

Why divine foreknowledge?

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Abstract: Christian theism has traditionally claimed that God knows the future. But why is divine foreknowledge important? In this essay, I argue that divine foreknowledge is valuable to Christian theism and that a hefty theological price must be paid if it is rejected. I also attempt to show that the range of knowledge available to God in theological models that deny divine foreknowledge is significantly less than claimed by proponents of these views. In particular, I argue that the God of such models could not know future physical necessities, physical probabilities, divinely intended future free acts, or future events required by the divine nature.

Christian theism has traditionally claimed that God knows the future in every detail, including the future free actions of created beings. Of course, this affirmation has been severely criticized, particularly in recent years, and a wide body of literature has arisen both defending and rejecting this conventional doctrine.¹ In the midst of the discussions, however, a particularly significant question has largely been neglected. And that is, why is divine foreknowledge important? What value, if any, is attached to the claim that God comprehensively knows the future? In the following essay I will argue that divine foreknowledge is of considerable value to Christian theism and that a hefty theological price must be paid if it is rejected. In the process, I will attempt to show that the range of knowledge available to God in theological models that deny divine foreknowledge is significantly less than claimed by proponents of these views and because of this such models are inadequate.

Openview theism and divine knowledge

In addressing these issues, it will be helpful to examine the views of some recent theistic writers who deny divine foreknowledge. I will focus on openview theism.² While process theology also denies divine foreknowledge, I will not concentrate on this set of teachings. The openview theist's position is well-

documented. As David Basinger points out, openview theism falls under the broad rubric of classical theism. It maintains that God is personal, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good.³ Unlike process theologians, openview theists insist that God ‘created and is sustaining an impersonal natural order ... and that this order functions to some extent independently of him’.⁴ While process theologians hold that the natural universe is ultimately ontologically independent of God, openview theists insist that the independence of the natural order is purely by divine grace. Thus, openview theism affirms a robust view of divine omnipotence, asserting that God has ultimate and utter control of the universe, but that God freely limits the exercise of divine power for the sake of creaturely freedom.

On the other hand, unlike some classical theists, openview theists deny ‘that God can both grant individuals freedom and control its use’.⁵ Rather, ‘to the extent that God grants individual freedom, he gives up complete control over the decisions that are made’.⁶ Consequently, openview theism denies a compatibilist view of freedom, endorsing instead libertarian freedom.

Openview theism rejects divine knowledge of future contingent actions on the grounds that it negates both human and divine freedom. Divine timelessness is rejected as a viable solution to the foreknowledge–free will dilemma.⁷ For openview theists, divine eternity must be understood as a beginningless, endless temporal duration. On the other hand, divine temporalists’ views, such as Molinism⁸ and Ockhamism,⁹ are also discarded. According to openview theists, such views do not resolve the incompatibility between libertarian freedom and divine foreknowledge. Further and not surprisingly, openview theists reject the Calvinistic claim that God predestines future actions of creatures or that he knows the future by predetermining it.¹⁰ Rather, for the sake of human and divine freedom, openview theists deny divine foreknowledge.

Richard Swinburne offers a classic example of an openview theist’s view of divine knowledge. Swinburne denies that divine omniscience involves knowledge of all true propositions because (1) certain propositions only may be known at certain times or by certain persons¹¹ and (2) knowledge of future contingent actions would destroy both human and divine freedom.¹² In the light of this denial, Swinburne offers the following definition of omniscience:

A person *P* is omniscient at a time *t* if and only if he knows every true proposition about *t* or an earlier time and every true proposition about a time later than *t* which is true of logical necessity or which he has overriding reason to make true, which it is logically possible that he entertains then.¹³

By the phrase ‘which it is logically possible that he [God] entertains then’, Swinburne attempts to account for the fact that some propositions can be known only at certain times or by certain persons.¹⁴ Thus, for example, it is logically impossible for God to know at some later time t_2 that ‘it is now t_1 ’. Or again it is logically impossible for God to know the truth of the proposition ‘I am in the hospital’ when the term ‘I’ indexes a person who is in the hospital, but who is not

God.¹⁵ Keeping this qualification in mind, Swinburne insists that his definition of omniscience allows the deity to know all true propositions about the past and about the present. It allows God to know any logically necessary propositions about the future. And it allows Him to know now any future events that He currently has overriding reasons to make sure will happen (or not happen). Concerning this last category, Swinburne especially has in mind those future divine contingent events that divine omnipotence would enable God to perform but which divine moral perfection would not permit – such as committing sin or suicide – or which divine moral perfection would require.¹⁶

On the other hand, Swinburne's definition does not allow the deity to know future freely enacted creaturely or divine events. If humans and God are truly free, God cannot know in advance what either will do freely.¹⁷ Admittedly, this lack of divine foreknowledge implies a universe that may 'contain the occasional surprise for God'.¹⁸ But Swinburne denies that this lack of knowledge in any significant way threatens divine sovereignty. First, Swinburne points out that while God cannot certainly know future free acts of humans, He can predict very accurately such actions. This follows because humans are 'creatures of limited knowledge in the actions and the reasons for doing them which occur to them, of habit in how they execute their actions, and of desire (i.e. inbuilt inclinations) in which actions they do ...'.¹⁹ Further, Swinburne notes that the limitation on divine foreknowledge is by divine choice. God does not know the future free actions of humans because He freely chooses to give humans freedom. At any moment, the deity is able to dissolve this limitation by 'withdrawing from humans their free will'.²⁰ Finally, Swinburne argues that God retains total control over the future. Since God is omnipotent and free, whatever events unfold in the future He is able to control. Indeed, at any moment, God may choose to abolish the universe completely. The deity remains sovereign into the future.

William Hasker²¹ and Richard Rice²² offer similar views of divine omniscience, each appending additional twists to the story. Hasker adds that God knows in detail all future possibilities, and that God knows both the probability of future events and the changing probabilities of those events as time unfolds.²³ Rice annexes the claims that God knows how to respond to any possibility that might actualize and that God knows those future events that 'will happen as the inevitable consequence of past and present factors',²⁴ events that are physically or causally necessitated by present events. A particularly important augmentation: Hasker and Rice both assert that in knowing the divine intentions, God knows that certain future events will occur, for God knows that nothing can prevent Him from fulfilling His will. Thus, concerning prophecy, Hasker notes that many prophecies are straightforward declarations of what God intends to accomplish. For example, claims Hasker, 'God did not foresee the death and resurrection of his Son; he declared them as going to happen, because he fully intended to bring them about.'²⁵

From these openview theist writings, the following model of divinity and divine knowledge emerges. God is a temporal, everlasting, personal, omnipotent, perfectly good being who knows at each moment of divine existence all that is logically knowable at that moment. He is unable to know propositions that are only knowable at times other than His immediate time or by persons others than Himself. God is also unable to know propositions about freely-enacted future events. This follows from the facts that God is temporal, backward causation and middle knowledge are impossible, and genuinely free creatures have been created. Nevertheless, there are a number of things the deity can know. He exhaustively knows all past and present events. He knows the truth of all logically necessary propositions. He knows all possibilities and how He could respond to each should it occur. God knows the present probabilities of any given future event and will know the changing probabilities of each possible future event as time unfolds. Further, the deity knows with certainty those future events whose necessary conditions already exist, those future events that currently are physically necessitated. Finally, God knows those events that He intends to bring about in the future and, consequently, He can rest assured that those events will occur.

