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Scotism

JOHN MARTIN FISCHER

There is a striking similarity between two families of arguments for incompatibilism. One sort of argument purports to establish the incompatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom to do otherwise; the other sort aims to show that causal determinism is incompatible with human freedom to do otherwise. These parallel arguments are extremely powerful. Recently, Anthony Kenny has developed a response to both kinds of argument.¹ The response follows Duns Scotus, and I shall call Kenny's approach 'Scotism'. Kenny claims that Scotism provides a genuine response both to the argument for the incompatibility of God's foreknowledge and freedom and also to the argument for the incompatibility of causal determinism and freedom. I shall set out the arguments for incompatibilism and explain the Scotist's response, and I shall argue that Scotism does not provide an adequate answer to incompatibilism. When the incompatibilist arguments are formulated suitably, it can be seen that Scotism misses the mark—the compatibilist will have to find another defence against incompatibilism.

1. *The arguments and the Scotist's ploy*

Nelson Pike has presented a particularly lucid version of the argument (first formulated by Boethius) for the incompatibility of God's foreknowledge and human freedom.² It is this formulation of the argument which Kenny chooses to criticize.³ I shall begin by setting out a version of the argument and explaining Kenny's Scotist strategy of response. I shall then develop the parallel argument concerning causal determinism and the corresponding Scotist response.

One might present Pike's incompatibilist argument in the following way. I shall assume here that 'God' is a proper name (rather than a definite description or 'role-indicator') and that God is essentially omniscient and eternal. God's eternality here is construed as 'sempiternality' or everlastingness—existence at all times. And God's omniscience implies that for any proposition P, God believes that P just in case P is true. Further, God is *essentially* omniscient; that is, it is *necessarily* true that God believes

¹ Anthony Kenny, *Will, Freedom, and Power* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford: 1975), pp. 155–7; and *The God of the Philosophers* (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1979), pp. 55–8.

² Nelson Pike, 'Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action', *Philosophical Review* (1965), pp. 27–46.

³ Kenny, 1979, pp. 56–8.

that P just in case P is true; in all possible worlds in which God exists, He is omniscient. Of course, God is traditionally thought to have other attributes as well, but for the purposes of this discussion of the incompatibilist argument, it is not necessary to specify the total set of divine attributes.

We begin by supposing that God exists and that Jones refrains from performing some ordinary act X (such as mowing his lawn) at time T₂. It follows from God's essential omniscience and eternity that God believed at T₁ that Jones would refrain from doing X at T₂. So if Jones can at T₂ do X at T₂, one of the following possibilities obtains:

- (1) Jones can bring it about that God held a false belief at T₁, or
- (2) Jones can bring it about that God held a different belief from the one He actually held at T₁, or
- (3) Jones can bring it about that God didn't exist at T₁.

But the incompatibilist points out that no one can bring about a logical falsehood, so (1) is ruled out. And (2) and (3) appear to be ruled out in virtue of the fact that the past is 'fixed', 'over and done with': no one can 'change', 'affect', or 'determine' the past. It seems that if P is a true proposition about the past, then no one can bring it about that P is false. Thus, it seems that Jones cannot at T₂ do X at T₂. If sound, the argument can be generalized to show that God's existence (understood as above) is incompatible with any human's freedom to do otherwise. It is a quite general and powerful argument.

The Scotist, however, is undaunted, and he attacks the argument for incompatibilism. The argument, as stated above, appears to depend on an inference from 'Jones can do X' and 'Doing X would be (for instance) bringing it about that God has a false belief' to 'Jones can bring it about that God has a false belief'. (Of course, this conclusion is part of a *reductio*.) That is, the incompatibilist argument, as developed above, seems to rest on the following sort of principle:

S can (cannot) do X.
 In the circumstances, doing X is (would be) doing Y.
 Therefore, S can (cannot) do Y.

