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Special Issue: Author Meets Critics: John Martin Fischer's "Our Fate: Essays on God and Free Will"

Anselm versus Fischer on Solving the Dilemma of Human Freedom and Divine Foreknowledge

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Introduction

If God knows what you will choose tomorrow, you cannot possibly choose otherwise than as God knows you will choose. How, then, can you choose freely? John Martin Fischer, in his chapter, "Engaging with Pike: God, Freedom, and Time" (with Patrick Todd and Neal A. Tognazzini – I shall refer to the three as "Fischer") in *Our Fate: Essays on God and Free Will*, briefly mentions a solution which is somewhat similar to the one I take to be the most successful way of dealing with the dilemma of human freedom and divine foreknowledge. He presents the solution as Ockhamism plus "eternalism" and dismisses it quickly in that it requires an "eminently contestable metaphysical picture about the nature of time".¹ I will defend Anselm's more systematically worked out version of this solution. (My interpretation of Anselm is not universally accepted, but here I am more concerned with the philosophical plausibility of the proposed solution.²) I will explain why the Anselmian does not find Pike's version of the "Basic Argument" for the incompatibilism of divine foreknowledge and a human "ability to do otherwise" a problem.

By "freedom" I mean Anselm's version of libertarian free choice. And by "divine foreknowledge" I mean God's knowing absolutely everything (Anselm's God

knows *things*, not just propositions) about the "future" (a term which will require qualification) with absolute certainty. First I give a quick sketch of Anselm's analysis of free will, including the importance of a created agent's ability to choose from himself which requires a "power to do otherwise".³ Then I explain Anselm's solution to the freedom and foreknowledge dilemma hinging on his view of the relationship of God to time. I discuss the Anselmian view of the "Basic Argument", and then I attempt to defend the Anselmian approach against the criticisms that Fischer raises and some related criticisms as well.

Anselmian Libertarianism

Anselm has it that God gave freedom to created agents, human and angelic, so that they could be just. His definition of freedom, intended to cover all free agents including God, is "the ability to maintain justice for its own sake."⁴ But in order to be morally responsible – praiseworthy and blameworthy – it must be up to the created agent himself to choose to hold fast to justice or to abandon it. (The discussion below will focus exclusively on issues of moral significance, so in speaking of "options", "choices" etc. I will assume that "morally significant" is understood.) In Anselm's tradition of classical theism all that has ontological status – every being with its powers, poten-

cies and properties -- is kept in being from moment to moment immediately by God. So it is a puzzle how the created agent could have anything from himself and not from God. Call a choice from oneself an "*a se*" choice and the property of "from oneself-ness" "*aseity*". We know that a created agent can make an *a se* choice, since he can be properly praised and blamed. Moreover, sometimes created agents sin, and it is logically impossible that God should cause sin, since to sin is to will what God wills that you not will. Further, it is in maintaining justice *a se* that the created agent becomes the best image of God.

Anselm insists that the power to choose between alternative possibilities is required for a created agent to choose with *aseity*. (God, on the other hand, exists independently, so all His acts are *a se* with no need for options. Below understand "agent" to refer only to the created agent.) The exercise of this power, like medieval causation in general, involves a substance – the agent in this case – engaged in activity.⁵ (Happily for the Anselmian, substance causation is making a comeback.) Counterfactual dependence is irrelevant, unless it is intended to express or clarify the exercise of power and the consequences thereof. So the agent can have the power to choose God provides him with desires for two sorts of objects, where both desires cannot be satisfied and pursuing one to the point of forming an actual intention constitutes the morally virtuous path, while pursuing the other to that point constitutes the morally vicious path. The agent, the agent's ability to choose, and the motivations are immediately caused by God. How, then, can the agent choose with *aseity*? Here Anselm has to coin a new term, to "per-will". To per-will is to desire something through to the point of actual intention. Desiring the mutually exclusive objects, the agent, at some point, per-wills one desire so that that becomes the intention, and the other desire ceases to be viable. And it is absolutely up to the agent which desire he per-wills. But there is no new entity introduced here. The "act" of choice is just the per-willing. So God causes everything in the choice that *exists*, but He does not cause the per-willing, so He does not cause all that *happens*. I have labelled this view a "parsimonious" agent-causation, since it is agent-causation without the introduction of any new or mysterious sorts of causes.