This last point is somewhat tricky for the openview theist, for part of the value of claiming that the deity cannot know future free contingencies is that it allows God's own future actions to be free. With this in mind, it seems that the openview theist would not want to assert that God's current knowledge of a divine intention is logically equivalent to sure knowledge that He will perform a future act. Such an equation would imply that any action that God previously intended is not currently performed freely – an implication that I think openview theists would want to avoid. Swinburne is aware of this problem. He states that since God is perfectly free, God cannot 'know in advance what he will do...'.²⁶ For this reason, Swinburne qualifies God's knowledge of divine future actions by stating that the deity knows those future events for which He 'has overriding reason to make true...'.²⁷ In other words, the deity only knows those future divine contingent events which are required by His essential nature – especially by divine goodness.²⁸ Indeed, Swinburne claims that such certainly known future divine events are not free.²⁹ Although neither Hasker nor Rice explicitly qualify in this way their claim that God knows the future by knowing divine intentions, such a qualification works well with and may be required by their systems.

Further, it may best represent Hasker's, Rice's and Swinburne's intent not to assert that God knows future divine free actions by knowing current divine intentions. Rather, their meaning seems to be that God currently knows the divine intentions and knows that nothing external to Himself can prevent those intentions from happening. *In other words, God knows that if He should continue to want a certain event to occur in the future, nothing can stop Him from bringing it about.* This is perhaps Hasker's point when he writes: 'Whatever God needs to do, he has the power to do; whatever he sees is best to do happens forthwith.'³⁰

Likewise, Swinburne comments that if God is 'omnipotent and perfectly free, the future will be subject to his total control; he can do with the world as he chooses ...'.³¹ Finally, Rice comments:

... God knows the range of options available to His creatures. He also is Himself responsible for those options. God determined how much freedom to allow His creatures. In so doing He limited the extent of their potential disruption of the universe. Surely God retains sufficient power to ensure the ultimate realization of His objectives ... the ultimate end of history is in God's hands.³²

Evaluating the openview theist position

What are we to make of this vision of divinity and of divine knowledge? I do not dispute the coherence of claiming that God may be a temporal, everlasting, personal, omnipotent, and perfectly good being. Nor do I quarrel with Swinburne's caveat that some propositions can only be known at certain times or by certain persons and, thus, are not logically subject to divine knowledge. Further, for the sake of argument, I grant that it is logically impossible for a temporal God to know future contingent (free) events. I also accept that the openview theist paradigm allows the deity to know all past and present events, and to know all logically necessary propositions. However, I hope to refute the claims that the God envisaged by openview theism:

- (1) can know currently physically necessitated future events;
- (2) can know the probability of future events;
- (3) can know that events currently divinely intended will happen; and,
- (4) can know that events required by the divine nature will happen.

Further, while I agree that God can know all possibilities, I will call into question the content of this knowledge, challenging the idea that God can know how He could respond sovereignly in every possible situation.

Before addressing these issues, a word is needed concerning the nature of knowledge. In recent decades, a common distinction has arisen between two broad conceptualizations of knowledge. These are internalist versus externalist theories of knowledge.³³ Broadly conceived, internalist theories insist that knowledge obtains,

- (1) if an individual S believes a proposition *p*,
- (2) if *p* is true, and
- (3) if S is cognizant of or can become cognizant of the grounds that justify believing *p*.

In other words, the knower must have privileged, internal access to the grounds that justify a belief. Internalism is manifested in a variety of knowledge theories, including the traditional foundationalist epistemologies of René Descartes and

John Locke, and the more recent theories of foundationalists (such as Roderick Chisholm) and coherentists (such as Laurence Bonjour).³⁴ Externalism, on the other hand, asserts that knowledge obtains for some individual S:

- (1) if S believes p ,
- (2) if p is true, and
- (3) if the noetic mechanism through which S comes to believe p is reliable.

In this case, S need not be aware of the grounds that justify belief in p , nor need S even be able in principle to become aware of these justifying grounds. Externalism is displayed in the contemporary writings of Alvin Goldman³⁵ and Alvin Plantinga.³⁶ In the argument that follows, specifically in the next three sections of this paper, I will assume an internalist notion of divine knowledge. That is, I will assume that for God to know a proposition p ,

- (1) He must believe p ,
- (2) p must be true, and
- (3) He must be aware of or be capable of becoming aware of the grounds that justify belief in p .

In the fourth section below, I will consider the strength of my arguments should an externalist notion of divine knowledge be supposed. Further, I will offer reasons for rejecting an externalist interpretation of God's knowledge.

Knowledge of the physically necessary

Assuming an internalist notion of divine knowledge, let us first examine the assertion that God knows future events that are currently physically necessitated. Such an affirmation may be challenged at three levels. First, one may question whether there are future events that are currently physically necessitated. As Hasker comments concerning the possibility of God presently predetermining future events through physical causation, 'we now know with virtual certainty that physical processes are *not* strictly deterministic, and thus the quantum indeterminacy would preclude information's being carried forward with the required degree of exactitude'.³⁷ In short, if random shifts occur among atomic particles (as many believe they do), and if these shifts have macro-effects, there are no absolutely certain physically necessary future events.³⁸ In principle, any currently occurring set of physical events may generate a variety of differing future chains of physical events, depending on the numbers and degrees of random atomic shifts that occur as the chain temporally unfolds. Thus, no particular chain of events is physically necessitated. Rather, certain chains of events are more probable than others. But knowledge of such probabilities (even high probabilities) would not be the same as knowledge of physically *necessitated* future

events. (In a moment I will consider problems associated with claiming that God knows the probabilities of future events).

A second challenge to the assertion that God knows physically necessitated future events has been offered by Gregory Ganssle. Ganssle points out that even if there are physically necessitated events, the deity can only know those physically necessitated events that in no way can be interfered with by free creaturely agents. Suppose that there is some future event that is physically certain to occur *as long as* no free agent disrupts the future causal chain. God cannot know that this event will occur, for He cannot know that some free agent in fact will not intervene. Ganssle formally states this principle as follows:

For God to know at time t , a contingent event E occurring at some later time t_2 , it must be the case that (1) the occurrence of E is determined by the state of the world and the laws of nature at t and (2) it is not possible for anyone [any free agent] to interfere in the causal sequence in such a way that prevents E from occurring.³⁹

Ganssle's point is well-taken. Indeed, Rice appears to acknowledge this complication when he states that God may know 'that something will happen because the necessary conditions for it have been fulfilled and nothing could conceivably prevent it'.⁴⁰

At this point, the openview theist might wish to contend that such a qualification of divine knowledge has little impact on God's knowledge of the vast majority of future physically necessary events. After all, the events of the universe that free agents can affect is relatively small compared to the total number of cosmic events (assuming that there are very few free agents in the universe and that there are considerable temporal/spatial limitations to cause-effect relationships). Valid as this point may be, however, one may counter it by noting that many of the most *religiously and morally significant* future events of the universe remain subject to future human interference. These are events largely confined to the surface of our planet, events that bring harm or benefit to humans and to their immediate environment. Presuming that human affairs are of utmost interest to God (as the Bible seems to indicate), such severely spatially limited events retain substantial cosmic import. Whole causal chains, subject to human intervention and pertaining to religiously/morally significant occurrences, cannot be known with certainty by God.