I shall call this principle the 'Transfer Principle'; it says that the power (or powerlessness) to perform one act can be transferred to another act in a certain way. Alternatively, it says that the power (powerlessness) to perform an act described one way can be transferred to the power (powerlessness) to perform the act described another way. The Scotist's ploy is to deny the Transfer Principle. I shall take Scotism to be the conjunction of the two claims: (i) The Transfer Principle is false, and (ii) If the Transfer Principle is false, then the argument for incompatibilism is invalid.

Kenny gives three examples which are intended to exhibit the unacceptability of the Transfer Principle:

Example One I may be able to hit the dartboard; on this particular occasion, I may hit the dartboard by hitting the center of the bull; but it by no means follows that I am capable of hitting the center of the bull.⁴

Kenny elaborates, 'Any particular exercise of power and skill will have other descriptions besides the one which occurs in the specification of the power; and the possession of the power specified in no way involves the possession of the power to perform acts answering to those other descriptions.'⁵

Example Two Let us suppose that I am going to eat my cake. I can, if I want, have my cake, but I am not going to have my cake, I am going to eat it. Given the facts of the case, to have my cake would be to have it and eat it too. But I can, if I want, have it. So, if the principle is valid, I can have my cake and eat it too.⁶

Kenny takes the third example from Duns Scotus (*Ordinatio*, 1 dist. 39; Scotus, V, 424):

Example Three Suppose I am carrying my own suitcase, A. In these circumstances, to carry my wife's suitcase B would be to carry both A and B. But though I can carry B, I can't carry both A and B.⁷

These examples might seem to impugn the Transfer Principle, and if the Transfer Principle is indeed false, then one can, apparently, defeat incompatibilism about God's foreknowledge and human freedom. A parallel argument for incompatibilism about causal determinism and human freedom also appears to depend on the Transfer Principle. The argument might be developed as follows.⁸ Let us first define causal determinism:

(CD) Causal determinism obtains in a world just in case a complete description of the state of the world at a given time T, together with a formulation of the laws of nature, entails every truth about what happens after T.

Now suppose, again, that Jones refrains from doing X at T₂, but, this time, imagine that causal determinism obtains. Further, let us say that the

⁴ Kenny, 1975, pp. 156.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. Also, Kenny, 1979, pp. 57-8.

⁷ Kenny, 1975, p. 157.

⁸ For developments of similar arguments, see: Carl Ginet, 'Might We Have No Choice?' in K. Lehrer (ed.), *Freedom and Determinism* (Random House, New York), pp. 87-104; and 'The Conditional Analysis of Freedom', in P. Van Inwagen (ed.), *Time and Cause* (Reidel: Dordrecht, 1980), pp. 171-86; and P. Van Inwagen, 'The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism', *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975), pp. 185-99, and *An Essay on Free Will* (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1983), pp. 55-105. I discuss such arguments in: John Martin Fischer, 'Incompatibilism', *Philosophical Studies* 43 (1983), pp. 127-37.

total state of the world at T_1 is $S(T_1)$. If Jones can at T_2 do X at T_2 , then (in virtue of (CD)), one of the following two possibilities obtains:

- (A) Jones can at T_2 bring it about that $S(T_1)$ was not the state of the world at T_1 , or
- (B) Jones can at T_2 violate a law of nature.

But (A) is ruled out by the ‘fixity of the past’; and (B) is ruled out by the fact that no human agent has it in his power to violate a law of nature—the laws of nature are inviolable constraints on human action. The argument, if sound, shows that causal determinism is incompatible with human freedom to do otherwise.

Again, the argument, as stated, seems to rest on the Transfer Principle. That is, the argument moves from the suppositions that Jones can do X , and doing X would be (say) violating a natural law, to the conclusion (which is part of a *reductio*) that Jones can violate a natural law. But if the Transfer Principle is invalid, as the Scotist insists, then so, apparently, is the incompatibilist argument.

