

THREE ROADS TO OPEN THEISM

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Open theists agree that God lacks what is normally called “comprehensive” foreknowledge, but why believe this? Open theists answer in three ways, which I call the narrow road, the wide road, and the shortcut to open theism. Here I argue that (1) the narrow road faces a difficulty concerning the doctrine of divine omniscience which doesn’t arise for the wide road, (2) the wide road is well-motivated and appealing, given certain philosophical commitments, (3) the shortcut is too simple to work, and (4) William Lane Craig’s objections to the wide road fail. I conclude with some observations about the state of the dispute between open theists and their critics.

1. Three roads, one destination

Open theists agree that if God foreknew every detail of the future, then humans would lack significant freedom.¹ Believing in significant freedom, they deny that God foreknows every last detail of the future. God is nonetheless, they insist, omniscient or all-knowing. But how can limits on foreknowledge be compatible with omniscience? Most open

theists make one of three moves. They either (1) tinker with the definition of omniscience, (2) claim that at least some statements about future contingents presently fail to be true or false, and so presently can't be known, or (3) claim that all statements about future contingents are false.² For reasons I'll explain below, I'm going to call these the (1) "narrow road," (2) the "wide road," and (3) "the shortcut" to open theism. The main thrust of my argument is that open theists ought to travel the wide road. Let's examine these strategies in turn.

2. The narrow road: Hasker on omniscience

In his book God, Time, and Knowledge and elsewhere, William Hasker builds a powerful philosophical case for open theism and against the traditional responses to the threat of theological fatalism. Most open theists are so for both biblical and philosophical reasons. While other open theists sweat over the details of biblical exegesis, Hasker does much of the philosophical heavy lifting, and he does it clearly, concisely, and often convincingly. But there is an unsatisfying aspect of his narrow road to open theism.

Following convention, let's call the traditional doctrine of foreknowledge, whereby God knows every last detail of the future just as he completely knows the past and present, the doctrine of comprehensive foreknowledge.³ Hasker, like all open theists, says that God lacks comprehensive foreknowledge, but is nonetheless omniscient. But as Hasker doesn't claim that statements about future contingents presently fail to be

true or false, in his view there will be perhaps an infinity of truths of the form “Agent S will freely perform action A” which the omniscient God doesn’t presently know. How can this be? Hasker analyzes “God is omniscient” as meaning that “It is impossible that God should at any time believe what is false, or fail to know any true proposition such that his knowing that proposition at that time is logically possible.”⁴

On the face of it, this definition is too weak; it takes the “omni” out of “omniscience,” for according to it, an “omniscient” being can fail to know an infinity of truths. Such a being may know a lot, we are inclined to say, but doesn’t know all, even though he may know more than any other being in existence, or perhaps even more than any other possible being could know. One can see why some of Hasker’s critics are given to complaints that he and other open theists “deny omniscience” or “deny foreknowledge.”

Hasker anticipates a variant of this objection as given by Jonathan Kvanvig and defends his analysis of omniscience using a comparison with omnipotence.⁵ If God is essentially morally perfect, then there will be logically possible actions he can’t perform, such as lying. Similarly, argues Hasker, there are “logical limitations” on what God can know.

Unfortunately, the cases are relevantly dissimilar. In one case, we have a bracingly clear logical incompatibility between two alleged features of God, namely omnipotence understood as the ability to do anything and essential moral goodness. But in the case of omniscience, where is the logical incompatibility? It is between omniscience understood (sensibly enough) as requiring knowledge of all truths, and our

possession of significant libertarian freedom. Here, the incompatibility doesn't drop right out of the definitions; it needs arguing for.

Of course, Hasker gives us arguments for the incompatibility, that is, arguments for what he calls theological incompatibilism.⁶ Three of these are apparently valid arguments from comprehensive divine foreknowledge and a couple of other plausible principles to the conclusion that no human ever has libertarian freedom. Hasker's point is that there seem to be only two premises one can plausibly deny, and he doggedly fights off attempts to deny other premises, as well as assertions that nothing about the conclusion need disturb us. In the God, Time, and Knowledge version, the two premises are

(B1) It is now true that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow.

(B2) It is impossible that God should at any time believe what is false, or fail to believe anything that is true. (Premise: divine omniscience)⁷

Hasker suggests that the best course is denying (B2), which he does by offering his surprisingly weak definition of omniscience. He mentions in passing the option of denying (B1) instead, but doesn't pursue it.⁸

William Lane Craig points out two problems with Hasker's narrow road. First, as

noted above, it's hard to swallow that there are a huge number of truths that an omniscient being doesn't know.⁹ The definition appears, as Craig says, "unacceptably contrived."¹⁰ I would add that like many compatibilist accounts of human freedom, it is made strictly to solve a philosophical problem, but carries no intrinsic plausibility.¹¹ Can't we have open theism and an intuitive definition of omniscience whereby such a being knows all truths? Yes, we can; that is the second, wider road to open theism, which we'll examine shortly. Second, Craig observes that Hasker's definition of omniscience "depends on there being a difference between a truth and a truth that is logically possible to know."¹² But it's hard to see what this extra requirement would be; it is hard to give "some reason to think that a statement can be true yet unknowable."¹³

In sum, Hasker's opponents can be forgiven for holding out hope that his arguments for theological incompatibilism are somehow unsound. At best those arguments would establish that divine foreknowledge and libertarian freedom are logically incompatible, but they can never show why this incompatibility exists. That is, these arguments are unable to make the contradiction plain; they don't help us gain an intuition of the relevant impossibility. This is a real shortcoming of the narrow road, and it doesn't infect the wide road.

Consider another analogy, this time with the doctrine of divine omnipresence. Suppose a philosopher claimed he could derive a contradiction between omnipresence and some hard to deny non-theological proposition. He might then revise the definition of omnipresence, saying that an omnipresent being is one which is everywhere, except in places where it isn't logically possible for anything to be. We'd all reply that this

philosopher has rethought the issue of where God is, and to put it plainly, he denies that God is everywhere. There's no use fiddling with the definition of omnipresence, when what one asserts is that God is not everywhere (though he's everywhere anything can be).¹⁴ A similar point applies to the narrow road; narrow roaders have an account of God's knowledge, and according to it God knows vastly more than we do, but also according to it, there are some truths he doesn't know. A plainspoken description of this position is that God is not all-knowing, though he has as much knowledge as any being could have.¹⁵ In other words, nothing could be omniscient, and so it is no hit against God that he isn't. But I, and many other open theists, would shrink from saying that nothing could be omniscient. The claim that there are presently truths which are such that it is logically impossible that they be known now is hard to give content to. Happily, on the wide road to open theism, there is no reason to say these things.¹⁶

3. The older and wider road

I call Hasker's way "narrow" and this second way "wide" for two reasons. First, far more thinkers have taken the second road than have ever taken Hasker's.¹⁷ Second, many thinkers have walked this path for reasons having nothing to do with theism, much less with open theism. There are many well-developed responses to the concern about whether divine knowledge and human free will are compatible. The wide road has historical roots as deep and wide as any these. Also, it has enjoyed as many adept

contemporary defenders as any. It is the only strategy which hasn't received a thorough examination at Hasker's hands.¹⁸

Philosophers and theologians who have traveled, or at least temporarily explored, the wide road include Aristotle, a fifth century Christian theologian, a few medieval philosophers, some Socinian theologians, several nineteenth century theologians, various process theologians, and many twentieth century standouts in logic and philosophy, such as Charles Hartshorne, Jan Lukasiewicz, Arthur Norman Prior, Richard Taylor, Storrs McCall, Nuel Belnap, Palle Yourgrau, and Bas Van Fraassen.¹⁹

But enough with the honor roll. Most importantly, one can make a powerful philosophical case for the idea that some claims about future contingents presently fail to be either true or false. This is far from being an ad hoc expedient to rescue human freedom; the belief can be as firmly rooted in careful reflection as competing views. Further, it seems strongly rooted in common sense; it reflects the way that nearly all of us think about future and human freedom, at least before committing to some theory which implies an incompatible view of time and/or free will.²⁰

The wide road allows open theists to stay with a definition of omniscience which requires such a being to know all truths there are. Why is God's foreknowledge limited? We needn't give the controversial and unilluminating (though I think true) answer: because that would rule out humans having libertarian free will. Rather, it is limited because since some propositions about the future are presently neither true nor false, it is as of now impossible that they be known to be true or false. It is best to say that divine foreknowledge isn't limited at all, for there is never (and perhaps can't be) any scrap of

reality, on this theory, which is not included in God's knowledge.

