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MARCIN TKACZYK'S OCKHAMISM,  
OR WHETHER THE THEORY OF *CONTINGENTIA PRAETERITA*  
IS THE ONLY PLAUSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM  
OF *FUTURA CONTINGENTIA*

In his impressive study entitled *Futura Contingentia*, Marcin Tkaczyk argues in favor of the position that the only way possible to an effective solution for the riddle of future contingent events is via the assumption that the past is not wholly determined and that retroactive causation (causation operating backwards in time) is a possibility. In the first part of this article, I will identify and discuss those theses contained in Tkaczyk's study with which we can identify, fully or to a large degree. In the second part, I shall consider the question whether the solution proposed by him is really the only possible one, without engaging too much in the discussion of the question whether this "only possible solution" is really possible. We will confine ourselves to general comments on the basic assumptions of the proposed conception and to delineating our own position on the future contingents problem, the position known as eternalism.

In Marcin Tkaczyk's work, the problem of contingent events is viewed in a broad and general perspective. Contingency is conceived in terms of two-sided possibility: a contingent event is such that it may happen or not, i.e. for a given contingent event,  $x$ , it is possible that  $x$  will take place, but it is equally possible that  $x$  will not take place. Classical examples of contingent events in this sense are acts of free will and chance events. Tkaczyk's perspective, adopted for the discussion of future contingents in his book, is broad, as it includes both the semantic and the theological versions of the

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antinomy of future contingents, as well as general, as it is claimed for the solution of that antinomy worked out in his study and advertised as the only plausible solution to that problem, that it is applicable to all variants of the problem of *futura contingentia*.<sup>1</sup>

It is generally accepted that the problem of future contingents, in its semantic version, arises from the following statement: if any proposition about an event (supposedly contingent) in the future is true or false now, then the future event concerned can no longer be regarded as contingent; for if the proposition about it is true now, this event must necessarily come about; so, it follows that it is a necessary event; if the relevant statement is false, the event concerned cannot, by any means, occur and, consequently, it is an impossible event. The obvious fact of there being propositional statements about events in the future, the assumption of bivalence in logic (there are only two logical values: truth and falsehood), and the assumption of the one-to-one surjective function from the set of all propositions to the two-member set of logical values combine to supposedly necessitate the conclusion that whatever is to happen in the future is determined in advance, as it were, and, therefore, must happen. According to this view, it is logic that determines all facts. Consequently, no fact is really contingent and there exist neither chance events nor free choice.

The problem of *futura contingentia*, in the theological version, is supposed to consist of the following riddle: given that there exists God (or another subject) who possesses beforehand knowledge of some future event and whose knowledge is considered infallible, the event in question must inevitably happen, and, therefore, must be regarded as necessary, since things cannot turn out in any way other than that foreseen by God. According to this perspective, again, there is no room for a chance event or for freedom; all has been predetermined by God's knowledge.

The semantic version of the problem of future contingents is sometimes formulated in the following scheme:

Necessarily: if proposition  $p$  concerning future event  $x$  is true, event  $x$  will take place.

Proposition  $p$  concerning future event  $x$  is true

Necessarily: event  $x$  will take place.

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<sup>1</sup> It should immediately be made clear, in anticipation of our further discussion, that the generality about which we speak when referring to Tkaczyk's solution consists of preserving the possibility to apply classical logic with its bivalence principle to statements concerning future contingent events, both in the case of the semantic and theological version of antinomy.

The theological version of the problem is sometimes formulated as follows:

Necessarily: if God knew that  $x$  will take place,  $x$  will take place

God knew that  $x$  will take place

Necessarily:  $x$  will take place

Marcin Tkaczyk argues that both formulations of the problem of *futura contingentia* are incorrect. Although they are correctly based on the implicit assumption that the future should be regarded as open, that is that there is a two-sided possibility for all future contingent events (as represented by freedom of choice and chance), they ignore the fact that the past (and the present) is closed, i.e. that it is temporally determined. Temporal determination is referred to by some colloquial sayings, such as, “What has been done cannot be undone” or “It is no good crying over spilt milk.” Temporal determination is the modality of temporal necessity which characterizes all beings past and present: statements, beliefs, physical events, acts of will, etc. According to Marcin Tkaczyk, the quoted formulations are also erroneous in that their conclusions do not follow from their premises, as they are not deduced according to the infallible rules of inference for modal propositions. (TKACZYK 2015, 202).

This last circumstance (the error of modal inference contained in both the schemes quoted above) is of importance for proponents of semantic and theological compatibilism. Semantic compatibilism holds that the fact that a statement concerning a future event is true, before that event takes place, does not make that future event necessary in any way; by analogy, theological compatibilism maintains that God’s foreknowledge of a contingent event does not impose any necessity on that event happening. Both views use the failure of modal inference in the above schemes as the main argument in support of their position. The problem of future contingents is only an apparent, not real, problem according to compatibilists of either sort: there is room in the Universe for both chance and freedom of will and the future remains open; neither logic nor divine foreknowledge predetermine the future.

