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THE OPENNESS OF GOD: HASKER ON ETERNITY  
AND FREE WILL\*

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of God's mode of existence as eternal is foundational for very many other views of God in the history of philosophy of religion. The concept of eternity also makes a significant difference to a variety of issues in contemporary philosophy of religion, including, for instance, the apparent incompatibility of divine omniscience with human freedom and of divine immutability with the efficacy of petitionary prayer. But the concept has come under attack in current philosophical discussion as inefficacious to solve the philosophical puzzles for which it seems so promising. Although Boethius in the early 6th century thought that the concept could resolve the apparent incompatibility between divine foreknowledge and human free will, some contemporary philosophers, such as Alvin Plantinga, have argued that eternity gives no help with this problem. Other philosophers, such as William Hasker, have argued that whatever help the concept of eternity may give with that puzzle is more than vitiated by the religiously pernicious implications of the concept for notions of God's providence and action in time. In this paper, I want to examine these arguments against the doctrine of God's eternity. I will focus especially on Hasker's position, but I'll look briefly at Plantinga's as well.

In various publications, William Hasker has argued for what he calls "the openness of God". It is part of the openness of God, in Hasker's view, that God

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does not have comprehensive knowledge of the future; in particular, the God of open theism lacks knowledge of the future free choices of human beings.

Hasker sees his position as an alternative to classical theism, as represented, for example, by standard Thomism, which Hasker rejects. Hasker thinks that the Thomistic account of God as eternal or timeless solves the problem of foreknowledge and free will only at the cost of making God's timeless knowledge useless to God in interaction with the temporal world.<sup>1</sup> Hasker says:

I ... regard the doctrine of timelessness as coherent and intelligible.... But divine timelessness ... does not help ... in enabling us to understand God's actions in providence and prophecy. (HASKER 2004, 100)

In this short paper, I will first examine Hasker's argument for thinking free will and timeless knowledge are compatible, and I will give reasons for thinking that Hasker's argument is itself incompatible with the doctrine of God's eternity. Then I will try to show that considerations derived from the doctrine of eternity yield a more effective way to argue for the same conclusion. Finally, I will use those same considerations to undercut Hasker's conclusion that timeless knowledge could be of no use to God in guiding his actions in time.

## ETERNITY

Boethius, who gives the classical definition of eternity, says that eternity is "the complete possession all at once of illimitable life".<sup>2</sup> Eternity is a timeless mode of duration, but nothing in the concept of eternity denies the reality of time or implies that temporal duration or temporal events are illusory (STUMP and KRETZMANN 1981, 1991, 1992). Boethius and others who accept the concept of eternity suppose that reality includes both time and eternity as two distinct modes of duration, neither of which is reducible to the other or to any third thing. Nonetheless, it is possible for inhabitants of the differing modes of duration to interact.

<sup>1</sup> There are others who make similar claims. See, for example, PLANTINGA (1986), reprinted in MORRIS (1987, 171–200), and ZAGZEBSKI (1991); see also ZAGZEBSKI (2008).

<sup>2</sup> The translation of Boethius's definition is one Norman Kretzmann and I constructed; see our "Eternity" in STUMP and KRETZMANN (1981).

To understand the nature of the interactions, it is important to see that, as Boethius and many others in the traditions of the major monotheisms understand it, eternity is a mode of existence characterized by both the absence of succession and also limitless duration.

Temporal events are ordered in terms of the A-series—past, present and future—and the B-series—earlier than, simultaneous with, later than. Because an eternal God cannot be characterized by succession, nothing in God's life can be ordered in either of those series. Moreover, no temporal entity or event can be past or future with respect to, or earlier or later than, the whole life of an eternal God, because otherwise God would himself be part of a temporal series.

On the other hand, eternity is also characterized by limitless duration, that is, the duration of a present that is not limited by either future or past. Because the mode of existence of an eternal God is characterized by a limitless and atemporal kind of presentness, the relation between an eternal God and anything in time has to be one of simultaneity.