4. The appeal of the wide road

The principle of bivalence says that all propositions are either true, or if not true then false. Here I want to briefly sketch out the case for denying this principle for some statements about future events that as of now may or may not happen. My purpose is simply to display the powerful appeal of a certain way of understanding the cosmos and assertions about it. In section 6 below, I'll argue that the complaints against the wide road by opponents of open theism don't give us any reason to doubt its picture of freedom, truth, and time.

Certain elements of common sense, modern logic, modern physics, and a long western philosophical and theological tradition sanction a linear model of time. That is, past, present, and future can be properly modeled as in Figure 1.

The letters s through v are earlier and later times. The circular nodes are whatever is the

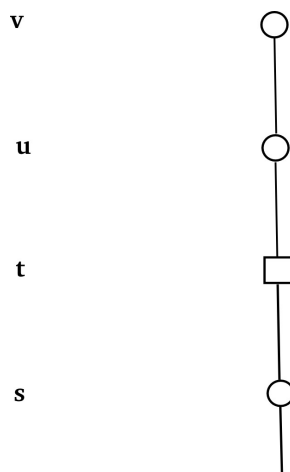


Figure 1

case at a time, and the square node is the present – what is the case now. Due to the aforementioned factors, many philosophers consider it blindingly obvious that there is and always has been an “actual world,” part of which has been, part of which now is, and part of which will be. An “actual world,” in standard terminology, is a certain “possible world,” which means that it is a certain logically consistent complete (spatially and temporally maximal) way things could be. And we should grant that common sense sanctions the belief that we all face a unique future, which could in principle be “viewed” by God or even a psychic.²¹ But common sense is not always consistent or clear; it also sanctions belief in incompatibilist or libertarian free will, as anyone who has taught an introduction to philosophy class can attest. But belief in incompatibilist freedom logically requires the openness of the future.²² If an agent ever has an unconditional ability to respond to her circumstances in more than one way, then she faces an open future; she must at that time have more than one future accessible to her, as in Figure 2, which I’ll call the branching model of time.²³

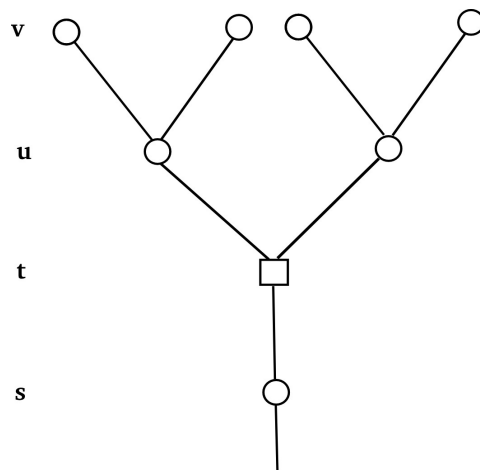


Figure 2

Philosophers who model reality in this way believe that time involves an ever-changing present, or objective time-flow, and are usually some sort of presentists, holding that the present has some sort of ontological priority over the past and future. Here I simply assume these controversial theses, because I think they are held by most open theists, and by many of their opponents as well.

Why have a model of our temporal universe? Many or all of our claims concern our temporal cosmos, and we explicitly or implicitly utilize a model of it when making such judgments. Those who hold the linear model assign truth values from an omnitemporal or timeless perspective; any statement which is true at a time is, according to the model, true from the perspective of any time, or from the perspective of no time. Some even assert that they don't know what it means to say that a claim is true at a time, and think it obvious that all true claims are so "timelessly."

Assignment of truth-values is more complicated for those who hold the branching model. If the claim is about the present or past, the valuation is straightforward, for at the time the claim is about, reality (what is and what has been) either fits or misfits with the claim. But what about future claims? When one inspects "the future" on this model, we find that there is no one future which is presently such that it will be; that is the whole point of branches in the model. The branches don't reflect our ignorance, but rather model a feature of reality, namely, real, objective indeterminism in a dynamic universe.

In my view the present is primary. The past branch-segments are those which are now such that they were; the present evolved, so to speak, by way of them. As to the future branch-segments, we aren't stuck with the incoherent thought that there are now

“many (incompatible) futures.” (Were there to be a complete future there could only be one.) Rather, the branching structure beyond the present represents facts about the present, namely, outcomes which are possible given the course of history up till now.

The branch-segments beyond the present represent temporally possible futures – not all the logically or even the causally possible ones, but rather, the ones which haven’t been ruled out by what has happened already together with what is now happening. These possible futures don’t exist in some weird realm, alternate universe, or half-way house between reality and unreality. They are simply present facts about the unrealized potentialities of present things; these things may change, be changed, give rise to new things, or be annihilated. The natures of things, in this model, allow more than one outcome. And if one believes in libertarian freedom in addition to indeterminism, one must add that which “path” or “branch” is taken is in some measure up to us.

A couple of interesting things follow from this picture. First, there is at present no actual world! Rather, at most, there is now an ever-lengthening actual history-segment, comprising the past and present. In their enthusiasm for Leibnizian or Plantingian possible-worlds discourse, many philosophers unwittingly commit to the linear model. On the branching model, one can reason about possible and impossible worlds, which would be maximal branches through the tree, but there won’t now be any actual world. Further, if God essentially has libertarian freedom and necessarily exists, and time doesn’t end, there is at no time an actual world. And if it’s impossible that time ends, there couldn’t even be an actual world; the notion of actual world may, for all we know, be as impossible as a round square!

Second, if the branching model is right, God didn't sit back in eternity "before" creation, and decide which world to actualize, for there is no world which is in any sense timelessly or omnitemporally picked out. So however we think about providence, we branching model theorists can't make use of the idea of God creating by actualizing a possible world.

But most importantly, on the branching model of time there is now no future – no complete future world-segment or branch which is now such that it will be. As Gregory Boyd points out, this is compatible with there being some aspects of the future which are now going to be; there may be, as it were, a gappy, or partial future.²⁴ It may be, for example, that no matter which branch is taken, the living and the dead will be judged by Christ at 11:36 am on April 17, 2072. Or it may be that no matter which branch is taken, the judgment will occur some time between Christmas of 2120 and Christmas of 2121. Or it may be that no matter which branch is taken, at some future time or other, the judgment will occur. Were these facts, they would be present facts about what will be, and would be known by the omniscient God.

It seems to drop out of this picture that some statements about things that as of now may or may not happen are neither true nor false (I say "some" and not "all" because of an important distinction I'll make in section 5 below.) Will John have eggs for breakfast on a certain future morning? Picturesquely, we can take the "God's-eye view" and mentally "climb up the crown of the tree" until we reach the morning in question, where we'll observe that some branches there feature John having eggs for breakfast while others do not. Given the openness of the future in that respect, there is presently

no fact which could make that statement true or false. Hence, it is neither, though since reality is ever-changing, it can later come to be true or false, say, that “John will have eggs for breakfast on October 12, 2039.”