However, Tkaczyk takes the position that compatibilists of either sort are fundamentally wrong, as the essential problem of *futura contingentia* must be construed in a different way, and its formulation should include temporal necessity, i.e. the fact that the past is closed or fully determined in the sense alluded to above. Given this assumption, the problem of future contingents is transformed from a dilemma concerning how the (open) future can be recon-

ciled with logic (bivalence) or with theology (divine foreknowledge) into a trilemma, which, apart from the theses on a future event and its representation in the past, also includes the assumption of the closed past and present.

The trilemmatic formulation of the problem of future contingents for the semantic version is as follows:

Necessarily: if statement  $p$  concerning future event  $x$  is true,  $x$  will take place.

Necessarily: statement  $p$  concerning future event  $x$  is true.

Necessarily: event  $x$  will take place.

The trilemmatic formulation for the theological version:

Necessarily: if God knew that  $x$  will take place,  $x$  will take place.

Necessarily: God knew that  $x$  will take place

Necessarily: event  $x$  will take place.

We agree with Tkaczyk that the quoted trilemmatic formulation is the correct way of stating the problem of future contingents. We also accept his point that an effective defense of the contingency of non-predetermined future events cannot be carried out on the basis of a supposed formal error in the trilemmatic restatement of the problem. In fact, no formal error is apparent here. This point is made explicit and clear in Tkaczyk's study right from the opening pages: the problem of contingent events has to be formulated with the inclusion of the assumption of temporal necessity and asymmetry of time (the fact that the past is closed while the future is open).<sup>2</sup> It is precisely in the formulation advocated by Tkaczyk that the problem of future contingents represents a challenge, to which an adequate response must be provided by any opponents of fatalism (absolute determinism).

There are a number of other points in which we are in agreement with Tkaczyk: we accept his conception of free will and we share his belief that a defense of free will against the threat of fatalism is a worthwhile exercise. Freedom is construed in *Futura Contingentia* in a libertarian way, as a choice from a class of options within the reach of the subject – a choice that is determined by no factor other than the sovereign decision of the subject. In the present state of philosophy and science, such a conception of freedom is adopted by a minority of theorists. It is challenged both by naturalists fascinated by the hard data of natural sciences representing man as a conglom-

<sup>2</sup> While we agree with temporal necessity of time, we do not agree with temporal asymmetry (more on that later in this paper).

eration of atomic particles, driven by an interplay of biochemical algorithms, and by theists, who are attached to the concept of negative or true freedom (only someone who is free from sin is truly free). The author of the cited treatise on future contingents, in his defense of libertarianism, invokes the data of inner experience, which present our own nature to us as libertarian. He argues that, if we were to call these data into doubt and accept fatalism, we would inevitably fall into skepticism; if one cannot trust his own inner experience, all the knowledge one believes he has, of himself as well as of other things, will collapse.

This is very good, although it is, by no means, the only reason why it may be worthwhile to defend the doctrine of free will. Another reason, scarcely mentioned in *Futura Contingentia*, is the necessity for theists concerned to vindicate the idea of a benevolent and just God as the maker of the world. Let us consider the following: if man is not the doer of his deeds nor responsible for the actions performed as the outcome of his decisions, then the responsibility for these deeds falls upon God who is the creator of man and of man's world. For if man is not the true perpetrator of sin and answerable for it, the only alternative perpetrator is God.

One must also agree that all attempts to solve the problem of contingency, especially in the theological versions which have been proposed so far, are unsatisfactory; this statement applies equally to the solutions proposed by Thomism, Scotism, and Molinism as well as by open theism. The Thomistic solution is interpreted in *Futura Contingentia* as a version of eternalism, i.e. the theory postulating God as an eternal being existing beyond time, who knows all events taking place in time, without succession, in a single, all-comprehensive, eternal now. If the past, which entails God's foreknowledge of temporal events, is closed and, consequently, necessary and immutable, all the more so is eternity absolutely immune to change. It follows that the assumption of the timeless nature of divine foreknowledge of temporal events is no help in solving the problem of *futura contingentia*. The Scotist proposals fare no better. According to that conception, determination of future events depends totally on God's will. Tkaczyk finds similarly unsatisfactory the Molinist solution that it was at the "instant" of making His decision to create the world that God acquired total foreknowledge of the future, and that future cannot be other than that foreseen by God in His knowledge. The point made by contemporary proponents of Molinism, namely that God's foreknowledge is based on free decisions of beings possible to be created by God, does not convince the author of *Futura contin-*

*gentia* either. The criticism levelled at the Molinist doctrine in *Futura Contingentia* should be taken as implying that it is not God's middle knowledge, as such, that generates the problem of fatalism, but rather God's decision to create a definite world (from among many possible ones), made on the basis of His middle knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The decision made by God to create the world defines God's foreknowledge, which is not alterable by whatever will happen, but fully determined by what has happened, i.e. by the fact of creation, in conjunction, let us add, with God's knowledge of the future behavior of created free beings as made visible to God in eternally true counterfactual conditional statements representing all possibilities of freedom. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that, according to Molinists, the choice made by God concerning who is going to exist and in what situation he/she will be set is dictated by God's intention to create the best possible world from among all those that could, in principle, be created. This is the way Molinists have adopted to reconcile the freedom of creatures with God's Providence: the conduct of a possible free being is determined only by that being itself; but it is, exclusively, God who decides whether or not this possible free being will exist in the actual world; it is only God who knows, in advance, by means of His middle knowledge, how each of the created beings will behave.

