

PROPHECY, PAST TRUTH, AND ETERNITY

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1. Introduction

In an earlier articleⁱ we presented, defended, and applied the traditional doctrine of divine eternity, the doctrine that God's mode of existence is timeless, characterized essentially by "the complete possession all at once of illimitable life".ⁱⁱ The traditional conception of God as the absolutely perfect being has included eternity as his mode of existence. In keeping with the traditional conception, the necessarily beginningless and endless life of a perfect being must also be possessed perfectly. No life, even a sempiternal life, that is imperfect in its being possessed with the radical incompleteness entailed by temporal existence could be the mode of existence of an absolutely perfect being. A perfectly possessed life must be devoid of any past, which would be no longer possessed, and of any future, which would be not yet possessed. The existence of an absolutely perfect being must be an indivisibly persistent present actuality.

Our article prompted some criticisms that attacked the concept of eternity directly, by focusing on difficulties in the notion of atemporal duration, which we take to be at the heart of the concept, or on difficulties in the epistemic and causal relationships between eternity and time, relationships presupposed by all traditional theological applications of the doctrine. We reply to these criticisms elsewhere.ⁱⁱⁱ

The applications of the doctrine of eternity that originally concerned us most were aimed at resolving the apparent incompatibility of divine immutability with divine omniscience and with the efficacy of petitionary prayer. But the application that has historically been most important to philosophers is the use of the doctrine of eternity in a purported solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom.^{iv} Some critics have attempted to discredit this application, thereby weakening the doctrine's psychological support, since the apparent usefulness of the doctrine in this application of it has provided one important motive for continuing to struggle with its complexities. The problem of foreknowledge and freedom was not, however, the original reason why philosophers and theologians concluded that God must be eternal;^v even if the doctrine of eternity were of no practical value in resolving the foreknowledge problem, it would for other reasons continue to be an important ingredient in perfect-being theology. But, in any case, we think these criticisms of its application to the problem of foreknowledge and freedom do not succeed.

In this article we examine three attempts to show that the doctrine of eternity fails to contribute to a solution to the foreknowledge problem. Since its purported contribution consists in providing a basis for arguing that God's

eternal omniscience cannot include foreknowledge and so cannot threaten human freedom, critics sometimes set out to show that even eternal omniscience is either compatible with foreknowledge or, indeed, must include it. The first of these lines has been taken very recently by David Widerker, who finds problems for the eternity solution in the traditional doctrine that God occasionally reveals to prophets truths about the future.^{vi} The second received a classic presentation in the eighteenth century at the hands of Jonathan Edwards, who based his objection on the mere possibility of prophecy.^{vii} The third criticism we will examine, Alvin Plantinga's, appears to take a different tack, arguing that even though eternal omniscience is compatible with human freedom, the problem of foreknowledge and freedom cannot be resolved simply by appealing to that aspect of the doctrine of eternity.^{viii}

In fact, as we will try to show, none of these three criticisms succeeds. In the process of arguing against them we hope to throw some light on the relationship that must obtain between an eternal God and temporal creatures.

2. Widerker's objection

Suppose that God knows, timelessly, that in 1995 Corazon Aquino introduces land reform in the Philippines. God's eternal, timeless knowledge cannot be knowledge of the event ahead of time. That is, given the doctrine of eternity, God's knowledge of that event, an event future to us in 1990, cannot be foreknowledge; and so the standard arguments showing an incompatibility between foreknowledge and freedom cannot apply to this case.^{ix} Just as your mere observation of what is going on in the street outside your window could not threaten the freedom with which that activity is being carried on, so the supposition that God eternally knows Aquino's 1995 action provides no basis for inferring that that action of hers isn't freely done.

But the traditional belief that God sometimes reveals true prophecies to certain human beings raises a difficulty for this strategy for dealing with the foreknowledge problem. A prophecy brings some of God's 'eternal knowledge into time, thus converting at least the revealed bit of it into foreknowledge. So, if we suppose, further, that God reveals to some prophet in 1990 the proposition that Aquino will introduce land reform in 1995, and reveals as well that it is God from whom this revelation comes, then regarding the 1995 action that prophet in 1990 has genuine foreknowledge. Even though it is not God who has the foreknowledge generated in this way, the standard arguments against the compatibility of foreknowledge and freedom would apply to the prophet's foreknowledge, which stems from God.

According to Widerker, a case of this sort presents defenders of the eternity solution with a trio of unpalatable options:

- (1) They can deny the doctrine of prophecy and claim that God never reveals to prophets any of his eternal knowledge; or
- (2) They can concede that prophesied human actions are inevitable, are not done freely; or
- (3) They can deny the principle of the fixity of the past..

The principle of the fixity of the past (PFP) captures the virtually universal intuition that it is never in anyone's power at time t to bring it about that some actual state of affairs that is past with respect to t did not in fact occur.^x If defenders of the eternity solution reject options (1) and (2), it seems they can maintain that Aquino is free to do otherwise in 1995 only by conceding that it is within her power in 1995 to bring it about that what was the prophet's 1990 foreknowledge was, after all, *not* the prophet's 1990 foreknowledge. Thus in making that move they would be denying PFP.

Widerker takes options (1) and (2) to constitute denials of basic religious beliefs, and so he supposes that defenders of eternity will indeed find themselves embarrassedly committed to rejecting PFP— an outcome that shows, he maintains, that the doctrine of eternity does not provide a solution to the foreknowledge problem.

We share Widerker's view that option (3), denying PFP, is in tolerable, and we agree with him that options (1) and (2) are in compatible with beliefs which defenders of the eternity solution are very likely to hold. Nevertheless, we still include ourselves among those defenders. In order to say how we think the solution escapes Widerker's criticism, it will be helpful, first, to say what we take free will and free action to consist in, and then to look more closely at the nature of prophecy.

3. Free will and free action

An agent, S , has freedom of will with respect to some volition, V , or V is an instance of free will on S 's part, just in case V meets these two conditions:

- FW1. V is not causally determined; and
- FW2. V is S 's own volition.

These two conditions are to be understood in the following way. (FW1) V is not causally determined only if V is not the result of an unbroken causal sequence that (a) originates in something other than S 's own beliefs and desires and that (b) makes V unavoidable for S . (FW2) V is S 's own only if (a) S 's intellect represents the state of affairs that becomes the object of V as (under some description) a good to be pursued by S at that time and (b) S forms V in consequence of that representation on the part of S 's intellect.^{xi} FW1 excludes as unfree any volition that is caused by something external to the agent, and so FW1 rules out compatibilist interpretations of free will.^{xii} FW2 excludes as unfree any volition ascribable to the agent only superficially—e.g., one resulting from some unconsidered, ungoverned passion or from some pathological state of the agent, such as a volition that the agent would not have had in the absence of hallucinogenic drugs the agent chose to take.