Here we must consider a common objection. “Not so fast. What you’re saying is that if all futures accessible from the present feature John eating eggs for breakfast on October 12, 2039, then the aforementioned sentence is true. And if none of those accessible futures has that event, then the aforementioned statement is false. But you’re confused; you’ve given truth conditions not for “John will have eggs for breakfast on October 12, 2039,” but rather for the corresponding modal statement - “Now-unchangeably, John will have eggs for breakfast on October 12, 2039.” But truth value is one thing, and modality is another. All it takes for the non-modal statement to true or false is for the actual future to include, or not include John eating eggs for breakfast on that date.”²⁵

In reply, if we assume that there is (timelessly, or now) an actual future, then this suggestion makes perfect sense. But this is to affirm the linear model of time; there will be, at any time, exactly one accessible future (though there may be many other logically, causally, and epistemically possible futures). On the other hand, once we eschew commitment to a complete actual future, we are left with a temporal universe that is presently (partially) indeterminate as to its current tendencies. We hold to the truth-realist intuitions that a true statement fits reality, and that a false statement misfits with reality. As of now, does reality fit or misfit with the claim that “John will have eggs for breakfast on October 12, 2039”? If that event occurs on all forward branches, then we

have a fit, so the non-modal statement is true. If it occurs on no forward branches, then we have a misfit, so the non-modal statement is false. If it occurs on some but not others, then as of now the non-modal statement lacks what it takes to be true, and also lacks what it takes to be false as well.²⁶ The objector is correct in her claim that truth is one thing, and modality is another, however, certain statements and the modal versions thereof may have the same truth-conditions, as I'll explain in section 5 below.

In sum, the wide roader's denial of the principle of bivalence isn't a mere ad hoc expedient to avoid fatalism or to confirm some pet theory about God. It is based squarely on the sober considerations about truth in a dynamic world. The above should also put to rest the notion that any deniers of bivalence need the following silly non sequitur: because for we can't know whether some statements about the future are true or false, such statements are neither true nor false.²⁷

5. The shortcut which isn't

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Just as Hasker has up till now clearly taken the narrow road, so in previous publications open theist Gregory Boyd has clearly taken the wide road.²⁸ Recently, however, inspired by some ideas of the master logician A.N. Prior,²⁹ Boyd has backtracked and suggested a seemingly less radical way to open theism, which I'll call the "shortcut" to open theism.³⁰

Why, theological concerns aside, would the wide road be thought costly? There are at least the following three reasons. First, a denial of bivalence goes against our

longstanding mainstream logical traditions. Bivalence is fed to every philosopher while she's in her philosophical cradle (i.e. Introduction to Deductive Logic class). Second, admitting that some claims are neither true nor false complicates one's logic. For starters, inferring p from $\neg\neg p$ will be a mistake if p is a kind of claim that can be neither true nor false (if p is not false, it needn't therefore be true, for it could be neither). We'll also wonder what to do with compound claims (e.g. $p \supset q$) where one of the component propositions is neither true nor false. Third, some believe that the notion that some claims are neither true nor false contradicts common sense, or is just somewhat unintuitive.

In my view, the first and third points are irrelevant, as popular practice and common sense can't overturn philosophical considerations like those in section 4 above, especially since such considerations are buttressed by other elements of common sense, such as belief in libertarian freedom and the openness of the future. The second fear is overblown, though much more needs to be said about it.³¹ I'll argue here that the shortcut, though it satisfies these three concerns and highlights an important point about talk of the future, doesn't do what it is supposed to, and so is no alternative to the wide road. It is, sadly, a dead end and not a shortcut at all.

Suppose that Howard possess libertarian freedom to either scream or refrain from screaming. This freedom requires a partially open future, wherein some total branches passing through the present feature Howard screaming, and others do not. As there is no actual future, it is not presently a fact that Howard is going to scream. The situation is represented in Figure 3. The letter "p" here means the proposition that

“Howard screams,” and time t is the present time.

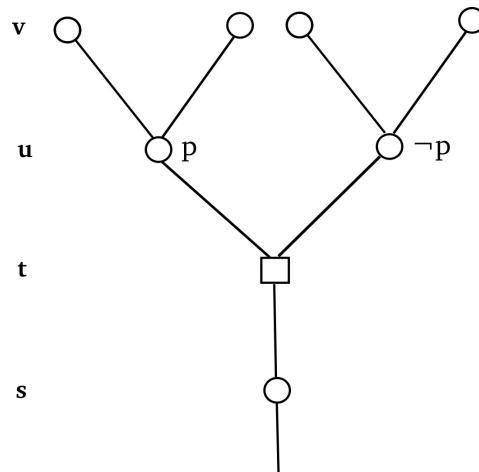


Figure 3

Boyd and Prior argue that bivalence is safe, for while we can't say that “Howard will scream” is true, we can say that it is false. The contradictory of “Howard will scream” isn't “Howard will not scream,” but rather, “It is not the case that Howard will scream.” In Prior's notation, using “F” for “it will be the case that” and “p” for the present tense “Howard screams,” we have the following:

False:

Fp
F¬p

True:

¬Fp
¬F¬p

How so? We can read off the above valuations using Figure 3 above. (In so doing we must assume that all p's there are are represented here; that is, there are no other p's “higher up” the “tree.”) Fp would be true just in case at the present, p was definitely going to be; that is, Fp would be true just in case all branches forward have p at some

time or other (perhaps all at the same future time, perhaps not). But the future isn't that way in the situation we're supposing; there, p isn't definitely going to be. Hence, Fp is false. The same considerations hold for $F\neg p$, hence, it is false as well. Now $\neg Fp$ says that it is not the case that p is now such that it is going to be, and this is true, for there is no actual future, and in no sense is p presently destined to come about. For similar reasons, $\neg F\neg p$ is true.

So far, so good. In my view, the preceding claims are true and important. The payoff for preserving God's omniscience and human freedom is obvious. God can't know whether or not Howard will scream, because when that event is future and contingent (i.e. something which as of now may or may not happen), "Howard will scream" is false, for as of now his screaming is not going-to-be. Of course, God would know that "It will be that Howard screams" is false whenever it is, but that in no way threatens Howard's freedom to scream, as God's knowing that doesn't logically imply that Howard does, or that Howard does not scream at some future time. Problem solved, right? And no exception to bivalence is in sight.

Unfortunately for this elegant solution, the matter is not so simple. Note that we've defined " Fp " as meaning "it is now definitely going to come about that p ," or "given the flow of time up till now, it is inevitable that p will happen." " Fp ," so defined, makes an assertion about the future and the present. It asserts that p happens down the line, and also, the present is such that this will definitely happen; the objective probability of p happening at some future time or other is presently (and at all future times) 1.

At this point, sophisticated Molinists, other opponents of open theism, and

miscellaneous defenders of bivalence will cry “foul.” Their objection is important, as it shows what is lacking in the shortcut; let’s listen to their complaint: “When I say ‘It will be that Howard screams’ or ‘Howard is going to scream’, I just mean that at some future time Howard screams! I’m not claiming the event to be inevitable or now-unchangeable. What I say is true just in case, as time rolls on, Howard ever screams. My statement is solely about the future, and is not also about the present.”³²

There is something right and important in the objection. We can and do make assertions purely about the future which are neutral as to whether or not the named event is presently inevitable. Suppose a pundit predicts: “Hillary Clinton will be elected U.S. president in 2008,” and that this is something that at the time of the prediction may or may not happen. We must get beyond what the pundit says to discover what she means, what she’s asserting. Is she asserting that Hillary’s election is now inevitable, that is, definitely going-to-be? She may be. If so, what she asserts is false, as Boyd argues. But she may not be asserting that. She may be assuming that the current probability of Hillary’s election is somewhat or very high. The one thing she can’t be presupposing (if her thoughts are consistent) is that its probability is now 0. And quite possibly, she’s never even considered the question of how probable Hillary’s future election is. But whatever her stance on the objective probability of Hillary’s election presently is, the pundit may simply be forecasting that eventually, Hillary’s election will happen. In this case, her statement is about some future time, and is not also about the present. In this way she can consistently say both “Hillary will be elected in 2008” and “As of now, Hillary’s election in 2008 may or may not occur.” On the assumption that

Hillary's election is indeed a future contingent, the second statement is presently true, though the first statement presently lacks a truth-value.

There are different tenses we can use in talking about the future. J.R. Lucas, following Hans Reichenbach, distinguishes between the "simple future" and "posterior present" tenses. The English sentence "There will be a sea battle tomorrow," Lucas explains, can be understood in two ways.