In our opinion, it is difficult not to agree with the criticism of Molinism from the viewpoint of fervent libertarianism—the position to which M. Tkaczyk is clearly inclined. However, we are not going to discuss this point in detail, but confine ourselves, rather, without delving into the extended and ramified contemporary debate on Molinism, to observing that Molinism appears not only to jeopardize the true freedom of human will but also to impose restriction on the freedom of divine will. Proponents of the theory of divine omnipotence raise the objection that God's omnipotence is significantly curtailed by the logical value of the counterfactual truths describing the behavior of nonexistent beings placed in nonexistent situations. God's

<sup>3</sup> Let us recall here that Molina distinguishes three kinds of knowledge in God: natural knowledge (that of things which do not depend on God's will), free knowledge (that of things which depend on God's decision), and middle knowledge (that of possible acts of choice made by possible creatures and the consequences). Of the last named, he wrote, "the third kind of knowledge is intermediate (between the other two). By means of this knowledge, God, starting from the profoundest and most ineffable comprehension of every free choice, sees in His own essence down to the minutest details what such an act of choice, in its intrinsic freedom, would affect if it were to set in this or that of innumerable possible arrangements of things, given that, in each of these arrangements, an opposite act of choice, if willed, would be possible, as is clear from what has been said in disputes 49 and 50." Translated into English from MOLINA 1854 (*Liberi arbitri cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia*, 4.52.9).

middle knowledge (which concerns precisely possible beings and possible situations) would depend on eternal pure possibilities, apparently independent of God. (Cf. ŁUKASIEWICZ 2014). In our opinion, this consideration presents a very good reason, different as it is from those suggested by M. Tkaczyk, for rejecting the Molinist conception; not only does Molinism fail in its attempt to solve the problem of fatalism, but it generates a serious problem of its own, namely the problem of circumscribing divine omnipotence.

Open theism, a view assuming that God does not possess complete foreknowledge of the future, finds a simple solution to the problem of *futura contingentia* in the theological version, by rejecting the second premise of the theological trilemma (namely, “Necessarily: God knew that *x* would take place”), but there are reasons to consider it unacceptable on theological and religious grounds. As Tkaczyk points out, the traditions of great monotheistic religions, in particular those of Judaism and Christianity, unanimously uphold the reality of prophecy of future events, and this fact presupposes God’s knowledge of the future. In this context, let us note, however, that the attempts of contemporary open theism (in previous times there have been theists akin to contemporary open theists; as M. Tkaczyk relates, some theologians of early Islam were of that sort) to solve the problem of prophecies aim to do justice to sacred scripture while preserving intact its principal thesis affirming freedom of will in the libertarian sense, albeit at the cost of circumscribing the scope of that freedom. This is done in the following way: it is assumed that God possesses foreknowledge of some future events insofar as they concern the domain of prophecy, yet does not possess foreknowledge which extends to all future events. In particular, He does not know beforehand those future events that have no bearing on the matters concerning prophecy. In other words, whatever God needs to know in advance for his providential designs concerning the world, He knows (for instance that Judas will betray Jesus); yet of whatever future event not related, in any significant way, to His providential plan, He remains ignorant, because He neither wants nor needs to know it. For instance, it is possible that God does not know beforehand that a certain John will decide to marry a certain Margaret on July 9, 2031, as He has no wish to know it. On the other hand, He is aware that no matter what John or anyone else does or fails to do, God will successfully manage to carry out His providential designs for the world. If this much is assumed, the testimony of religious texts relative to prophecy will be saved and, so too, will the thesis affirming contingency of some future events be saved. The treatise, *Futura Contingentia*, omits any reference to this revised or “hybrid” version of open

theism.<sup>4</sup> Such a revisionist turn within the current of open theism is an attempt to achieve a compromise position that would reconcile the ideas of contingency of the world (including freedom of will), divine providence, and tradition based on the holy texts of Christianity. The solution worked out by revisionist open theists is a remarkable theory; its drawback is the sort of limited fatalism it incorporates, openly proposed and accepted by its proponents (BOYD 2001). To be more precise, the view upheld by the revised open theism is one which states that whatever (being, act) God wants to be free (contingent) is in fact free, and that which God decrees to be determined and necessary, is in fact determined and necessary. Naturally, as in all like frameworks, a problem arises, namely, in what measure God bears the responsibility for evil and sin present in the world, given that He is the ultimate cause of everything that happens in the world.

A proponent of revised open theism has at least two lines of argument available to him to weaken the objections raised by its critics. One step is to invoke the weak compatibilist doctrine of freedom (the conception of freedom most often upheld and defended in Western philosophy). In this perspective, he can maintain that, in the case of Judas for example, even though Judas was not free in the libertarian sense, he may still be considered to have been free in the compatibilist sense: he could not do otherwise than he did; there were no options left for him but, still, he did what he did of his own accord, without any external compulsion. The determination of Judas's will, worked by God from the inside, as it were, according to this theory, amounts to no external compulsion.

