TOWARD A PANENTHEISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF TIME

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy

MAY 2010

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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TOWARD A PANENTHEISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF TIME

Abstract

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May 2010

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The concept of panentheism lacks sufficient development in the area of the

philosophy of time. The current literature says little about what sorts of positions

panentheism demands or implies. I suggest that panentheism is compatible with the

existence of absolute time and with the existence of a block universe, and I defend these

positions by appealing to commonly used metaphors and analogies from the literature on

panentheism.

Before discussing the implications of panentheism, it is important to define

precisely what it is. Most definitions of panentheism share important features but express

those features in different terms. I analyze common definitions and then survey the most

common metaphors and analogies used to explain these definitions.

I argue that the concept of absolute time is not only compatible with panentheism,

but is compatible only with panentheism. If absolute time exists, then it was either

created by God or is a part of God. If God created absolute time, then it either constrains

God by imposing its metric upon God, or it is not absolute because it relies on God for its

metric. If absolute time is a part of God, then panentheism must be true. Further, when

considered to be a part of God, absolute time is useful for explaining how the universe is in God and how the universe is God's body.

I also argue that panentheism is compatible with eternalism. I argue that it is possible for a panentheistic God to exist outside of time in the fashion suggested by Augustine and Boethius, but also that a panentheistic God could overcome the classical philosophers' problems with how a timeless God could interact with the universe. I achieve this by arguing that God is absolutely temporal, meaning that God's duration creates an absolute time upon which physical time is dependent. Absolute time is a part of God and is transcendent of physical time, which places God "outside" of physical time in a sense that secures God's transcendence.

The culmination of my arguments is that absolute time and an absolutely temporal existence are compatible with but not necessary for panentheism.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

God's relationship to the world is an important issue in the philosophy of religion because it bears significant influence upon what God is understood to be like in terms of God's attributes and nature. Thus, deciding to think of God's relationship to the world as being this way over that way is a foundational choice for one's understanding of God. Among the many things affected by this choice is how to understand God's relationship with time. Any particular framework for understanding how God is related to the world will require some explanation of how God is related to time. One must decide if God experiences the passing of time, if God exists in a series of presents like humans or if God exists in all times at once, if God knows the future, and so on. Besides these issues, one might wonder how the acceptance of a particular God/world relationship affects various issues in the philosophy of time. One must explore whether a God who is related to the world in a particular way would imply that time is absolute rather than relative, if only the present exists or if the past and future exist as well, if time had a beginning, and so on. Each of these issues will impact what kinds of attributes God would have as well as informing what kinds of things God would do. Consider this: If time does not have a beginning, then one might have to concede that God did not create the universe, but is coeternal with it. Also: If God exists outside of time, then God might not interact with the world. God's relationship to time is a serious issue for any given God/world relationship.

Four God/World Relationships

If, as we have hypothesized, God's relationship to the world is important, then we should consider different ways in which God could be related to the world. Ted Peters identifies four primary kinds of God/world relationships, which are theism, pantheism, deism, and panentheism.[1] This list does not exhaust all possible God/world relationships, but it does include those that are the most influential and consequential. Peters compares these views across three criteria: whether God created the world, whether God acts in the world, and whether God is *a se*, which means existing independently.[2] We will pay little mind to whether or not God is creator, and will add to that list whether God is personal and whether God is transcendent or immanent. While not exhaustive of differences between these views, these criteria are sufficient to demonstrate some relevant differences between them.

First we consider theism, which is the view that God is a personal being that created the world, and who exists in aseity[3] apart from the world, yet also interacts with the world. The God of theism is not dependent on the world in any way and is a completely separate entity from the world. Despite being separate from the world and transcendent of it, the God of theism regularly interacts with the world via miracles and answered prayers. This interaction only occurs in the direction of God acting on the world because the world cannot act upon God. The world cannot act upon God for two primary reasons: God is immutable (unable to change), and God a non-physical

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[1] Ted Peters, "Models of God," *Philosophia: Philosophical Quarterly of Israel* 35:3-4 (2007), p. 273. Peters identifies nine total models of God, but the others, which are atheism, agnosticism, polytheism, henotheism, and his own view of eschatological panentheism, are not God/world relationships in the same sense as the four used above.
[2] Peters, pp. 276-288.
[3] "Aseity" is the attributive adjectival form of *a se*.