...the simple future speaks only about tomorrow, that it is a sea-battle day, whereas the posterior present says something about today too, that it is a day-before-a-sea-battle-day...³³

Thus the assertion that Howard will scream can be understood as "At some future time or other, Howard screams" (simple future tense) or as "As of now, Howard will (definitely) scream." (posterior present tense). The importance of this distinction is that when it comes to statements about future contingents in the posterior present tense, there is no need to deny bivalence, as all such claims are presently true or false, as Boyd and Prior argue. However, by the argument of section 4 above, we know that as of now, when p is a future contingent, reality doesn't presently feature p happening or not happening in the future. Hence, both "it will be that p " and "it will be that $\neg p$ " (simple future tense) are presently neither true nor false. The failure to distinguish between the simple and posterior present manifests in persistent confusion that $\neg Fp$ and $F\neg p$ make the same

assertion.³⁴ If we read “F” as simple future, these are logically equivalent. But reading the “F” as posterior present, it is clear that they mean different things, as explained above.

In section 4 above I made the point that if one thinks of time as branching in the future direction, one must hold that some claims about the future are when made neither true nor false. I now clarify the point: this holds only when “it will be that p” is in the simple future tense. Statements in the posterior present tense are all either true or false when made.

At the end of section 4, I raised the objection that I’m “confusing truth and modality.” To fully dismantle this objection, I’ll need to put all my cards on the table. I’ve argued that there are (at least) two distinct kinds of future-tensed statements, the simple future, and the posterior present. The statements have both non-modal (“it will be that p”) and modal (“necessarily, it will be that p,” “possibly, it will be that p”) forms. The kind of modality is “now-unchangeability”: what must be, what can’t not be, given the course of history up till and including the present. I now spell out what I understand the truth-conditions of all these kinds of statements are.

Let’s use “Fp” for the posterior present, “Op” (it is eventually going to turn out that p) for the simple future, “□” for “now-unchangeably,” and “◇” for “temporally possibly” (◇p means “it is not now-unchangeably the case that it is not the case that p,” that is, $\neg\neg p$). Such statements, like any statements, will be true, false, or neither because of how reality is. Future tensed statements are about “the future.” Will it be that p? If we consider all the “branches” through the present – that is, all possible total histories

consistent with the flow of time so far – p must be related to them in one of three ways.

Perhaps p occurs at some point on every branch. On the other hand, p may occur on no such branch. And finally, perhaps p occurs on some, but not on other branches.³⁵ There are, then, three situations to consider, three ways that reality may relate to p – this event that we are saying will, won't, or might happen. With these tools, we can specify the truth conditions for the various possible statements, and say which are logically equivalent to which.

Logically equivalent statements	Situation 1: All accessible futures contain p, none contain $\neg p$	Situation 2: No accessible futures contain p, all contain $\neg p$	Situation 3: Some accessible futures contain p, others $\neg p$
$Fp, Fp, \diamond Fp, Op$	T	F	F
$\neg Fp, \neg Fp, \neg \diamond Fp, \neg Op$	F	T	T
$F\neg p, F\neg p, \diamond F\neg p, O\neg p$	F	T	F
$\neg F\neg p, \neg F\neg p, \neg \diamond F\neg p, \neg O\neg p$	T	F	T
Op	T	F	-
$\neg Op$	F	T	-
$O\neg p$	F	T	-
$\neg O\neg p$	T	F	-
$\diamond Op$	T	F	T
$\neg \diamond Op$	F	T	F
$\diamond O\neg p$	F	T	T
$\neg \diamond O\neg p$	T	F	F

All this seems correct to me, and I invite the reader to consider each spot on this chart from the presupposition of the branching model of time. (With apologies to technically-minded readers, I can't comment here on all the logical ins and outs of this sort of temporal and modal logic.)

Now the objector was accusing me of confusing “it will be that p” with “now-unchangeably, it will be that p”; it was alleged that I foolishly offered the truth-conditions of the latter for those of the former. But I wasn't confused. As I understand Fp , it is logically equivalent to Fp ; whenever one is true, so is the other, and whenever one is false, so is the other. In general, depending on the modality and the claim, it can be that a claim and the modal version of it are true or false in all the same circumstances, and are made true by one and the same fact. For example, one may know and assert that “No bachelor is married” without having any modal concepts. But presumably the same fact that makes it true also makes it true that “Of metaphysical (or logical) necessity, no bachelor is married” (namely, that the concept of a married bachelor is inconsistent). Back to the case at hand, one who says “it will be that p” (Fp) doesn't assert that same thing as one who says “now-unchangeably, it will be that p.” (Fp) And a person may assert Fp without having any clear grasp of the concept of now-unchangeability (temporal necessity). Still, the first claim is true just in case the second claim is true, and is false just in case the second is false. Again, Fp and Op don't mean the same thing, but they are logically equivalent.

The objector's claim that “it will be that p” may be true while “now-unchangeably, it will be that p” is false, is ambiguous. At first glance, we might think there are four

interpretations:

1. Fp may be true while Fp is false.
2. Op may be true while Op is false.
3. Fp may be true while Op is false.
4. Op may be true while Fp is false.

However, there aren't really four interpretations; she's asserting that a future-tensed statement may be true while the modalized version of that same statement is false.

Thus, she mustn't mean 3 or 4. (For the record, both 3 and 4 are false; see the table just above.) To assert 1 or 2 is pure question-begging in this context, for these are the very things wide road open theists deny. And importantly, their denial isn't merely a clever escape from problems their own claims have generated; the denial of bivalence for non-modal simple future tensed statements, and all of the valuations on the chart are above, are based on sober, cool-headed intuitions about truth in an indeterministic world – that is, a world “with a branching future,” irrespective of any pet theories about God or human freedom.

To return to Boyd and Prior, we've seen why the hoped-for shortcut to open theism is in fact a dead end. Open theists believe there are valid arguments from the doctrine of comprehensive foreknowledge to the non-existence of significant human freedom. Yet we maintain belief in such freedom by replying that such arguments are unsound, because each contains a false premise, the one which says that God certainly

foreknows some future free action. Boyd and Prior can block some such arguments (where what God knows is that some future free action is now going-to-be), but not others (where God knows that some future free action will eventually occur). Here we must say that God doesn't now know that, not because it is false (how could it be?) but rather because it is now neither true nor false. The shortcut isn't; the wide road alone gets us where we want to go.

6. Craig's attempts to close the wide road

Open theism has provoked a great deal of criticism from theologically conservative Christians, especially evangelical protestants. Among philosophers, the able and prolific William Lane Craig has led the charge. As we saw in section 2 above, he makes some apt criticisms of the narrow road. In this section I'll reply to seven criticisms of the wide road in Craig's writings; wide roaders, I believe, have solid replies to each one.

Objection 1: Open theists argue as follows: the future is unreal, only statements about what is presently real can be true, hence statements about the future are untrue. But the second premise is false; if it were true, then claims about the past couldn't be true or false either. That isn't so; it is true, for instance, that "Abraham Lincoln was assassinated." The truth of a claim about any time depends simply on what is the case at that time. If it will be, then the statement is true; ontological differences between the

present and future are irrelevant. Though an A-theory of time is correct, we can't infer from it that the principle of bivalence is false.³⁶

Reply 1: Let's take the points in reverse order. It isn't the A-theory alone which requires denying bivalence, it's rather the branching model. It is false that the truth of any claim about any time depends simply on what is the case at that time. As we saw in section 5 above, this isn't true of statements in the posterior present tense.³⁷ As to the argument at the beginning of the objection, open theists often express their intuitions imprecisely, in ways that are open to this interpretation (though in some cases charity arguably requires that they be understood as unclearly presupposing the branching model).³⁸ All must agree that if something has been, it is now true to say that it was, and if it will be, it is now true to say that it will be. But the branching model has it that as to, say, Bill freely eating an apple in three days, neither the eating nor the not-eating is now such that it will be. One who asserts that the truth of a claim about any time depends simply on what is the case at that time seems to be using that "is" in a tenseless manner, referring to what is the case from a timeless or omnitemporal standpoint. But according to the branching model, when one takes the God's-eye perspective, what one sees is a linear past and present capped off with a branching realm of future possibilities; that is, the God's-eye perspective reveals no total future, as there is presently no such thing. Nor will there ever be a total future, so long as time never ends and at least one being with libertarian freedom exists. Objection 1 thus fails as a diagnosis of why (at least some) open theists think as they do, and utterly fails as a non-question-begging objection.