In evaluating the Scotist position, I shall separate two distinct issues: (1) Do the examples actually establish that the Transfer Principle is unacceptable? (2) If the Transfer Principle is indeed invalid, would it follow that incompatibilism cannot be defended? That is, does the incompatibilist’s argument depend essentially on the Transfer Principle, or can the argument be reformulated in such a way as to avoid reference to the principle (and also to avoid the problems posed by the Scotist’s examples)?

2. *The Transfer Principle*

Let us first consider whether the Scotist’s rejection of the Transfer Principle is justified by the three examples. In order to threaten the Transfer Principle, an example must have the following sort of form: it must be a case where (i) an agent can (cannot) perform some act X , (ii) in the circumstances, doing X would be doing Y , and (iii) the agent cannot (can) perform Y .⁹ I

⁹ It might be thought that, properly speaking, one cannot be said to be able to perform act-particulars, but only acts of certain types. If this is so, the Transfer Principle can be reformulated as follows:

S can (cannot) perform an X -type act.

In the circumstances, doing an X -type act would be doing a Y -type act.

Therefore, S can (cannot) perform a Y -type act.

Of course, an example which would undermine the principle would have to possess the following kind of structure: (i) an agent can (cannot) perform an X -type act; (ii) in the circumstances, doing an X -type act would be doing a Y -type act, and (iii) the agent cannot perform a Y -type act.

The fact that the Transfer Principle can be formulated in this way shows that Kenny’s ascription of equivocation to the Transfer theorist is unfair. Kenny says: ‘Some who have considered the argument form laid out above regard it as containing an equivocation in the “do X ” in the first premise and the conclusion. They say, the “ X ” has to be replaced by a generic act, a description of an act-type; whereas in the second premise, “doing X ” refers to a particular act, an act-token. This seems to be basically the same objection as my own’ (Kenny, 1975, p. 156).

believe that Kenny's second and third examples are clearly not of the requisite sort, and that his first example is, at best, controversial. I shall begin by considering the second and third examples.

The second example is obviously defective as a counter-example to the Transfer Principle. It is supposed to be an ordinary situation in which I eat a piece of cake, though I can refrain from eating it (have it). Now, this is a case where it is true that I can have my cake. And it is also true that I cannot have my cake and eat it too. But it is clearly false that, given the circumstances, my having the cake would be my eating it too. Obviously, on any adequate semantics for conditionals, it will be true that if I were to have my cake, I would not also eat it. Thus, in the case as described, whereas features (i) and (iii) of a counter-example to the Transfer Principle are present, feature (ii) is absent.

Kenny says, as regards Example Two, 'There are many cases where I can ϕ , but will not. In such cases, there will be descriptions of ϕ -ing which will describe it in terms of the fact that I am, in fact, not going to ϕ .'¹⁰ Kenny's claim is that, in the example, the possible act of my having the cake could be described in terms of what in fact happens: I eat the cake. But the act-description, 'my eating the cake', cannot describe the *same action* as the description, 'my having the cake'. There is no possible action picked out by the logically inconsistent act-description, 'having the cake and eating it too'. What is required in order to show the failure of the Transfer Principle is a case where a particular exercise of a power can be described in various ways, and the agent has the power to perform the action, described one way, but lacks the power to perform the act, described another way. But the example clearly is *not* one in which the same exercise of a power can be described as 'having the cake' and 'having the cake and eating the cake'. Thus, Kenny has not provided an example of the failure of the Transfer Principle.¹¹

Kenny's third example is adapted from Duns Scotus. In the circumstances of the example, I am carrying my own suitcase, A. And to carry my wife's

¹⁰ Kenny, 1979, p. 57.

¹¹ Of course, Kenny's example is offered in the context of a criticism of Pike's incompatibilist argument. Specifically, Kenny takes Pike to be arguing that (as above) if Jones can do X at T₂, and doing X at T₂ would be bringing it about that God held a false belief at T₁, then Jones can bring it about that God held a false belief at T₁ (Kenny, 1979, p. 58). Now Kenny might say that if my argument about Example Two is correct, then Pike's incompatibilist argument must fail, since he is committed to a description of 'doing X in terms of his not doing X'—'bringing it about that God held a false belief at T₁'. This description, being logically contradictory, picks out no possible action.