Still let us imagine a defender of openview theism offering the following objection both to Ganssle's criticism and to the criticism from random atomic shifts: while God has graciously granted freedom to physical reality as a whole and to sentient beings especially, He at any time may rescind such freedom. The deity retains complete control over all future events. Any event that He *wants* to be physically necessary, He can make sure *will be* physically necessary. In the case of atomic shifts, if there is some future event that God intends to be physically necessary, He can make sure (as the causal chain unfolds) that no atomic shifts

occur that could deter the divinely intended event. In the case of events subject to intervention by free choices, if there is some future event that God intends to be physically necessary, He can make sure (as the causal chain unfolds) that no free agent prevents the intended event. As we have seen, Swinburne, Hasker, and Rice each appeals to divine control as an occasional source of divine foreknowledge.

But such an explanation faces two difficulties. First it reduces divine knowledge of physically necessitated events to knowledge of divinely decreed events. In effect, it asserts that God knows physically necessary future events by making them physically necessary. But why bother with two categories of divine foreknowledge? Just admit that the first reduces to the second.

A second, more intriguing, problem for this explanation is that it assumes that God knows that divinely intended future events will happen; it assumes that God knows that the events that He intends to be physically necessary will be physically necessary; or perhaps even more precisely, it assumes that God knows that the *divine events* that He intends to enact in order to insure that some future events are physically necessitated will be enacted. As we have observed, however, Swinburne explicitly argues that for the sake of divine freedom, God cannot know that many divinely intended events will happen (including the deity's own future actions). God only knows those divinely intended events for which He has overriding reasons to make happen – events that are necessitated by the divine nature. But if this is the case, God can only *know* that the events that He intends to be physically necessary *will be* physically necessary *if* He has overriding reasons for making those events happen. Assuming that there are some (perhaps many) future physically necessary events that God does not have overriding reasons for making happen,⁴¹ there will be some (perhaps many) physically necessary events that He cannot *know* will actualize, even if He currently intends for them to occur. In short, explaining God's knowledge of some (perhaps many) physically necessary future events by means of His knowledge of divine intentions is not viable.

Now all of this leads to a third challenge to the assertion that God knows physically necessitated future events. Ganssle further notes that even if there are physically necessitated events, God can only know those physically necessitated events that in no way can be interfered with by a future free divine action. Suppose that there is some future event that is physically certain to occur *as long as* the deity does not disrupt the future causal chain. God cannot know that this event will occur, for He cannot know that He will not in fact intervene.⁴² In other words, if Swinburne is right – if God cannot know His own future free actions, then God cannot certainly know any of those physically necessary future events with which He could interfere. Of course, a clear exception to this divine ignorance would be those cases where the deity has overriding reasons for making the physically necessary event happen. Ganssle calls such events theological necessities. These are events that 'God cannot fail to perform ... because such a failure would constitute a violation of His necessary nature'.⁴³ Still presuming that there are many

physically necessary events which God has no overriding reason to make happen, and presuming that there are many physically necessary events with which God could interfere in the future, there are many future physically necessary events that He cannot know will happen.

Indeed, let us press this further. The openview theist's system seems to require that all future physical events (physically necessary and otherwise) are subject to free divine intervention and, thus, not subject to divine knowledge. This is especially true prior to the creation. Rice insists that God need not have created any universe.⁴⁴ Swinburne more cautiously claims that God need not have created the particular universe that he did.⁴⁵ In other words, God's creation of this particular universe was a free act; it was not a theological necessity. But this means that prior to creation no future event of this universe was theologically necessary. And if this is the case, the deity could not have known that any future event of this universe would happen (including 'physically necessary' ones). Indeed, if creation is a free act, prior to creation, God could not have known with certainty that He would create at all.

These difficulties are somewhat ameliorated once the deity creates, for it seems reasonable to suppose that certain theological necessities are relative to the created order. For example, upon creating various creatures, God will not do evil to them (whatever evil might be); or if He makes a promise to created beings, He will keep it, etc. In turn, if Swinburne is correct, these theological necessities will provide God with certain knowledge of some future events. However, the openview theist will likely grant that after God creates this particular universe, most physical events of this world (including physically necessary ones) are not theological necessities. Otherwise the openview theists' claim that God exercises total control over the future or that God could eradicate the universe make no sense. Clearly God cannot control or eradicate any future event that is theologically necessary. And so while the divine ignorance of future physically necessary events is not as large after creation as it is prior to creation, that ignorance remains extensive.

I conclude that the God of openview theism must be ignorant of a huge number of future physically necessary events. First, there may be no physically necessary events for God to know. Second, if there are physically necessary events, many of them are subject to intervention by free creatures and, therefore, are not subject to divine knowledge. Third and most profoundly, if there are physically necessary events, many – perhaps all – are subject to future free divine intervention and, thus, are not subject to God's knowledge.

Knowledge of probabilities

But what of divine knowledge of probabilities? Does the openview theist's view of God allow such knowledge? At first glance, this hardly seems questionable.

Obviously, humans know the rough probabilities of many future events; and so, surely God's knowledge of probabilities is much greater than our own, since He has a more thorough awareness of the past and present than we do. As we have seen, Hasker insists that God knows the probabilities of most or perhaps all future events; Swinburne and Rice declare that God knows the probable future actions of currently existing free agents because God has a full understanding of who we presently are.

Still there is something puzzling about claiming that God knows the probability of future events. Probabilities are rooted in past regularities, which implies (if we assume an internalist interpretation of divine knowledge) that God's knowledge of the probability of future events is grounded in knowledge of past uniformities in the created order. But is it rational to project past regularities into the future? And more, is it wise to base divine knowledge of the future on past patterns of the universe? Concerning the first question, one need not look far to find a notable challenge. David Hume argued that matters of fact are contingent. Their contraries are always possible. But if this is the case, induction can be neither rationally demonstrated nor directly experienced. Hume writes:

These two propositions are far from being the same, *I have found that such an object has always been attended with such an effect, and I foresee, that other objects, which are, in appearance, similar, will be attended with similar effects*
[I]f you insist, that the inference is made by a chain of reasoning, I desire you to produce that reasoning. The connection between these propositions is not intuitive. There is required a medium, which may enable the mind to draw such an inference, if indeed it be drawn by reasoning and argument. What that medium is, I must confess, passes my comprehension; and it is incumbent on those to produce it, who assert, that it really exists, and is the origin of all our conclusions concerning matter of fact.⁴⁶

Further, Hume notes:

When we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connection; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find, that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other. The impulse of one billiard-ball is attended with motion in the second. This is the whole that appears to the *outward* senses. The mind feels no sentiment or *inward* impression from this succession of objects: Consequently, there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connection.⁴⁷

In other words, it is not clear that inductive inferences are rationally demonstrable or directly experienced. In turn, it seems to follow that the projection of past regularities onto the future may be unwarranted.