Objection 2: The “same facts that guarantee the truth or falsity of present- and past-tense statements also guarantee the truth or falsity of future-tense statements.”³⁹ If on Christmas eve I say “there will be a white Christmas this year,” and the day after Christmas, I say, “we had a white Christmas this year,” there is one fact, namely snow on Christmas, that makes both true. That fact is simply being viewed from different temporal perspectives. But if one fact makes both true, how can we say that the first statement is neither true nor false while the second statement is true?⁴⁰

Reply 2: First, as the open theist allows that some statements about the future are true in advance, and to my knowledge no open theist claims that all statements about the future lack a truth-value, we need a different example, one which clearly involves future contingents.⁴¹ Let’s suppose that Johnny freely decides to help with preparing Christmas dinner. Craig urges that in all cases, the “same facts guarantee that a future-tense statement asserted earlier, a present-tense statement asserted simultaneously [with the fact it is about], and a past-tense statement asserted later are all true.”⁴² But we should ask: guarantee when? If the branching model is correct, we see that at times prior to Johnny’s free decision, there is no future fact to guarantee the truth of “Johnny will freely decide to help with preparing Christmas dinner.” There is such a fact during and after his decision, about what is or has been. Craig seems to be thinking that reality warrants looking at the matter timelessly or omnitemporally. He simply doesn’t engage holders of the branching model here; he doesn’t even mention the notion that it is mistaken to

consider the future as being complete from the standpoint of eternity, or from a “God’s eye” view.

Objection 3: The following argument refutes the claim that some propositions are at some times neither true nor false, but later become true or false.⁴³

1. Any true tensed statement has a logically equivalent tenseless version.⁴⁴
2. Every true tenseless statement is true at all times.
3. Every true tensed statement is true at all times. 1, 2
4. No tensed statement gains a truth value after previously lacking one. 3

Reply 3: The argument is valid, but someone committed to the branching model ought not accept 2. If (the simple future) “Howard will scream next Thursday” is presently neither true nor false, for the same reasons “Howard screams on January 20, 2008” is presently neither true nor false.⁴⁵ This latter statement may well become true, but it doesn’t follow, for believers in branching time, that it always was true, because it wasn’t always going-to-be. Craig asserts that “... a tenseless statement, if it is true at all, is always true. This is precisely because the statement is tenseless.”⁴⁶ But this inference can only be made by believers in an actual world – a complete world history, such that part of it has happened, part is happening now, and part is such that it will happen. This

is precisely what wide roaders deny.

Another problem with this argument is premise 1. It seems that “Howard will scream next Thursday,” when understood as a posterior present statement (asserted when the next Thursday is 1/20/08), is not logically equivalent to “Howard screams on January 20, 2008.” The first statement implies that today is such that it definitely will be followed by said scream on the next Thursday, whereas the timeless statement does not. (It could now be neither true nor false, subsequently becoming true on Wednesday night, for instance, in which case today won’t have been such that it definitely would be followed by that scream on the next Thursday.) So like premise 2, premise 1 should be rejected by proponents of the branching model.

Objection 4: It is untenable that no future-tensed statement is true or false when it is made. If that were so, “the statement made in 1998 ‘George W. Bush either will or will not win the presidential election in 2000’ would not be true.”⁴⁷ But it was. Further, an open theist can’t say that “Bush will both win and not win the presidential election in 2000” was false in 1998, which of course it was.⁴⁸

Reply 4: Craig is arguing against a straw man. Open theists don’t want to make the absurd claim that no statement about the future is true or false. And open theists taking the wide road have ample grounds for agreeing with Craig that the first statement above is true and the second false. For wide roaders, reality as it stood in 1998 was sufficient to make that statement true, interpreted in the simple future tense. In all futures

accessible from 1998, the election of 2000 either did or didn't feature "Dubya" as the winner – even the possible future-segment which eventually became actual, in which the vote counting lasted into 2001. The English "or" statement cited by Craig was thus true, but not because one of the disjuncts was true. It is not what logicians call truth-functional, and so it can be misleading to translate it into the first order logic statement " $p \vee \neg p$." But so what – all analytic philosophers know that there is an infinity of non-truth-functional statements or propositions which can't be expressed in standard first order logics, for instance, all truths involving necessity and possibility. What made the second statement false in 1998 (whether read as posterior present or simple future) was the fact that it was impossible for the future to turn out that way. There was no branch or branch segment on the tree in which "Dubya" wins and doesn't win the election (in the same way and at the same time). That statement would be false not only in 1998, but also at all times before the completion of the 2000 election.

If one reads Craig's statements as posterior present tensed, then on the assumption that Bush's victory was as of 1998 something that might or might not happen, then both of the cited statements would be false in 1998. "George W. Bush either will or will not win the presidential election in 2000" would be false because neither his victory nor the non-occurrence of his victory was going-to-be as of 1998. "Bush will both win and not win the presidential election in 2000" is necessarily false if read as posterior present. It asserts, in effect, that in 1998 the present had contradictory properties – preceding and at the same time not preceding a Bush victory in 2000.

Objection 5: "...[1] to assert that a proposition is false is to assert that it is not true and [2] to assert that it is not true is to assert that it is false; [3] to assert that a proposition is true is to assert that it is not false and [4] to assert that it is not false is to assert that it is true. Thus from the very meaning of the terms ['true' and 'false'], it follows that every proposition is either true or false, which is the Principle of Bivalence."⁴⁹

Reply 5: Wide roaders must agree with 1 and 3. There is no reason for wide roaders to accept 2 or 4, and they have ample reason to deny 2 and 4, as explained in sections 4 and 5 above.

Objection 6: Prior and Boyd claim that a prediction like "Hillary will be elected president in 2008" is false when made, even supposing that when the time comes, she wins! That's flatly inconsistent.⁵⁰

Reply 6: The apparent inconsistency disappears when we observe the distinctions of section 5 above. It can be false that something is now going-to-be, even if it later becomes going-to-be and/or eventually happens. Craig's comments in one place where he makes this objection are revealing: "...this seems absurd, for what else does it mean for a future-tense statement to be true than for things to turn out as the statement says they will?"⁵¹ It can mean, when the statement is posterior present, that things will turn out that way, and that the present is such that it will definitely evolve that way, so to speak. If the prediction is in the simple future tense, it is inconsistent to say that is now

false though what it forecast later happens. As we've seen, wide roaders will say, plausibly, that such predictions are never true or false when made. Those who like Craig are committed to an actual world, with its linear future, won't abide this, but this does nothing to close the wide road.

Objection 7: Susan Haack has proven that the principle of bivalence logically follows from two hard to deny principles, namely the law of excluded middle and Tarski's truth schema. Therefore, we ought not deny bivalence.⁵² The argument, which uses "Tp" for "It is true that p" and "Fp" for "It is false that p," is as follows.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. $Tp \equiv p$ | Tarski's truth schema |
| 2. $p \vee \neg p$ | law of excluded middle |
| 3. $T\neg p \equiv Fp$ | definition of "F" ("It is false that ____") |
| 4. p | assumption |
| 5. Tp | 1, 4 |
| 6. $Tp \vee T\neg p$ | 5, \vee -introduction |
| 7. $\neg p$ | assumption |
| 8. $T\neg p$ | 1, 7, substituting $\neg p$ for p |

9. $Tp \vee T\neg p$ 8, \vee -introduction
10. $Tp \vee T\neg p$ 2, 4-6, 7-9, \vee -elimination (proof by cases)
11. $Tp \vee Fp$ 3, 10⁵³

Reply 7: This argument is primarily directed against certain wide roaders who wish to affirm the law of excluded middle (every sentence of the form $p \vee \neg p$ is true) while denying the principle of bivalence (every p is either true, or if not true, false). To many, this argument presents itself as an unassailable proof. I suggest that such people are in the grip of the linear model; that is, they are believers in an actual world.