If this were Kenny's position, then it is important, first, to see that it would not be a version of Scotism; he would not be blocking Pike's argument by denying the Transfer Principle. Rather, he would be claiming that an application of the principle by Pike is incorrect, since the second premiss (the identity claim in the Transfer Principle) is false. Further, even if the identity claim, 'doing X at T₂ would be bringing it about that God held a false belief at T₁' is false, Pike considers two other possible identity claims. And Pike has an argument that, for each identity claim, if it is true and the Transfer Principle is valid, then Jones cannot do X at T₂. Thus, Pike is *not* committed to the truth of the identity of doing X at T₂ and bringing it about that God held a false belief at T₁ in order to achieve his incompatibilist result. He merely considers this as one of three possibilities.

suitcase, B, would be to carry both suitcases; together, they are too heavy for me to carry. Kenny's claim is that, whereas I *can* carry B, and carrying B would be (in the circumstances) carrying both A and B, I *cannot* carry both A and B. It seems to me that, contrary to Kenny's claim, this is not a case where I can, in the circumstances, carry B. I think that the Scotist is here confusing having a general ability to do something with being able, in particular circumstances, to do it. Whereas I might have a general ability to pick up suitcases such as B, I do not have the ability, in the circumstances, to do so, since I am encumbered by A.¹²

Similarly, if I am chained to my chair, I cannot, in the circumstances, leave the room, though I may have the general ability to do so. It is quite clear that the Transfer Principle fails when applied to the 'can' of general ability. I have the general ability to leave the room, to leave the room in these circumstances would be to leave it while chained, but I do not have the general ability to leave it while chained. But it does not follow that the Transfer Principle fails when applied to the 'can' of being able, in particular circumstances.

Of course, it is the 'can' of being able, in the circumstances, which is fundamental to the arguments about free will. That is, if you are chained to your chair, you are not morally responsible for failing to leave the room; even if you have the general ability to leave the room, the fact that you cannot, in the circumstances, leave the room suffices for exculpating you. (I assume here that you were involuntarily chained to the chair, and that you know that you are chained to the chair.) Thus, even if 'transfer' fails to hold for general ability, if it holds for 'can, in the circumstances', then the incompatibilist's argument will still be potent: it will have, as its conclusion, that no one can, in the sense of 'can' relevant to ascriptions of moral responsibility, do otherwise.¹³

I have argued that neither Example Two nor Example Three contains the three features required in order to have a counter-example to the Transfer Principle. Example Two has features (i) and (iii) but not (ii); and Example Three has features (ii) and (iii) but not (i). Let us now consider Example One. Here it is claimed that I can hit the dartboard; that, in the circumstances, hitting the dartboard is hitting the bull's-eye; and that I cannot hit the bull's-eye. As Kenny presents the example, what makes true the identity claim, 'in the circumstances, hitting the dartboard is hitting the bull's-eye',

¹² For a useful discussion of the various senses of 'can', see Don Locke, 'The "Can" of Being Able', *Philosophia* 6 (1976).

¹³ I do not wish to argue that moral responsibility requires freedom to do otherwise. Rather, the claim is that the sort of freedom *relevant* to moral responsibility is that expressed by 'can, in the circumstances'. Thus, Harry Frankfurt, who denies that responsibility requires freedom to do otherwise, employs the notion of freedom in developing an account of responsibility. He suggests that an agent can be morally responsible for an act if it is not the case that the agent performed the act only because he could not have done otherwise. (Harry Frankfurt, 'Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility', *Journal of Philosophy* 46 (1969), pp. 829-39.)

is that I actually throw the dart and hit the bull's-eye. Unlike Examples Two and Three, here features (i) and (ii) are present, but it is, I claim, unclear whether feature (iii) is present.