transcendent being upon whom the world is unable to exert influence. When the term "theism" is invoked in later chapters, it should be taken to mean the view that God is separate from and transcendent of the world. The God of theism is not part of the universe, nor is the universe part of God; they must always be understood to be completely separate. As a primary rule, theism privileges God's transcendence. Broadly speaking, theism is the orthodox view of Christianity, having its roots in such figures as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

According to Peters, pantheism is the view that God and the world are identical spatially and temporally.[4] This means that the world is God and God is the world, as is implied by the term "pantheism," which comes from the Greek and literally means "all God," or "all is God." It is important to note that for common forms of pantheism, while there is a unity of existing things where everything is one singular God/world, there is also an apparent plurality of existing things, which allow us to perceive individual entities such as people, trees, and rocks. This apparent plurality, however, is illusory, as there is only one absolute reality, which is the unity of God and the world.[5] Given that God and the world are identical, pantheism radically privileges God's immanence. God is fully present in all places and all times because all places and times *are* God. Given God's immanence in the world and given that God and the world are identical, a pantheistic God is not *a se*. God cannot be independent of the universe if God is the universe. Finally, if God is fully immanent and is identical with the universe, then a pantheistic God is not transcendent. There is no aspect of God that is not an aspect of the world. Given that there is no separation between God and the universe, it does not make sense to think of

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[4] Peters, p. 281.
[5] Peters, p. 281.

God as acting in and upon the universe. Levine points out that the pantheistic God and the theistic God are so radically different that it does not make sense to imposes theistic categories on a pantheistic God.[6] The God of pantheism is a completely different kind of non-personal entity than the personal and transcendent God of theism. Because the God of pantheism is so different in this way, one should avoid thinking of the God of pantheism as a personal agent who acts on the world. With these aspects of pantheism in mind, pantheism will be used in the following chapters to refer to the view that God is totally immanent and non-personal. Historically, pantheism is identified with Stoics in ancient times and Spinoza in modern times.

The next God/world relationship we survey is deism. Deism is the view that a personal, *a se*, and transcendent God created the world but no longer interacts with it. Deism arose in the 17th and 18th centuries as a response to the growing consensus that physical laws govern the universe. If laws govern the universe, then there is little room form God to act once the universe had been set in motion. Consequently, the God of deism is understood to have essentially created the universe and set it in motion so that it would actualize itself with no further intervention from God. The relevant features of deism that pertain to our discussion are that it has a personal, *a se*, and transcendent God that does not interact with the universe. Some famous deists include Thomas Jefferson and Voltaire.

Lastly we discuss panentheism, which is the view that everything is in God. A more detailed description of panentheism is that the world is in God, yet God transcends

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[6] Michael Levine, "Pantheism," ed. Edward N. Zalta, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/pantheism (Accessed March 30, 2010).

the world. A fuller explanation of the definition and meaning of panentheism is offered in Chapter Two. With regard to what a panentheistic God is like, the God of panentheism is personal and interacts with the world. The God of panentheism is also affected by the world because the world is in God and God experiences events that transpire in the world. The world's being in God demonstrates that God is immanent in the world, but panentheism also contends that God transcends the world. This combination of immanence and transcendence is possible because the God of panentheism is not fully separate from the world like the God of theism, nor is this God fully identical with the world like the God of pantheism. The God of panentheism contains the world and is more than the world, and is thus both immanent and transcendent. Because God is not completely separate from the world, the God of panentheism is not *a se*. This God exists with the world and is acted upon by the world. For now, let panentheism mean the view that the world is in God and God is both transcendent and immanent. Panentheism is the view favored in this thesis. Historically, panentheism has been linked with such philosophers as Plato, Plotinus, Hegel, and Hartshorne.

Given these four kinds of God/world relationships, panentheism functions as a middle way between theism and pantheism, and stands in opposition to the main tenets of deism. Where theism stresses God's transcendence and pantheism privileges God's immanence, panentheism holds that God is both immanent and transcendent. Panentheism and theism are alike in that they both think God is personal and that God interacts with the world, but pantheism and panentheism are alike in that they both think that the world is not fully separate from God. Panentheism is unlike deism with regard to God's immanence, God's aseity, and God's interaction with the world.