Another step in an open theist's defense of God's goodness in the face of the world's evil could be, still maintaining the assumption of compatibilism, to adopt the standpoint of theodicy of greater good. In other words, God determined certain events (and the future) to take place because of the greater good that would come into being in the world as a result precisely of these events. In accord with this view, some statements concerning the future could be true beforehand (before what they refer to takes place), because their logical value was determined by God's ordinance, while other propositions, referring to future events, would be blanks with regard to truth value. Such a conception could be reconciled with the (weakened) diachronic bivalence principle adopted by M. Tkaczyk.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The cited version of open theism revises the traditional conception of open theism that God remains ignorant of *all* future contingent events and only makes probabilistic guesses about such events.

<sup>5</sup> Formulation and defense of the diachronic bivalence principle is, in our opinion, a very valuable result achieved in M. Tkaczyk's dissertation – a result that is interesting for its own



Let us make it clear that it is not our intention to defend open theism in the modified version described above. Still, we believe that, when engaging in a discussion of future contingents, freedom, and contingency in general, it is good to bear in mind that there exists such a theoretical proposal, which has followers, and is, apparently, consistent with classical logic (with the weak version of bivalence principle), as well as with the religious tradition postulating existence of prophecy, belief in divine providence, and the libertarian conception of free will, albeit in a very restricted sense. This restriction applies to instances where the libertarian will is replaced with will construed in the compatibilist sense. The reason why we refuse to defend the solution proposed by revised open theism is mainly due to the problem of responsibility for evil, which inevitably appears whenever we admit a determination of human will directly influenced by God's activity. The essence of this problem is the question: given that God can determine human beings to act in a definite way, why has He not determined at least some humans, if not all, to exclusively, morally good action?<sup>6</sup>

As we already remarked above, Marcin Tkaczyk also rejects the Thomist way of dealing with the problem of future contingents as ineffective (the necessity of the past is replaced in Thomism by the necessity of eternity, which leaves the theological trilemma intact in its essence, with all its shortcomings). We agree with Marcin Tkaczyk that the Thomist solution remains open to some queries although, let it be also noted, that we construe the Thomist position in a different way than he does on a number of points.

First, we believe that the essence of the Thomist position is not the thesis of the timelessness of God and His knowledge, but the thesis of the causal nature of divine knowledge: God, as the Creator, is the cause of all (temporal) events of which He possesses a-temporal knowledge. (ŁUKASIEWICZ 2014).

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theoretical import, apart from its usefulness as a tool in theological and metaphysical debates. The defense of this principle consists of the demonstration that accepting this principle as valid does not require any changes in classical propositional calculus, and that classical propositional calculus is, thereby, established as the proper logic for propositions about future contingent events. The diachronic bivalence affirms, in a conjunction of four statements, that: 1) no proposition is, nor will ever be, both true and false; 2) every proposition is, or will be at some time, either true or false; 3) no proposition that is, or will be, true, will ever cease to be true; 4) no proposition that is, or will be, false, will ever cease to be false. Cf. TKACZYK 2015, 344 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Further discussion of the possible answers to this question definitely exceeds the limits and purpose of this article. Let us only note here that one (probably not the only one) possible response to this question which would provide an alternative to hybrid open theism, would be admitting a number (be it minimal) of events that are not predetermined (and thus contingent). If everything were predetermined by God, the inner experience of our own freedom and autonomy would be no more than an illusion, and God's perfect goodness and benevolence would be called into question.

The significant point made here is not whether God is the primary or a secondary cause (in the orthodox Thomist conception He can only be the primary cause) of temporal effects, but the fact that He knows all contingents by knowing Himself: His will and His knowledge, which, by the way, must be identical with each other, given the ontological requirement of absolute simplicity of God's being, grounded in the theistic postulate of God's absolute aseity which means that He exists entirely from himself and autonomy. (DODDS 2012). Thus, there is an intimate link between divine knowledge and God's efficient causality, His ontological aseity, and simplicity, which, in our opinion, is all too often ignored in the debates concerning contingency of events, with the result that the discussion is narrowed down to the problem of knowing future contingents beforehand, or, more generally, to the epistemic aspect of the problem of contingency and the question of how the contingent nature of future contingents can be reconciled with foreknowledge of these very contingent events. This, of course, is a legitimate approach; yet, when we consider divine foreknowledge of future contingent events in the context of the theistic doctrine historically rooted in the sacred traditions of the great monotheistic religions, which view God first and foremost as the Creator of the Universe and not merely a being knowing the future completely and infallibly, the partial (namely restricted to the epistemic aspect of the problem) solutions of the riddle of contingency leave one with a sense of deficiency and a suspicion that the presented answers are merely apparent, not real, solutions.