It is worth noting that these conditions, taken singly or together, do not entail the intuitively appealing principle of alternate possibilities. One form of this principle is that an agent who acts with free will always could *do* otherwise than she does. Consider, for example, a sane, loving mother who is casually invited to torture her baby to death just for fun, and suppose that in

this particular instance God would in fact intervene to prevent the mother from accepting or even ignoring the invitation, although neither the mother nor her sadistic interlocutor know or believe this. Then as a matter of fact it is not possible for the mother to do otherwise than she does, when she rejects the invitation. But it is easy to suppose that her volition to reject it nevertheless satisfies conditions FW1 and FW2, and is thus an instance of free will on her part.

Conditions FW1 and FW2 also do not entail a weaker form of the principle of alternate possibilities, that an agent who acts with free will could always *will* otherwise than she wills. It is psychologically impossible for a sane, loving mother to agree to torture her baby to death just for fun; that's part of what it means to describe her as sane and loving. But there is no incoherence in supposing that the volition on which she acts in rejecting the insane invitation satisfies conditions FW1 and FW2 for freedom of will.

There are good reasons to adopt conditions for free will that do not *entail* the principle of alternate possibilities.^{xiii} But, particularly in view of the principle's intuitive appeal, it should also be noted that conditions FW1 and FW2 are *compatible* with the principle. And, just because of its intuitive appeal, the principle of alternate possibilities is adopted in this article as a rule of thumb. That is, we proceed on the assumption that if there is no particular reason for questioning the applicability of the principle to a particular case, then an action that lacks alternate possibilities, an action that is inevitable for an agent, is not an action that the agent does freely.

We define free action in terms of the account of free will.

An action, *A*, is a free action of an agent, *S*, just in case these two conditions are met:

- FA1. The volition on which *S* acts in doing *A* is an instance of free will on *S*'s part; and
- FA2. In doing *A* *S* is doing what he wants to do when he wants to do it.^{xiv}

FA1 excludes as unfree any action stemming from a volition excluded as unfree by our definition of free will. FA2 excludes coerced actions as unfree even if they satisfy FA1.^{xv} In that same way, some actions done out of passion, obsession, or addiction might also be assessed as unfree—e.g., taking the drug to which one has become addicted.

4. The nature of prophecy

Since defenders of the eternity solution are unlikely to consider accepting Widerker's first option—i.e., denying that divinely revealed prophecy ever occurs—the heart of his criticism of the eternity solution is his claim that its adherents must admit that prophesied actions are unfree unless they are willing to deny PFP. Because he is, understandably, drawing on religious tradition, he takes his examples of prophecy from the Bible.

The first thing to notice about biblical prophecies is that they vary considerably in form. For instance, some are categorical, but others are

conditional—such as this one regarding the throne of David: “If thy children will keep my covenants and my testimony that I will teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore” (Psalm 132:12). Obviously prophecies conditional in this way do not render any action inevitable or unfree.^{xvi}

Even categorical prophecies are sometimes so vague that they cannot be taken as rendering any particular action unfree. Consider, for example, this prophecy from the book of Daniel: “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people” (Daniel 8:23-24). This prophecy leaves vague the identity of the king, and the nature, victim, time, and place of the king’s action. Consequently, it renders no particular action inevitable or unfree. Its central claim might be presented in this form:

It will be the case that some king destroys some people at some time.

Such a prophecy could have threatened freedom only in case one or more of the elements compounded within the scope of ‘It will be the case that’ had been brought out and separately identified in, e.g., this form:

There is or will be some king, K, and there will be some time, T, such that it will be the case that K destroys some people at T.^{xvii}

Of course, the vagueness of any particular form of words cannot be a feature of God’s perfect knowledge itself, and even a vague prophecy brings some eternal knowledge into time. So, someone might think, what we have done to dismiss this prophecy as a threat to freedom has no bearing on the bit of divine knowledge conveyed, however obscurely, by the vague prophecy. But our present concern is just with the alleged threat to freedom in the expressed prophecies themselves. The further possibility, that there is a threat to freedom in the divine knowledge itself that stands behind the prophecy, is the one raised by Jonathan Edwards and considered in the next section of our paper.

Not every traditionally recognized prophecy is characterized by the degree of vagueness that renders the prophecy in Daniel unthreatening to freedom. Some categorical prophecies unmistakably identify certain elements of the prophesied event. In the story of Oedipus, the oracle says that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother. But even if we suppose that the ultimate source of the oracle is an infallible and perfectly truthful deity, and that consequently the oracle makes it inevitable that that particular agent will behave in those particular ways to his father and his mother, we need not conclude that the actual killing and the actual marrying are not free actions for Oedipus. What is rendered inevitable is, at most, the occurrence of such actions sometime between the pronouncement of the oracle and the deaths of the people mentioned in it. Nothing in that constraint entails that any particular action of Oedipus’s will be inevitable or unfree. It is compatible with the

prophecy that any particular instance of his killing his father or marrying his mother—the ones related in the story or any others—meet conditions FA1 and FA2 for free action and even satisfy the principle of alternate possibilities. Instead of killing his father when and as he did, for instance, he might have freely refrained from fighting on that occasion, and the prophesied event might have occurred another time, another way. Although crucial elements of this prophecy are unmistakably identified (the agent and the nature and objects of his actions), the vagueness of its other elements (e.g., time, place, and manner) leaves it compatible with the agent's freedom.

Still, it is easy to imagine a prophecy in which no crucial elements are left vague; and, more important in the context of our consideration of Widerker's position, there appear to be biblical prophecies of this sort. In Acts 9:10-12, for instance, a Christian named Ananias has a vision in which God says to him, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Saul has had a prophetic vision that stipulated not only the agent and the nature and recipient of the action, but also the place where and the way it will be done: Ananias will go to Judas's house in Straight Street and put his hand on Saul so that Saul's sight may be restored. In telling Ananias about it God does not say whether the prophecy to Saul mentioned any particular time, but the fact that God is commanding Ananias to go to Saul at once is at least consonant with the prophecy's having specified a time in the very near future, and, for the sake of the example, we will suppose that it did.^{xviii} This prophecy, then, seems to be the sort that would render Ananias's particular prophesied action inevitable and unfree.

But Ananias's reply to the command is a version of 'If it's all the same to you, God, I'd rather not'—suggesting that he, at any rate, does not think of this prophesied action of his as inevitable. "Lord," he says, "I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here [in Damascus] he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:13-14). Ananias seems to view the situation as one in which his own volitions might, after all, be efficacious. Is this attitude of his just naive?

The most that may be said to have been rendered inevitable by the prophecy is that before this day is over (supposing the time to have been specified in that way) Ananias will put his hand on Saul, while Saul is in Judas's house, and that Saul's sight will be consequently restored. Now, that might take place against Ananias's will. For example, Judas, waiting for the promised event, might become impatient and, in order to rid himself of an incapacitated houseguest, kidnap Ananias and force him to put his hand on Saul. On the other hand, the inevitable event might take place not at all against Ananias's will but rather because he freely wills to do what he believes the prophecy has rendered inevitable.^{xix} Nothing in the prophecy or in the circumstances in which Ananias fulfills it is incompatible with supposing that in doing so he meets both conditions for freedom of will: it is certainly possible that he act as prophesied but on a volition that (FW1) is not causally determined and (FW2) is his own. The prophecy renders his action inevitable, but from the fact that an action is inevitable it does not follow that the volition

the agent has as he does the action is inevitable. An action that is inevitable and unfree because in doing it the agent is not (FA2) doing what he wants to do when he wants to do it may nevertheless be an action in which (FA1) the agent acts with free will.