Panentheism's ability to provide a middle way between pantheism and theism has made it an increasingly popular view in recent decades. Panentheism is uniquely equipped to produce a God/world relationship that presents God as a personal and relational being who interacts with the world and partakes in its joy and suffering. This focus on the relationality of God helps to avoid classical theistic conceptions of God as a ruling monarch who stands unaffected by the events of the world.[7] Panentheism offers a picture of a God who does not stand idly by while people suffer, but who instead suffers along with them. This aspect of panentheism tends to consume much of the panentheistic literature because it has been adopted by a new wave of thinkers who want to rework their understanding of the nature of God in light of a modern bias against authoritarianism.[8] Panentheism is also a prevalent topic in the science and religion dialogue. It offers the possibilities of explaining God in materialistic terms and explaining God in ecological and environmental metaphors without resorting to interventionist kinds of causation where God acts on the world from a place outside of it.[9] If the world is in God, then it could make sense to understand God's relationship to the world as a complex biological system or as God being the environment in which the world exists. In support of this idea, Philip Clayton argues that panentheism can explain God as not "'breaking into' the world from outside but of God being organically related

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[7] Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 51-63.

[8] For a representative example of this kind of work, see Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 1987.

[9] Arthur Peacocke, *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the Twenty-First Century*, Philip Clayton, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 5-11.

to the world as we are organically related to our own bodies."[10] Panentheism's view that

the world affects God helps makes it possible to explain how God might act and react to a

changing world as an agent who is related to the world and not separate from it.

Despite the fact that panentheism is a lively topic of discussion, there has been

very little discussion of what panentheism demands or implies with regard to time.[11] If

God reacts to the world and suffers with it, God does those things in time. If God is one

part of a complex universal environment, then God participates in that system in time.

Given the importance of time, an investigation into how a panentheistic God relates to

time is necessary for the future progress of panentheism. This thesis endeavors to

demonstrate some specific ways that a panentheistic God could possibly relate to time.

Additionally, the thesis explores the applications of these possibilities and attempts to

explain those applications in terms used in current panentheistic literature.

Before moving on, it is important and appropriate to discuss how my personal

views on the usefulness and validity of panentheism shape this thesis. My interest in

panentheism stems mainly from my view that it is a *via media* between theism and

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[10] Phillip Clayton, "On the Value of the Panentheistic Analogy: A Response to William Drees," *Zygon* 35:3 (2000), p. 703.

[11] There is a large body if literature about process philosophy and time, but this literature is not often directly useful for problems in panentheism because process philosophy is not necessarily panentheistic, nor are panentheists necessarily philosophers of process. The process literature on time discusses specific metaphysical positions that are unique to process philosophy and are rarely directed at how a panentheistic God relates to time. For specific discussion of panentheism and time see Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 1996, pp. 259-319; Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 1985, pp. 104-139; and Russell Stannard, "God in and Beyond Space and Time," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Perspective in a Scientific World*, Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 109-120.

pantheism and that it can synthesize the best parts of those views into something that is still distinctly Christian. My panentheism is intended to be a distinctly Christian panentheism, which both shapes and limits my appropriation of the view. For example, one might think that panentheism could be subsumed by pantheism by simply denying that God is, or could be, transcendent. This move, however, is not an option because God's transcendence and otherness from the world is a vital aspect of both Scripture and traditional theology. God's transcendence cannot be compromised. In addition to being transcendent, the God of Christianity is also personal, which is not readily compatible with pantheism. As with God's transcendence, God's personal nature is fundamental to Christianity and cannot be compromised. On the opposite end of the spectrum, theism offers a somewhat complete view of a transcendent God, and one might wonder why panentheism could not be subsumed by theism. The problem with theism is that conflicts arise when attempting to explain and secure God's transcendence. These problems are related to different attributes that are conferred to a completely transcendent God. A God who is transcendent, changeless, unaffected by the world, and outside of time is not a God who can coherently act in response to the world in the way described in Scripture and by traditional theology. Panentheism offers a way to explain how God can be both transcendent and intimately involved in the world while still staying within basic Christian ideas about who God is and what God is like. My desire to employ my panentheism within the bounds of Christian thinking is what ultimately leads me to reject being either a pantheist or traditional theist. With these considerations in mind, we progress to an overview of the arguments of the thesis.

Overview

        In the thesis I attempt to accomplish three different tasks. The first task is to define panentheism and then use the term consistently in accordance with my chosen definition. The second task is to apply that definition to two issues in the philosophy of time. The third task is to demonstrate how panentheism offers more and better ways to approach these issues than does theism. These tasks are interwoven through each chapter, and together guide how I approach the issues at hand.