Of course, the presentness and simultaneity associated with an eternal God cannot be temporal presentness or temporal simultaneity. Taking the concept of eternity seriously involves recognizing that it introduces technical senses for several familiar words, including “now”, “present”, and “simultaneous with”, as well as for the present-tense forms of many verbs. The relations between eternity and time therefore require a special sense of “simultaneity”.

In earlier work, Norman Kretzmann and I called this special sort of simultaneity “ET-simultaneity”, for “simultaneity between what is eternal and what is temporal”. A relationship that can be recognized as a kind of simultaneity will of course be symmetric. But, since its relata have relevantly distinct modes of existence, ET-simultaneity will be neither reflexive nor transitive. In particular, each of two temporal events can be ET-simultaneous with one and the same eternal event without being ET-simultaneous with each other.

Given the doctrine of eternity, God does not have foreknowledge. He knows any given thing or state of affairs that is a future contingent with respect to us only as it itself is temporally present, and not as it is future. For the same reasons, God cannot change the past or act on the future. Such actions require a temporal location, without which there can be neither past nor future. Nonetheless, the proponents of the doctrine of eternity thought that, in the eternal present, God can directly know and affect events that are

past or future with respect to us in time. For example, God can will in the eternal present that something occur or that something come into existence at any particular point in time, including those points that are past or future with respect to us.

With this much review of the doctrine of eternity, we can now turn to a sketch of Hasker's position as regards God's eternal knowledge of future free choices.

#### HASKER'S POSITION

Hasker begins the development of his position as regards God's timeless knowledge by examining a much-discussed argument of Plantinga's which attempts to show that taking God's knowledge to be timeless does not solve the problem of foreknowledge and free will (HASKER 1989).<sup>3</sup> In this argument, Plantinga is making use of a common intuition, namely, that divine eternity is somehow now as fixed and determinate as the past is.

Linda Zagzebski puts that intuition this way: "We have no more reason to think we can do anything about God's timeless knowing than about God's past knowledge. The timeless realm is as much out of our reach as the past" (ZAGZEBSKI 2008).

And so, she says, "the timelessness move does not avoid the problem of theological fatalism since an argument structurally parallel to the basic argument [for the incompatibility of foreknowledge and free will] can be formulated for timeless knowledge" (ibid.).

Here is Plantinga's version of such an argument (with dates changed for the sake of the discussion here):

Suppose in fact Paul will mow his lawn in 2095. Then the proposition *God (eternally) knows that Paul mows in 2095* is now true. That proposition, furthermore, was true eighty years ago; the proposition *God knows (eternally) that Paul mows in 2095* 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 2095. 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. (PLANTINGA 1986, 240)

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<sup>3</sup> Hasker takes himself to have given conclusive arguments for his view of eternity and free will in this book, and I will here concentrate on his arguments in that book.

Plantinga thinks that since this argument makes use of the notion of God's *eternal* knowledge and nevertheless leads to the conclusion that Paul's "mowing [in 2095] is necessary in just the way the past is..., the claim that God is outside of time is essentially irrelevant" (ibid.) to any solution to the problem of foreknowledge and free will.

Plantinga's argument depends on taking the past truth of the proposition *God eternally knows that Paul mows in 2095* as a hard fact about the past, to which the fixity of the past applies. But Hasker argues that whether or not this is a hard fact about the past depends on whether the proposition *God eternally knows that Paul mows in 2095* is itself a hard fact. From Hasker's point of view, the success of Plantinga's argument depends on whether or not "propositions about the eternal acts of God [are] 'necessary' in the same way in which the past is necessary" (HASKER 1989, 174).

On the one hand, in the spirit of the intuition expressed by Zagzebski, Hasker claims that it certainly seems as if they are. He says, "as of the present moment, it is in many respects *not yet determined* how the future shall be.... God's timeless eternity ... certainly cannot be open in this way; *every* fact is determined to be as it is, and not in any other way" (174).

On the other hand, however, Hasker says that when an eternal God looks at time: "God distinguishes necessities and contingencies [in time] even though there is no contingency left in the latter in the form in which they reach His gaze" (175).<sup>4</sup> And so God looks at all of time as a temporal being would look at the temporal past.