But in order to decide in what respects Ananias's will and action may or may not be free it helps to see how the story continues. Ananias's reply, indicating temerity and reluctance, is followed by God's saying to him "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). In letting Ananias see that his mission will help rather than endanger God's saints, God presumably dispels Ananias's reason for objecting to doing what he has been told to do. In this way God strengthens Ananias's natural inclination to cooperate in furthering God's work. "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord.. hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight..." (Acts 9:17). In the circumstances, there is good reason to think not only that (FA1) Ananias did freely what the prophecy had rendered inevitable, but also that in going to Saul (FA2) he was doing what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it.

So not only can an inevitable action be done by an agent acting with free will, it is also possible for an action to be inevitable and yet a free action. Cases of this sort will be cases in which the agent himself has a powerful desire to do the action, his will is not causally determined by anything external to him or by pathological factors within him, and the inaccessible alternatives to his inevitable action are alternatives the agent has no desire to do or even some desire not to do.^{xx}

5. Reply to Widerker's objection

The story of Ananias and the other examples of prophecy we have been considering suggest that if Widerker's criticism is to succeed in showing that prophecy is incompatible with freedom, it will have to be construed quite narrowly as regards both the prophecy and the freedom. The prophecy will, in the first place, have to specify all the pertinent details of the prophesied action: the agent, the patient, the nature and manner of the action, and its time and place. In the second place, in order to block the sort of opening left for freedom in the story of Ananias, the prophecy will have to be about an act of will rather than an overt act. Finally, the prophesied act of will cannot be such that the agent finds every recognized alternative to it unthinkable for him. A prophecy predicting in all requisite specificity an act that has no acceptable alternatives recognized by the agent still leaves open the possibility that (FA1) the agent does it with freedom of will and that (FA2) the act is precisely what the agent wants to do just then.

A prophecy in which an act of will is specified in all requisite detail and has at least one alternative that the agent does not find unthinkable for him is what is needed to substantiate Widerker's charge. Faced with such a prophecy, defenders of the eternity solution should, we think, simply grant Widerker's point and accept his second option: in such a case the agent of the

prophesied action does not act with free will, and so his action is not free. But we are also inclined to think that no biblical prophecies are of this sort.^{xxi} If that's so, it's very likely to be so just because such prophecies would render the prophesied action unfree. If, as Christian theologians have often observed, a perfectly good God would not directly nullify the nature he has given his creatures, then neither would he deliver prophecies that would have that effect.

6. Edwards's objection

Jonathan Edwards recognized no *problem* of foreknowledge and free will. Instead, he fully accepted what he considered to be the well-reasoned conclusion that God must have foreknowledge and that human actions are consequently necessitated: "Having proved, that God has a certain and infallible prescience of the acts of the will of moral agents, I come now... to shew how it follows from hence, that these events are *necessary*, with a necessity of connection or consequence."^{xxii} He therefore saw the doctrine of eternity not as a putative solution to a troubling problem but as an attempted evasion of an indubitable truth. In his view, even if God's knowledge were not temporal, "God knows the future voluntary actions of men in such a sense beforehand, as that he is able particularly to declare, and foretell them, and write them, or cause them to be written down in a Book, as he often has done; and that therefore the necessary connection which there is between God's knowledge and the event known, does as much prove the event to be necessary beforehand, as if the divine knowledge were in the same sense before the event, as the prediction or writing is. lithe knowledge be infallible, then the expression of it in the written prediction is infallible; that is, there is an infallible connection between that written prediction and the event. And if so, then it is impossible it should ever be otherwise, than that that prediction and the event should agree: and this is the same thing as to say, 'tis impossible but that the event should come to pass: and this is the same as to say, that its coming to pass is necessary. So that it is manifest, that *there being no proper succession* [i.e., no temporality] *in God's mind, makes no alteration as to the necessity of the existence of the events which God knows.*"^{xxiii}

Although in this passage Edwards alludes to actual prophecies (e.g., "as he often has done"), he does so in order to establish his principal claim, that God "*is able* particularly to declare" "the future voluntary actions of men", which are consequently necessitated even if God's knowledge is timeless—i.e., without any "proper succession"—just "*as if* the divine knowledge *were* in the same sense *before* the event, as the prediction or writing is". And so the sort of reply we make to Widerker, which depends on considerations of actual prophecies, cannot be extended to Edwards, whose assessment of eternity as making no difference to divine determinism depends on a consideration of eternal knowledge itself. What must its nature be if divinely revealed prophecy is to be possible?

Edwards bases his answer to that question on his view that God's omniscience, even if understood as timeless, entails a necessary connection between God and the known event; it is this connection that he takes to render the event necessary "beforehand":

[A]ll certain knowledge proves the necessity of the truth known... Though it be true, that there is no succession in God's knowledge, and the manner of his knowledge is to us inconceivable, yet thus much we know concerning it, that there is no event, past, present, or to come, that God is ever uncertain of; he never is, never was, and never will be without infallible knowledge of it; he always sees the existence of it to be certain and infallible. And as he always sees things just as they are in truth; hence there never is in reality anything contingent in such a sense, as that possibly it may happen never to exist. If, strictly speaking, there is no foreknowledge in God, 'tis because those things which are future to us, are as present to God, as if they already had existence: and that is as much as to say, that future events are always in God's view as evident, clear, sure and necessary, as if they already were. If there never is a time wherein the existence of the event is not present with God, then there never is a time wherein it is not as much impossible for it to fail of existence, as if its existence were present, and were already come to pass.

God's viewing things so perfectly and unchangeably as that there is no succession in his ideas or judgment, don't hinder it but that there is properly now, in the mind of God, a certain and perfect knowledge of the moral actions of men, which to us are an hundred years hence: yea, the objection [raised by supporters of the doctrine of eternity] supposes this; and therefore it certainly don't hinder but that, by the foregoing arguments, it is now impossible these moral actions should not come to pass.^{xxiv}

Edwards's rejection of eternity as an attempted evasion of fore knowledge and its consequences relies on the fact that the doctrine of eternity includes the claim that God knows future events. Eternity would otherwise be incompatible with prophecy, and defenders of eternity would be forced to accept Widerker's first option. Edwards acknowledges that God's eternal knowledge of future events would not be *foreknowledge* but, rather, certain and infallible knowledge of the future that is grounded in the fact that events future to temporal creatures are present to eternal God. But present events, like past events, are as they are and cannot be otherwise. So, since on the doctrine of eternity as Edwards construes it our future is now present to God, our future now has the sort of unalterability or inevitability that undeniably characterizes our present. Consequently, even on the doctrine of eternity nothing about our future is genuinely contingent or evitable for us. It is in this way that Edwards argues that eternal knowledge would be just as incompatible with free will as foreknowledge is, starting from his correct observation that even those who claim God is eternal generally admit that he has the power to reveal true prophecies.