Now I do not wish to deny the effectiveness of inductive reasoning. But I would propose that inductive thinking is grounded in a fundamental and ultimately

unprovable assumption – a kind of base faith. This is the supposition that the future will be like the past, that past patterns will continue. When humans reason inductively, we exercise a fundamental trust in the regularity of the universe. But I do not think that it is sagacious to ascribe such a faith to God. First, it seems to make God depend on the created order. For God to know the probability of future events, God must trust the created order. But this seems to place the proverbial cart before the horse, the creation before the creator, the sustained before the sustainer. Further, and perhaps more problematic, if Hume is correct, there is no clear grounding for this faith. Trust in the future uniformity of the universe could be mistaken. Indeed, Hume claimed that our use of induction is essentially a habit, unsupported by reason or experience.⁴⁸ And it seems inappropriate to claim that God's belief about future events could be based on so insecure a foundation, indeed possibly based on a divine habit, ungrounded by reason or experience.

But perhaps I have overstated the dilemma, for God's trust in the regularities of the universe need not be grounded in the universe itself. It may be rooted in God's own being. Perhaps God trusts the regularities of the universe because He fully intends for those patterns to continue. In turn, divine knowledge of probabilities may be based on God's belief that He will maintain the universe in its regularities.

But a problem arises. We have already seen that for the sake of divine freedom, openview theists claim that God cannot know many of His own future actions. Only those future divine events required by God's nature may be known. Further, I have argued that, prior to creation, no future event of this universe was theologically necessary, which seems to imply that future divine maintenance of the uniformities of the universe could not have been known by God before the act of creation. Additionally, I have contended that while there could be theologically necessary events in this universe after the act of creation, most events likely would not be theologically required. If we take seriously the openview theist's claims that God can control the future totally, can perform miracles, and can utterly annihilate the created order, we must admit that the future sustaining of creation in its regularities is not theologically necessary and, thus, not subject to divine knowledge. In sum: if God cannot know that divinely intended free acts will occur, He cannot know that the uniformities of the universe will continue and, subsequently, cannot *rationally* affirm the probability of various events. As with currently physically necessitated future events, God's lack of certain knowledge concerning future divine actions negates divine knowledge of physical probabilities.

But maybe I still have overstated the dilemma. The openview theist may retort that perhaps God exercises *faith* in the divine intentions and perhaps this faith grounds divine knowledge of future probabilities. While the deity may not *know* that various presently intended divine intentions will occur, He may *believe* that many of them will occur and this belief may be well justified. As we have seen, the most tenable openview theist position asserts that while God cannot *know* that certain presently intended free divine acts will occur, the deity can know that *if* He

should continue to want an event to occur in the future, nothing will be able to stop Him from bringing it about. Applied to knowledge of probabilities this means that God can know that if He should continue to want certain regularities in the universe, those regularities will continue and based on those uniformities God can know the probability of future events.

For the moment, let us grant that God can know that if He continues to intend something in the future, He will be able to bring it about; but let us also acknowledge how minimal an assertion this is. In essence, one is arguing that God knows the truth value of a conditional statement: if God maintains the uniformities of nature, event x will likely take place. But the critical issue is not the truth value of the conditional statement, but the truth value of its consequent. One wants to know how likely event x is. And this knowledge cannot come from knowing the truth value of the conditional statement alone, but by knowing both the truth value of the conditional statement and its antecedent. Now divine knowledge of the antecedent has been denied. God does not know that He will maintain the uniformities of nature. Consequently, knowledge of the consequent is also rejected. Whatever role knowledge of these conditionals might serve, they do not grant God knowledge of the probability of future events. I conclude that God's lack of knowledge concerning future free divine acts nullifies His knowledge of probabilities.

Knowledge of theologically necessary events

Much of our discussion to this point provides a negative assessment of God's knowledge of the future based on divine intentions. As we have seen, openview theists admit that for the sake of divine freedom, God cannot know many divinely intended future events. Only those future events that are required by His nature may be known. In turn, since creation was a free act of God, prior to creation no event of this universe was required by the divine nature and, therefore, prior to creation the deity could not have known any future event of this universe. Further, while after creation some future events of this universe may have become theologically necessary, most likely did not; and thus these also could not be known by God. Obviously, all of this greatly diminishes God's knowledge of future events.

But what of the claim that God knows that if He should continue to want a given event to occur in the future, nothing external to Him can prevent it? Doesn't He at least know of His own future sovereignty? Further, doesn't God know that events required by the divine nature will occur? In this section, I contest the assertions that the God of openview theism can know of the divine future sovereignty or know theologically necessary future events.

Swinburne argues that if God is omnipotent and free, He is able to control the future. More precisely we should augment Swinburne's claim to say: if God *continues* to be omnipotent and free *in the future*, He will be able to control the

future. *But (assuming an internalist notion of divine knowledge) the critical question is: how can God know that He will be omnipotent and free in the future?* The answer implicit in the openview theist's system is that omnipotence and freedom are essential qualities of divinity; they are necessary attributes of God. Swinburne argues that God is a necessary being, that He necessarily exists and necessarily is the kind of being that He is.⁴⁹ Rice insists that God exists necessarily.⁵⁰ Presumably, then, since God necessarily exists, He will always be. Since God necessarily has the attributes that He has, He will always be omnipotent and free. And since all of this is true, the deity can know that if He continues to intend some future event, He will be able to accomplish it.

This reasoning, however, only pushes the question back a step, for now we must ask (again, assuming an internalist interpretation of divine knowledge): *how can God know that He is a necessary being?* How can the deity know that He necessarily exists or that He necessarily is the kind of being that He is? Several explanations are possible; but before we consider them, let us dismiss an unsatisfactory solution. God cannot know of His necessary existence (of His everlasting existence, of His never-ending future existence) through inductive reasoning, through temporally limited experiential knowledge. One cannot verify a universal claim based on inductive reasoning. Even if God has always existed to this time and even if God has always had the attributes He currently has, it does not demonstrate that in the future He will exist or will have the attributes He currently has. If the deity is to know of the divine necessary existence and nature, this knowledge must come from some source other than induction, other than temporally limited experience. But what source might that be? For the God of openview theism, the options are limited.

One way God might know of His necessary existence and necessary nature would be if He were timeless. If there were but one static moment and God existed and had certain attributes in that moment, the divine existence and nature would be necessary.⁵¹ But this explanation is not available to openview theists who explicitly reject divine atemporality.

Another way the deity might know of His necessary existence and nature would be if He had foreknowledge – if in the temporal present He could experience His endless future existence and unchanging future nature (and could remember His beginningless past existence and unchanging past nature). Such a God would know that in all times He exists and has the nature that He has. This would be sufficient to establish His necessary existence, at least as Swinburne defines it. (See Swinburne's definition of ontological necessity below). Unfortunately, openview theism rejects divine foreknowledge in the sense required here and, so, cannot use this solution in explaining God's knowledge of His necessary existence and nature.

