is that, were Jones to refrain from mowing the lawn at T_2 , God, at T_1 , would have believed that Jones would refrain from mowing the lawn. Similarly, were Jones to mow the lawn at T_2 , God at T_1 would have believed that Jones would mow the lawn. Different from the Mavrodean position, the Plantingean position is not that Jones could bring it about, nor to cause, that God would hold a different belief at T_1 , but that God would have held a different belief if Jones were to perform a certain act.¹⁴

Incompatibilist William Hasker argues that neither Ockhamists nor Molinists triumph. All of his arguments are collected or developed in his book *God, Time, and Knowledge*, published in 1989.¹⁵ Hasker presents in Chapter two of his book several arguments against middle knowledge. Then he deals with the Ockhamists by first arguing that propositions like (1a) are, indeed hard facts. Thus he argues that the Plantingean notion of counterfactual power over the past is the same as the Mavrodean notion of power over the past. Finally he proceeds to refute the Mavrodean stance by arguing that the notion of freedom which it employs is not a truly libertarian one.¹⁶

¹³ Hasker remarks that John Turk Sanders seems to be the first one who talked about the notion of counterfactual power over the past in "Of God and Freedom," *Philosophical Review* 75 (1966). But Plantinga is no doubt the one who makes it popular. For Plantinga's position, see Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out" and Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper, 1974), 66-73, which is a reply to Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," *Philosophical Review* 74 (1965): 27-46.

¹⁴ Hasker offers a detailed explication of this Plantingean position in *God, Time and Knowledge*, 96-104.

¹⁵ As we may see in his preface to the 1998 paperback edition, there is no successful refutations offered by his opponents years after the publication. He seems to be satisfied with his achievement in this book.

¹⁶ There is a good summary of Hasker's strategy in Thomas Flint, "In Defense of Theological Compatibilism," *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (1991): 238.

Some Clarifications

Before entering into the main discussion, I would like to give some remarks on certain relevant positions. They will be briefly discussed in this section and the conclusions would be the assumptions for the subsequent discussion. Readers who disagree with these points may take them as working hypotheses.

A Timeless God?

Some theists use the notion of a timeless God, which was a position originally held by Boethius (480-524) and Aquinas (1225-1274),¹⁷ to explain why God has simple foreknowledge (the knowledge of what will actually happen). However, there are a lot of difficulties concerning this notion. William Lang Craig, though being an advocate of compatibilism, remarks that the notion of timelessness requires a special type of understanding of time, namely B-theory of time, as opposed to the commonsense understanding of time, A-theory of time. A-theory of time claims that "temporal becoming is objectively real and that future events do not in any sense exist."¹⁸ B-theory, on the other hand, states that "the passage of time is purely subjective and events in the future and past are every bit as real as events in the present."¹⁹

This theory usually invokes the idea of backward causation which seems ontologically impossible.²⁰ Though Craig does not conclusively argue against B-theory (but he argues for God's timelessness before creation elsewhere), he is inclined to reject it and does not base his argument for God's foreknowledge upon the notion of timelessness. William Hasker also casts doubt on this notion. Despite his defense for the coherence of this doctrine, he confesses that it is conceptually stressful and highly implausible due to its frequent use of analogy.²¹

¹⁷ Strictly speaking, for a timeless God, it is not foreknowledge at all because the succession of time is nothing but "one simultaneous whole". See Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 6.

¹⁸ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 79.

¹⁹ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 79.

²⁰ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 78-79.

²¹ Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 184. See also note 21 on the same page reporting similar comment made by Richard Swinburne.

After all, Paul Helm, though a proponent of timelessness of God, admits that "the statement 'God knows timelessly that some event *occurs* in my future' would still be true in advance of the event."²² Plantinga echoes that a proposition is true or false *simpliciter* and no more true at a time than, for example, in a mail-box or a refrigerator."²³ So, the claim that God is outside of time, Plantinga says, is essentially irrelevant. Therefore, in this paper I will not consider further the arguments made by the advocates of a timeless God. Nor will I discuss the possibility of backward causation.