7. Edwards's misunderstanding of eternity

We think Edwards's argument is spoiled by his failure to appreciate certain implications of the doctrine of eternity.^{xxv} The language that has always been associated with the doctrine makes expressions such as 'present' and 'now' ambiguous between applications to time and to eternity. In the context of the doctrine, the present tense, too, is ambiguous between indicating present time

and timelessness. Furthermore, on the doctrine of eternity there will be one sort of simultaneity relating temporal things and another sort that obtains when the relata include both eternal and temporal things. Since being temporally simultaneous with some thing or event may be understood (roughly) as occurring, existing, or obtaining *at the same time as it*,^{xxvi} a different account of simultaneity is obviously required when not all the relata are in time. It is in that connection that we developed our notion of ET-simultaneity to portray the relationship presupposed by causal or epistemic interaction between eternal and temporal beings.

ET-simultaneity may be defined in this way: For every x and for every y , x and y are ET-simultaneous if and only if

- (i) either x is eternal and y is temporal, or vice versa (for convenience, let x be eternal and y temporal); and
- (ii) with respect to some A in the unique eternal reference frame, x and y are both present—i.e., (a) x is in the eternal present with respect to A , (b) y is in the temporal present, and (c) both x and y are situated with respect to A in such a way that A can enter into direct causal relations with each of them and (if capable of awareness) can be directly aware of each of them; and
- (iii) with respect to some B in one of the infinitely many temporal reference frames, x and y are both present—i.e., (a) x is in the eternal present, (b) y is at the same time as B , and (c) both x and y are situated with respect to B in such a way that B can enter into direct causal relations with each of them and (if capable of awareness) can be directly aware of each of them.^{xxvii}

Like temporal simultaneity, ET-simultaneity is symmetric: x is ET simultaneous with y if and only if y is ET-simultaneous with x . Unlike temporal simultaneity, however, ET-simultaneity is neither reflexive nor transitive. Because x can be ET-simultaneous with y only in case one of them is eternal and the other is temporal, nothing can be ET-simultaneous with itself: ET-simultaneity is irreflexive. And the requirement of different domains for the relata of ET-simultaneity also guarantees its intransitivity. If the requirement of different domains is fulfilled in the premisses of the transitivity schema, it must be violated in the conclusion (where ‘ R ’ = ‘is ET-simultaneous with’):

$$x R y, y R z, \text{ } x R z.$$

On this basis it is clear that many of the claims crucial to Edwards’s argument are ambiguous. For instance, his claim that “there is properly now, in the mind of God, a certain and perfect [eternal] knowledge of the moral actions of men, which to us are an hundred years hence” is ambiguous between (at least) these two readings (where ‘ A ’ designates some particular “moral actions of men” and ‘ t ’ designates a time one hundred years from now):

- E1. It is now (in the temporal present) the case that God eternally knows *A-at-t*.
- E2. It is now (in the eternal present) the case that God eternally knows *A-at-t*.

And there is an analogous ambiguity in the tense of the main verb in Edwards's claim that "those things which are future to us, are as [eternally] present to God, as they already had existence", which can be read in either of these ways:

- E3. It is now (in the temporal present) the case that *A-at-t* is eternally present to God.
- E4. It is now (in the eternal present) the case that *A-at-t* is eternally present to God.

Although E2 and E4 provide no insight into the nature of the eternal present, the little they say is altogether in keeping with the doctrine of eternity. But since the eternal present can have no temporal relations with anything, no truths (such as E2 and E4) about the state of God's knowledge in the *eternal* present could show "the [future 'contingent'] event to be necessary *beforehand*", as Edwards thinks present-tense truths about God's eternal knowledge do. The readings that appear to generate the conclusion Edwards needs are E1 and E3, which tie God's eternal knowledge to the temporal present.

In one respect Edwards seems entitled to E1 and E3. Consider E5 and E6, which may well appear to be the contradictories of E1 and E3:

- E5. It is *not* now (in the temporal present) the case that God eternally knows *A-at-t*.
- E6. It is *not* now (in the temporal present) the case that *A-at-t* is eternally present to God.

It looks as if defenders of eternity would want to reject these apparent contradictories of E1 and E3. After all, E5 might be read as simply denying that God is omniscient. And E6 might be read as denying that the eternal present is ET-simultaneous with *A-at-t* although the doctrine of eternity entails ET-simultaneity between the eternal present and absolutely every time.

However, these readings of E5 and E6, which lend Edwards's argument the support it needs, depend on treating the expression 'now (in the temporal present)' as idle—just an awkward, pointless show of precision. In fact, omitting it entirely shows more clearly why defenders of eternity would be likely to reject E5 and E6. But that fact about E5 and E6 is enough to suggest that they are not unmistakably the contradictories of E1 and E3. For in E1 and E3 the expression 'now (in the temporal present)' is *not* idle but, rather, does the all-important work of tying God's eternal knowledge to the temporal present, the crucial move in Edwards's argument.

The phrase 'It is now the case that...' of course implies that what is within its scope describes something that currently obtains or occurs. But God's knowing, or having certain things present to him, is *not* a currently

obtaining state of affairs if what is meant is that it obtains in the temporal present, and the '(in the temporal present)' rider attached to 'It is now the case that...' in E1 and E3 restricts their meaning in just that way. So, because the basis on which defenders of eternity ought to reject E1 and E3 is the general inapplicability of temporal specifications to eternal states of affairs, the proper contradictories of E1 and E3 require negations of broader scope than those in E5 and E6; they require negations that more clearly negate 'now (in the temporal present)':

E1n. It is not the case that it is now (in the temporal present) the case that God eternally knows *A-at-t*.

E3n. It is not the case that it is now (in the temporal present) the case that *A-at-t* is eternally present to God.

8. Edwards's position and ET-simultaneity

Still, the concept of ET-simultaneity might seem to offer Edwards's position a new lease on life. Since the eternal present is ET-simultaneous with every time, it is ET-simultaneous with the temporal present. And perhaps the notion of currently obtaining in the temporal present could be broadened to include obtaining ET-simultaneously with the temporal present.

On this generous interpretation, E3 may be read as telling us that there are relations of ET-simultaneity (a) between certain events future to us and God's eternal present, and (b) between God's eternal present and the temporal present. Similarly, ET may be read as telling us that God's eternal knowledge, characterized by his ET-simultaneity with certain temporal events future to us that are objects of his knowledge, is itself ET-simultaneous with the temporal present.^{xxviii} Edwards's position becomes more formidable, then, if we interpret it in terms of ET-simultaneity and take this claim of his to be its central thesis: "If there never is a time wherein the existence of the [future 'contingent'] event is not present with God, then there never is a time wherein it is not as much impossible for it to fail of existence, as if its existence were present, and were already come to pass."

If it is now the case that God knows *A-at-t*, this is in virtue of the fact that the moral actions of those men a hundred years from now. are present to God. But if it is now the case that *A-at-t* is present to God, those events are not really contingent, those actions are not really free; *A-at-t* is fixed and inevitable, like anything else that is currently obtaining, and so it is "impossible for it to fail of existence". In other words, Edwards thinks that from

E1'. It is now the case that God knows the particular sins Tom, Dick, and Harry commit one hundred years from today

we can infer

E7. It is now the case that Tom, Dick, and Harry will commit those sins one hundred years from today.