How so? Premise 1 takes on the sheen of a necessary and self-evident truth only if a linear model is assumed. Adherents of the linear model read it thusly: "It is timelessly or omnitemporally true that p if and only if it is timelessly or omnitemporally the case that p ." The actual world is (from a timeless and/or an omnitemporal perspective) what it is. And the eternal verities are about that world. Suppose, assuming this perspective, that a claim p is true. The answer to the question "When is p true?" never matters. Some philosophers protest that they don't understand what it would be for a claim to be true at or relative to a time. Others think it obvious that if p is true at some time t then it must be true at all other times as well. Both, I suggest, are assuming an actual world.

Whoever embraces the branching model must deny premise 1. Such a person accepts that the universe objectively changes, and hence that the stock of truths about

that universe changes as well. There will then be an infinity of counterexamples to 1 above, which pop up as soon as we ask, with the branching model in mind, when it is true that p. Suppose that p is “Hillary freely decides to run for president of the United States on January 1, 2007.” Suppose that this date is in the past, and that p is now true – she did do that. We won’t say, though, for reasons given in section 4 above, that p was true in say 500 BCE, or even in 2004 CE.⁵⁴ In this situation the left hand side of 1 is false, while the right hand side is true; thus, the biconditional 1 is false.⁵⁵

In this section we’ve seen seven shots and seven misses. What lessons can we draw from all this? First, we should note that the linear model is a widely and deeply entrenched assumption. Many of its proponents feel no need to defend it, as it is seamlessly woven into their belief system, connecting with such issues as God, physics, and human freedom. This is just a sociological observation; nothing follows about the truth or rationality of the linear model.

But it leads us to a second point. Once their assumption is plainly pointed out, labeled, and contrasted with an attractive alternative, it is their job to both argue for it and defend it. It seems to me that opponents of open theism have not yet done this.

The reason for this comes out in our third lesson: the failed objections above are mere distractions. The fundamental reason for traditionalists’ disavowal of the wide road (or any sort of open theism) has to do with what the mainstream Christian traditions have committed to, and specifically what they hold the Bible teaches.⁵⁶ The traditionalists’ core conviction is that the mainstream Christian traditions have been

correct to affirm that God has comprehensive foreknowledge of history, because this is what is taught in the Bible, and everything the Bible teaches is true. Indeed, some of them think it is obviously taught in the Bible – something which any but the most stubbornly biased reader will find there - which explains their frequent exasperation with and sometimes open contempt for open theists. Yet this claim that comprehensive foreknowledge is an obvious biblical doctrine has been adequately refuted by open theists.⁵⁷

Whether or not the claim that God is omniscient but lacks comprehensive foreknowledge is an acceptable, good, or overall best interpretation of the Bible is an ongoing discussion. One relevant consideration is whether or certain post-biblical traditions (take your pick) are normative for Christians. The normativity of post-biblical tradition is something that hasn't been much discussed (possibly because it is a difficult issue for conservative Protestants), and usually only comes up when traditionalists want to get in a few rhetorical jabs at open theism as faddish, based on ignorance of history, or a dangerous aberration. Certain post-biblical creeds assert things incompatible with open theism. Do its opponents consider these documents authoritative for Christians, or not? If so, whence does their authority derive? It is no good to attempt to ridicule open theism for its admitted historical unpopularity; sometimes unpopular claims turn out to be true!

We've seen that the objections of this section don't work, nor do they get to what really divides open theists from their traditionalist critics. Even were all sides to acknowledge the failure of these objections, opponents of open theism would put all the

weight of the issue on their claim that the Bible plainly teaches things incompatible with open theism.

7. Conclusion

To summarize, the narrow road to open theism is unsatisfying because it forces us to concoct a suspect analysis of omniscience. In contrast, the wide road to open theism isn't a mere expedient to solve a philosophical problem. It is rather based on a serious and well-articulated view of reality and an accompanying view of truth about that reality. This view can be given initial plausibility, and gains plausibility upon reflection. It has not been effectively argued against on philosophical grounds by open theism's opponents, who universally assume the linear model. The shortcut promises the same gain as the wide road with less pain, but can't deliver.

After all is said and done, what is the dispute about open theism fundamentally about? Is it, as some opponents stoutly object, a dangerous attempt to "redefine God" or to invent a new, non-biblical god in accordance with contemporary tastes? Is open theism a lawless and confused abandonment of historic Christianity, or a foolhardy rejection of biblical authority? Or is it, as David Basinger argues, a disagreement about the nature of divine providence?⁵⁸

Travelers on the wide road should say the following. At bottom, we have not (merely) a disagreement about God, biblical interpretation, or the role of tradition in

guiding theology; we rather have a deep disagreement about this question: Is there presently an actual world? Wide readers say no, and their opponents say yes. Open theists have made the point before that the dispute is not about the fact of God's omniscience, but rather the content of it, and the reflections of sections 4-6 above show why some critics' dismissal of this claim is cavalier.⁵⁹ Many conservative theologians and philosophers, in their zeal to play Paul Revere ("The heretics are coming!") are too quick to try to change the subject back to the attributes of God or to the allegedly dire spiritual consequences of believing open theism, subjects about which they are more comfortable arguing. Too many of these critics are firmly and uncritically in the grip of the linear model, and seem unaware of the issues of sections 4-6 above.

Why doesn't God know that you'll freely eat Twinkies tomorrow? It is right to say, with Hasker, that since you have significant free will, he can't know that, but it is more illuminating to say that there is now no such truth about a coming Twinkie-eating to be known – because as of now, that event isn't going to be. God at all times knows all there is, but "all there is" is a moving target.⁶⁰

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NOTES

1. That is, I think, part of what most people mean by “open theism.” David Basinger, however, holds that open theism is fundamentally an account of divine providence which is compatible with classical theories of divine foreknowledge (though he is an open theist who holds that God has what he calls “present knowledge” only). See his “Practical Implications,” in Clark Pinnock (et. al.), ed. The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 155, and The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 36-7, 55, 144 n.23.

2. In some cases, open theists employing the second strategy speak of a need to redefine the concept of omniscience, not realizing, I think, that their taking the second, “wide” road renders it unnecessary to redefine “omniscience.” (Richard Rice, “Divine Foreknowledge and Free-Will Theism” in Clark Pinnock, ed. The Grace of God and the Will of Man (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), 128-30.) Open theists traveling the wide road may retain the common definition (always knowing all truths); as we’ll see, they need only say that divine omniscience has less content than traditionalists have assumed, and that this content changes as the cosmos changes. I’m unable to confidently place some open theists in either camp. (e.g. Clark Pinnock, “God Limits His Knowledge” in David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds. Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986) 150-1; Donald H. Wacome, “Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom,” Review of the Evangelical Philosophical Association, 12, 49-64, 1989.)

3. As Gregory Boyd points out, this characterization of open theism as denying that God has “comprehensive” foreknowledge, or denying that God is all-knowing, or attributing ignorance of reality to God is obnoxiously question-begging in reference to his (former) position, which I’ll discuss below as “the wide road.” (Gregory Boyd, God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 124-6, “A Response to John Piper,”

<<http://www.biblical-theology.com/omniscience/piper.htm>>, “Brief Responses to Objections,”

<<http://www.gregboyd.org/gbfront/index.asp?PageID=506>>, “Common Misconceptions on the Open View,” <<http://www.gregboyd.org/gbfront/index.asp?PageID=503>>; cf. Rice, “Divine Foreknowledge,” 129) According to both wide road and shortcut open theism (explained in sections 3-5 below), there is never any truth which God fails to know. Boyd suggests the term “exhaustively definite foreknowledge” for the kind of knowledge open theists believe God lacks. (Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press), 86) Perhaps a clearer term would be: “temporally complete knowledge.” In any case, the conventional expression that open theists deny God “comprehensive” foreknowledge does fit narrow road open theism, which holds that there are truths God doesn’t know, all of which traditionalists assert that he knows.