So an *a se* choice looks like this: Let "S" stand for our agent. To choose *a se* S must be in the "torn condition" (TC), where he is desiring the mutually exclu-

sive objects. Call these A and B. At time (t)1 S is in TC desiring A and B. And then at some point, t2, he per-wills B. His per-willing B is absolutely *a se*. This schema entails the "grounding principle": "... the truth of a proposition about [an *a se*] choice must be grounded in the making of the actual choice."⁶ It follows that knowledge of the choice must originate with the choice itself. (We are most interested in God, so I use "knowledge" to refer to *true* belief arrived at in a way that delivers certainty. I adopt the language of "belief" to make the subsequent discussion easier, but the God of traditional classical theism does not, strictly speaking, entertain *beliefs about* reality.⁷ His omnipotence and His omniscience are identical with the act by which He immediately causes everything that is.) How, then, can God foreknow at, and before, t1 what S freely chooses at t2? Anselm's answer will show why the "Basic Argument" is not a problem for him.

The Anselmian Solution to the Freedom and Foreknowledge Dilemma

Ockham's original version of "Ockhamism" held that God knows future free choices even though the future does not exist. But how could He? Ockham answered with characteristic forthrightness, "I haven't a clue!"⁸ Given the grounding principle, in the absence of an actual agent making an *a se* choice, there is nothing to be known. Thus, if we understand created freedom along Anselmian lines, Ockhamism (at least in its original version) cannot provide a satisfactory solution to the dilemma, no matter how subtle one's elaboration of the distinction between "soft" and "hard" facts. Molinism, too, is ruled out. That there are truths about what any possible agent *freely* chooses in any possible circumstances – a truth that is independent of any actual agent actually choosing – conflicts with the Anselmian analysis of *a se* choice.

What Fischer calls "Thomism", the thought that God is atemporal so His knowledge that S chooses B at t2 is not *before* t2, does not help either. It does not – without the addition of more elements -- answer the question about how God might know that S chooses B at t2.⁹ And, as Fischer points out, we who are located in time may hold *at some time t* that God knows what will happen subsequent to t. Moreover, the Christian philosopher may believe that God has delivered information to temporally located persons in such a way that *they* know that someone will make

a free choice in what is, to them, the future.

Here is Anselm's solution to the dilemma: Just as a single moment in time is present to, or contains, all of space and everything that is happening everywhere in space, God's eternal mode of being, which is not subject to temporal extension or within time at all, is present to, or contains, all spaces *and times*, and everything that is happening everywhere in space and at any time in time.¹⁰ In that God's perspective is the correct one, since all times are "there" equally for God, all times are "there" equally simpliciter. This theory of time is usually called "eternalism" or "four-dimensionalism", but in that the former term can suggest that the created universe is "co-eternal" with God, while the latter may seem dogmatic regarding the number of dimensions creation may contain, I prefer the term "isotemporalism". All times are equally real. All have the same ontological status. Although "before" and "after" are objective, "past", "present", and "future" are subjective to a given perceiver at a given time. What someone at some time perceives as the present is no more real than what that perceiver understands to be the past or the future. This theory of time underlies any consistent time-travel movie – you start from what is to you the present, you go back to the past or forward to the future, and, when you get there, that becomes your present.¹¹ Among contemporary philosophers of religion – and this is reflected in Fischer's brief discussion of his Ockhamism plus "eternalism" -- the main alternative to isotemporalism is presentism; what exists in the present is all that has ontological status. The present is real and the past and future are absolutely non-existent.

Anselmianism holds that God knows what you choose in your future because all of time is equally present to Him. The proposition, "S chooses B at t2" – assuming S chooses B at t2 – is true at all times, the truth of the proposition being grounded in the fact that S chooses B at t2. The proposition, "God knows that S chooses B at t2" is true at all times, including when believed or uttered by a temporal perceiver at and before t1, and the source for God's knowledge is S's *a se* choice for B at t2. It is true that, if S chooses B at t2, S cannot fail to choose B at t2, but logic delivers that consequence. If an "ability to choose otherwise" entails that an agent who chooses X at a time, not choose X at that time, then no one can choose otherwise, by the law of non-contradiction. Anselm allows that this introduces a species of necessity: Necessarily, if God

knows that S chooses B at t2, then S chooses B at t2. But it is a "consequent" necessity. It is the necessity that arises from the original positing of the fact, since God knows that S chooses B at t2 *because* S chooses B at t2. Necessarily, if X, then X. How does all of this relate to the "Basic Argument"?