A third way the deity might know that He is a necessary being would be if He were an *analytically* necessary being. By an analytically necessary being I mean one whose nonexistence is analytically impossible and for whom it is analytically

incoherent to suppose that being's not having the properties it has. I have conceded the openview theist's claim that God knows all logical necessities. Obviously then, if God were an analytically necessary being, He would know this and would know of His own future existence and nature.

But is God an analytically necessary being? Swinburne says no. He writes:

... a world without a particular substance or a particular kind of substance seems always to be a coherent supposition and to involve no contradiction; no set of propositions which describe such a world seem to entail a self-contradiction. The supposition of the existence of a Godless universe (either one without any divine being or one without the particular one that, I suppose, there is) seems evidently coherent, and so should be taken to be so in the absence of positive counter-argument. All ontological arguments known to me that purport to show the logical necessity of God's existence seem to me unsound.⁵²

In another place, Swinburne notes:

... it is, I think, easy enough to show fairly conclusively that 'God exists' is not logically necessary.... For to say this is... to say that (S) 'there exists a personal ground of being' is logically necessary. But if this were so, any statement entailed by (S) would also be logically necessary. (S) entails such statements as the following: 'it is not the case that the only persons are embodied persons', 'it is not the case that no one knows everything about the past', 'it is not the case that no one can make a weight of more than ten million pounds rise into the air'. Hence if (S) is logically necessary the negations of these latter statements will be incoherent. But fairly obviously they are not. Fairly obviously 'the only persons are embodied persons', 'nobody knows everything about the past', and 'no one can make a weight of more than ten million pounds rise into the air', are coherent claims, whether false or true.... Atheism is a coherent supposition. 'God exists' is not [logically] necessary....⁵³

According to Swinburne, God's *existence* is not analytically necessary but ontologically necessary. That is, God exists everlastingly with no cause. Formally, this is stated as follows: '... a substance S is ontologically necessary if there is not at any time a cause, either active or permissive, of its everlasting existence'.⁵⁴ Thus the deity is necessary in the sense that He exists in a beginningless/endless temporal duration and '... does not depend for his existence on himself or on anything else. No other agent or natural law or principle of necessity is responsible for the existence of God. His existence is an ultimate brute fact'.⁵⁵ Further, Swinburne's comments (from the extended quotes above) entail that *per se* God's particular nature is not an analytic necessity. There is nothing analytically incoherent in claiming that there is no omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly free, etc., being. Obviously, if God's existence is not analytically necessary, neither is the particular set of attributes that constitute God's nature logically necessary.

Prima facie, if Swinburne is correct, if God's existence and nature are not analytically necessary, God cannot use divine knowledge of logical necessities to know of His own necessary existence or nature. In turn, God cannot be certain of His own future existence or nature. Even if, in fact, God will exist endlessly and

causelessly into the future, and even if God will continue to have the attributes He always has, the deity currently cannot know this – at least not by analytical reasoning.

But perhaps the logical necessity of God's existence and nature can be demonstrated in some other fashion. Suppose that from an absolute standpoint, Swinburne is correct – neither God's existence nor nature is absolutely, analytically necessary. But consider the possibility that once God exists, He, in fact, is the kind of being whose existence and nature is logically necessary. In other words, suppose that the brute fact that God happens to be is a kind of fact whose future existence and nature is logically required. If so, perhaps God could know this and, in turn, could be aware of His own future existence and nature.

In *The Coherence of Theism*, Swinburne argues that perhaps God *essentially* is a personal ground of being. That is, perhaps God essentially is an omnipresent, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient (as defined by openview theists), perfectly good spirit who is the source of moral obligation, creator of the universe, and exists in a beginningless/endless temporal duration. In the light of this, it could be argued that if God essentially is a personal ground of being and if the attributes named above are essential elements of such a being, then once God exists it is logically impossible for Him not to have these attributes. In other words, it is logically impossible for God not to exist (per the essential attribute of everlasting duration) and for God not to be omnipotent, free, omniscient, etc., (per the other essential attributes).⁵⁶

As constructed this argument is ambiguous. It may be construed in one of the following ways. First, it may be stating:

- (1) Necessarily, if God is personal ground of being, God exists everlastingly and is omnipotent, free, omniscient, etc.
- (2) God is personal ground of being.
- (3) Therefore, necessarily God exists everlastingly and is omnipotent, free, omniscient, etc.

But if the argument is so interpreted, it commits a modal fallacy – sometimes called Sleigh's fallacy. Sleigh's fallacy runs like this.

Necessarily, if A, then B.

A

Therefore, necessarily B.

The failure of such an argument is seen in the following examples. 'Having two children necessarily implies having children, but from this and the fact that Peter has two children, it does not follow that Peter necessarily has children.'⁵⁷ Or again, necessarily, if John is a bachelor, he is unmarried. But it does not follow from this and from the fact that John is a bachelor that he necessarily is unmarried. He could happen to be a bachelor and, therefore, could happen to be unmarried. In the light

of these analogous arguments, all that would follow from (1) and (2) above is that God (happens) to exist everlastingly and is omnipotent, free, omniscient, etc. And this would not be particularly helpful to the openview theist's case.

Another interpretation of the argument from God as personal being might be the following.

- (4) If God is personal ground of being, then necessarily God exists everlastingly and is omnipotent, free, omniscient, etc.
- (5) God is personal ground of being.
- (6) Therefore, necessarily God exists everlastingly and is omnipotent, free, omniscient, etc.

This argument appears to be valid. Unfortunately, it faces two difficulties. First, one cannot help but feel that such an argument involves a philosophical slight of hand. If we seriously grant Swinburne's earlier conclusion that no being's existence is logically necessary, it seems to follow that no being at any time logically necessarily exists or logically necessarily has the attributes it has. Consequently, even if a being currently exists, it cannot be logically necessary that such a being exist or have certain attributes at some future time. In short, if we grant Swinburne's first argument, it is not clear that the notion of a currently existing essentially everlasting, omnipotent, omniscient, etc., being is coherent. Indeed, Swinburne admits that he cannot demonstrate the coherence of such a concept.⁵⁸

Second, even if we concede the possibility of an essentially everlasting, omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly free being, a critical question remains: how might God know that He is such a being? Let us grant (for the sake of argument) that if God essentially is a personal ground of being (as defined by Swinburne), it is logically necessary that God endlessly exist with certain attributes. What is not clear is how God might establish the antecedent truth that He is in fact a personal ground of being. Analytical reasoning doesn't disclose this. If no being analytically necessarily exists, then the kind of being that God happens to be is not a logical necessity and, therefore, God cannot discover the kind of being He is by analytical reasoning. In turn, it is not clear that experiential reasoning can establish that God is a personal ground of being, for entailed in experientially knowing that God is such a being is experiential knowledge that God will endlessly exist into the future. But we have already argued that such knowledge cannot be gained by induction or by temporally limited experience. If God were timeless or if He, though temporal, could currently experience the future, then God experientially could know of His endless future existence and attributes and, consequently, could know that He is personal ground of being. But since openview theism denies both divine atemporality and the possibility of a temporal being presently experiencing future events, there seems to be no way for God experientially to know that He is a personal ground of being. In turn, God cannot use knowledge (which he does not possess) of this antecedent truth to establish the consequent proposition that His

existence and nature are logically necessary. I conclude that since God cannot know that He is personal ground of being, He cannot know that He will endlessly exist with attributes He has had to this point.