Future-Tense Statements

Another unsuccessful way to evade fatalism is the claim that all future-tense statements are neither true nor false since the state of affairs has not occurred, such that the truth value of the proposition that "*S* will do *X* at *T*" (*T* being a time in future) is not ready until *T*. However, one then may wonder why in our ordinary language it seems to be the case that future-tense statements *do* have truth value now. It is not counter-intuitive. As Nicholas Rescher and Alasdair Urquhart rightly point out, "[the] issue of truth or falsity hinges entirely upon *how matters turn out at the time at issue*, so that the allocation of a truth status to future contingents is perfectly innocuous, because it prejudices nothing."²⁴

Causation

Theological determinism holds that God's foreknowledge is the necessary cause of a future event. Quite the contrary, many compatibilists argue that it is the future events that constitute the contents of God's foreknowledge. For example, when Plantinga endorses Ockham's way out and discusses the counterfactual power over the past such that Abraham would not have existed, he says, "if I were to do [an action] *A*, then God would have foreseen that I would do *A* and would not have created Abraham."²⁵

²² Paul Helm, "Timelessness and Foreknowledge," *Mind* 84 (1975): 524-27. Cited in Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 65.

²³ Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out," 176.

²⁴ Nicholas Rescher and Alasdair Urquhart, *Temporal Logic*, Library of Exact Philosophy (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1971), 211. Cited in Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 57.

²⁵ Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out," 196.

Note that Plantingean compatibilists are not ready to claim that it is the future event that *causes* God's foreknowledge. Though, as Hasker says, compatibilist must hold to the idea that we may have in some way power over the past, the more popular notion is the Plantingean idea of counterfactual over the past, which claims that it does not involve causation.²⁶

Strategy of this Discussion

It should be noted that theological fatalism can be reduced to logical fatalism, i.e., the logical fatalist argument (1) to (4) is formally the same as the theological fatalist argument (1a), (1b), (2) to (4). The truth of the proposition "Jones will mow the lawn at T_2 " does not depend on whether there is a being who could conceive of it infallibly at any time in the past or future. William Craig joins Richard Taylor and Susan Haack to claim that theological fatalism is reducible to logical fatalism. "According to Taylor, an omniscient God can be incorporated into the argument to convey the reasoning more easily to the unphilosophical mind, but such an assumption contributes nothing to the cogency of the argument."²⁷ I have no dispute with this position and will proceed with this position.

It is an important move to identify theological fatalism with logical fatalism because the problem in the latter can be more easily grasped. One would wonder why a true proposition in the past can have such a mysterious influence upon a person's own "free" choice at present. Or more exactly, as the truth value of a proposition does not change because of the time it is expressed, a person's freedom to perform an act is, according to logical fatalism, deprived of by a corresponding proposition expressed in any time in the past or in the future.

Though intriguing, logical fatalism seems absurd. Therefore we may be *prima facie* justified to believe that fatalistic arguments are somehow fallacious or wrong unless conclusive arguments are given by the fatalists. Following this understanding, with libertarian freedom described as (FW), the controversy induced by theological fatalism can now be interpreted as the debate over the compatibility of God's

²⁶ Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 96.

²⁷ Richard Taylor, "Fatalism", *Philosophical Review* 71 (1962): 52. Cited in Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 67-68.

foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom, and the burden of proof is on the fatalists or incompatibilists to show that their arguments are sound. As long as arguments for incompatibilism are shown to be inconclusive, the benefit of the doubt will be given to compatibilism, even when there is no detailed and forceful explanation on how God may have foreknowledge.²⁸

In this paper, I will try to defend compatibilism against some of the well-articulated arguments of Hasker. He disputes the claim that propositions like (1a) are soft facts, and dissolves the Plantingean notion of counterfactual power over the past into the Mavrodean idea of power over the past, which he also rejects on the ground that the Mavrodean idea is inconsistent with the notion of libertarian freedom. As every issue he raises is complicated, I can only have space in this paper to discuss the first dispute, i.e., the distinction between hard facts and soft facts.