Anselm and the "Basic Argument"

Here is a very slightly altered version of one of the iterations of the argument which Fischer gives in "Engaging with Pike":

Suppose that God exists and that S chooses B at t2. God, given His essential omniscience, knows at t1 that S chooses B at t2. Now one of the following conditionals must be true:

1. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would have held a false belief at t1.
2. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would not have existed at t1.
3. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would have held a different belief from the one He actually held at t1, i.e., God would have believed at t1 that S would refrain from choosing B at t2.¹²

The conclusion is supposed to be that, given God's omniscience, S cannot refrain from choosing B at t2, and hence divine omniscience conflicts with the human ability to do otherwise, which is essential for a robust, libertarian human freedom.

Here is how the Anselmian analyzes this argument: The three conditionals (1-3) are all true. God's belief at t1 that S chooses B at t2 is grounded in S's choosing B at t2. And if S chooses B at t2 then, by the law of non-contradiction, S does not refrain from choosing B at t2. It is true that S cannot choose otherwise at t2 than as he chooses at t2, but it would be odd if one had to violate logic in order to be free. The freedom involved in the alternatives of the torn condition and the absolute aseity of the per-willing of one option over the other is sufficient to ground moral responsibility. Nothing more, or other, is contributed by the "ability to do otherwise" that Pike and Fischer have in mind.

Before moving on to a defense of isotemporalism, it is worthwhile to note that the three conditionals are

true even if we abstract out the temporal indexing of God's beliefs to the past. So, on the isotemporal view it would be correct to say that, whatever God believes, He believes "at all times"; not that He is circumscribed by time, but that it is true at all times that, if X is the case, God believes that X is the case. So --

Suppose that God exists and that S chooses B at t2. God, given His essential omniscience, knows at all times that S chooses B at t2. Now one of the following conditionals must be true:

1. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would be holding a false belief at all times.
2. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God does not exist at any time.
3. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would be holding a different belief from the one He actually holds at all times, i.e., God would be believing at all times that S would refrain from choosing B at t2.

And the conditionals are true if we rephrase them to describe God's *present* knowledge of S's choosing B at t2. That is, suppose that God is a temporal being, as Fischer assumes, and that He does not have *fore*-knowledge, but finds out what agents choose simultaneously with their choosing, by observing them. So --

Suppose that God exists and that S chooses B at t2. God, given His essential omniscience, knows at t2 that S chooses B at t2. Now one of the following conditionals must be true:

1. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would be holding a false belief at t2.
2. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God does not exist at t2.
3. If S were to refrain from choosing B at t2, then God would be holding a different belief from the one He actually holds at t2, i.e., God would be believing at t2 that S would refrain from choosing B at t2.

This iteration of the "Basic Argument" entails that God could not have *present* knowledge of a present choice without the conclusion that the agent cannot "do otherwise". One might hold that "freedom to do otherwise" could be reconciled with divine omniscience ("omniscience" being a term open to interpretation) if God learns what S chooses only after S has

chosen. But that is a radical diminution of divine omniscience; there are possibly millions or billions of present facts of which God is presently ignorant.