4. William Hasker, God, Time, and Knowledge (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 187. In a recent article he more concisely says, “Omniscience... means that God knows everything that is logically capable of being known.” (“The foreknowledge problem,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, 50, 97-114, 2001, see 111) Cf. Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, David Basinger, Reason and Religious Belief, 3rd edition. (New York: Oxford University Press), 68. David Basinger also understands omniscience in the way Hasker does. (Case, 39, “Can An Evangelical Christian Justifiably Deny God’s Exhaustive Knowledge of the Future?,” Christian Scholar’s Review, 25, 1995, 133-45, see 133.)

5. Hasker, God, 187, “Foreknowledge,” 111.

6. Hasker, God, 69, “Foreknowledge,” 98; Peterson et. al., Reason, 164.

7. Hasker, God, 69.

8. Hasker, God, 73.

9. Craig overstates his case, asserting that “any adequate definition of a concept must accord with our intuitive understanding of that concept.” (William Lane Craig, “What Does God Know?” in Douglas F. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, eds., God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 137-56, see 147.)

10. ibid.

11. To be fair, it may be contrived to solve more than one philosophical problem. Philosophers have explored the idea that there are classes of true propositions which, for various reasons, it would be logically impossible for God to know. (Richard Swinburne, The Coherence of Theism, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 167-83; Peterson, et.al., Reason, 68.) Here I assume that these claims can't be sustained, and that we should therefore prefer an intuitive understanding of omniscience. If they can be sustained, we'll have to qualify the claim that God at all times knows every proposition true at that time. What has to be clearly shown is precisely how it is contradictory that God should know certain truths. Should we accept these claims, we'll have to say either that nothing could be omniscient, including God, although God has the greatest knowledge a being could have. But again, I'm not presently convinced that we should make this move.

12. Craig, "What," 147.

13. Craig, "What," 148.

14. Yet another analogy can be made with Peter Geach's case against the doctrine of divine omnipotence. Geach argues that we can't come up with a defensible meaning of "God can do anything," so we should give up that doctrine, and affirm instead that God is "almighty." (Peter Geach, "Omnipotence," Philosophy, 48, 7-20, 1973.)

15. Perhaps, though, one could argue that omniscience is best defined as awareness of all facts, rather than as knowledge of all truths. Suppose one thinks of "truths" as thoughts. Perhaps, then, when I think "I am a sinner," that truth is one which God can never know; he can't ever truly think "I am a sinner." Yet, one could still say that God is directly aware of the fact that Dale is a sinner, the fact which makes both "I am a sinner" (thought by me) and "Dale is a sinner" (thought by God) true. If this view is viable, there would be nothing misleading

about calling it a doctrine of omniscience, a theory of how God knows all “things” (that is, all facts or actual states of affairs, rather than all propositions).

There is nothing in this line of thought, though, to help narrow roaders. They are committed to an infinity of truths God doesn’t know, but equally well, they’re committed to an infinity of facts of which God is unaware (contingent, future facts about what will be freely done). Quite apart from any intuitions about the meaning of “omniscience,” this is hard (but perhaps not impossible) to swallow, given the assumptions that God is the eternal, omnipresent, source of all contingent things, who at every moment preserves all things in existence.

16. In a recent piece Hasker argues convincingly that the denial of comprehensive foreknowledge is compatible with the claim that God is perfect, since the foreknowledge dispute is fundamentally about the world God has made, and not about God’s own nature. (“God Takes Risks,” in Michael L. Peterson and Raymond J. VanArragon, eds., Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2004), 218-28, see 220-1). I agree with this latter claim, but it seems to many of us that an absolutely perfect being must know all truths.

17. The only other narrow roader I’m aware of is Peter van Inwagen. (unpublished talk, Wheaton Philosophy Conference, October 2004). There is a variant of the narrow road, which as far as I know has only been taken by Christian philosopher Dallas Willard, as reported by John Sanders. (“On Heffalumps and Heresies: Responses to Accusations Against Open Theism,” Journal of Biblical Studies, 2, 2002, available online at:

<http://journalofbiblicalstudies.org/Issue5/on_heffalumps_and_heresies.htm>, section 3; cf. Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 244-53) Willard points out that “God is omnipotent” means not that God actually does (in some sense) “all” things, but that he can do all things. Similarly, why not say that an omniscient being is one who is able to know all truths, but may in fact have decided not to know all truths? Why would God limit himself in this way? Willard

believes, quite plausibly, that for God to have genuine personal relationships with us, he can't know in advance everything we'll ever do. But I suggest that Willard's narrow road isn't the best way, for two reasons. First, as with Hasker's narrow road, this seems an undesirable redefinition of "omniscience." If God got rid of all his knowledge except his knowledge of the rules of checkers (but was still able to know all truths), he would still be "omniscient" on Willard's definition, and this seems an abuse of language. The concept of having perfect or unlimited knowledge doesn't seem to be dispositional – it refers to a condition, not a mere ability or power to be in a condition. Second, as I will explain in section 4 below, this account of God's knowledge seems inconsistent with the understanding our temporal universe required by our possession of libertarian freedom. It isn't simply God's foreknowledge that is inconsistent with human freedom, in my view, but it is also belief in an actual world.

18. Hasker says little about it in print. In a recent article he says the view that statements about future contingents are now neither true nor false "is controversial" and says that "it seems not to lend itself to further argument as readily as the considerations that arise if the existence of truths about the contingent future is granted." ("Foreknowledge," 112 n. 10; cf. God, 122-5) A recent book co-authored by Hasker says something about the reason why, for open theism, God lacks comprehensive foreknowledge: "...there are some aspects of the future that cannot be known with certainty by anyone, including God. This is not because of any deficiency in God's knowledge, but because it is the inherent nature of the future to be indefinite. God... knows as indefinite those aspects of the future that are, as of now, open and indefinite." (Peterson et. al., Reason, 167) In my view this line of thought can be cashed out only if we take the wide road, for if there is a (total) future (i.e. the portion of the actual world which is after the present), then it must be definite in all respects. For "the" future to be open can only be for there to presently be no actual future, but many as-of-now possible futures. That is, to say the future is indefinite is just to say that the realm of "the future" branches (more properly, given the flow of time up till now, things may continue in more than one way). (Cf. similar remarks by Pinnock, "God

Limits,” 150-1.)

19. With apologies to the reader, I give only an honor roll and not a bibliography here. Philosophical sources may be found in the Philosopher’s Index, and some historical theological sources are given in Boyd, Satan, 91. A more extensive list of theologians and philosophers committed to open theism and related theisms is given by John Sanders, The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 162-4, and 324.

20. On the other hand, I readily admit that other elements of “common sense” are incompatible with my preferred model of our temporal universe. People’s untutored intuitions are sometimes inconsistent, which is why we need careful thinking which transcends “common sense,” while preserving what is correct therein.

21. Thus Richard Swinburne observes that “In normal usage, propositions about a named future time... are true or false - timelessly.” (Coherence, 180)

22. This is denied by what has been called “Frankfurt Libertarianism,” which holds that free actions need only be uncaused, and the agent needn’t have ever been able to do otherwise than she actually did. I’ll resist opening that can of worms, as I agree with Hasker’s critique of this theory as poorly motivated and incomplete. (“Foreknowledge,” 109) Also, most philosophers committed to one of the traditional solutions to the problem of logical fatalism and/or the problem of theological fatalism (Molinism, Ockhamism, Boethian eternalism) seem to be committed to both libertarian freedom and a linear future. This has always struck me as inconsistent; the sine qua non of libertarian freedom is an unconditional ability to do otherwise. If one has libertarian freedom, then in some circumstances, there is more than one thing one can choose and do. The universe, so to speak, must be “loose enough” to allow this; it must be that history can progress more than one way, which is what the branching model represents.

23. Such models as I use them in this paper are highly simplified; in particular, they are not meant to suggest that at each time there are only a finite number of accessible futures.