Hasker's Analysis of Hard Fact/Soft Fact Distinction

In *God, Time, and Knowledge*, Hasker develops once again his argument for incompatibilism which first appeared in an earlier paper.²⁹

(C1) It is now true that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (Premise)

(C2) 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. (Premise: divine omniscience)

(C3) God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow. (Assumption for indirect proof)

(C4) 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)

²⁸ An anonymous reviewer for the *Jian Dao: A Journal of Bible and Theology* wonders why we cannot suspend judgment instead of accepting compatibilism when there is no successful incompatibilist arguments constructed. My reason is that it is a traditional Christian doctrine that God is omniscient and it is not necessary for a Christian to present arguments for any of his/her beliefs before he/she holds them.

²⁹ William Hasker, "Foreknowledge and Necessity," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 123, 128.

(C5) 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 C3, C4)

(C6) 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 C2)

(C7) Therefore, it is not in Clarence's power to refrain from having a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From C5, C6) So, Clarence's eating the omelet tomorrow is not an act of free choice.

(C8) Clarence will act freely when he eats the omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (Premise)

(C9) Therefore, it is not the case that God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From C3-C8, indirect proof) (numbering his)

However, with respect to (C4), Ockhamists may argue that if what God believed in the past is a future-relational proposition, such past belief of God is a soft fact and the notion of unalterability of the past does not apply to this past belief of God. The argument is that, "Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow" is clearly a future-tense statement, thus (C3) being a soft fact, (C4) dubious, (C5) does not conclusively follow from (C3) and C(4).

In reply to this, Hasker first analyses the distinction between hard facts and soft facts. Based on his analysis, he suggests that (C3) may be regarded as a hard fact. If so, Ockhamists will be in great trouble. Then Hasker employs an original argument to show that propositions similar to (C3) are indeed hard facts.

Let us examine his analysis now. In order to solve the problem of logical fatalism, Hasker says that an adequate account of the distinction between hard facts and soft facts should be able to render

(9) John had a cup of tea for lunch.

a hard fact, whereas

(10) It was true at 6:00 this morning that John would have a cup of tea for lunch.

uttered at 6:01 must be classified as a soft fact. Hasker also points out that a proposition's being "really about the past" is not necessarily a proposition's being such that it cannot be in anyone's power to render it false. For example, the truths of logic cannot be rendered false by anybody but they are not in any sense about the past. Based on these considerations, Hasker carefully delineates the category of future-indifferent propositions – "propositions that are wholly about the past and the present, and that are such that their truth or falsity cannot be affected by anything that happens in the future."³⁰ Then Hasker proposes,

(H1) An elementary proposition is future-indifferent if and only if it is conceptually consistent with there being no times after the present, and also with there being times after the present.

(H5) Any future-indifferent proposition that is true is a hard fact.

(H6) Any conceptually or metaphysically necessary truth is a hard fact.

(H7) Any proposition entailed (conceptually or metaphysically) by one or more hard facts is itself a hard fact.³¹

(numbering his)

Now, Hasker applies these distinctions to Clarence's case. Acknowledging that the word "God" is a proper name referring to our idea of God, Hasker affirms that

(A2) Necessarily, if God has always believed that a certain thing will happen, then that thing will happen.

is true. But (A2) and (C3) conceptually entail

(19) Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow.

which is non-future-indifferent. Hence (C3) seems to be a soft fact and apparently shares no accidental necessity. At this stage, Hasker admits that the compatibilist apparently wins. However, Hasker then offers an original argument to turn the whole case.

³⁰ Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 81-84.

³¹ Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 88-89. (H2) to (H4) are not listed because they are not particularly relevant to the following discussion.