Applying a version of the basic argument to God's present knowledge of present truths does, perhaps, trade on the thought that the present is as "fixed" as the past.¹³ Fischer suggests that this thought may be mistaken, and chooses not to weigh in. He writes, "... thus, I shall adopt the convention of speaking of what the agent can at the relevant time *or just prior to that time* [Fischer's italics] do. Thus, if one holds that the present is fixed, then the pertinent time, for the purposes of my analysis, is just prior to the present."¹⁴ I find this a puzzling suggestion. First, with regard to Pike's argument, the present seems as "fixed" as the past. The thought that S may be able to refrain from choosing B at t2, although S chooses B at t2, is surely difficult, unless one meant by "able to refrain" something like what the Anselmian could mean: even as S chooses B at t2, since S was in TC at t1, and since the choice for B over A was absolutely *a se*, it is true to say that S "could" choose A at t2; that is, S retains, at t2, the sort of power that allows for the choosing of A (refraining from choosing B). But that sense of "could refrain" would not allow the Basic Argument to go through, since that S "could refrain" from choosing B is entirely consistent with God knowing, at t1 and before, that S chooses B at t2. And the same could be said for any understanding that S could refrain from choosing B at t2, while S *is* choosing B at t2, that trades on facts about S's powers as a choosing agent. And the move to what the agent can do "*just prior to that time*" is not clear. No one can actually *do* something prior to the time at which they actually do it. Say that the fixity of the present entails that if S chooses B at t2, then S cannot refrain from choosing B at t2. Can S refrain from choosing B at t2, at t1? It is hard to see how. On the Anselmian account, it is true to say that, at t1, when S is in TC, S has the agent-causal power to per-will A or to per-will B, and it is absolutely up to S which he will per-will. But again, on this understanding the Basic Argument does not go through, since S's having this sort of power is consistent with God's knowing, at t1 and before, that S per-wills B at t2. Note also, that having the ability "just prior" may not be sufficient for a robust, libertarian free will. Suppose that God is a temporal, libertarian free agent. Suppose further that up through t1 S's options are open, and then, at t2, God decides to cause S to choose B at t2. On Anselm's account, this was not

an *a se* choice, since it was up to God what S chooses at t_2 . But if it is the ability to do otherwise *prior* to the time of the choice that counts, then S is able to do otherwise in some apparently important sense. I just don't see it.

Defense of Isotemporalism

So, on the Anselmian view that holds that God knows that S chooses B at t_2 because S chooses B at t_2 , the Basic Argument *does* show that S cannot refrain from choosing B at t_2 , but the principle of non-contradiction all by itself would have done the job. But the Anselmian position does include the isotemporal theory of time. Fischer suggests that Ockhamism – God (apparently in time) knows the truth about future free choices – is compatible with eternalism (my “isotemporalism”) although not with presentism.¹⁵ But he does not go on to use this point to consider a solution to the freedom and divine foreknowledge dilemma. The reason he does not go this route seems to be that he finds isotemporalism unattractive, as do many contemporary philosophers of religion.¹⁶

Before moving to criticisms of isotemporalism let us glance, first, at other reasons for holding the view, beyond the (pretty impressive!) fact that it allows us to preserve robust human freedom and complete divine foreknowledge. For the Anselmian an even more important motivation for being an isotemporalist is that God is “that than which nothing greater can be conceived”. On presentism, God is circumscribed by the extensionless moment that is the present. He can act immediately only on the present, and His knowledge of the past and the future, like ours, is indirect, depending on memory and other sorts of evidence. This constitutes a severely limited conception of divine knowledge and power. On isotemporalism God knows and acts causally upon everything, at all times, immediately. Clearly isotemporalism allows for a conception of God which is greater than the God whose life is but an endless succession of fleeting moments. Fischer himself offers another reason to subscribe to isotemporalism when he explains why the Ockhamist should reject presentism. “The fundamental problem is that presentism cannot allow for the sort of cross-time explanations involved by Ockhamism. If something is a fact about a moment in 1959, for instance, then, on presentism, only things that exist at that moment in 1959 can be explanatory grounds for this fact.”¹⁷ Fischer takes this to show that the Ockhamist

must reject presentism. Fischer does not mention it in “Engaging with Pike”, but this argument would show that, on presentism, facts about the *past* would also lack “explanatory grounds”. The presentist holds that the past is no more existent than the future. A theory of time that undermines explanatory grounds for claims about the past seems pretty radical. The presentist can, perhaps, argue that past events leave traces in the present, and it is those present traces that provide explanatory grounds for facts about the past. But when we express what we take to be a fact about some past event it is rarely the case that we intend our statement to mean, or entail, or include, any facts about traces in the present. Presentism entails this symmetry regarding the future and the past; both are absolutely non-existent. If Fischer is right that, on presentism, there are no explanatory grounds for a fact about the future, then – at least *prima facie* -- there are no explanatory grounds for a fact about the past. And that is a difficult position. Especially since the Basic Argument requires that the past be fixed from the perspective of the present and the future.