Again, distinguishing between a general ability and being able, in the circumstances, might be illuminating. It is perhaps true that I lack the general ability to hit the bull's-eye: in a large number of trials, I would hit the bull's-eye very rarely. But, it doesn't seem to follow from my lacking the general ability to hit the bull's-eye that I *cannot*, in the circumstances, hit the bull's-eye. Further, if the principle, 'I do X, therefore, I can do X' is valid, then I obviously *can* hit the bull's-eye since I actually do so. And, whereas it is clear that the principle is not valid, when the 'can' is the 'can' of general ability, it is not so clear that it is invalid, when the 'can' is that of being able, in particular circumstances.

If one accepts the principle, 'I do X, therefore, I can do X', as applied to 'can, in the circumstances', then the Scotist's example lacks feature (iii), and the Transfer Principle, interpreted in the relevant way, would not have been shown to be invalid. But it is unclear what to say about the principle, 'I do X, therefore, I can do X', as applied to the relevant 'can'. Some philosophers who distinguish between the two senses of 'can' might insist that the principle is *invalid* as applied to *both* senses. For example, having made the distinction, John Thorp says, '. . . in the logic of human ability *ab esse ad posse non valet consequentia*: from the fact that I *do* hit the bull it does not follow that I *can* [on this occasion] hit it.'¹⁴ These philosophers identify the 'can' of being able, in the circumstances, with Nowell-Smith's 'all-in' sense of can.¹⁵ When one can, in the 'all-in' sense, do X, one has *both* the general ability and the opportunity to do X. If the identification of 'can, in the circumstances' with the 'all-in' sense of 'can' is made, then the Scotist can defend Example One as a counter-example to the Transfer Principle. I would reject this identification, because I believe that, insofar as I actually hit the bull's-eye, then I can, in the circumstances, hit the bull's-eye. But I do not know how to construct a cogent argument in defence of this view.

My approach in this section has been to cast doubt on whether any of the three examples adduced by the Scotist is a counter-example to the Transfer Principle; I have suggested that each example lacks one of the essential features of a counter-example to the principle. But I have not argued *conclusively* that Example One fails; indeed, it is controversial whether Example One shows the Transfer Principle to be false, insofar as the principle, 'I do X, therefore, I can (on this occasion) do X' is controversial. In the next section, I shall, for the purposes of the argument, *concede* that Example One shows that the Transfer Principle fails; my strategy will be to

¹⁴ John Thorp, *Free Will: A Defence Against Neurophysiological Determinism* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London: 1980), p. 29.

¹⁵ P. Nowell-Smith, 'Ifs and Cans', *Theoria* (1960).

reformulate the incompatibilist argument in such a way that it does not depend on the Transfer Principle. If the incompatibilist argument does not require the Transfer Principle, then Scotism will not be a successful response to incompatibilism, even if the Scotist is correct in rejecting the Transfer Principle.

3. *The argument reformulated*

I shall now present a version of the incompatibilist argument (about God's foreknowledge and human freedom) which is similar to the first version, but which does not rely on the Transfer Principle.¹⁶ This version of the argument makes the same assumptions about God's attributes as the first version. Further, the incompatibilist introduces a principle which expresses the 'fixity of the past'. This principle says not only that one cannot *causally affect* the past, but also that one cannot so act that the past would have been different from what it actually was. The appropriate version of the fixity of the past principle, according to the incompatibilist, is:

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

We suppose, again, that God exists and that Jones refrains from performing some ordinary act X at T₂. It follows that God believes at T₁ that Jones will refrain from doing X at T₂. Now, consider the conditional,

(1') If Jones were to do X at T₂, then God would have held a false belief at T₁.

This conditional must be false. Remember that we have been assuming that 'X' names some ordinary act such as an act of mowing the lawn; thus, 'Jones does X' is, at least, logically possible. Because the antecedent of (1') is logically possible and its consequent is logically impossible (in virtue of God's essential omniscience), (1') must be false; in terms of the possible-worlds semantics for conditionals, in the closest possible world(s) in which the antecedent is true, the consequent is false.