His warrant for thinking so is that we surely could infer E7 from EI' if 'God' in EI' were replaced by the name of some temporal knower—'Theresa', let's say. When the stipulated knower is temporal, prefacing these claims with 'It is now the case that' in no way affects the validity of the inference. When the knower is eternal, however, 'It is now the case that' (or Edwards's 'there is a time wherein') makes a crucial difference. On the interpretation we are supplying for Edwards, EI' says that there is a relationship of ET-simultaneity between God's eternal present and those future sins, the relationship that essentially characterizes his eternal knowledge of temporal events, *and* that God's eternal present, in which God's, knowing A at-t occurs, is likewise ET-simultaneous with our temporal present. On that interpretation, does EI' entail E7? E7 says that one of the states of affairs currently obtaining in the temporal present is Tom's, Dick's, and Harry's future sinning. E7 would follow from EI' if, but only if, ET-simultaneity were transitive. In that case, from the two claims of ET-simultaneity conveyed in EI' Edwards would be entitled to conclude that the future sinning is ET-simultaneous with the temporal present. (That is, (a) Now [$t - 100$] is ET-simultaneous with God's eternally knowing A-at-t, (b) God's eternally knowing A-at-t is ET-simultaneous with A-at-t, therefore (c) Now is ET-simultaneous with A-at-t.) But, as we have pointed out, ET-simultaneity is an intransitive relationship. From the facts that some past or future state of affairs is ET-simultaneous with the eternal present and that the eternal present is ET-simultaneous with the temporal present, it does not follow that that past or future state of affairs is ET-simultaneous (or simultaneous in any other respect) with the temporal present. The intransitivity of ET-simultaneity invalidates all inferences of the form 'It is now the case that God knows *p*; therefore, it is now the case that *p*', where '*p*' ranges over contingent propositions. Even on the generous interpretation that helps out Edwards's position with the concept of ET-simultaneity, his objection to the eternity solution fails.

Edwards pretty clearly assumes that if future events are really present to God, then, since God sees things as they really are, future events are somehow really present for us with all the infinitely detailed features God discerns in them. For that reason the future, present to God, is in all its details inevitable for us.

On the doctrine of eternity, however, if future contingent events are really present to God, it is because the time in which they happen to occur is ET-simultaneous with God's eternal present. From that explanation it doesn't follow that those events are somehow really present *temporally*, even though the eternal present is also ET simultaneous with the temporal present. *A fortiori* it doesn't follow, as Edwards claims, that since God "always sees [future] things as they are in truth.. there never is in reality anything contingent in such a sense, as that possibly it may happen never to exist". The supposition that Corazon Aquino's introducing land reform in 1995 is ET-simultaneous with God's eternal present is compatible with her action's being free, stemming from earlier free volitions and contingent causes, each of which is itself ET-simultaneous with the eternal present.^{xxix} Analogously, each event leading up to Aquino's overthrowing Marcos in 1986 was simultaneous with our temporal present then as that event was occurring and was or might well have been the object of someone's direct temporal awareness. But nothing in

those relationships of simultaneity or direct awareness makes those events inevitable rather than contingent.

Understanding that ET-simultaneity is intransitive blocks Edwards's attempt to infer the inevitability of temporal events from God's unquestioned ability to reveal prophecies about them. And, finally, there is nothing in the doctrine of eternity's account of time, eternity, and their interrelationship to support Edwards's basic conviction, that future events eternally present to God are as temporally determinate as if they had "already come to pass".

9. Plantinga on past truth and eternity

In dealing with the problem of foreknowledge and freedom, Plantinga understandably focuses his attention on Edwards's "particularly perspicuous" formulation of it.^{xxx} Accordingly, Plantinga dismisses the eternity solution just because he thinks that "the claim that God is outside of time is essentially *irrelevant* to Edwardsian arguments",^{xxxi} a position at least superficially much like Edwards's own attitude towards the eternity solution. But Plantinga's dismissal of the solution, unlike Edwards's or Widerker's, depends not on assumptions about actual or possible prophecy but only on the past truth of claims about God's knowledge, regardless of whether that knowledge is or can be communicated to any person in time.

In view of the similarity between Edwards's and Plantinga's dismissals of the concept of eternal knowledge as inefficacious or irrelevant, it is not surprising that Plantinga characterizes the argument on which he bases his dismissal as a restatement of Edwards's argument.^{xxxii} Here is the argument:

Suppose in fact Paul will mow his lawn in 1995. Then the proposition *God (eternally) knows that Paul mows in 1995* is now true. That proposition, furthermore, was true eighty years ago,^{xxxiii} the proposition *God knows (eternally) that Paul mows in 1995* not only *is* true *now*, but *was* true *then*. Since what is past is necessary, it is now necessary that this proposition was true eighty years ago. But it is logically necessary that if this proposition was true eighty years ago, then Paul mows in 1995. Hence his mowing then is necessary in just the way the past is. But, then it neither now is nor in future will be within Paul's power to refrain from mowing.^{xxxiv}

It will be convenient to lay out Plantinga's argument in this way:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Suppose | (1) Paul will mow his lawn in 1995. |
| | (2) The proposition <i>God eternally knows that Paul mows in 1995</i> is true now. |
| | [] (3) The proposition <i>God eternally knows that Paul mows in 1995</i> was true eighty years ago. ^{xxxv} |
| | (4) What is past is necessary. |
| | (5) It is now necessary that <i>God eternally knows that Paul mows in 1995</i> was true eighty years ago. |
| | (6) Necessarily, if <i>God eternally knows that Paul mows in 1995</i> was true eighty years ago, then Paul |

- mows in 1995.
- (7) Paul's mowing in 1995 is necessary.
 - (8) It neither now is nor in future will be within Paul's power to refrain from mowing in 1995.

Since this argument makes use of the notion of God's *eternal* knowledge and nevertheless leads to the conclusion that Paul's "mowing [in 1995] is necessary in just the way the past is..., the claim that God is outside of time is essentially irrelevant to Edwardsian arguments" presenting the problem of divine determinism.

10. Plantinga on hard facts

The first thing to notice about this argument is that (4), an old, familiar, and particularly troublesome version of the principle of the fixity of the past (PFP), is what makes it go. We have all learned to be cautious about the notion of the necessity of the past. In particular, it is commonly maintained that only "hard facts" about the past are "necessary", with the accidental necessity that accrues to what is genuinely past, and Plantinga endorses that position. He doesn't provide a definition of hard facts—a notoriously hard thing to do—but he does make clear which sorts of facts about the past he thinks *can't* be hard facts: "(17) [God knew eighty years ago that Paul will mow in 1995^{xxxvi}] is not a hard fact about the past; for...it entails

(18) Paul will mow his lawn in 1995;

and no proposition that entails (18) is a hard fact about the past. . . .No proposition that entails (18) is a hard fact about the past, because no such proposition is *strictly* about the past. We may not be able to give a criterion for being strictly about the past; but we do have at least a rough and intuitive grasp of this notion. . . .First, no conjunctive proposition that contains (18) as a conjunct is (now, in 1986) strictly about the past. Thus *Paul will mow his lawn in 1995 and Socrates was wise*, while indeed a proposition about the past, is not *strictly* about the past. And second, hard facthood is closed under logical equivalence: any proposition equivalent (in the broadly logical sense) to a proposition strictly about the past is itself strictly about the past. But any proposition that entails (18) is equivalent, in the broadly logical sense, to a conjunctive proposition one conjunct of which is (18); hence each such proposition is equivalent to a proposition that is not a hard fact about the past, and is therefore itself not a hard fact about the past."^{xxxvii}

Plantinga uses this negative account of hard facts against Edwards's argument for the incompatibility of foreknowledge and free will. In Plantinga's view, the claims about the past that are said to be necessary in Edwards's argument are not hard facts and so do not qualify as necessary under the principle of the necessity of the past.