        Primarily addressing the task of definition, Chapter Two is a survey of various definitions of panentheism and the metaphors and analogies used to describe panentheism. I demonstrate that most definitions are similar in content but explain their positions with different kinds of figurative language. A standard definition of panentheism labels it as the view that the world is in God, but God transcends the world. The most difficult part of that definition is trying to decide what it means for the world to be in God and how to go about explaining that relationship. Most panentheists draw from three primary explanatory devices to accomplish the task. These illustrations are: the mind/body analogy, the locative metaphor, and the substance metaphor. I survey how these figures of speech are used by various panentheists and offer critiques of their adequacy.

        After discussing the usefulness of the metaphors and analogies, I settle upon my own definition of panentheism, which is taken from Arthur Peacocke. I define panentheism as the view that "God is the circumambient reality enclosing all existing entities, structures, and processes, and as operating in and through all, while being more

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than all."[12] I also stipulate that the "in" relationship in panentheism is to be understood in the locative sense that God contains the universe and surrounds it on all sides. The universe is in God because God is a qualitatively superior kind of infinite than the universe such that, no matter how large the universe is, God would still transcend it.

Chapter Three focuses on the concept of Newtonian absolute time. The chapter addresses Newton largely through a response to a proposal by William Lane Craig that uses Newtonian absolute time to secure knowledge of a universal now for God. I argue in this chapter that Craig's usage of absolute time is not compatible with theism. The argument centers on the source and existence of absolute time. Newton argued that absolute time measures a true duration to which all physical time is relative. Absolute time comes into being as an effect of God's eternality; because God has existed for all of eternity, Newton argues that there must be an eternity in which to exist. Newton holds that absolute time is an effect of God's existence that exists separately from God. I argue that if absolute time exists separately from God, then it must either have a metric that is independent of God or it must have a metric that is given to it by God. If the metric of absolute time is independent of God, then God has caused something to exist over which God has no control. This conflicts with God's omnipotence. On the other hand, if absolute time gets its metric from God, then it is not properly absolute because God has a metric that is more primary than the metric of absolute time. My solution to this problem is to posit that absolute time is a part of God, which implies panentheism because it removes the distinction between God and the world, or at least between God and created things.

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[12] Peacocke, p. 22.

After demonstrating that absolute time can only work if understood panentheistically, I explore the consequences of adopting absolute time and the analogous concept of absolute space. I conclude that if one uses the mind/body analogy, the existence of absolute time provides a way to understand how the universe could be God's body. If absolute time is a part of God and it contains all physical time, then there is a sense in which absolute time establishes the basis for the existence of physical time. Combining this insight with the locative metaphor, I conclude that absolute time can function as a container that enables the world to be in God in a spatial sense.

Chapter Four asks whether panentheism is able to reconcile divine action with the existence of a block universe. In order to answer this question, I survey two different modes of divine temporal being and analyze their ability to accommodate a panentheistic God. I conclude that a panentheistic God is plausibly absolutely temporal, which means that absolute time is a part of God, and absolute time makes physical time possible. Because God is eternal and necessary, God exists at all times and is present to all times. After concluding that God is plausibly absolutely temporal, I critique two classical views of divine timelessness and amend them to incorporate absolute temporality. The classical views of Augustine and Boethius both offer explanations of how and why God could have a perspective to see all of time at once, which is a necessary condition for observing a block universe.

After establishing how an absolutely temporal God could transcend time and yet still be related to time, I argue that an absolutely temporal panentheistic God is compatible with a block universe and is able to exercise divine action in a block universe. I define a block universe as a universe where time is a dimension like the spatial

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dimensions. In a block universe, past and future objects exist just as much as present objects; they just exist earlier or later. I argue that the mechanisms of absolute temporality combined with a perspective that sees all of time at once allow God to know when any give now is and act appropriately on that now. I consider the objection that a block universe represents a fixed and immutable state of affairs because all time exists simultaneously, which prohibits the possibility of change. I answer the objection by noting that it is our human temporal perspective that makes thinking of change impossible, and not the simultaneous existence of all times. God is able to see all time at once, which gives God a different perspective on causation and the passage of time. Given God's perspective, the simultaneous existence of the past, present, and future does not imply a fixed and immutable state of affairs. My account of God's ability to act in a block universe is unique to panentheism because it incorporates absolute time into God's ability to know when now is for any given now, which theism is not able to do.

I argue in conclusion that panentheism is compatible with absolute time and a block universe in ways that theism either is not or is not able to be. While there are still very many unanswered questions about how a panentheistic God relates to time, this thesis demonstrates some possibilities and elaborates how panentheism deals with these problems in a fashion superior to that of the other God/world relationships, and especially better than theism.