Thus, one of the following conditionals must be true:

- (2') If Jones were to do X at T₂, then God would have held a different belief from the one He actually held at T₁, or
- (3') If Jones were to do X at T₂, then God would not have existed at T₁.

¹⁶ Nelson Pike reformulates the argument in: 'Of God and Freedom: A Rejoinder', *Philosophical Review* 75 (1966), pp. 369-79. His reformulation is in response to: John Turk Saunders, 'Of God and Freedom', *Philosophical Review* (1966), pp. 219-25. The version of the argument I present here is suggested by Pike's reformulation, although it is different in form.

But if (2') is true, then (via (FP)) Jones cannot at T₂ do X at T₂. And similarly, if (3') is true, then Jones cannot at T₂ do X at T₂ (again, in virtue of (FP)). This completes the incompatibilist's argument; the conclusion is that if God exists, then Jones cannot do other than he actually does at T₂, and the result is obviously generalizable to any human action.

I now wish to contrast this version of the incompatibilist's argument with the first version. Kenny's Scotist claim is that the first version of the argument fails because it relies on the Transfer Principle. That is, it supposes that Jones can do X. Then it makes the *identity* claim, 'doing X would be (say) bringing it about that God held a different belief from the one He actually held'. It then concludes (as part of a *reductio*) that Jones can bring it about that God held a different belief from the one He actually held. Power to perform an action is transferred from the first action to the one said to be identical with it. In contrast, the second version does *not* make use of the Transfer Principle—no identity claim between actions is asserted, and there is no claim of power transfer. Rather, it is simply claimed that there is a certain relationship between the relevant conditionals and the can-claims: if either of the conditionals (2') or (3') is true, then the can-claim must be false.

Let us see how Kenny's purported counter-example to the Transfer Principle bears on the second version of the argument. In this version, the incompatibilist claims that the truth of certain sorts of conditionals rules out the truth of the can-claim. The example is, allegedly, an example in which I can hit the dartboard, hitting the dartboard is hitting the bull's-eye, but I cannot hit the bull's-eye. This can be granted; but in light of the reformulated argument, we need to look at the relationship between the can-claim and the conditional which are true in the example: 'I can hit the dartboard' and 'If I hit the dartboard, I hit the bull's-eye'. Now there is no reason to object to the compatibility of *this* conditional and the can-claim—both seem to be true in Kenny's example. But, in contrast, the incompatibilist claims that there *is* good reason (based on the fixity of the past) to object to the compatibility of 'Jones can at T₂ do X at T₂' and (2') or (3'). Kenny's Example One, then, is simply not pertinent to the reformulated incompatibilist argument: the reformulated argument does not employ the Transfer Principle, but rather, a purported connection between conditionals and the can-claim, and the argument claims that the truth of *certain sorts* of conditionals (*not* true in Example One) rules out the can-claim. Thus, the fact that in the example a can-claim is consistent with a certain sort of conditional (different from the sort used in the incompatibilist argument) does not undermine the incompatibilist argument.

Let me explain the irrelevance of Example One a bit more explicitly. There is, intuitively, no reason to think that, if it is true that if I were to do A, some 'lucky', 'random', or 'accidental' event would occur, then it follows that I cannot do A. Consider another example: I flip an ordinary, fair coin,

and it turns out 'heads'. It is true here that if I flip the coin, it turns out heads (a 'random' event); but there is no temptation to say that it follows that I *cannot* flip the coin. (And this is so, even if it is granted that I *cannot* cause the coin to come up 'heads'.) Similarly, from the truth of 'If I hit the dartboard, I hit the bull's-eye', it does not follow that I cannot hit the dartboard. But, in contrast, if it is true that if I were to do A, some fact about the past would not have been a fact, then it is plausible to assert that I cannot do A. So, for example, if it is true that if I were now to do A, then John F. Kennedy would not have been assassinated, then it seems that I *cannot* now do A. There seems to be a conceptual connection between the truth of the conditional and the falsity of the can-claim. Thus, (FP) has a certain plausibility which is not threatened by Kenny's Example One. The incompatibilist, then, relies on a principle (FP) which is *narrower* than the Transfer Principle; examples which might show the failure of 'Transfer' need not also undermine (FP). That is, even if Example One is a case where I can hit the dartboard, hitting the dartboard is hitting the bull's-eye, but I cannot hit the bull's-eye, it need not undermine (FP); it is *not* a case in which the truth of the *relevant* sort of conditional (about the past) is consistent with the truth of the pertinent can-claim.