11. Reply to Plantinga's argument

But, as we have seen, Plantinga's own argument for the irrelevance of the doctrine of eternity takes the form of an argument for the incompatibility of eternal knowledge and free will. As such, it is vulnerable to the same objection he brings against Edwards. In explaining that no 'proposition entailing (18) is a hard fact, Plantinga is out to show in particular that these two propositions are not hard facts:

- (13) Eighty years ago, the proposition *Paul will mow his lawn in 1995* was true;
- (17) God knew eighty years ago that Paul will mow in 1995.^{xxxviii}

On this basis, supplied by Plantinga himself, it is easy to see that a crucial step in his argument against the eternity solution is not a hard fact either.

- (3) The proposition *God eternally knows that Paul mows in 1995* was true eighty years ago

entails

- (3a) God eternally knows that Paul mows in 1995,^{xxxix}

and (3a) entails (18) just as (17) does.^{xl} Since, on Plantinga's view, no proposition that entails (a proposition that entails) (18) is a hard fact, (3) is not a hard fact.

But if (3) is not a hard fact, Plantinga's version of the principle of the necessity of the past in (4) does not apply to it. In that case, the derivation of (5) is invalid, and so the argument is invalid. The derivable version of (5) is simply (3) all over again, and so the derivable version of (7) is simply (7R) 'Paul mows in 1995', or (1), the original supposition, all over again. And from (7R) or (1) it does not follow that (8) 'It neither now is nor in future will be within Paul's power to refrain from mowing in 1995'.

So if Plantinga is right in thinking that Edwards's argument against the compatibility of foreknowledge and free will fails, then his own argument against the compatibility of eternal knowledge and free will fails also, and for just the same reasons as those he alleges against Edwards.

12. The role of the argument in Plantinga's project

Edward Wierenga, in commenting on an earlier version of this paper, claimed that our objection against Plantinga's argument shows a misunderstanding of his project.^{xli} Wierenga pointed out that Plantinga thinks that a version of the hard-fact/soft-fact distinction is enough to solve the problem of foreknowledge and freedom, without recourse to the doctrine of eternity.^{xlii} Since the argument we are objecting to is intended to show only that

the concept of God's eternal knowledge by itself is not enough to solve the problem, it is of course an argument that deliberately ignores the hard-fact/soft-fact distinction. And so our criticism, which depends on introducing the distinction, is misconceived.

But the fact that the argument ignores the distinction means that it is trading on a false and misleading view of the applicability of PFP, as our objection shows. It is, therefore, not an argument that could show the insufficiency or irrelevance of the eternity solution considered on its own, because it doesn't consider it on its own but burdens it with a false view of the necessity of the past. As our discussion of Edwards should help to show, the eternity solution developed on its own has no need of the hard-facts/soft-facts distinction. We have recourse to it in objecting to Plantinga's argument only because the argument's deliberate avoidance of it unfairly couples the concept of God's eternal knowledge with a concept of the necessity of the past that Plantinga himself regards as crude and mistaken. No argument that burdens the doctrine of eternity in such a way could succeed in showing that the doctrine is irrelevant to the problem of divine determinism.

13. Past truth and ET-simultaneity

Someone might suppose that even if this particular argument from past truth fails, the idea behind it is generally sound and simply needs to be presented differently. That is, someone might suppose that the past truth of a proposition about God's eternal knowledge of a future event does show that the event is somehow fixed or inevitable *now*, before the event occurs. If that aspect of the future were *not* fixed in such a way, one might think, how could it be true now, or in the past, that God *knows* it?

But this way of raising the problem of past truth is just a variation on Edwards's objection to the eternity solution. Like Edwards's argument, it trades on the transitivity of simultaneity in a context in which the only appropriate simultaneity relationship is intransitive. God's eternal knowledge of an event that is future to us is characterized in part by the fact that the time at which that event actually occurs is ET-simultaneous with God's eternal present. Now consider this claim:

- (A) The proposition (g) 'God eternally knows *p*' (where *p* is some future contingent event) is now true.

Proposition (g) of course entails *p*, but does it also entail this further claim?

- (B) It is now the case that *p*.

Claim (B) is required for the argument that God's eternal knowledge shows future events to be fixed *now*, before they actually occur. Now a proposition is true only if things are as the proposition says they are. But the state of affairs presented in proposition (g) is an eternal state of affairs, God's eternally knowing *p*. What basis is there for saying, with (A), that (g) is *now* true, where

‘now’ is clearly intended to ‘pick out the temporal present?’

The only basis, as far as we can see, is the relationship of ET-simultaneity between that eternal state of affairs and the temporal present. If that’s right, then the truth of (A) depends on two relations of ET-simultaneity: one between the future event and the eternal present (*p* is ET-simultaneous with God’s eternal knowing), the other between the eternal present and the temporal present (God’s eternal knowing is ET-simultaneous with *now*). But since ET-simultaneity is intransitive, the truth of (A) doesn’t entail that *p* is in any way fixed or inevitable *now*, in the temporal present. So although (A) entails *p*, (A) doesn’t entail (B) ‘It is *now* the case that *p*’; and without (B) there is no basis for claiming that any future event is now inevitable simply in virtue of God’s eternally knowing it.

Restated in this way, then, the thought presumably behind Plantinga’s argument from past truth collapses into Edwards’s objection to the eternity solution, which we have already provided grounds for rejecting.

14. The trouble with examples

The natural tendency to think that future events are inevitable, somehow already present for us if they are really present to God, seems to stem at least partly from the way examples have to be constructed in order to be pertinent to this discussion. In order to talk concretely about God’s atemporal awareness of some future contingent event, we have to begin by saying something of the sort we’ve been saying in this paper: ‘Suppose that in 1995 Corazon Aquino will introduce land reform legislation; in that case that free future action of hers is ET-simultaneous with God’s eternal present’. And there is a natural inclination to think that anyone who maintains that *p* is thereby committed to maintaining (or at least not denying) that it is now the case that *p*. As long as we’re operating on this supposition about Aquino we can’t with a straight face deny that we know what the future of Philippine land reform will be or insist that that aspect of the future isn’t yet determined. Such suppositions are designed to give us some sense of the nature of an eternal being’s knowledge of time. To the extent to which they succeed, they tend to confuse God’s eternal viewpoint with our natural temporal viewpoint regarding future contingent events. The example puts us in God’s position, or in the position of prophets to whom he has revealed a bit of his atemporal knowledge. So the natural, almost unavoidable way of presenting this material makes it hard to avoid thinking that if future contingent events are really present to God, they are somehow also really present for us.