CHAPTER TWO

PANENTHEISM DEFINED

Within the diverse set of concepts generally known as "panentheism," the clearest commonly held position is that panentheism is not a cohesive or unified doctrine. As a testament to the diversity of views within panentheism, a recent anthology on the topic inspired a review entitled "The Variety of Panentheisms." In light of this theoretical complexity, when prefacing a typology of panentheisms, Niels Henrick Gregersen states that the diversity of views is so significant that someone who defends panentheism should specify just what kind of panentheism he or she is defending.[13] In light of the variety of understandings and implementations of panentheism, it is necessary to present a survey of the variety of panentheisms and to choose which one will be the primary subject of further chapters. This survey proceeds by engaging varying definitions of panentheism, describing the primary metaphors used to explain them, and arriving at a working definition of panentheism to be used henceforth.

Definitions of Panentheism

The term "panentheism" literally means "everything-in-God". The German philosopher Karl Krause coined the term in 1829 as *Allingottlehre* (all-in-God-teaching), and Charles Hartshorne popularized it in the 1950s. A common but useful definition of panentheism, taken from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, defines it as the view that "the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every

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[13] Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," in *In Whom We Live*, p. 34.

part exists in Him, but His being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe."[14] At a basic level, virtually all professing panentheists would accept this definition, but it is by no means exhaustive. We can consider the above definition as a basic minimum of common requirements necessary for a view to be labeled as panentheistic, as it contains the basic set of components upon which virtually all panentheists agree. The principal components of the definition are God's omnipresence and immanence, "the Being of God penetrates the whole universe," a statement about the location of the universe and its relationship to God, "so that every part exists in Him," and God's transcendence and ontological distinction from the universe, "but His being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe." While this definition captures some basic elements of panentheism, many panentheists offer their own variations on or deviations from it. The following examples illustrate the diversity of definitions and are accompanied by a brief discussion of why these definitions take their distinctive forms.

The first alternative definition comes from scientist and theologian Arthur Peacocke, who defines panentheism as the view that "God is the circumambient reality enclosing all existing entities, structures, and processes, and as operating in and through all, while being more than all."[15] Peacocke's definition is more specific about God's spatial relation to the universe, as God is the surrounding reality in whom all things exist. Peacocke also deviates by including God's activity in his definition. When compared to the Oxford definition, Peacocke's retains all of the substance of the former, but adds

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[14] John Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) p. 27.
[15] Peacocke, p. 22.

more specific information about how God is related to the world, and about God's interaction with the world.

David Ray Griffin offers an example of a definition specifically tailored to endorse distinctive features. Griffin, at one point, defines panentheism as the view that "God is essentially the soul of the universe. Although God is distinct from the universe, God's relation to it belongs to the divine essence."[16] A complete reading of the article from which this definition is taken demonstrates that Griffin's definition assumes the content of the Oxford definition, but focuses particularly on how God is related to and separate from the universe using a soul/body analogy. Griffin is arguing for an understanding of God that is grounded in process philosophy, which motivates him to define panentheism in terms of the relevant issues with which he is working. Specifically, Griffin argues that God is *essentially*, in the Platonic sense, the soul and organizing force of the universe. Griffin wants God to be causally active in the world, but to be so without breaking natural laws. In order to explain how God could be causally efficacious without intervening on natural systems, Griffin sees fit to employ a soul/body relationship, which strongly influences his panentheism.

Charles Hartshorne makes a similar move with his definition in *The Divine Relativity*. In that work, Hartshorne argues for a relational understanding of God, which yields a definition of panentheism as "the view that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative items, and yet, taken as an

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actual whole, includes all relative items."[17] Because Hartshorne is working from

relational principles, he defines panentheism in strongly relational terms. Despite the

difference in terminology, Hartshorne affirms the majority of the Oxford definition, as he

claims that God is separate from the world, yet includes it. In another work with another

purpose, Hartshorne, with William Reese, offers a much more complicated definition. In

Philosophers Speak of God, panentheism is defined as the view that God is ETCKW,

which means that God is: <u>E</u>ternal (in some aspects of his reality devoid of change,

whether as birth, death, increase or decrease), <u>T</u>emporal (in some aspects capable of

change, at least in the form of increase of some kind), <u>C</u>onscious (self-aware), <u>K</u>nowing

(of the world or universe, omniscient), and <u>W</u>orld-inclusive (having all things as

constituents).[18] The only feature God as ETCKW shares with the Oxford definition is

world-inclusiveness, and the rest of the definition only serves Hartshorne and Reese's

purpose of differentiating panentheism from theism and pantheism.