I have shown that the incompatibilist argument can be formulated in such a way that it can be seen not to depend on the Transfer Principle. Of course, when the argument is thus formulated, it depends on (FP), which is a stronger principle than the principle that one cannot *causally affect* the past. But (FP) is plausible and is clearly what the incompatibilist intends to assert. (FP) is, however, controversial, and a compatibilist might challenge it. It is not my purpose here to defend (FP) and thus, to defend the incompatibilist argument. Rather, I have simply shown how the argument can be presented so as to be independent of the Transfer Principle; so, even if one objects to (FP) and hence rejects incompatibilism, this objection will not be a form of *Scotism*.

There are, of course, various ways of finding fault with the argument. One approach, which follows William of Ockham, claims (i) that (FP) only applies to a sub-class of facts about the past: the 'non-relational', 'genuine', or 'hard' facts about the past, rather than the 'relational', 'spurious', or 'soft' facts; and (ii) that such facts as God's actual belief at T₁ and even God's existence at T₁ are mere 'soft' facts. This sort of attack on incompatibilism might be called 'Ockhamism', and I have discussed and criticized it elsewhere.¹⁷ Also, one might reject the temporal in favour of the atemporal conception of God's eternity; this sort of compatibilist approach follows Boethius and Aquinas.¹⁸ Here, I have simply argued that *some* defence of

¹⁷ John Martin Fischer, 'Freedom and Foreknowledge', *Philosophical Review* 92 (1983), pp. 67–79; and 'Ockhamism', *Philosophical Review* 94 (1985).

¹⁸ Such an approach is developed in: Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, 'Eternity', *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), pp. 429–58.

compatibilism is required other than Scotism; rejection of the Transfer Principle is not *sufficient* to defeat incompatibilism.

4. *A parallel reformulation*

Above, I formulated an argument for the incompatibility of causal determinism and human freedom to do otherwise which, like the first version of the argument for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom, seems to rest on the Transfer Principle. Kenny claims that the Scotist response to the argument about God's foreknowledge also applies to the argument about causal determinism.¹⁹ I shall now develop a second formulation of the argument about causal determinism (parallel to the second version of the argument about divine foreknowledge) which does not employ the Transfer Principle. Again, my argument will be that the Scotist's ploy—denying the Transfer Principle—is not a sufficient defence of compatibilism.

Remember the definition of causal determinism:

- (CD) Causal determinism obtains in a world just in case a complete description of the state of the world at a given time T, together with a formulation of the laws of nature, entails every truth about what happens after T.

The incompatibilist accepts principle (FP) and also a parallel principle which expresses the fixity of the laws of nature:

- (FL) For any action Y and agent S, if it is true that if S were to do Y, some natural law which actually obtains would not obtain, then S cannot do Y.

Again, we suppose that Jones refrains from doing X at T₂, that causal determinism obtains, and that the total state of the world at T₁ is S(T₁). Given these assumptions, one of the following two possibilities obtains:

- (A*) If Jones were to do X at T₂, S(T₁) would not have been the total state of the world at T₁, or
 (B*) If Jones were to do X at T₂, some natural law which actually obtains would not obtain.²⁰

But if (A*) is true, then it follows from (FP) that Jones cannot at T₂ do X at T₂. And if (B*) is true, then it follows from (FL) that Jones cannot at T₂ do X at T₂. This completes the incompatibilist argument; the upshot is that if

¹⁹ Kenny, 1975, pp. 155–7; and Kenny, 1979, p. 58.