Secondly, Aquinas seems to assume a presentist metaphysics of time, which holds that only that which is actually present is truly real; thus, the future, which is not actually present, does not seem to be real in the full sense of the word. True, Aquinas, now and then using metaphors taken from Boethius, implies that God has immediate access to the whole of time including the past, present, and future. Nevertheless, the metaphysics of becoming, taken over by Thomas from Aristotle, based on the concept of passage from potency to act, presupposes presentism in the theory of time (the so-called theory of time A). The eternal contemplation of time and all its parts, as the foundation of God's foreknowledge of future events, looks rather like an *ad hoc* hypothesis adopted expressly for the discussion and solution of the future contingents problem, whereas the presentist metaphysics of potency and act is an essential constituent of Thomas's vision of the Universe inherited from Aristotle.

Thus, while we agree with Marcin Tkaczyk's thesis that Thomism fails in its attempt to produce a solution to the problem of the contingency of future events that would satisfy proponents of libertarianism, we are obliged to observe that our understanding of Thomism and, in particular, of Aquinas's conception of divine knowledge, differs significantly from the interpretation presented in M. Tkaczyk's monograph. We will say more: if Aquinas's position was truly like the one attributed to him by M. Tkaczyk—if, in other words, according to Aquinas, God's knowledge of contingent facts consisted in an eternal, a-temporal contemplation of them—his solution to the problem of contingency and freedom of will, in our opinion, would be a very correct one.

We will revisit the theory of eternal contemplation by God of contingent events in the concluding section of this paper.

Having surveyed those theses of Marcin Tkaczyk's book with which we basically agree, be it with some minor reservations, let us consider the proposal that Tkaczyk proposes in his book as a definitive solution to the problem of *futura contingentia*.

As for the semantic version of this problem, we believe his solution consists in a replacement of the strong bivalence principle with a weaker version thereof. This weaker principle is the diachronic bivalence briefly mentioned above; its special import consists in allowing for propositions that are indeterminate with regard to truth value for the time being; these logically indeterminate or "blank" propositions are precisely statements concerning future contingent events. (TKACZYK 2015, 343). These gaps are filled in and eliminated, owing to a kind of retroactive causation which consists in a contingent future event, e. g. a contingent act of a human being, imparting the missing logical value to a logically blank proposition representing that very event but formed in the past (that is, before that event takes place). If, for example, Peter forms a statement on July 9, 2018 to the effect that, on July 31, 2031, John will decide to marry Margaret, then John, by deciding on July 31, 2031 to marry Margaret, will cause Peter's statement of July 9, 2018 to be a true statement; in other words, John's action was the cause that Peter's statement of July 9, 2018 *was/became* true on that very July 9, 2018. Until July 31, 2031, Peter's statement of July 9, 2018 is a proposition that is logically blank (neither true nor false); however, the moment John makes his decision, Peter's statement of July 9, 2018 becomes "already" a true proposition. In fact, it could be said that it has always been a true proposition (including the period between July 9, 2018 and July 31, 2031); yet, this can only be said on

July 31, 2031, since it is only on that day that John, by his action, determined the past of the proposition in question. This proposition's past as a logically blank proposition was replaced by its past as a true proposition without any blank: since John made true the prediction forming the content of that proposition, the proposition itself was made true and *de facto* was true all the time, as we see when we think of its logical value in retrospect on July 31, 2031 and subsequently. If, however, John failed to fulfil its prediction, Peter's proposition would have been false July 9, 2018 and following.

We have presented a very brief and summarizing reconstruction of M. Tkaczyk's Ockhamism. Is our interpretation true to its object, though? Does such an alteration of the past, as described by the author of the treatise, *Futura Contingentia*, lie within the reach of the human power at all?<sup>7</sup>

Let us quote M. Tkaczyk's statement *in extenso*:

Now, for one thing we affirm that human beings have the capacity to impose, take away, and alter meanings with regard to physical objects in the broadest sense: things, events, ways of behaving, states of affairs. Between an act of imposition of a meaning and the corresponding state of having that meaning can obtain a true cause-effect relationship, even though this relationship is not physical in nature and need not be physically observable at all. In the domain where meanings (senses) are imposed, taken away and altered we are not constrained by any temporal restrictions. For instance: we could come to an agreement in 2014 and decide that World War II began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931; if we did so indeed we would *affect* [the italics are Marcin Tkaczyk's] the state of affairs in which Germany was not the power to begin World War II. This, of course, would not result in any change in the physical and psychological description of past events; still the meaning (sense) of past events (for us) would be changed. This change in the sense of past events is a result of an act of our will and this result comes earlier in time than

<sup>7</sup> Concerning this question, it is worthwhile to cite the observation made by Bożena Czernecka-Rej to the effect that the instances of supposed retroactive causation cited in Tkaczyk's dissertation (delayed inauguration of academic year, retroactive legislation) gives rise to doubts as to whether the cited cases are really examples of retroactive causes or are, rather (and more probably) instances of our representation of the past being changed. It is clear that changes in our representation of the past are not changes of the past itself (CZERNECKA-REJ 2017, 142). Apart from the quoted, no other instances of supposed retroactive causation are given in *Futura Contingentia*, and it is expressly stated that there is no question of retroactive causation in the domain of physical phenomena; any changes made in the past from a future cause can only take place in the sphere of meaning (sense); that is, in the proper domain where logical values belong. The fact that the examples of supposed retroactive causes given in M. Tkaczyk's book are far from satisfactory does not, in itself, disqualify his Ockhamism. They can, at best, serve as a justification of the objection that Tkaczyk's proposed theory is an *ad hoc* hypothesis, and *ad hoc* hypotheses may sometimes turn out to be true as well.