Hasker thinks that it follows from this that we are related to God's eternal present as we are related to the future: "if God in his eternity looks upon our time as one would look back on the past, it follows that in a certain respect we can view, or rather conceive of, eternity as we conceive of the future!" (175).

And from this claim, Hasker goes on to infer that "eternity is like the future, and unlike the past, in that *it is still open to our influence*" (175–76).

Consequently, Hasker says, "facts about God's eternal knowledge ... are *not* hard facts.... [P] *There are things that God timelessly believes which are such that it is in my power, now, to bring it about that God does not timelessly believe these things*" (176). And he concludes this way: "If, and only if, this proposition [P] is possible, is the doctrine of divine timelessness consistent with libertarian free will" (176).

So, Hasker thinks Plantinga's argument is unsuccessful. If it is not a hard fact that God eternally knows that Paul mows in 2095, then the necessity of

<sup>4</sup> Hasker is here quoting Arthur Prior, who himself attributes the thought to Anselm.

the past does not apply to it; and so the inference in Plantinga's argument to the conclusion that it is necessary that Paul mow is invalid.

Nonetheless, Hasker thinks, this rebuttal of Plantinga's argument should give no joy to the proponent of God's timelessness, because it comes at a considerable cost. That is because it is impossible that God should use a knowledge "derived from the actual occurrence of future events to determine his own prior actions in the providential governance of the world" (176). Even if God's timeless knowledge of the future is not incompatible with human free will, on Hasker's view, God cannot use that knowledge in interacting with human beings.

#### PLANTINGA'S ARGUMENT AND HASKER'S OBJECTION

Although Hasker is trying to defend the doctrine of eternity against Plantinga's argument, his objections to Plantinga's argument are themselves hard to square with the doctrine of eternity. In particular, the premises of Hasker's argument for his crucial claim that facts about God's eternal knowledge are not hard facts seem incompatible with the doctrine of eternity.

Consider, to begin with, Hasker's statement that when God looks at time, he looks at it as if it were the temporal past, in which no contingency is left in anything that was once contingent. On the doctrine of eternity, it is not possible for God to be related to anything as past. On the contrary, everything in time is ET-simultaneous with the whole of God's life. For the same reason, it is not true that for an eternal God all contingency has gone out of contingencies in time. God is related to contingent things as they are present, but nothing about this relation renders the contingent things past or non-contingent with respect to God.

Someone might worry here that even if contingent things are present with respect to God, there is still the necessity of the present. But however exactly we are to understand the necessity of the present, it does not take away contingency. If Paula in the temporal present sees Jerome smile at her, it does not follow that Jerome's smiling at her loses its contingency because it is present. What makes Jerome's smiling contingent is the fact that he might not have smiled; her seeing his smile does not entail that any state of affairs prior to his smiling made his smiling necessary. And that fact about the contingency of his smiling stays the same even though his smiling is present. Analogously, for God in the eternal present, the contingencies of

time remain contingent even when in the eternal present God is related to them as ET-simultaneous with the whole of eternity.

Finally, consider the conclusion Hasker draws from these premises: “There are things that God timelessly believes which are such that it is in my power, now, to bring it about that God does not timelessly believe these things.” In other words, on Hasker’s view, in the eternal present God believes *p*; but I have it in my power in the temporal present to bring it about that in the eternal present God does not believe *p*.

But, on the doctrine of eternity, this is also impossible. There is no succession in eternity. And so it is not possible for an eternal God first to believe *p* and then to believe not-*p*. If there are things that God believes in the eternal present, those are the things that God believes; and it is not possible for him to believe things different from those. A fortiori, it is not in anyone’s power in the temporal present to bring it about that in the eternal present God believes things different from those that he believes [had believed?] in the eternal present.

So, it seems that the premises of Hasker’s argument against Plantinga are not compatible with the doctrine of eternity, and the conclusion he draws from them seems incompatible with the doctrine as well. Consequently, Hasker’s attempt to rebut Plantinga’s argument and defend the compatibility of free will and God’s eternal knowledge is not successful.