²⁰ It might be argued that there is a third possibility:

(C*) If Jones were to do X at T₂, then either S(T₁) would not have been the total state of the world at T₁ or some natural law which actually obtains would not obtain.

But I shall simplify the discussion by not discussing (C*), since it will be ruled out in a way similar to the way in which (A*) and (B*) are ruled out.

causal determinism is true, then Jones (and any human agent) cannot do other than what he actually does.

At one point, Kenny presents the incompatibilist as arguing in the following way.²¹ 'I can't violate a law of nature. If it is physiologically determined that I not move my little finger, then, in the circumstances, my moving my little finger would be my violating a natural law. Thus, I can't move my little finger.' This argument depends on the Transfer Principle, and if the Scotist is right, the Transfer Principle must be rejected. But I have developed another route to the incompatibilist result. The incompatibilist points out that, if it is physiologically determined that I not move my little finger, then (given that the past is held fixed) it is a necessary condition of my moving my little finger that some natural law which actually holds would not hold (i.e., that I violate some actual natural law). But if it is a necessary condition of my performing an act that I violate some actually obtaining natural law, then I cannot perform the act.

It is important to see that the incompatibilist argument here does *not* depend on the principle (call it 'Transfer*'), 'Whenever performing an act B is a necessary condition of doing A, and I cannot do B, then I cannot do A'. If it did, then the Scotist's Example One might tell against the argument, because it is supposed to be a case where hitting the bull's-eye is a necessary condition of hitting the dartboard (that is, if I hit the dartboard, I hit the bull's-eye), I cannot hit the bull's-eye, but I can hit the dartboard.

I claim that it is useful to distinguish between various different reasons why it might be true that I cannot do some act B. One such reason is that doing B would be lucky, random, or in some sense 'accidental'. (Of course, here it is assumed that it does not follow from the mere fact that one does an act that one *can* do it, in the pertinent sense.) Another reason is that doing B would be (or require) violating a natural law. Now, as I argued above, there is *no* temptation to say that if it is true that if I were to do A, then some lucky (or random) event would occur, then I cannot do A. Thus, when it is true that doing some 'lucky' act B is a necessary condition of doing A, one might be able to do A, even though one cannot do B; it can be conceded, even by the incompatibilist, that 'Transfer*' is invalid.

In contrast, if it is true that if I were to do A, then I would travel faster than the speed of light, then it seems that I cannot do A. When it is true that doing B (which is a violation of natural law) is a necessary condition of doing A, then it seems to follow that one cannot do A. The incompatibilist, then, relies on (FP) and (FL), narrower principles than 'Transfer*', which embody connections between the truth of *certain* sorts of conditionals and the falsity of the relevant can-claims, and none of the Scotist's examples threatens the incompatibilist's move; whatever reasons might lead one to accept (FP) and (FL) would not be undermined by Scotist examples.

²¹ Kenny, 1975, p. 155.

5. Conclusion

The two parallel arguments for incompatibilism might seem, at first, to rely on the Transfer Principle. Kenny's Scotist examples, however, call this principle into question. The Scotist denies the Transfer Principle and thus, also, the incompatibilist conclusions. In this paper I have separated the issue of the acceptability of the Transfer Principle from that of the soundness of the incompatibilist's argument. First, I have shown that only Kenny's Example One has any force against the Transfer Principle, and that it is controversial whether this example conclusively refutes the principle. Second, I have argued that the incompatibilist arguments can be formulated so as not to depend on the Transfer Principle; thus, rejection of the Transfer Principle in itself will not allow one to defeat incompatibilism. Of course, the incompatibilist arguments, appropriately formulated, rely on principles (such as (FP) and (FL)) which, though plausible, are controversial. I do not here deny that incompatibilism can be rejected by rejecting (FP) or (FL); but it is useful to see that a compatibilist *must* reject (FP) or (FL). It would be a mistake to think that incompatibilism *depends* on the Transfer Principle, and thus that rejection of this principle suffices to defeat incompatibilism.²²

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