

On Heffalumps and Heresies: Responses to Accusations Against Open Theism

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“Hence, God can be influenced by what we do and God truly responds to what we do. God genuinely interacts and enters into dynamic give-and-take relationships with us” (2).

- This is an aspect that Dwight mentioned in his email, one of the premises of the view of open theism is that God continually interacts with God’s creation – the relationality is very important
 - *Open theism and Process have a lot of similarities: both positions challenge traditional Western views on God’s immutability. Holding to slightly nuanced versions of a personal God who is in process with creation, journey together, and relational; thus God is interactive, caring and compassion, able to the hurt and pleased, etc. Both positions take relationality seriously. (Dwight Friesen)*

“God elicits human cooperation such that it is both God and humanity who decide what the future shall be” (2).

“Graciously, however, God invites us to collaborate with him to bring the open part of the future into being” (3).

- Reminded me of what Doug Pagitt said during the *New Theology for a New World* seminar. The fact that we rely on God to do everything, since God created everything, has everything planned, it’s all in God’s court. Rather, when we view ourselves as players in the game as well, we become more actively involved in God’s creation, becoming co-(re)creators and co-collaborating with God...we’re in the business of working with and alongside God.
 - *We understand humanity primarily by its distinctiveness from God; but maybe we need to be co-collaborating with God – doing what God does. (Doug Pagitt)*

“Moreover, ‘The conclusion that God’s glory is diminished by libertarian human freedom is impossible to avoid’ (p. 226). Here, Ware lays his cards on the table and indicts every form of Arminianism for diminishing the divine glory” (10).

- This seems to be a very *small* view of God’s glory. Why can we not bring glory to God by exercising the very free will that God endowed us with? This seems to be a way in which we can bring glory to God; by living our lives as God hoped we would.

“What is really being argued here is: “The Bible clearly teaches” is equivalent to “our interpretation of scripture is inerrant.” This is to confuse the inerrant scripture with our fallible understandings of it” (16-17).

- Not much to comment on that, just something that we *all* need to be reminded of quite often. Not sure if I would use the word ‘inerrant’ with Scripture or not (leaning towards probably not) – but this is important. *Whatever* your view of Scripture is, our understandings of whatever it is are limited, and thus not the end-all-be-all interpretation.

“Certainly, proponents of openness may be incorrect in our specific suggestions for improvements...” (21)

- One thing I really appreciated throughout this essay is Sanders’ humility that has come through many times throughout this essay (as seen in this quote from pg. 4: “*Someday, perhaps someone will convince me that my arguments are faulty and that there is a better explanation that can handle my objections. Until then, however, I will continue to affirm this view in the face of virulent opposition.*”

“Open theists argue that it is logically incoherent” (23).

- This isn't the convincing argument for open theism for me. I am okay with a God of mystery – with things in my faith that are incoherent – even logically incoherent, at least in this phase of my life. Having everything line up and make sense logically is not the most important thing to me. The idea that God is intricately involved in our lives, that God wants us to become co-collaborators with God – that is what is enticing to me. That is convincing...that I matter to God in a way that could even change how God might act in a certain situation.

“This same guilt by association move is made when openness is claimed to be process theology because both views share a couple of points in common. A former professor of mine quotes a remark in one of our books that openness and process agree on a particular point. He then says this remark proves that open theism derives from process theism! Of course, having a point in common does not prove dependency so I wrote my former professor about this error in logic. He responded that he was right and that was that! Those who claim openness is simply process theology need to read what process theologians are saying about openness. David Ray Griffin, a prominent process theologian, says that he cannot stomach open theism any more than he can classical theism because openness is just too similar to the classical view and thus not worthy of God. Open theism is a hot potato being tossed back and forth between classical and process theists. Nobody wants us. The sons of openness have nowhere to lay our heads” (32-3).

- Interesting point on the difference between process theology & open theism.

“World magazine demonized open theism and claimed that it was responsible for a long list of evils including homosexuality! Huh? At least they did not hold us responsible for state supported terrorism” (34)!

- I knew there was a reason that the *World* pisses me off. Yah, that's definitely some scholarly work being done by their writers.

Overall Thoughts

While I still need to finish Boyd's *God of the Possible*, Sanders' article seemed to be a more enticing appeal to begin to (re)think about open theism and its possibilities for theology today. I don't think that open theism necessarily negates God's sovereignty, in that God is still knowledgeable concerning the parts of the future that are available to God. God allows part of the future to remain open, and it is that part of the future that we become co-collaborators, co-(re)creators with God, in forming the future, in bringing about God's kingdom here on Earth. This helps bring about a more dynamic, (inter)active example of Christianity, a Christianity where it **does** in fact matter what you do, how you live, because you are involved in bringing about God's future here on Earth – we're not just playing around and passively accepting whatever future God has decided ages ago – it's still up for grabs. The future could be absolutely shitty or we could choose to, along with God, co-create a beautiful future, filled with the desires of ourselves and the desires of God.

This, I think, is appealing. This I think will draw people to God. This, I think, could be revolutionary for those who are willing to be open to new ideas about who God is, what God does, and what God desires for God's Creation.