But perhaps there is another way to demonstrate that God logically necessarily exists and has the nature that He has. One might argue that, based on the attributes God currently has, it necessarily follows logically that God will endlessly exist with the attributes He currently has. If God is omnipotent at time t_1 , then no action that he does not cause or permit may happen in the next moment t_2 . If God is omniscient and perfectly good, He will not cause or permit any event that can threaten His existence or His nature. Thus, in the next instance, t_2 , God will continue to exist with the same nature as at t_1 . But if God has the same nature at t_2 that He did at t_1 , then in the next instant, t_3 , He again will not cause or permit any event that can threaten his existence or his nature. And so, at t_3 God will continue to exist with the same nature as at t_2 . Now this reasoning may be extended infinitely into the future. Thus, through a deductive reasoning process, God can establish that He will endlessly exist with the same attributes.

But can God know that He is currently omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good? A close analysis of the argument above reveals that these attributes are defined in terms of the future, in terms of what God will do in the next moment. Allegedly, because God is currently omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, in the next moment He will not cause or permit any actions that will threaten His existence or nature. But how might God know that these attributes apply to Him? This cannot be learned by analytic reasoning. There is no logical necessity to any being existing in the next moment who can perform these tasks. Further, it is not clear that this truth can be established by experience. It would seem that God would need to experience the next moment in order to know that in fact He currently is omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good. But it appears to be impossible for God, as conceptualized by openview theism, to do this. Again, if God were timeless or if He, though temporal, could currently experience the future, then God could know experientially of His current omnipotence, omniscience, and moral perfection. But since openview theism denies both divine atemporality and the possibility of a temporal being presently experiencing future events, there seems to be no way for God experientially to know this. I conclude that since the God of openview theism cannot establish the antecedent truth that He essentially is omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good, He cannot know that He necessarily exists or necessarily has the nature that He has.

Indeed, I would issue the broader conclusion that since God's existence and nature are not clearly analytically necessary, God cannot know of His own necessary existence and nature through analytical reasoning. Of course, the openview theist may reject Swinburne's argument that God's existence and nature are not analytically necessary. But to do this requires both a refutation of Swinburne's arguments from above and a persuasive construction of the ontological argument.

The onus is on the openview theist to establish that God's existence and nature are logically necessary in order to avoid the conclusions I have drawn so far.

But if God's existence and nature are not analytically necessary, and if God is neither atemporal nor presently experientially able to know the future, how can God know of His own necessary existence and nature? I believe that the God of openview theism could not know this. One could claim that such a God simply innately knows of His necessary existence and nature, or that there is some mysterious mechanism by which God might know these truths. But neither of these solutions is rationally satisfying. It seems reasonable to view an appeal to innatism as a mere rejection of the problems raised and any recourse to an unknown mechanism for divine knowledge can be set aside until its proponents spell out for us what such a mechanism might be and how its mode of operation would allow God to know of His necessary existence and nature. I reject these solutions in hope of a more persuasive explanation. In turn, I conclude that the God of openview theism could not know of His own necessary existence and nature. Notice, I am not claiming that God could not *be* a necessary being, could not necessarily exist or have attributes necessarily. I am only claiming that the God of openview theism could not *know* of this necessary existence and nature.⁵⁹

The impact of these conclusions on divine knowledge is considerable. God could not know that He will be omnipotent and free in the future, could not know of His own future sovereignty, could not know that if He should continue to intend some future event He will be able to bring it about. Indeed, God could not know with certainty any theologically necessary future event or state of affairs. He could not know of His own future existence. He could not know of His own future nature, including that He will be perfectly good, omniscient, sustainer, saviour, etc. God could not know that He will keep or will be able to keep His promises. No theologically necessary future event could be known by God, including the claim that He will be able to fulfil His intentions.

I conclude (assuming an internalist understanding of divine knowledge) that the God of openview theism could not know future physical necessities, physical probabilities, divinely intended future free acts, or theologically necessary future events. For many, myself included, this is not an acceptable view of God. It involves God in far too much risk-taking.

The externalist version

Thus far, I have assumed an internalist interpretation of divine knowledge. I have supposed that for God to know some proposition *p*,

- (1) God must believe *p*,
- (2) *p* must be true, and,
- (3) God must be aware of or capable of being aware of the grounds that justify believing *p*.

But what if we assume an externalist version of divine knowledge? Presumably then, God could know some proposition p ,

- (1) if God believed p ,
- (2) if p were true, and,
- (3) if God came to know p via some reliable cognitive mechanism.

In this case, God would not need to know the grounds which support belief in p .

The potential utility of such an interpretation of divine knowledge for the openview theist is something like this. Concerning divine knowledge of future probabilities, one could argue that God need not know nor be able to know the grounds that justify His inductive, probabilistic inferences. That is, the deity need not know nor be able to know that the future will be like the past, that past natural patterns will continue. In order to know some proposition p about some probable event, God needs (1) for it to be true that the future will be like the past, (2) for p to be true, and, (3) for God to come to believe p through a cognitive mechanism that accurately tracks these truths – from (1) and (2) – and, thus, reliably produces true probabilistic beliefs, such as p . In turn, concerning divine knowledge of theologically necessary future events, one might argue that God need not know nor be able to discern the grounds that justify such beliefs. That is, God need not know nor be able to know that He necessarily exists or necessarily has the attributes that He has. Rather, in order to know a proposition p about some theologically necessary future event, God needs (1) for it in fact to be true that God necessarily exists and necessarily has the attributes that He does, (2) for p theologically necessarily to be true, and, (3) for God to come to believe p through a noetic operation that accurately reflects these truths – from (1) and (2) – and, thus, reliably produces true theologically necessary beliefs, such as p . (Some similar set of circumstances would also likely hold for divine knowledge of physical necessities.)

The strength of such a potential openview theist counterposition is that neither in my case against divine knowledge of probabilities nor against divine knowledge of future theological necessities have I established respectively (1) that the future will not be like the past, or (2) that God in fact does not necessarily exist or does not necessarily have the attributes that He has. And since each of these is possible, it is equally possible that God has reliable cognitive mechanisms that track these truths and produce true beliefs accordingly.

Unfortunately (for the openview theist), the externalist notion of divine knowledge is not well-suited for theism. Two problems emerge. First the externalist view does not cohere with the traditional theistic claim that God's beliefs are infallible. It is common for theists to assume that if God believes some proposition p , then p is true, and if p were false, God would not believe it. In short, God's beliefs cannot be false. Indeed, it is precisely the infallibility of divine beliefs that sets up the dilemma which is paramount for the openview theist's system – namely, the

divine foreknowledge–free will dilemma. Prima facie, because God’s beliefs are infallible, the occurrence of events divinely foreknown appear to be unalterable and, subsequently (so the argument goes), not free.⁶⁰ In the light of divine infallibility, the following seems to hold for divine knowledge of probabilities. If God believes some proposition p that some event e is probable (to some specific degree), then p is true; that is, e is probable (to the degree that God believes it is). Further, if p were not true, if e were not probable (to some specific degree), then God would not believe p . Concerning knowledge of necessities, if God believes some proposition p that some future event e is (physically or theologically) necessary, then p is true; that is, e is (physically or theologically) necessary. Further, if p were not true – if e were not (physically or theologically) necessary, then God would not believe p .