A third reason for not rejecting isotemporalism out of hand is that it – or something like – is apparently the preferred theory of contemporary physics. I do not argue that philosophers of religion ought to work very hard to conform their ideas to some present consensus among scientists. That consensus could change in five years, and then where would we be? Moreover, God and His activity are not the proper subject matters of science, and God may be and do things that the objects studied by the scientist cannot (naturally) be and do.¹⁸ Nevertheless, if modern physics *and* Saint Anselm of Canterbury subscribe to a theory of time, the embracing of which allows us to solve a dilemma in the philosophy of religion, then that theory ought to be given serious consideration.

Fischer does not outright reject isotemporalism, but he does not give it the thoughtful treatment it deserves. He notes that “Many think eternalism is counterintuitive. It is implausible, they say, that we are no more real than the dinosaurs.”¹⁹ Phenomenologically, isotemporalism *is* radically weird. The dinosaurs worry me less than does the thought that “I” of five minutes ago and “I” of five minutes hence exist just as much as I do now. That is hard to imagine. But presentism is phenomenologically difficult, too. If the past and the future are absolutely non-existent, then the present is the non-extended point at which the non-existent

future becomes the non-existent past. It doesn't *feel* that way.

But even if we were to give presentism the edge phenomenologically, it is not clear that, in this case, we ought to give a great deal of weight to appearances and intuition. The physical universe as described by the particle physicist is beyond strange, but the philosopher rarely says to the physicist, "I'm sorry, but I must reject your claim, since I cannot envision what you are describing. It strikes me as counterintuitive." Moreover, the parties to the freedom and foreknowledge debate tend to subscribe to the view that the one God is three persons in one nature, and that one of the persons has, not only a divine, but a human nature. I suggest that it is more likely than not that the human intellect will have a hard time comprehending the relationship of this very puzzling God to time.

William Hasker, a well-known participant in the freedom and foreknowledge debate, is also a severe critic of isotemporalism, and so I turn to him to offer a brief look at a few criticisms and possible responses.²⁰ (This will be just a brief review of a few points to suggest how the debate might go, and to show that the isotemporalist can likely defend her side of the question.) Hasker, in company with many critics, holds that isotemporalism denies change. He says,

It is important to recognize that *in the four-dimensional continuum nothing changes*. There is "change" only in the sense that a road "changes" as it passes first through farmland, then through forest, then over a river, and at last up into the mountains. The road, of course, doesn't *change* at all, though it has different features at different points along its length. Similarly, the four-dimensional continuum never changes at all, though different states of affairs obtain at different temporal locations along it.

But Hasker does not explain what "change" means, if it means something more, or other, than that things are one way at a time and a different way at a different time. One sometimes reads that presentism captures change better because it takes account of the *flow* of events from the future through the present to the past. But it doesn't. The future is non-existent, so no events are there to flow from it. The past is non-existent, so no events flow into it. The present is where two non-existents meet. It is puzzling that anything

like an event takes place in a presentist universe, since events would seem to be temporally extended.

Hasker raises a further problem concerning personal identity. Using "Kate" and "Bill" engaged in a debate, He writes,

From a God's-eye point of view, Kate₁ is timelessly beginning her talk, even though she does this at a temporal location earlier than the one we now occupy. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, neither temporal location has any special claim to being "now"; each and every time is "now" with respect to the events that occur at that time, and that is all there is to be said about the matter. The point to grasp is that the *immediate experiencer* Kate₁ is a *different individual* than the immediate experiencer Kate₂; similarly, the immediate experiencer Bill₁ is a different individual than the immediate experiencer Bill₂. (It seems, then, that we have in effect "Kate-by-committee" and also "Bill-by-committee.") This is clear because, among other reasons, Bill₁ and Bill₂ have different, and mutually incompatible, experiences: Bill₁ timelessly listens to Kate's talk and says nothing himself, whereas Bill₂ is timelessly speaking, and hearing nothing from Kate. Furthermore, each of these individuals exists timelessly at a particular temporal location; it is impossible for either of them to move to a different temporal location. These two simply cannot be the same individual.

True, on isotemporalism a person is a continuous "ribbon" from conception infinitely (I presume) into the future, with different experiences and properties characterizing the person at different times along the ribbon. Hasker's Kate₁ experiences standing, Kate₂ is seated, Kate₃ is standing, but why insist that someone who has different experiences and properties at different times must be different persons? The spatial analogy is useful: A person's body is extended physically, and the feet may be having a different experience than the hands, but we do not insist that there is not a discrete individual.