But the doctrine of eternity recognizes time and eternity as two distinct real modes of existence. We in 1990 cannot be in a relationship of simultaneity with an event in 1995, because the latter event isn’t occurring now. God’s situation is different, however, because the beginningless, endless, persistent eternal present encompasses all of time. Any particular temporal event is earlier than, simultaneous with, or later than the temporal present; but every temporal event *as it is when it is temporally present* is ET-simultaneous with God’s eternal present.

A rough analogy may help here. God is eternally aware of just what

you are aware of now, and of just what you were aware of at noon yesterday, and of just what you will be aware of at noon tomorrow, but only *as you are directly aware of those things on those occasions*, not as you may be aware of them afterwards in memory or beforehand in anticipation. Omnipresent timeless awareness of time is direct awareness *at once* of *every* present time somewhat as you are aware of *this* time, in something like the way you can be directly aware of this time only when and because it is present.

The real existence of temporal events coincides precisely with their being temporally present. The perfection of God's knowledge entails his being aware of the real existence of temporal events; the atemporality of God's knowledge entails his being aware non-successively, at once, of the real existence of every temporal event. For God, who timelessly sees contingent events future to us when and as they are temporally present, those events have the sort of inevitability that accompanies presentness, and only that sort. For us, relative to whom they are future, those events are as evitable now as the presently occurring contingent events were evitable when they were future. Nothing in God's relationship to those events determines them in advance any more than our observing Aquino's present actions would render those actions of hers unfree.

So, the claim in the doctrine of eternity that all contingent events really future to us are really timelessly present to God does not entail that they are somehow really present for us, so that it is now determined what the future will be. Edwards's and Plantinga's positions, along with the many others of that sort, gain plausibility from the fact that merely presenting the kind of case to be considered involves pretending, probably without realizing it, to a view of future contingent events that is naturally unavailable to a temporal observer. And the central claims of Edwards's and Plantinga's arguments, even when they are helped out by an application of the notion of ET-simultaneity, are seen to trade on a mistaken view of that relationship as transitive.

15. Conclusion

We think eternity is a hard concept. We also think that conceiving of God as the absolutely perfect being entails recognizing that his mode of existence must be eternity rather than time. All the same, philosophers and theologians are rightly inclined to be suspicious of a concept whose coherence is repeatedly challenged. And so the alleged efficacy of eternity in resolving the problem of theological determinism has always been an important practical consideration on the side of persisting in the effort to provide a clearly coherent account of eternity. Those who are engaged in that effort therefore have a special obligation to look carefully at objections purporting to show that the best-known, most-valued practical application of eternity is, after all, of no value. In this article we have examined three such objections, representing the most formidable lines of thought we know of against the eternity solution, and we have found that none of them provides good reasons for abandoning the solution or giving up the attempt to understand eternity.^{xliii}

- i “Eternity”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981) 429-458; reprinted in Thomas Morris, ed., *The Concept of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 219-252.
- ii Our translation of Boethius’s definition, on which see “Eternity”, pp. 429-434.
- iii In “Atemporal Duration: A Reply to Fitzgerald”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987) 214-219, and in “Eternity, Action, and Awareness”, forthcoming in a volume edited by Thomas Tracy.
- iv When divine omniscience is conceived of as temporal, it apparently entails divine foreknowledge, which apparently entails that human beings never can act or choose to act otherwise than as God has always foreknown they would. For a recent but already classic presentation of the problem, see Nelson Pike, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action”, *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965), 27-46. In fact it was in connection with a discussion of this problem (beginning in V, Pr. iii) that Boethius developed his classic account of eternity in *The Consolation of Philosophy* V, Pr. vi. And recently William Hasker has laid down a stringent but tolerable “criterion for an acceptable doctrine of [divine] timelessness: such a doctrine must solve the problem of free will and foreknowledge” (*God, Time, and Knowledge* [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989], p. 148). As further evidence of the problem’s revived capacity to stimulate philosophical investigation, see, e.g., John Martin Fischer, ed., *God, Foreknowledge and Freedom*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- v For a summary of the reasoning that gave rise to the concept see our “Eternity” (n. 1 above), pp. 444-445.
- vi David Widerker, “A Problem for the Eternity Solution”, forthcoming in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. We are grateful to Professor Widerker for showing us his paper in typescript. Objecting to the eternity solution on the basis of considerations of prophecy is certainly not new, nor does Widerker claim that it is. For some sophisticated earlier disputation over problems of just this sort, see Rita Guerlac’s translation of Leon Baudry’s collection of a connected series of fifteenth-century texts: *The Quarrel over Future Contingents* (Louvain 1465- 1475), (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).
- vii Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* (1754), II, 12 (see n. 22 below); reprinted in Baruch A. Brody, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 393-403. Although Widerker focuses his attention on examples of prophecy, like Edwards he insists that an objection of this sort can also be based on the mere possibility of divine intervention, in the form of prophetic revelation or otherwise, based on eternal knowledge of future contingent events.
- viii Alvin Plantinga, “On Ockham’s Way Out”, *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (1986) 235-269; reprinted in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *The Concept of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 171-200.
- ix See, e.g., William Hasker, op. cit. (n. 4 above), Ch. 4: “Two Arguments for Incompatibilism”, pp. 64-74.
- x PFP is variously formulated in the literature. Widerker (see n. 6 above) presents it in more than one form, among which this form is basic: “No agent has it within his power at a given time T to bring about the non-obtaining of a fact about the past, relative to T.”
- xi For further explanation of these conditions and an argument for them see Eleonore Stump, “Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities”, in Michael Beaty, ed., *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.
- xii As Hasker remarks, “if one takes a compatibilist view of free will, most of the problems considered here [concerning divine knowledge in relation to time and human free will] are rather readily resolved and a whole battery of new problems arises to take their places”, op. cit., p. x.
- xiii As recent work by Harry Frankfurt and others has shown, the principle does not hold in every case that satisfies intuitive criteria for free will. (For bibliography and a discussion of these issues, see Stump, “Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities” [n. 11 above].)
- xiv This definition is adapted from one given by Harry Frankfurt (see “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 [1971] 5-20). Frankfurt’s definition is significantly different from ours because he is concerned to broaden the division between free will and free action. For instance, his definition has the result that an agent could act freely while not acting with freedom of will; our definition rules out that possibility. On the other hand, on our definitions of free action and free will an agent could act with free will in doing an unfree action. In a case of coercion, for example, the coerced agent might well meet the requirement in FA1 but not the requirement in FA2 of the definition of free action—acting with free will but not doing what he wants to do. (For more on coercion, see n. 15 below. For an interesting argument that it is possible to act with free will in doing an unfree action, see Rogers Aibritton, “Freedom of Will and Freedom of Action” (*Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 59 (1985), 239-251.) Part of the reason for the difference between Frankfurt’s definition of free action and ours is that he is working with an unusually demanding notion of free will, interesting in itself and useful in certain contexts (as his work has shown) but irrelevant to our immediate concerns in this article.
- xv We take coerced actions to include cases in which one person successfully threatens or intimidates another into acting in some way—e.g., Maggie is going to Chicago because David is holding a gun to her head and insisting that she go—but not cases in which one person exercises force over another to such an extent that what happens thereafter is in no sense the forced person’s action—e.g., Maggie is going to Chicago because David has tied her up, put her in his car, and is driving her there.
- xvi Ockham dealt with the problem of preserving contingency in view of God’s foreknowledge by taking all biblical

prophecies as conditional:

“I maintain that no revealed future contingent comes to pass necessarily.... Consequently [what was revealed] could have been and can be false. Nevertheless the Prophets did not say what is false, since all prophecies regarding any future contingents were conditionals. But the condition was not always expressed. Sometimes it was expressed—as in the case of David and his throne—and sometimes it was understood— as in the case of [the prophecy of] the destruction of Nineveh by the prophet Jonah: ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown’ [Jonah 3:4]—i.e., unless they would repent; and since they did repent, it was not destroyed” (Marilyn Adams and Norman Kretzmann, *William Ockham: Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 2nd edn. [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983], p. 44). Cf. Calvin Normore’s discussion in Ch. 18, “Future Contingents” (pp. 358-381 in Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 370 ff.; also A. Edidin and C. Normore, “Ockham on Prophecy”, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 13 (1982), 179-189.

xvii In terms of a convenient distinction familiar to medieval philosophers, the first of these forms presents the compounded sense of the prophecy, while the second presents one of its divided senses.

xviii If we suppose that the prophecy left even just the time unspecified, then this example, too, might, through a crucial vagueness, avoid particular inevitability.

xix Some of the actions attributed to Jesus in the gospels seem to have been done by him because he chose to act as he believed he had been prophesied to act. Consider, e.g., Matthew 21:1-5; 26:52-54; Mark 14:48-49; John 19:28-30.

xx Certainly the most famous precise biblical prophecy and the one that figures most in philosophical discussions is Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; John 13:38). (For in ingenious examples of such discussions see Guerlac’s translation of Baudry’s medieval texts, n. 6 above.) Peter’s denial, unlike Ananias’s visit to Saul, seems clearly to be a case of freedom of will that is not also freedom of action: FA1 without FA2.

xxi The biblical prophecies that look most like cases of this sort are those that involve the hardening of hearts, on which see Eleonore Stump, “Sanctification, Hardening of the Heart, and Frankfurt’s Concept of Free Will”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 (1988), 395-420.

xxii Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will, which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Vertue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (Boston, 1754); ed. Paul Ramsey, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1 [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957], Part II, section 12, 257-269, p. 257; reprinted in Brody (see n. 7 above), p. 393. The final clause of this passage, explaining that these events are necessary “with a necessity of connection or consequence”, suggests that Edwards is relying on the distinction between *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis*. Almost certainly he does have the distinction in mind, but he is not invoking *necessitas consequentiae* as many contributors to this discussion have done, in order to show that the necessity at issue here does not bind the agent. The other passages we quote make this clear.

xxiii Op. cit., p. 267; Brody, p. 401.

xxiv Op. cit., pp. 266-267; Brody, pp. 400-401.

xxv The passages we have quoted contain several indications that he is at least careless in his description of eternity as an atemporal mode of existence: God, he says, “never is, never was, and never will be without infallible knowledge”, and God “always sees things just as they are in truth”; “there is no event...that God is ever uncertain of”. But our concern here with his understanding of divine timelessness is only with its effect on his treatment of God’s knowledge as necessitating human action.

xxvi In “Eternity” we provide a slightly more sophisticated account of temporal simultaneity, pp. 435-438.

xxvii For more on this definition, see our “Eternity, Action, and Awareness” (n. 3 above).

xxviii The truth in Edwards’s misleadingly expressed claim that eternal God “never is, never was, and never will be without infallible knowledge” of any temporal event (see n. 25 above) lies in the fact that the eternal present, in which God’s eternal act of knowing every temporal event takes place, is ET-simultaneous with every time.

xxix Of course, the suppositions (i) that Aquino’s introducing ‘land reform in 1995 is ET-simultaneous with God’s eternal present and (ii) that Aquino does not introduce land reform then are incompatible. Necessarily, if her introducing land reform in 1995 is present to God, in 1995 she is introducing land reform. But that observation no more threatens freedom or contingency than does this one: ‘Necessarily, if you are looking at this page, you are looking at this page’.

xxx “On Ockham’s Way Out” (n. 8 above), p. 237.

xxxi Op. cit., p. 240; emphasis added.

xxxii He introduces it by saying that if “the thesis that God is both atemporal and such that everything is present for him... is coherent, ...Edwards’ argument can be restated in such a way as not to presuppose its falsehood” (p. 239). As we have seen, Edwards himself presents a version of his argument for divine determinism that does not presuppose the falsity of the doctrine of eternity.

xxxiii Plantinga recognizes that the notion of a proposition’s being true at a time is controversial, and so he offers a parallel argument based on the notion of a sentence’s expressing a truth at a time. The parallel argument depends on this claim: “eighty years ago the sentence

(5) God knows (eternally) that Paul mows in 1995

expressed the proposition that God knows eternally that Paul mows in 1995... . But if in fact Paul will mow in 1995, then (5) also expressed a truth eighty years ago” (p. 240). In the interest of brevity, we will confine our discussion to his first formulation of the argument. Nothing in our discussion turns on the difference between the two formulations.

xxxiv Op. cit., p. 239. This argument is coming in for considerable criticism

in the literature (see, e.g., Linda Zagzebski, forthcoming; Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, forthcoming); and David Widerker, op. cit. [n. 6 above]). Although these criticisms succeed in pointing out flaws in the argument, we think there is more to be said.

xxxv Plantinga leaves the status of this step in his argument unclear, but we assume that he takes it to derive from (2) along with certain tacit claims about eternal knowledge.

xxxvi After the first few pages of his article Plantinga (apparently inadvertently) changes the date in his central example from 1995 to 1999. To avoid confusion, we silently change ‘1999’ back to ‘1995’.

xxxvii Op. cit., p. 248.

xxxviii Op. cit., pp. 246 and 247.

xxxix Our (3a) appears as (5) in Plantinga’s article; see n. 33 above.

xl The facts that (18) is in the future tense while (3a) uses the tenseless ‘mows’, appropriate to a description of eternal knowledge, is no obstacle to the inference. Sticklers may fill it out with such premisses as ‘God eternally knows that 1995 is later than 1990’ and ‘God eternally knows that future-tense verbs are appropriate only in sentences intended to express propositions regarding events later than the time of utterance’.

xli Plantinga himself also made this claim in responding to an earlier draft, and William Alston said the same sort of thing in discussing the paper with us.

xlii For an important criticism of this line of thought, see John Martin Fischer, “Hard-Type Soft Facts”, *The Philosophical Review* 95 (1986), 591-601.

xliii We are grateful for helpful comments on earlier drafts from William Alston, William Hasker, Nelson Pike, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Purtill, David Widerker, and, especially, Edward Wierenga.