He invokes the proper name "Yahweh" in the Hebrew tradition where he claims that there is no association of the metaphysical notions such as essential everlastingness. Thus

(20) Yahweh has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow.

becomes future-indifferent, hence hard fact. And he claims that

(21) If Yahweh exists, Yahweh is God.

is metaphysically necessarily true, because, "it expresses an *essential property* of Yahweh."³² (emphasis his) Thus it is a hard fact. His denouement is that the hard facts (20) and (21) jointly entail (C3) and therefore, according to (H7), (C3) is also a hard fact. Thus, the Ockhamists claim that (C3) is a soft fact is false and, according to the unalterability of the past, (C5) does clearly follow from (C3) and (C4). Also if (C3) is now shown to be a hard fact, since (19) is entailed by (A2) and (C3), and since (A2) is a hard fact, according to (H7), (19) is also a hard fact.

Refutation of the Revived Incompatibilist Argument

No doubt, the crux of Hasker's revived argument is the use of "Yahweh" which shows that (C3) is a hard fact. Hasker explains that his motivation for the employment of "Yahweh" in the argument is a parallel reasoning that, without it, propositions like "God exists" and "God created the universe out of nothing" would not be future-indifferent,³³

³² Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 93.

³³ The anonymous reviewer objects that "The author seems to suggest here that Hasker believes that these two propositions are future-indifferent. But, it seems to me, Hasker does think that they are *not* future-indifferent according to his (16) on p.84 of his book... Hasker does not think that if a (true) proposition is non-future-indifferent, then it must be a soft fact." First, the reviewer seems to overlook the first sentence of my quotation of Hasker (see note 34). As whether Hasker does think that these propositions are not future-indifferent, it seems dubious. In his effort to replace "God" with "Yahweh" in *God, Time and Knowledge*, 92, Hasker displays great caution over the implication of non-future-indifference of the word "God". Hasker says "as we do so [the replacement], we will take care to avoid importing into the name's significance such metaphysical notions as everlastingness... 'Yahweh exists' is future-indifferent; unlike 'God exists,' it does not conceptually entail anything about the existence of times later than the present." Finally, I have no suggestion that Hasker thinks that a true proposition that is non-future-indifferent must be a soft fact. The reviewer seems to be over-reacting. See my (H8) below.

For God being essentially everlasting, both [of the above examples] entail the existence of times after the present. But is it reasonable to suppose that such propositions as these are *soft* facts? The intention of the distinction between soft and hard facts was to distinguish between those propositions that are such that it might be in someone's power to make them false, from those for which this is impossible. But it is 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."³⁴

Let us examine his argument. His reasoning seems to be that if we classify every proposition containing the word "God" with its conceptual connotation of essential everlastingness, which is non-future-indifferent, then absurd cases like "God exists" and "God created the universe out of nothing" being soft facts will occur. Such parallel reasoning seems to justify our refraining from letting (C3) be a soft fact. From the above quoted passage, it is clear that Hasker has implicitly adopted three more propositions:

(H8) Some non-future-indifferent proposition that is true is a hard fact.³⁵

(SF) Propositions that are such that it might be in someone's power to make them false are soft facts.

(HF) Propositions that are such that it is impossible in anyone's power to make them false are hard facts.

(H8) does pose a possibility that (C3) is a hard fact. However, it is unclear under what circumstances a non-future-indifferent proposition that is true is rendered a hard fact.³⁶ Hasker himself gives no further discussion on this and no criterion to classify non-future-indifferent true proposition

³⁴ Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 91-92.

³⁵ Hasker admits so. He gives an example to illustrate this. Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 93.