And presentism seems worse on personal identity over time. A person's immediate experiences *now* aren't the same as those of a few minutes ago. Indeed, on presentism, there is no continuity between a person's past and his present, since his past is absolutely non-existent. If having different experiences and

properties made one a different individual, then it is hard to see how someone, who exists now, could be the same individual as he used to be a few minutes ago, since that person who existed a few minutes ago, does not exist now. Surely existing and not-existing are incompatible properties. The presentist could say that there is only the individual, existing wholly at this instant, remembering those earlier experiences, but that seems a less robust grounding for personal identity over time than the isotemporalist's claim that the whole self is a time ribbon, all of which exists with different experiences and different properties at different times. What makes someone the same person over time is one of the extremely difficult issues in philosophy, but presentism's instantaneous self does not do the job any better than the isotemporalist's ribbon self.

Hasker suggests another discomfort of isotemporalism; the times of pain and suffering one experiences are never annihilated from reality. And others suggest that the Christian must reject isotemporalism for related, eschatological reasons. Suppose someone is saved. On isotemporalism the old, sinful person is always a "part" of the ribbon that is that individual's life. The Christian isotemporalist responds that this is true, but it is entirely consistent with the Christian message that the beatified be forever a saved sinner. Moreover, the "ribbon" of the saved streams into an infinite future, so perhaps those moments of pain and suffering are given meaning and overwhelmed by the joyous future. (Just how the blessed experience their lives may be a question that can be answered only once one has arrived at the undiscovered country.)

I hope these examples show that the isotemporalist can propose defenses to some standard criticisms. Fischer raises a further point against "simple foreknowledge" rather than the isotemporalist solution to the dilemma, but it is a criticism that some suppose can be effectively leveled against the Anselmian position. "If we posit simple foreknowledge – that God knows in advance unconditional future contingent statements that state that some individual will freely perform some action in the future – it appears as if God is severely limited in His providential powers; after all, the future free behavior of human agents is 'given to Him,' as it were."²¹ The Anselmian theory does admit that God's knowledge of what some individual chooses with aseity derives from that individual choosing. But being able to know, and to act on, everything at

all times in one, eternal act surely entails great scope for the divine power. For example, on isotemporalism, a Christian can tell a story like this: God knows that the early Jewish converts to Christianity are, before their conversions, the sort of people who are likely to be skeptical of Jesus's claims of divinity. He knows that one way to mitigate their skepticism is to have them believe that prophets of old foretold various bits of information about the messiah that would accord with facts of Jesus's life. God, in His eternal present, appreciates the epistemic condition of the would-be converts, provides the prophets with the useful information, and sees that His stratagem works. If some of the converts convert through *a se* choice, then God knows they do so through their doing so.

True, God would exercise more complete sovereignty if He were to cause every event including every "free" choice. But then responsibility-grounding human freedom seems to be sacrificed. Open Theism, where God exists only at the present moment and doesn't know what created agents will freely choose in the future, entails a much more severe limitation on divine sovereignty. And, contrary to what Molinists claim, it is not clear that Molinism offers a defense of robust divine sovereignty. On the Anselmian view God is limited by His own choice to create free agents. On Molinism God is limited by the "middle knowledge" of what any possible created agent would choose in any possible situation. These contingent "counterfactuals of freedom" exist independently of God, and God, to achieve His purposes, must work with them. This constitutes a serious and *unchosen* limitation on God's power. This, in addition to the problem that Molinism rules out *a se* choice!

Fischer defends his own "Bootstrapping View" on which God does not have complete foreknowledge. Still, God can know a future contingent proposition (*p*) "in the same way that an ordinary human being can know this: (at least in part) by believing that *p* while being in a KCS ["knowledge conferring situation"] with respect to *p*. But unlike an ordinary human being, God knows that if He believes that *p*, then it follows of necessity that *p* is true. He knows this via His self-Knowledge: He knows that He is essentially omniscient."²² But an ordinary human believer could be in KCS and believe *p* and yet *p* be false. God would have the same evidence, yet He would not believe *p*. So, "...it is possible (given the structure of the Bootstrapping View) that God Himself has no additional

evidence on the basis of which He, unlike the human reliable believers, can see why p will turn out to be false.”²³ Isn't this mysterious? Yes, but, says Fischer, “I contend ...that *every* major view about God's knowledge of the future has at least a mystery associated with it, if not a significant problem...One's evaluation of the various views will presumably be a holistic cost/benefit analysis in which one weighs the pros and cons...”²⁴ True. How, then, should we assess the pros and cons of the Anselmian theory?