The problem is that the externalist interpretation of divine knowledge (when combined with openview theism’s ontology) makes it possible for some of God’s beliefs to be false. An analysis of the concept of a ‘reliable cognitive mechanism’ reveals that there are a number of factors that contribute to the reliability of a cognitive process. Among the most important is whether a cognitive process is well suited for its environment. That is, the reliability of a cognitive mechanism is relative to the environment in which it is operating. A variety of authors has made this point.⁶¹ Thus, for example, the perceptual mechanism that allows one to see that an object is red is reliable only under certain conditions – for instance, in relatively bright, white light. In conditions of relatively dim light, or yellow light, or no light, the reliability of visual perception for seeing red is considerably diminished.

But this aspect of externalism (the fact that reliability is relative to environment), when combined with the ontological state of affairs envisioned by openview theism, makes it possible for God’s cognitive processes to be unreliable and, thus, for God to hold false beliefs. This is particularly the case for divine knowledge of physical necessities and probabilities. Let us assume that God has a properly functioning cognitive process that allows Him to know the proposition p that some future event e is probable; and this cognitive system works well under conditions where the future indeed will be like the past. Unfortunately, the ontology of openview theism allows for conditions in which the future would not be like the past. For example, God could freely choose to work a miracle, or stall the normal natural patterns, or utterly destroy the physical order. In such cases, the future would not be like the past, and the noetic mechanism by which God knows future probabilities would be unreliable. In turn, divine beliefs formed by such a cognitive process could be (and in many cases would be) false. Or again, let us assume that God has a properly functioning cognitive process that allows Him to know the proposition p that some future event e is physically necessary; and this cognitive mechanism works well under conditions where no free agent interferes in the future causal chain of events. Because openview theism allows for interference by free agents (creaturely or divine), then the noetic mechanism which

works well when no interference occurs and through which the deity knows future physical necessities could be unreliable. Divine beliefs formed from that noetic mechanism could be (and in many cases would be) false. In each case – both in the case of divine knowledge of probabilities and of divine knowledge of physical necessities – God’s knowledge could be false. And this contradicts the normative theistic claim that God’s beliefs cannot be false, that if p were false God would not believe p .

It must be admitted that these conclusions do not clearly hold for divine knowledge of theological necessities. I have acknowledged that given the openview theist’s system it is possible for God’s existence and nature to be necessary. In fact, openview theists explicitly affirm the necessity of the divine existence and nature. Subsequently, it is possible (1) that God’s existence and nature are necessary, (2) that God has a cognitive mechanism that works well under such conditions, and (3) that this divine cognitive process reliably generates true beliefs about theological necessities (including the beliefs that God necessarily exists and necessarily has the attributes that He has). Consequently, while the externalist interpretation of divine knowledge (combined with openview theism’s ontology) makes it possible for divine beliefs about future physical necessities and about probabilities to be false, it does not require the possibility of divine fallibility concerning beliefs about theological necessities. And this may offer some, if not complete, consolation to the openview theist.

One might wish to protest that all of this seems circular. By appealing to an externalist notion of divine knowledge, the (imaginary) openview theist seems to be asserting that God knows of His own necessary existence and nature through a cognitive process that *assumes* the divine necessary existence and nature. But then one might want to ask: how does God know (justify the belief) that such an assumption is true? To put it in its blatantly circular form: how does God know of the divine necessity in order to know of the divine necessity? As tempting as this line of attack is, I will pursue it no further. For the externalist will likely counter that such an attack unfairly imposes internalist criteria of epistemic justification upon an explicitly externalist view of knowledge. And, admittedly, this line of reasoning does impose internalist criteria, although I will leave it to the reader to decide how unfair that might be.

But let us consider a second problem with an externalist interpretation of divine knowledge – a problem that affects not only divine knowledge of physical necessities and probabilities, but also divine knowledge of theological necessities. An externalist interpretation of divine knowledge is not compatible with the openview theist’s own understanding of divine omniscience (not to mention with more traditional notions of divine omniscience). As we have seen, Swinburne defines divine omniscience as God knowing at some time t all true propositions about t and earlier times. But if the externalist interpretation of divine knowledge is correct, if God does not know the epistemic grounds which justify believing some

proposition p , then there are some true propositions about the present and/or the past that God does not know – namely, propositions about the grounds that justify certain divine beliefs. In turn, this contradicts the openview theist's definition of omniscience (as well as other standard definitions of omniscience). The openview theist could augment her definition of omniscience so as to exclude the need for knowing propositions about the justifying grounds for believing propositions. But such a manoeuvre would be ad hoc and, *prima facie*, would run counter to the openview theist's own intuitions concerning omniscience.

I believe that these two difficulties – namely, that an externalist interpretation of divine knowledge is incompatible with omniscience and incompatible with divine infallibility (of certain divine beliefs) – provide sufficient reason for rejecting an externalist theory of divine knowledge. In turn, appeal to such a theory in an effort to avoid the earlier conclusions of this essay simply is unacceptable. In the light of this, then, I reiterate my conclusions from the previous section: The God of openview theism could not know future physical necessities, physical probabilities, divinely intended future free acts, or theologically necessary future events. And this is not an acceptable view of God.

The importance of foreknowledge

The purpose of this essay is not only to articulate the theological difficulties of openview theism's doctrine of divine knowledge, but also to affirm the theological importance of divine foreknowledge. Hasker has made the now familiar charge that the loss of divine foreknowledge is of little consequence for theism, that foreknowledge without middle knowledge supplies no real help for divine governance of the universe.⁶² I do not intend to refute this latter assertion. But I do reject the claim that the loss of divine foreknowledge affords little negative consequence for theism. For one of the values of divine foreknowledge is that it provides God with knowledge of His own future existence and nature. To put it in Swinburne's terms, it allows God to know of His own ontological necessity. In turn, this enables God to avoid the risking-taking and psychological anxieties that ignorance of the divine necessity likely would produce. It also informs God of His ultimate victory, of His complete sovereignty into the future.

This is not to say that there are no problems with affirming divine foreknowledge. In particular, the problem of its incompatibility with divine and human freedom remains paramount. But be that as it may, it is incumbent upon the openview theologian duly to face and to address the difficulties of his/her theological system. Among those difficulties, in part arising from the denial of divine foreknowledge, are the considerable divine ignorance and divine risk-taking outlined in this essay.