³⁶ My reviewer questions that it is indeed pretty clear because Hasker "has given an apparently clear definition of the term 'hard fact' on p.84 of his book... Hasker's definition of 'hard fact', as I understand it, is this: A proposition P is a hard fact at $t =_{df}$ P is true, and it is impossible that anyone at t or after t has the power to render P false." I am afraid that it is the reviewer who has misunderstood Hasker's definition. According to Hasker, "if the distinction is to be of use in settling the foreknowledge debate, that distinction itself cannot be explicated in terms of the powers of agents." (*God, Time and Knowledge*, 81) Hasker claims that he is going to proceed from the concept of future-indifference to the concept of nobody having the power to render P false. (*God, Time and Knowledge*, 83-84)

is offered. Maybe he thinks that his move to use "Yahweh" is sufficient to show that (C3) is a hard fact. Before presenting the problems in his move to "Yahweh", I would like to discuss the plausibility of rendering (C3) as a soft fact.

Let us compare the following three propositions:

(C3) God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow.

(11) God exists.

(12) God created the universe out of nothing.

Though all of them are non-future-indifferent, it is quite clear that (C3), given divine omniscience (C2), can be regarded as a truth-functional proposition which contains a constituent proposition, namely "Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow." This proposition is a future-tense statement and apparently its truth depends on the future event of Clarence.

As for (11), according to Hasker's understanding that the word "God" expresses something about the nature and the status of the divine being, it is obviously a metaphysically and conceptually necessary truth such that it is in nobody's power to bring it about that it is false. Thus, the puzzle caused by its non-future-indifferent property can be eliminated by (H6) and (HF). We may assuredly render (11) hard fact. With regard to (12), I wonder why it must be a hard fact. Why it is not a soft fact? Particularly, Plantingians may possibly say yes because they are advocates of counterfactual power over the past.³⁷ Maybe there is an event such that, were it to happen, God would not have created the universe out of nothing. Maybe he would have created out of something, or have created nothing at all. Perhaps before God created the universe, according to His middle knowledge, were God to know that in this actual world none will be saved, God would not have created this universe.³⁸ So long as Hasker has not refuted such a counterfactual power over the past, he cannot successfully convince compatibilists that "God created

³⁷ My reviewer severely charges me that I have misunderstood both Hasker and Plantinga's definitions of hard fact in *God, Time and Knowledge* and "On Ockham's Way Out." However, according to my response in note 36, I do not think that I have misunderstood Hasker's. As for Plantinga's, the reviewer presents no arguments and I think the burden of proof is on his side.

³⁸ This example originates from Dr. Kwan Kai-man. Personal communication.

the universe out of nothing" must be a hard fact. Therefore, though I have not adduced any relevant criterion to determine which non-future-different true propositions are soft facts, from the above case-by-case analysis, it is plausible to render (C3) and (12) as soft facts, and (11) is nevertheless a hard fact. I conclude that Hasker's worry over (11) and (12) does not necessitate a ground for the parallel reasoning to prevent (C3) sounding like a soft fact by substituting "Yahweh" for "God".

Now, let us turn to Hasker's move to use "Yahweh." My opinion is that his move is of no avail to him. Hasker claims that (20) and (21), being both hard facts, jointly entail that (C3) is a hard fact. He also claims that there is no connotation of the metaphysical notions of "God" such as essential everlastingness. However, in so doing, Hasker is required to maintain a premise that

(13) "If Yahweh exists, Yahweh is God", i.e., (21), is a metaphysically necessary truth.

As Hasker says, it expresses an *essential property* of Yahweh. If what "Yahweh" refers to is *essentially necessarily* God, i.e., the same as what "God" refers to, I wonder why Hasker cannot see that (21) entails God's essential omniscience, (A2). Then, again (C3) is shown to be non-future-indifferent. According to the analysis in the preceding paragraph, it is plausible, though not conclusively certain, to hold that (C3) is a soft fact.

After all, I also doubt if the Hebrew use of "Yahweh" alone does not carry any connotation of metaphysical attributes such as everlastingness. There are numerous biblical verses in the Old Testament which suggest that the LORD, i.e., Yahweh, is everlasting, or has attributes which are everlasting, which implies that Yahweh is also everlasting. Just to mention a few: in Psalms 41:13, it is written "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting, Amen and Amen." (NIV); Psalms 90:2, "from everlasting to everlasting, you are God"; Isaiah 9:6, "[the Messiah] will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Unless Hasker has also offered a forceful re-interpretation of so many verses (which seems impossible), it is clearly rational for anyone to think that the Hebrew use of the word "Yahweh" in ancient Hebrew does have a connotation of

everlastingness.³⁹ Therefore, (20) and (21), hence (C3) are all non-future-indifferent true propositions not shown to be hard facts.