its cause. As for the course of physical events related to what we name the Second World War, it is a complete development in itself that can no longer be altered: the Germans, the Japanese and all the other participants did what they did, and nothing can change these facts. We cannot send any physical signal to these past events, all we can do with respect to them is receive physical signals coming to us from them, which means exactly: suffer the effects caused by those happenings in the past. By contrast, in the world of meanings set up by those who participate in the agreement, in the world of senses of our culture group, some past events acquire new sense, other lose the sense they hitherto possessed, still other change their meaning. Within the confines of that world or that sphere of the world, *the past, in a measure, can change according to our wishes*. [the emphasis mine: D.L.]

Secondly, we affirm that logical values belong, at least in part, to the world of meanings. They are our creation. (For that reason, we believe that the controversy as to whether logical values are relative or absolute, whether they are carried by propositions, judgments, thoughts etc. is aimless. Logical values are what we order them to be, within certain limits, of course, marked out by the functions they are to fulfil. So, instead of arguing over what logical values are like, we had better seriously reflect on what they ought to be like). (TKACZYK 2015, 400).

It is apposite for our present discussion to point out some statements made or implied in the quoted passage that are of fundamental importance in our interpretation of Tkaczyk's position given above. First: a cause-effect relationship is obtained between the (causal) human action (in the domain of sense) that comes later in time than the consequence this action produces, which takes place earlier. Second: this action done by a human being (in the domain of sense) can change the past. Third: the changes of the past, producible by human actions (in the domain of sense), can exclusively concern the sphere of meaning, including logical values, and not, by any means, the sphere of physical or psychological events. Fourth: logical values are not eternally attributed to their bearers, whatever these bearers may be.

The question that arises here, which is of prime interest for our discussion in this paper, is whether and how the described solution of the semantic version of future contingents problem can be applied to the theological trilemma presented above. Does God remain ignorant of what John will do on July 31, 2031 until that very date, given that, until that date, the statement of July 9, 2018 is a blank with regard to its logical value? Does He acquire only on July 31, 2031 the knowledge of John's action envisaged in the relevant statement? Does John's relevant action on July 31, 2031 change the past in such a way as to make God's knowledge of contingent events, occurring in

time, free of any blanks, when viewed in retrospect from the moment of John's decision onwards? If that were the case, God would never entertain a false belief as to John's action and (in the final version of the past formed by John in the future) would always know, beforehand, what John would do.

Herein lies the rub: what holds true for the semantic version of the riddle need not and does not hold for the theological trilemma. The reason is that foreknowledge, in general, and God's foreknowledge, in particular, is not contained within the sphere of senses controlled by human convention. The state of mind of a real intelligent subject containing knowledge of the future is truly and necessarily related to all kinds of contingent states of affairs, including physical ones. (TKACZYK 2015, 402).

John cannot in any way change the logical value of God's affirmations, even though these may be dependent on what John will freely do in his capacity as a free subject. Thus, the question arises, how God can possibly know what will happen in the future, if the future in itself is open (not predetermined in any way). The answer to this question comes in the following two passages:

Now the restrictions imposed on physical signals in this model [namely Minkowsky model] are such, that the hypothetical possibility of sending signals into the absolute past would be identical to the possibility of receiving signals from the absolute future. (TKACZYK 2015, 403).

and:

One can without contradiction attribute knowledge in advance of coming events to an omniscient subject (namely God) if and only if one attributes to the same subject an unrestrained power to produce effects in the past. (TKACZYK 2015, 404).

If our reading of these passages is correct, God has complete and perfect knowledge of the future, precisely because He possesses an unlimited capability of receiving *all* signals from the future (because of His omnipotence). A statement concerning a future contingent event can be true and God's knowledge of that event is possible, in advance, because (and here it is worthwhile once again to quote the author of the book):

logical value of any proposition describing a certain state of affairs is an effect of that state of affairs. By analogy: the correct state of knowledge concerning a certain state of affairs is an effect of that state of affairs. (TKACZYK 2015, 406).

However, here again a question arises: if God's knowledge embraces all true propositions, and if the truth of some of these propositions depends on events that will only happen in the future, and if at least some of these propositions (for example propositions concerning free acts of will) may be truth-value blanks for the time being, only filled in with the appropriate value when the future contingent event they refer to actually takes place, is it not the case that God's knowledge concerning future contingent events also embraces temporary truth-value blanks and is not, therefore, complete and perfect? Or, perhaps, there are some double standards at work here; thus, although truth-value propositional blanks really exist, God's knowledge of contingent events is entirely free of them, because it is founded upon perfect reception of signals from the absolute future, and not on a recognition of the logical value of the relevant propositions.