Further, all of this points toward the potential value of another traditional theistic doctrine: the doctrine of divine timelessness. Hasker affirms the coher-

ence of divine timelessness⁶³ and admits that divine timelessness resolves the incompatibility between divine foreknowledge and freedom.⁶⁴ But Hasker also insists that it would be unwise to affirm divine atemporality simply on the grounds that it overcomes the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and freedom. This is the case, in part, because divine foreknowledge is of little theological value.⁶⁵ But if foreknowledge provides the theological value of allowing God to know of the divine ontological necessity and, in turn, if divine atemporality allows both freedom and divine ‘foreknowledge’, then a new rationale for affirming divine atemporality emerges. Divine atemporality allows God to know of His necessary existence and nature, and grants freedom to future creaturely acts. Of course other problems remain for divine timelessness, and it is not my intention to address these issues here. However, it remains the case that a rationale exists, unforeseen by Hasker, for affirming both divine timelessness and foreknowledge.⁶⁶

Notes

1. The reader may refer to following texts as examples of this growing body of literature: John Fischer *et. al. God, Foreknowledge, and Freedom* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); William Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Linda Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1991); Michael Robinson *Eternity and Freedom: A Critical Analysis of Divine Timelessness as a Solution to the Foreknowledge–Free Will Debate* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1995).
2. This perspective has been given various names, including the ‘openness of God view’ and ‘freewill theism’. I am using the phrase ‘openview theism’ to denote this point of view. I am doing this in an attempt to avoid the awkwardness of the expression ‘the openness of God view’ and the broadness of the locution ‘freewill theism’. (Many theological systems affirm divine and creaturely freewill.) For summaries of this school of theology, see Clark Pinnock *et. al. The Openness of God* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994); Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*; and David Basinger *The Case for Freewill Theism* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), especially 21–37.
3. Basinger *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 11.
4. *Ibid.*, 24.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 33.
7. Richard Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, 1995), 228; Nicholas Wolterstorff ‘God everlasting’, in Clifton Orlebeke and Lewis Smedes (eds) *God and the Good* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 181–203.
8. Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 52.
9. *Ibid.*, 75–143. See also Richard Swinburne *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 132.
10. John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ford Lewis Battles (tr.) John T. McNeill (ed.) (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 3, 23, 6. For a recent defence of this perspective see John Feinberg ‘God ordains all things’, in David and Randal Basinger (eds) *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 19–43.
11. For example, the statement ‘it is now t_1 ’ ... can only be known at t_1 ’; Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, revised edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 168.
12. *Ibid.*, 177.
13. *Ibid.*, 180–181.
14. *Ibid.*, 172.
15. *Ibid.*, 168–172.
16. Swinburne explicitly makes this point in *The Christian God* where he states: ‘God, if he is necessarily and eternally perfectly free, must be ignorant of his own future actions – except in so far as his perfect

- goodness ... constrains him to act in certain ways', 134. Similar points are made in *The Coherence of Theism*, 266.
17. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 177, 181.
 18. Swinburne *The Christian God*, 143.
 19. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 181.
 20. *Ibid.*, 183.
 21. Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, especially 192–205. Also William Hasker 'A philosophical perspective', in Pinnock *et al. The Openness of God*, 151–154.
 22. Richard Rice *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will* (Minneapolis MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1980), especially 53–59. Also *Idem* 'Divine foreknowledge and free-will theism', in Clark Pinnock *et al. A Case for Arminianism: The Grace of God, The Will of Man* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 121–139.
 23. Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 188–189.
 24. Rice *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*, 135.
 25. Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 195.
 26. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 181.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. Swinburne states that events for which God has overriding reasons to make true 'follow from his [God's] nature'; *The Christian God*, 135.
 29. Swinburne makes this explicit when he states that God's 'freedom of choice only operates for choice whether to do an action A when he does not acknowledge overriding reasons for doing A rather than refraining, or for refraining rather than doing A'; *The Coherence of Theism*, 152. In other words, if God has overriding reasons for making a future event true and, thus, knows that it will occur, that event is not free.
 30. Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 192.
 31. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 181.
 32. Rice *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*, 66.
 33. For surveys of these theories, see John Pollock *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Totowa NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986); see also Alvin Plantinga *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1993).
 34. See Roderick Chisholm *Theory of Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966, 1977, 1989); see also Laurence Bonjour *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).
 35. Alvin Goldman 'What is justified belief?', in George Pappas (ed.) *Justification and Knowledge: New Studies in Epistemology* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979).
 36. Alvin Plantinga *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1993).
 37. Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 193.
 38. Even if there are genuinely physically necessary future events, one could not be certain of this, one could not know this, for one could not know in advance whether or when random atomic shifts were going to occur.
 39. Gregory E. Ganssle 'God's knowledge of the future', unpublished paper presented at the Society of Christian Philosophers' Eastern Regional meeting, April 1998. (Brackets are mine.)
 40. Richard Rice 'Biblical support for a new perspective', in Pinnock *et al. The Openness of God*, 51.
 41. As we will see below, openview theists seem to believe that there are likely to be many events in our universe which God has no overriding reason to make happen.
 42. Ganssle 'God's knowledge of the future', 5.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. Rice *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*, 34.
 45. Swinburne *The Christian God*, 135.
 46. David Hume *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977), 4. 2. (The emphasis is Hume's.)
 47. *Ibid.*, 7. 1.
 48. *Ibid.*, 5. 1.
 49. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 272–290.
 50. Rice *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*, 56.

51. Presumably this would be a kind of 'accidental' necessity.
52. Swinburne *The Christian God*, 144–145.
53. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 274–275.
54. Swinburne *The Christian God*, 118–119; see also 146–147. Swinburne's definition of God's necessity is somewhat more complex than this. He differentiates between what he calls ontological necessity and metaphysical necessity, and claims that God's existence may be either of these. Nevertheless, the distinctions are not particularly germane to the basic point I am making and my conclusions equally apply to his definition of metaphysical necessity. For this reason, I only expound his definition of ontological necessity.
55. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 277. In making these latter claims, Swinburne evokes the following definition of necessity: '[D] A proposition is necessary if and only if it is true, but the truth of what it states is not (was not, or will not be) dependent on anything, the description of which is not entailed by page', (*Ibid.*, 258). With this understanding of divine necessary existence, Swinburne sees himself agreeing with the basic insights found in John Hick 'Necessary being', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 14 (1961), 353–369.
56. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 232, 278–279. It should be noted that Swinburne does not argue for this position explicitly. But such an argument potentially arises from his notion of God as a personal ground of being.
57. Gerhard Schurz 'Admissible versus valid rules: a case study of the modal fallacy', *The Monist*, 5 (1977), 376.
58. Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism*, 288–289.
59. I am quite willing to grant the cogency of Swinburne's claim that God may be essentially a being whose nature does not change (and whose future existence will not end). My point is simply that since these truths are not analytic, nor temporally verifiable, and since openview theists deny that God is atemporal or has foreknowledge, then such a God cannot know of His own essentially indestructible, unchanging nature and existence.
60. Hasker assumes the infallibility of divine beliefs in his case against the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and freedom. See Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 66–74.
61. For example, see Plantinga *Warrant and Proper Function*, 7–11, and Pollock *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 118.
62. Hasker *God, Time and Knowledge*, 59–63.
63. *Ibid.*, 144–170.
64. *Ibid.*, 172–176.
65. *Ibid.*, 181.
66. I would like to offer special thanks to the Editor for aid in finalizing this essay both in terms of style and content. Also, thanks is given to those anonymous referees for *Religious Studies* whose suggestions helped improve this paper in various ways.