24. Boyd, God, 54, 123.

25. I thank an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

26. This holds only when “will be” is understood in a certain way; I distinguish two meanings of “it will be that p” in the following section.

27. William Lane Craig, Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom (New York: E.J. Brill, 1991), 60; “Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingency” in Ronald H. Nash, Process Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987), 91-115, see 102.

28. Boyd, God, 124; Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 46.

29. A.N. Prior, “Indeterminism without Neuter Propositions” in his Time and Modality (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 94-103, “Time and Determinism” in his Past, Present and Future (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 113-36, “It Was To Be” in P.T. Geach and A.J.P. Kenny, eds., Papers in Logic and Ethics (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 97-108.

30. Gregory Boyd, “Neo-Molinism and the Infinite Intelligence of God,” Philosophia Christi 5, 2003, 187-204. See 192-3. (Another version of this paper by the same name is available at: <<http://www.gregboyd.org/gbfront/index.asp?PageID=700>>; see section 1.) Also see Alan Rhoda, Gregory A. Boyd, and Thomas Belt, “Omniscience and the Logic of an Open Future” (unpublished).

Boyd’s new position is remarkably similar to, if not the same as, earlier ones adopted by Charles Hartshorne (see Charles Hartshorne, “Deliberation and Excluded Middle,” Journal of Philosophy, 61, 476-7, “The Meaning of ‘Is Going to Be’,” Mind, 74, 46-58, 1965; Donald Wayne Viney, “Does Omniscience Imply Foreknowledge? Craig on Hartshorne,” Process Studies, 18, 30-7, 1989, see 32-3 [also available online at: <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2771>>]) and Nicolas Denyer (Time, Action and Necessity: A Proof of Free Will (London: Duckworth, 1981), 67-9).

However, I have no reason to believe that Boyd’s shift resulted from his reading either of them. I believe that my criticism below applies equally to the claims of Prior, Denyer, Hartshorne, and Boyd.

31. A number of technical issues arise here, which I’ll avoid in this paper. My own conviction, based

on weighing the various alternatives in the literature, is that it is reasonable to believe in truth-value gaps – that is, propositions which are neither true nor false. I address several arguments against this strategy in section 6 below.

32. For one among a great many instances of this complaint, see Charles A. Baylis, “Are Some Propositions Neither True Nor False?,” Philosophy of Science, 3, 156-66, 1936, see 162-3.

33. J.R. Lucas, The Future: An Essay on God, Temporality and Truth (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 25. A.N. Prior shows why these distinctions, which employ the concept of a “reference point” in time in addition to the time of assertion and the time of the reported event, are basically correct but ultimately too simple. (“Precursors of Tense Logic,” in his Past, Present and Future (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 1-19, see 12-5.)

34. E.g. William Lane Craig, The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987), 60, 62.

35. I quantify over accessible futures here only for the sake of convenient exposition. As I’m a presentist, I don’t believe that there are any such things; the future and past “branch-segments” in my model aren’t to be thought of as realities. What they represent are events which have been real, and events which will become or might become real. So the three situations in the chart might be more accurately put as follows: reality is such that it guarantees that p will be, guarantees that p won’t be, or neither guarantees that p will be nor that it won’t be.

36. Craig, “What,” 144-5, Divine, 57, 61, Only, 56-8, “Process Theology’s Denial of Divine Foreknowledge,” Process Studies, 16, 198-202, 1987, see 199-200, “Divine,” 99-101. Cf. Norman L. Geisler and H. Wayne House, The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2001), 58-61; Bruce Reichenbach, “Bruce Reichenbach’s Response,” [to Clark Pinnock’s “God Limits His Knowledge” in the same volume] in Basinger and

Basinger, Predestination, 175-7.

37. Nor is it true for certain past tenses, as Lucas explains. (The Future, 18-21)

38. For example: Basinger, Case, 40-1; Gregory A. Boyd and Edward K. Boyd, Letters from a Skeptic: A Son Wrestles with His Father's Questions About Christianity (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor, 1994), 30; Pinnock, "God Limits," 97, 138; Clark H. Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in Pinnock, Grace, 15-30, see 25-6; Rice, "Divine Foreknowledge," 134; Sanders, The God, 198.

39. Craig, "What," 145. This argument is adapted from Nicholas Rescher, Many-Valued Logic (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 2-3.

40. Craig, "What," 145. Cf. Only, 58, "Process," 200, "Divine," 101.

41. Craig's and Rescher's actual example is the fact that it is raining on a certain day. (Craig, "What," 145)

42. Ibid.

43. What follows is my analysis of an argument Craig has long used against foes of bivalence. See Craig, "What," 145, Only, 59, "Process," 200, Divine, 59, "Divine," 102.

44. Craig grants that translating a tensed statement into a tenseless one may involve loss of meaning, but he still asserts that one will be true or false just in case the other is – that is, that they are logically equivalent. (Craig, Only, 59, Divine, 59-60)

45. Cf. Viney, "Does Omniscience," 35.

46. Craig, "What," 145 (emphasis in original).

47. Craig, "What," 145-6. Cf. Divine, 57, 59, Only, 58-60, "Process," 200, "Divine," 101-2.

48. Craig, "What," 145-6. Cf. Divine, 45, Only, 60, "Process," 200-1.

49. Craig, Divine, 62.

50. Craig, "Process," 200, "Divine," 103, Only, 63.

51. Craig, Only, 63.

52. Craig, Divine, 46-50.

53. Susan Haack, Deviant Logic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 67-8; Craig, Divine, 46. I have not quoted her argument, but have rearranged and expanded it in an attempt to clarify it.

54. If we interpret the claim back then as asserting that her decision was then inevitable, the claim would have been false, and if we interpret it as solely making an assertion about January 1, 2006, it would have been neither true nor false then, as in both 500 BCE and at any time in 2004, reality was compatible with her making that decision, or not making that decision in 2006.

55. In correspondence, Alan Rhoda points out that 1 is an obvious truth if read in the present tense rather than timelessly or omnitemporally. (“It is now true that p if and only if it is now the case that p.”) Further, urges Rhoda, so do the rest of the premises. Don’t we have then, a clear proof of bivalence – that every proposition is now true, or now false?

In my view, no we do not. 1 is true thus interpreted, but 2 will be false. 2 says that every sentence of the form “ $p \vee \neg p$ ” is true. When p is a simple future tense assertion about a future contingent (e.g. “The Texas Rangers will win the World Series in 2011.”) “ $p \vee \neg p$ ” will be neither true nor false, as it is a truth-functional statement, and neither disjunct has a truth value. To be true, at least one of p and $\neg p$ would have to be true. To be false, both p and $\neg p$ would have to be false. Neither condition obtains, so “ $p \vee \neg p$ ” in that situation fails to be true, and so does premise 2 of our argument.

56. For example, see: Craig, “What,” 138-43, “Only,” 29-37; D.A. Carson, “How Can We Reconcile the Love and the Transcendent Sovereignty of God?,” in Huffman and Johnson, God, 279-312, see 299-304; Eric L. Johnson and Douglas S. Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” in Huffman and Johnson, God, 11-41, see 13, 28-32, 41; Ronald H. Nash, Life’s Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999), 319.

57. Basinger, “Can,” 139-45; Boyd, God, 21-87, “The Open-Theism View,” in James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 13-47, Satan, 85-133, “The Bible and the Open View of the Future,” <<http://www.biblical-theology.com/omniscience/open.htm>>; Richard Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” in Pinnock, et. al., eds., Openness, 11-58, see 26-35, 50-7; Sanders, The God, 15-139.

58. Basinger, Case, 36-7, 41, 55.

59. E.g. Justin Taylor, “Introduction,” in John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth, eds., Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003), 13-8, see 14.

60. My thanks to two anonymous referees for this journal, Thomas Belt, Gregory A. Boyd, William Hasker, John Sanders, Peter van Inwagen, an audience at the Eastern Division meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers at Asbury College, and especially Alan Rhoda for their helpful correspondence and/or comments on previous drafts of this paper.