It is not our wish to rule out, in advance, the possibility of providing convincing answers to these questions. Nevertheless, we think it might be apposite for an adequate grounding of such answers to say more about contemporary metaphysics of Ockhamist inspiration, especially in the version proposed by M. Tkaczyk, so as to achieve the fullest possible clarity regarding the challenging matters here under discussion. In the concluding section of this paper, we wish to outline an answer to the problem of *futura contingentia*, especially in its theological version, that will represent an approach which is an alternative to Marcin Tkaczyk's Ockhamism.<sup>8</sup>

The position we defend belongs to the class of eternalist solutions, i.e. to the kind of theories which accept for granted that God is an a-temporal being, implying that God's knowledge is different in its modal qualification from what belongs to the past. The author of *Futura Contingentia* rather lightly and jokingly dismisses the eternalist position, together with arguments in its favor, as a "foolishness" (TKACZYK 2015, 412.) He justifies his dismissal of eternalism by stating that temporal necessity (or should we say a-temporal necessity (?), which is reducible in the final analysis to immutability) is a modal qualification not only of the past (and the present), but also of eternity and, thus, if divine knowledge is eternal, it describes the modal status of God's knowledge. It follows, therefore, that the second premise of the syllogism grounding theological fatalism (namely: "Necessarily: God knew that *x* will take place") retains its validity and, as a consequence, theological fatalism appears to be an irrefutable thesis.

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<sup>8</sup> We treat this solution more comprehensively and in more detail in our book ŁUKASIEWICZ 2014.

The logic of the theological trilemma looks implacable. Let us not despair, however, but rather attempt to find some counterbalance to it. We may consider the trivial case of a cup of coffee on a table. I know the cup of coffee is now here in front of me on the table because I can see it standing. This cup of coffee, at this very moment, cannot *not* stand there (be elsewhere and/or in a different position), precisely because it is there and standing. Yet if it could be so that this very cup of coffee was not standing on the table in front of me, I would know then that it was not there on the table in front of me. Once it stands there, however, it is temporally necessary that it does, and once this cup is there on the table in front of me, my knowledge of this fact cannot be other than it actually is. So, my knowledge of this fact is also temporally necessary, even though, in principle, my knowledge could be different from what it actually is. Of course, my knowledge of the cup standing in front of me is not a kind of foreknowledge – that is, knowledge occurring earlier in time than its object or, in other words, before this cup appeared on the table in front of me, I had no idea it would be there. Between my knowledge of it and the cup of coffee on the table in front of me, there obtains a certain close relationship, which I feel not constrained, by any circumstances, to describe as a cause-effect relationship; still if anyone insisted on it, I would grant as much. What I will insist upon, in turn, is that the relationship between my knowledge of a contingent event and the event as object bears no mark of anything like retroactive causation; there is no case involved of a subsequent event being the cause of an antecedent event. Let me repeat: once the cup of coffee is there and I know it, nothing can change my knowledge of this fact. But the flow of necessity, so to say, in this and in all the like cases, is not from the knowledge to the object of that knowledge, but the other way around: it is the (temporal) necessity of the object that fixes the necessity of the knowledge of that object. There is the temporally necessary knowledge of the cup of coffee now standing on the table because it contains a temporally necessary state of affairs, namely, the cup of coffee standing on the table and not *vice versa*. A state of affairs determines the corresponding knowledge (a representation of that state of affairs) and imparts to it the modal status of temporal necessity.

Now, eternalist theism, the theory we espouse, can be reduced in its essence to the view that, just as my (human) knowledge of past contingent events is temporally necessary, since the states of affairs it represents are temporally necessary, God's knowledge of contingent events in the world is a-temporally (*sic*) necessary, since the states of affairs it concerns are tem-



porally necessary. God's knowledge of what happens now is immutable because, if anything happens now, the fact remains unchangeable that this very thing happens at this very moment.

A key presupposition of the version of eternalism we defend is metaphysics of symmetrical time (theory of time B). This is a conception of time which assumes that the past, the present, and the future share an equal degree of reality and, because of that, God can "view" all temporal events as present in a kind of a-temporal "now." There are arguments in favor of this conception of time based on both contemporary physics and metaphysical considerations.<sup>9</sup>

There are, naturally, arguments against the conception B of time. Here, we shall confine ourselves to indicating one serious objection to that theory, which is particularly relevant in the context of the debate on theological fatalism (the theological trilemma quoted above), namely, the objection that the conception B of time is incompatible with freedom in the libertarian sense; that is, if the conception B is true, libertarian freedom cannot be the case in reality. The objection runs as follows: if the future is as real as the past, it is also closed like the past. Henceforth, any future choice of mine already exists in the future and is as determined as my past choices, even though I am not yet aware of it. In fact, any future choice of mine is already settled, and I will not be able to do otherwise than I will in fact do. In reality, no other option is left for me than the one that lies ready made in the future. The future is as immutable, closed, and determined as the past and the present. Hence it follows that everything is, in fact, determined, and fatalism true.