#### PLANTINGA’S ARGUMENT AND THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNITY

Nonetheless, in my view, Hasker’s evaluation of Plantinga’s argument is right: Plantinga’s argument does not succeed in demonstrating that there is an incompatibility between free will and God’s eternal knowledge. The compatibility of free will and God’s eternal knowledge can be defended against Plantinga’s argument in a way different from Hasker’s.

From the past truth of a proposition about God’s eternal knowledge of a future event, Plantinga’s argument tries to show that the future event is somehow fixed or inevitable *now*, before the event occurs. In my view, the doctrine of eternity renders this move problematic.

To see what difference the doctrine of eternity makes to this move, consider the same move on the supposition that God is temporal. On this supposition, if

(a) In 1932

(g) *God knows that in 2095 Paul mows*

is true,

then in 1932 there is a state of affairs that corresponds to (g). And that state of affairs is God's knowing in 1932 that in 2095 Paul mows. Furthermore, in 1932 God knows that in 2095 Paul mows only if in 2095 Paul mows. So since in 1932 God does know this, then in 1932 the world must be the way God knows it to be. If in 1932 there were no mowing in 2095, then in 1932 the world would not be the way it must be for God in 1932 to know that in 2095 Paul mows; and so it would not be knowledge that God had in 1932. But since God does have this knowledge, then in 1932 it is the case that in 2095 Paul mows. Consequently, it is now (where, for purposes of this discussion, *now* is after 1932 and before 2095) the case that in 2095 Paul mows. If God were temporal, then, these inferences would be valid:

(a) In 1932

(g) *God knows that in 2095 Paul mows*

is true.

Therefore, (b) in 1932 God knows that in 2095 Paul mows.

Therefore, (c) in 2095 Paul mows.

Therefore, (d) it is now the case that in 2095 Paul mows.

But once we add in the doctrine of eternity, the inference from a suitably reformulated version of (a) to (b) is invalid, and it no longer supports (d) either.

On the doctrine of eternity, the state of affairs of God's knowing that in 2095 Paul mows obtains in the eternal present. God's eternal knowledge does not obtain in 1932, because it does not obtain at any temporal location whatsoever. In 1932, (g) is true only because in the eternal present God has the relevant knowledge, and the eternal present is ET-simultaneous with 1932.

So, from

(a') In 1932,



(g') *God in the eternal present knows that in 2095 Paul mows is true,*

it does not follow that

(b) in 1932 God knows that in 2095 Paul mows,

because God's knowledge cannot be temporally located in 1932.

So much is relatively uncontroversial. It is also the case, however, that if (a) is suitably reformulated as (a'), it no longer supports (d).

When the object of the knowledge God has in the eternal present is something temporal, then what is known by an eternal God has a temporal location; but it does not share that temporal location with God's knowing of it. Instead, God's knowing is ET-simultaneous with the temporal location of what is known. God's knowing in the eternal present that in 2095 Paul will mow is ET-simultaneous with the time in 2095 when Paul mows.

Certainly, God's knowing in the eternal present that in 2095 Paul mows requires that in 2095 Paul mows. If there were no mowing on Paul's part in 2095, then it would not be knowledge that God has in the eternal present. But it is not the case that if *in 1932* there were no mowing in 2095 to correspond to God's knowing, then it would not be knowledge that God has in the eternal present.

In order for it to be knowledge about Paul's mowing that God has in the eternal present, it is sufficient that there be a relation of ET-simultaneity between God's eternal present and the temporal location in which Paul mows. And there is, since God is ET-simultaneous with every time, including the time in 2095 when Paul mows. But it does not follow that it is the case now, in the temporal present, that in 2095 Paul mows. In order to ground God's knowledge of Paul's mowing in 2095, it is not necessary that Paul's mowing in 2095 somehow obtains or is fixed already in the temporal present. What grounds God's knowledge obtains in 2095; and, unlike God, the temporal present is not simultaneous in any sense with respect to 2095.

In other words, from

(a') In 1932

(g') *God in the eternal present knows that in 2095 Paul mows is true,*

it follows that

(c) in 2095 Paul mows.

But it does not follow and is not true that

(d) it is now the case that in 2095 Paul mows.