Now, it is clear that the move to use "Yahweh" is of no use for Hasker to render (C3) a hard fact. What he is successful to show is only that some non-future-indifferent propositions are hard facts, like (11), and that (C3), though being non-future-indifferent, maybe a hard fact. But he can give no further argument to show that (C3) *must be* a hard fact. According to the intuition adduced by William of Ockham, it is *prima facie* justified to render (C3) a soft fact. Hasker is still unsuccessful to claim that (C5) does follow from (C3) and (C4).

Conclusion

After a survey of the major positions and discussion on the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human freedom as described by (FW), the incompatibilist argument by Hasker, (C1) to (C9), is shown to be unsuccessful. He attempts to revive his argument by doubting whether (C3), "God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow" is a soft fact, and, with the use of "Yahweh" instead of "God", he claims that (C3) is indeed a hard fact. However, Hasker fails to show that the use of "Yahweh" can render (C3) a future-indifferent true proposition. Neither is he successful to explain why non-future-indifferent true propositions like (C3) must be a hard fact.

³⁹ My reviewer undertakes to offer an interpretation as follows: "These verses are confessions of faith. They may not be *analytically* true. For example, when I say 'Jesus is everlasting,' this is my confession of faith. But the proposition 'Jesus is everlasting' seems *not analytically* true, though synthetically true." I would not bother with the reviewer's distinction between analyticity and syntheticity. I just wonder what "Yahweh" Hasker, the anonymous reviewer, and I are referring to. Hasker's reasoning is that "[Hebrews] used this name [Yahweh] with no thought or connotation of such metaphysical attributes as essential omniscience, essential everlastingness, and the like... We will use the name, as the ancient Hebrews did, simply as a nonconnotative proper name referring to that individual who in fact was, and is, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (*God, Time and Knowledge*, 92) And my objection is that *the Hebrew use* of "Yahweh" *does* have the connotation of everlastingness as found in my quotations of Biblical verses. I do not see a working distinction between analyticity and syntheticity matters here. So long as the majority of the ancient Hebrews believed that "Yahweh" is, whether analytically or synthetically, everlasting, as reflected from many Old Testament passages, my objection is cogent.

According to the strategy presented above, Hasker's incompatibilist argument remains inconclusive, though I have not offered any proof of compatibilism. It is *prima facie* justified to hold that divine foreknowledge is compatible with the libertarian sense of human freedom.⁴⁰

ABSTRACT

The author surveys the major discussions on the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human libertarian freedom. Then the author shows that an incompatibilist argument offered by William Hasker is unsuccessful. Hasker's attempt to revive the argument by re-considering the hard fact and soft fact distinction fails, too. Due to the implausibility of theological fatalism, the incompatibilist argument being inconclusive. The author argues that it is *prima facie* justified to believe in the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human libertarian freedom.

撮 要

多年以來，學者對上帝的預知和人的自由意志能否相容爭論不休，有過不少重要討論，本文作者為此作出研究。哈斯克 (William Hasker) 曾論證上帝的預知和人的自由意志是互不相容的，作者卻指哈斯克的論證難以叫人信服。哈斯克利用硬事實和軟事實的分別，重申其論據，可惜同樣不成功。由於宿命論在神學上並不可信，所以哈斯克的論證亦沒有結論。作者於是認為上帝的預知和人的自由意志的相容是不言而喻的。

⁴⁰ Acknowledgement must be made to my supervisor Dr. Kwan Kai-man for his insightful discussion on the first draft of this paper. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewer for the provocative remarks.