On the pro side, the Anselmian view preserves divine *certainty* regarding *every* future event. Also on the pro side, it allows for a very robust analysis of human freedom, where choices are truly up to the created agents who make them. On the con side, we might say (*pace* contemporary physics) that accepting the isotemporalist theory of time is a cost because isotemporalism does not conform to our intuitions or to how things seem to us. That is, after all, the main charge against isotemporalism in that the other criticisms can be answered. The question then is, should how things appear to us, or should our metaphysical intuitions, outweigh the almost ubiquitous teaching of Christendom until very recently and the philosophical and theological value of reconciling divine certitude about the future with robust human freedom? I judge accepting isotemporalism a small price to pay for an overwhelming benefit.

Endnotes

[1] Fischer (2016) 179.

[2] I attempt to defend the interpretation from Anselm's text in Chapters 8 and 9 of my *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[3] For the textually based case that Anselm says what I say he says see my (2008) and my *Freedom and Self-Creation: Anselmian Libertarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 76-100.

[4] *De libertati arbitrii* 3. I will continue the discussion within the Anselmian framework, but his basic analysis of free choice could, *mutatis mutandis*, be translated into naturalistic terms. And it could, of course, be spelled out with much more precision, and in much more detail, than the present paper warrants.

[5] Ordinarily we might say “exerting some force”, but

that usually implies an object which is affected, and it is not clear that that is how Anselm is thinking about choice.

[6] Rogers (2015) 109. I do not develop a careful analysis of “grounding”. An intuitive notion of “dependence” is adequate for my purposes.

[7] The question of unactualized possibilities is a vexed one with which I do not intend to engage here. And I will eschew the “possible worlds” patois. I find it unhelpful and sometimes misleading.

[8] *Ordinatio* d.38,q.u., M (Appendix 1, p.90 in Marilyn McCord Adams and Norman Kretzmann, *Predetermination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents* (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1969) 34-79.

[9] Scholars debate over how Thomas understands divine foreknowledge. Some hold that his view is roughly similar to what I take to be Anselm's. Others – I find this more likely – hold that Thomas believes that God knows the future by knowing what He Himself will cause. This is pretty clearly Boethius's position in the *Consolations* Book 5, Prose 6.

[10] *De Concordia* 1.5. The physicists tell us that time and space are relative so perhaps Anselm's analogy of the single moment present to, and containing, all of space is not a correct description of the physical universe, but it helps to explain the relationship of divine eternity to spatio-temporal creation.

[11] Consistent time-travel movies include *Time after Time*, the first *Terminator*, and *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (except for the dramatic device of “the clock is still ticking in San Demas”). Movies that involve changing the past or the future or the present are not consistent. If X happens at t, X happens at t.

[12] Fischer (2016) 167.

[13] See my “The Necessity of the Present and Anselm's Eternalist Response to the Problem of Theological Fatalism”, *Religious Studies* 43 (2007) 25-47.

[14] Fischer (2016) 147, note 24.

[15] Fischer (2016) 172-175.

[16] Fischer mentions Plantinga's rejection of isotem-

poralism as a motivation for rejecting the view (175), but the traditional classical theist will not be moved by this appeal to authority.

[17] Fischer (2016) 173.

[18] I once had an otherwise well-educated person tell me that Christ could not have been resurrected because Science shows such things to be impossible. One wishes that everyone would study a little basic metaphysics.

[19] Fischer (2016) 174.

[20] The following draws (with Hasker's permission) upon a debate between William Hasker and myself at the Society for Philosophy of Religion Annual Meeting in February of 2015. I discuss these and other re-

lated matters in "Anselmian Eternalism: The Presence of a Timeless God", *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (2007) 3-27.

[21] Fischer (2016) 82. Here the issue is simple foreknowledge as opposed to Molinism, where the Molinist claims that God's middle knowledge allows Him to exercise sovereign power. Fischer argues (81-98) that Molinism is not relevant to the specific question at issue, how to reconcile divine foreknowledge with human freedom.

[22] Fischer (2016) 37.

[23] Fischer (2016) 44.

[24] Fischer (2016) 44, 45.