Of course, from the denial of (d) it does not follow that

(e) it is now the case that in 2095 Paul does not mow.

Because in the eternal present God can be ET-simultaneous with future events that do not yet obtain in the temporal present, God's knowledge can have a grounding in something future with respect to us without its being the case that the future event is already fixed in the temporal present. *Now*, in the temporal present, neither Paul's mowing nor his not mowing is fixed. Nonetheless, in the eternal present God can know that in 2095 Paul mows, since God is ET-simultaneous with the time in 2095 at which Paul's mowing occurs.

Claim (a') is true because there is a relation of ET-simultaneity between the eternal present and 1932, a time past with respect to us. And claim (g') is true because there is a relation of ET-simultaneity between the eternal present and Paul's mowing in 2095, a time future with respect to us. But ET-simultaneity is not a transitive relation. From the fact that 1932 is ET-simultaneous with the eternal present and the eternal present is ET-simultaneous with 2095, it does not follow that 1932 is simultaneous with 2095. And so Paul's mowing in 2095 is not something that is the case in 1932. It is therefore also not the case that, because of God's timeless knowledge of it, it is necessary with the necessity of the past. The intransitivity of ET-simultaneity invalidates all inferences of the form "It was true that God knows *p*; therefore, it is now the case that *p*", where *p* ranges over future contingents.

So the crucial claim of Plantinga's argument can be true:

Necessarily, if *God eternally knows that Paul mows in 2095* was true eighty years ago, then Paul mows in 2095;

and yet the conclusions Plantinga derives from this claim can be false. It follows from this claim that in 2095 Paul mows, but it does not follow that it is now necessary that in 2095 Paul mows or that Paul has no power over whether or not he mows in the future.

God's knowledge in the eternal present of events that are present to him but future with respect to us does not imply that those future events are the case in the temporal present, fixed somehow before they actually occur in time. And so God's knowledge in the eternal present of events future with respect to us is compatible with human free will in those future events.

#### HASKER ON THE USELESSNESS OF ETERNAL KNOWLEDGE

Similar reflections also undercut Hasker's reasons for rejecting the usefulness of God's eternal knowledge to God's ability to act in time. Hasker's thought seems to be the other side of the coin of the intuition expressed in the quotation from Zagzebski above: the present is fixed and determinate, the eternal present as much as the temporal present. In either mode, once something *is* present, it seems that nothing can be done to alter it, not even by God.

On Hasker's way of thinking about it, even if there is no temporal succession as between future events and God's knowledge, there is a logical order; an event's obtaining is logically prior to God's knowing it. So it seems as if the future events must be *there* in order for God to know them. And, in that case, Hasker's point seems to apply: since a future event must be *there* for God to know it, it seems that God cannot use his knowledge of that future event to act on it. And for that reason, God cannot act on a future event in light of his knowledge of it. And so it seems that we have the conclusion Hasker wants: God's knowledge of things future with respect to us is useless for any action of God's on future events, even if God's knowledge is eternal.

But here we might stop to consider how anything in time acts on anything else in time. Two things about the exercise of causal power in temporal events are worth noting.

First, the thing exercising causal power co-exists with the thing on which its causal power is exercised. In ordinary temporal kinds of cases, the thing that exercises causal power is simultaneous with the thing its causal power is

exercised on.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the caused event happens at least in part because of a causing event. But the *because of* relation here should not be confused with a temporal relation. As things are in the temporal world, the *because of* relation obtaining between one causing event and another caused event takes place in a temporally ordered series. But it is the *because of* relation that is doing the work.

Both these conditions can be met by an eternal God.

Although God himself is not located at a time, God can meet the first condition for causal influence on things in time in virtue of being ET-simultaneous with any thing in time. In the eternal present, God can will that there be a causal influence on things at a time; and the things at that time, whatever that time is, will be ET-simultaneous with God's willing in the eternal present.

And God can meet the second condition as well. Temporal things cannot happen after an eternal God wills them to happen, but they can happen because an eternal God wills them to happen at a time.