Still, the choice I will make in what is now, for me, the future is such and no other precisely because I will make it in a free way. In other words, I will affect its existence. If I make a different choice in the future, the future will be different. There is a dependence of the future upon my choices which shows that our futures will be those we make by our acts of choice and our willed actions. On the assumption of theory B of time, if the present is temporally necessary, since it is what it is and cannot be other than it is, the same is true of the future: it is temporally necessary because it cannot be other than it is, once it comes into being.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Extensive presentation and discussion of the arguments in favor of theory B of time would exceed the limits and the purpose of this text; here, we only direct the reader to some reliable readings, such as HELLER 2008; REA 2005; ROGERS 2007; MORDARSKI 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the discussion of these matters in ROGERS & HASKER 2011.

In response, be it cursory, to the objection of fatalism raised against eternalism, the version of eternalism we defend affirms that God's knowledge of the future consists of God's knowledge of the present and the temporal necessity of the future is transferable to God's knowledge thereof, not the other way around. This point is made to remove the threat of God's foreknowledge imposing its necessity upon seemingly contingent events and, consequently, excluding all freedom and contingency from temporal happenings. Given this modification of the eternalist theory, it can be said that temporal necessity does not rule out freedom (nor contingent nature) within events which take place in time. It is thus possible to accept the theological trilemma as a correct reasoning, both formally and materially, and still defend the reality of freedom and the contingent nature of chance events. True: the past is immutable and, as a consequence, necessary; the present is immutable and, as a result of that, necessary; the same is true of the future. Nevertheless, whatever happened in the past, is happening now, and will happen in the future, respectively, was, is, and will be so and so, because we determine our past-time according to our will. If we acted other than we did, and we could, in principle, act differently, history would be different, and the future would be different. This position does not require any revision of logic, nor even an application of a weakened principle of bivalence, as there are no temporal truth-value blanks in it.

Perhaps the emission of signals from the absolute future that God receives in their total number, mentioned in Marcin Tkaczyk's work, is only possible because the future already exists, and we remain ignorant of it because we have not yet approached it closely enough. For if the future did not exist, it would be hard to understand how a nonexistent future, that is a non-being entity, could send any signals at all and what these signals would be. If this observation is correct, then there may be more points in common, than differences, between M. Tkaczyk's Ockhamism and the version of eternalism defended in the last section of this paper. The most noticeable points of agreement would be as follows: there exists, in reality, freedom in the strong, libertarian sense; God possesses unlimited knowledge of all future events; God "receives" (in our preferred vocabulary "views" or "contemplates") all signals from the future. The chief differences between our points of view would only consist of the following: our conception does not allow for any gaps or blanks, be it temporal, in the truth-value of propositions, in contrast to M. Tkaczyk's; we believe that temporal (or a-temporal) necessity does not annihilate the contingency of free acts and chance events. This last

point shows that we incline towards the view that not only the dilemma of future contingents, but also the trilemma of contingency, indicates no threat either to freedom of human will or to God's omniscience.

Having said as much, we realize that a great deal more should be said, than has been done in the present text, in defense of human freedom and a world contingency more complete and more expertly justified according to the perspective dominated by God, the all-knowing and all-powerful Creator. (ŁUKASIEWICZ 2015).

*Translated by Roman Majeran*

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MARCIN TKACZYK'S OCKHAMISM, OR WHETHER THE THEORY  
OF *CONTINGENTIA PRAETERITA* IS THE ONLY PLAUSIBLE SOLUTION  
TO THE PROBLEM OF *FUTURA CONTINGENTIA*

Summary

In the first part of this article, we point out and discuss these the contained in Marcin Tkaczyk's book, *Futura Contingentia*, with which we agree completely or at least partially. In the second part of the paper, we seek to consider whether the solution of the *futura contingentia* problem, rooted in the basic intuitions of William of Ockham, is the only one possible and available for us. We argue that there is another possible approach to the problem of how to reconcile divine omniscience with contingent events rather than the Ockhamist solution. The alternative view, which we suggest, is "eternalism", meaning that God is timeless, and that temporal necessity is compatible with contingent events and free decisions.

OCKHAMIZM MARCINA TKACZYKA, CZYLI O TYM, CZY TEORIA  
*CONTINGENTIA PRAETERITA* JEST JEDYNYM MOŻLIWYM ROZWIĄZANIEM  
PROBLEMU *FUTURA CONTINGENTIA*

Streszczenie

W części pierwszej artykułu wskazujemy i pokrótce omawiamy niektóre tezy zawarte w rozprawie *Futura contingentia* Marcina Tkaczyka, z którymi się solidaryzujemy w pełni lub w dużym stopniu. W drugiej części zastanawiamy się, czy rzeczywiście rozwiązanie problemu przyszłych zdarzeń przygodnych, zgodne z koncepcją Ockhama, jest jedynym możliwym rozwiązaniem dla problemu *futura contingentia*. Jako propozycję alternatywną proponujemy stanowisko zwane eternalizmem. Tezą główną eternalizmu jest, że Bóg istnieje poza czasem i że konieczność temporalna nie wyklucza przygodności zdarzeń w tym libertariańskiej wolności woli.

**Key words:** God; freedom; divine foreknowledge; necessity; truth.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Bóg; wolność; Boża przewidziania; konieczność; prawda.

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