By way of a help to intuition here, consider a petitionary prayer for healing made at  $t_1$ . Someone might suppose that an eternal God could not respond to this prayer because a response to prayer has to come *after* the prayer, but an eternal God cannot do anything after anything else. This supposition is mistaken, however. For something to be a response to a prayer, it has to occur *because of* the prayer. But this is not the same as occurring after the prayer, even if in the temporal world a response that occurs because of a prayer typically occurs after the prayer. In one and the same the eternal present, God can be aware of the prayer for healing at  $t_1$  and will that there be healing at  $t_2$ . In this case, although God's willing of healing is not later than the prayer, it is nonetheless because of the prayer. And being because of the prayer is sufficient for God's willing to count as a response to the prayer.

Consequently, an event 2 at a time  $t_2$  could happen at least in part because of what God wills, even if God's willing is not prior to the event at  $t_2$ . The fact that event 2 is ET-simultaneous with God's eternal present does not mean that God gets to event 2 too late to act on it, as it were. It is a mistake to suppose that God is unable to exercise causal influence on event 2 on the grounds that, for God, event 2 is *there* and fixed with the necessity of present. Because God is ET-simultaneous with what is prior to event 2, event 2

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<sup>5</sup> My point is not that causal power is always exercised in this way, only that it can be and ordinarily is exercised in this way.

is what it is at least in part because of what God in the eternal present wills to happen at times prior to  $t_2$ .

Since God is ET-simultaneous with every moment of time as that moment is present, God can exercise causal influence in the same manner at any time. What happens at  $t_n$  happens at least in part because of the causal effects which God in the eternal present wills to happen at times before  $t_n$ . In this way, without being himself in time, in one and the same eternal present, God can will in such a way that he exercises causal influence over the whole temporally ordered causal sequence of events in time.

This interpretation of an eternal God's actions in time can be applied also to God's knowledge of things in time.

In the example above, it is true that there is a logical dependence between event 2 at time  $t_2$  and God's knowledge of event 2. God knows event 2 because event 2 obtains, and not the other way around (cf. STUMP and KRETZMANN 1998). But, in the eternal present, which is ET-simultaneous with times before  $t_2$ , God wills to exercise causal influence at an earlier time  $t_1$  in such a way that event 2 at time  $t_2$  happens at least in part because of what God wills to happen at time  $t_1$ . God's knowledge of event 2 at time  $t_2$ , then, depends on event 2; but event 2 itself depends on God's causal influence on things at  $t_1$ . God's knowledge of event 2 therefore includes knowledge of his own causal influence helping to bring about event 2.

And, clearly, this conclusion generalizes. With respect to any event, although God knows that event because it is there, the event is there at least in part because of the causal influence that in the eternal present God exercises in time. Since God in the eternal present knows everything that he wills to occur as a result of his causal influence in time, whatever happens in time happens at least because of God's knowledge of it.

The flaw in Hasker's argument for the uselessness of God's eternal knowledge stems from Hasker's supposition that the logical dependence of God's knowledge on the events known obviates God's ability to use his knowledge to shape his actions. On the doctrine of eternity, the logical dependence of God's knowledge on the events known does not rule out the causal dependence of those events on God's acts, and those acts are included in God's knowledge. And so, in this sense, the events are dependent on God's knowledge. Because God is not temporally ordered with respect to events in time, God's act of will with respect to any event at a time  $t_n$  will be made in light of God's knowledge of all the events in time, including those future with respect to us.

## CONCLUSION

In various other places, I have argued against Hasker's view that the God of classical theism is religiously inadequate or disappointing.<sup>6</sup> In those places, I have tried to show that the simple, eternal, immutable, impassible God of the classical theism of Averroes, Maimonides, and Aquinas can be as intimate with human beings and responsive to them as any open theist could desire. And, for a classical theist such as Aquinas, God is a risk-taker, too.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, I have not recapitulated those arguments with regard to classical theism. Instead, I have focused on the second of Hasker's reasons for rejecting classical theism, namely, that even if it could reconcile God's timeless knowledge of the future with human free will, it has to do so in a way that makes God's knowledge of the future useless for God's governance of the world, so that classical theism has no philosophical advantages over open theism. As I have tried to show, the doctrine of eternity can resolve the problem of divine foreknowledge and free will without the cost Hasker supposes it to have.

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<sup>6</sup> See, most recently, "Eternity, Simplicity, and Presence" in STUMP (2011a, 243–63), reprinted as "Eternity, Simplicity, and Presence" (STUMP 2011b, 29–45). See also chapters 3 and 13 in my *Aquinas* (STUMP 2005), and my "Simplicity and Aquinas's Quantum Metaphysics", in STUMP (2014). For a defense of the claim that the God of Thomism can be maximally intimate with human beings, see my *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (STUMP 2016).

<sup>7</sup> The Thomistic God may, however, not be a risk-taker in precisely Hasker's sense. Hasker defines divine risk-taking this way: "God takes risks if he makes decisions that depend for their outcomes on the responses of free creatures in which the decisions themselves are not informed by knowledge of the outcomes" (HASKER 2004, 125).

The Thomistic God is a risk-taker in the sense that he makes decisions that depend for their outcomes on the responses of free creatures, when those responses are not themselves determined by God. So Aquinas accepts both the biblical claim that God wants all human beings to be saved and the doctrine that some human beings are not saved. That this is so explains why Aquinas needs to distinguish between God's antecedent and his consequent will. His antecedent will is what God would have willed if things had been up to him alone; his consequent will is what God in fact does will given what creatures freely will.

From my point of view, the version of risk-taking engaged in by the Thomistic God is sufficient for real risk. Hasker says that God is a risk-taker in the sense that "creatures' decisions may be contrary to God's wishes, and in this case God's intentions in making those decisions may be at least partly frustrated" (HASKER 2004, 125). If we substitute 'God's antecedent will' for 'God's wishes' in Hasker's claim, then Aquinas's views commit him to the same claim, without the implication of frustration, since God's consequent will is in harmony with the way the world is.

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## THE OPENNESS OF GOD: HASKER ON ETERNITY AND FREE WILL

## Summary

The understanding of God’s mode of existence as eternal makes a significant difference to a variety of issues in contemporary philosophy of religion, including, for instance, the apparent incompatibility of divine omniscience with human freedom. But the concept has come under attack in current philosophical discussion as inefficacious to solve the philosophical puzzles for which it seems so promising. Although Boethius in the early 6th century thought that the concept could resolve the apparent incompatibility between divine foreknowledge and human free will, some contemporary philosophers, such as William Hasker, have argued that whatever help the concept of eternity may give with that puzzle is more than vitiated by the religiously pernicious

implications of the concept for notions of God's providence and action in time. In this paper, I will examine and respond to Hasker's arguments against the doctrine of God's eternity.

**Keywords:** eternity; free will; providence; omniscience.

## OTWARTOŚĆ BOGA: HASKER O WIECZNOŚCI I WOLNEJ WOLI

### Streszczenie

Koncepcja sposobu istnienia Boga jako bytu wiecznego wprowadza istotną różnicę w rozpatrywaniu różnych zagadnień współczesnej filozofii religii, w tym na przykład tematu pozornej niezgodności między Boską wszechwiedzą a ludzką wolnością. Jednak w obecnej debacie filozoficznej koncepcja ta została zakwestionowana jako nieskuteczna w rozwiązaniu problemów filozoficznych, dla których została niejako powołana. Chociaż Boecjusz na początku VI wieku sądził, że może ona rozstrzygnąć problem niezgodności między boską przedwiedzą a wolną wolą człowieka, niektórzy współcześni filozofowie, tacy jak William Hasker, twierdzą, że jakiegokolwiek wsparcie ze strony przyjętej koncepcji wieczności w rozstrzygnięciu tego zagadnienia ulega osłabieniu wskutek zadziałania niekorzystnych z religijnego punktu widzenia konsekwencji tej koncepcji dla takich pojęć, jak Boża opatrność i działanie Boga w czasie. W artykule autorka analizuje i odpowiada na argumenty Williama Haskera sformułowane przeciwko doktrynie Boskiej wieczności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wieczność; wolna wola; opatrność; wszechwiedza.