     After surveying some alternative definitions of panentheism, it seems that

Gregersen's suggestion that panentheists specify which form of the concept they are

discussion has merit. To complicate matters further, in addition to the differing

definitions in use, panentheists also employ several powerful metaphors to explain their

formulations of the concept.

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[17] Charles Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 89.
[18] Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, eds., *Philosophers Speak of God* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 16.

Panentheistic Metaphors and Analogies

Having taken a brief look at some of the variety of definitions of panentheism, one might observe that the definitions have a large amount of overlapping content. The primary differences between the definitions arise from the metaphors and analogies their authors draw upon to formulate them. The "in" in panentheism has a number of different possible meanings, and panentheists tend to use a specific set of metaphors and analogies in order to explain in just what sense the world is in God. One particular distinction to note in the following discussion is that some panentheists hold that the world is in God and that it is a part of God, while others hold that the world is in God but is not part of God. This difference has a profound impact on how different thinkers explain how the world is in God.

Proceeding to our analysis of panentheistic explanations of what it means to be in God, Gregory Peterson has identified three primary explanatory devices used by panentheists in his survey of current panentheistic thinking. They are the mind/body (or soul/body) analogy, the locative metaphor, and the substance metaphor.[19] The following section explains and critiques these metaphors and analogies.

The Mind/Body Analogy

The most prominent tool for explaining panentheism tends to be the mind/body analogy, which is roughly defined as the idea that God is to the world as a mind is to a body. There is another formulation of this analogy that says God is to the world as a soul is to a body, but the mind/body analogy is currently more popular because it does not

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[19] Gregory R. Peterson, "Whither Panentheism?" *Zygon* 36:3 (2001), pp. 399-403.

presuppose soul/body dualism or "soul" language. Of the two formulations, the

soul/body analogy is much older, as Cooper and Clayton note that the analogy dates back

to Plato's account of the world soul in *Timaeus*,[20] but the mind/body version has taken

precedence because it has more hope of explaining the God/world relationship in

naturalistic or materialistic terms, so long as no mind/body dualism is supposed. Another

aspect of this analogy is that it can be offered in a strong (literal) or weak (figurative)

sense. Hartshorne argues for the necessary embodiment of God because all persons must

have bodies,[21] while Clayton, Peacocke, and others argue for a purely analogical

understanding because, although they view embodiment language as useful, they do not

think God is adequately comparable to humans to justify such a strong conclusion.[22]

The strong and weak senses of the mind/body analogy also take different stances

on whether the world is in any sense divine. Clayton adopts the weak analogy because he

supposes a sort of dualism where the two kinds of existing things are God and the

world.[23] For Clayton, the world is related to God, but is not actually God. Similarly,

Peacocke holds that the world is interior to God but is distinct from God.[24] While the

world is not divine, it participates in God's divine being through existing in God. The

panentheism of Clayton and Peacocke differentiates itself from pantheism not only by

making God more than the world, but also by supposing a dualistic distinction between

God and the world. This supposed dualism becomes problematic when Clayton and

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[20] Cooper, p. 18; see also Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 235.
[21] Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, p. 79.
[22] Clayton, pp. 262-264; Peacocke, p. 24.
[23] Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), pp. 131-132.
[24] Peacocke, p. 22.

Peacocke claim to maintain a monistic emergent naturalism. This naturalism stands in direct conflict with the dualism created by thinking of the world as separate from God and not divine. This conflict is one of the reasons for resorting to figurative language in order to explain God's relationship to the world. Hartshorne, on the other hand, sees the world as a part of God, specifically as God's body. While God's being is more than just the physical universe, the physical universe is a part of God. In order to avoid committing to dualism, Hartshorne supposes panpsychism.[25] Even though there is a part of God that is more than the observable physical universe, that part of God is composed of the same basic kind of thinking stuff. For Hartshorne, God is not different in kind from the world, but instead God is the best possible organization of thinking stuff.

In application, the mind/body analogy serves two primary functions: it explains God's relationship to the world and offers an account of God's ability to act in the world. When describing God's relationship to the world with this analogy, the world is in God, yet God is more than the world in a part/whole sense. The world (body) is part of the whole, but God (the mind) is more than just the body. In Hartshorne's strong view of the analogy, God is actually a living being with a body that is comprised of the universe. He says, "The world consists of individuals, but the totality of the individuals as a physical or spatial whole is God's body, the Soul of which is God."[26] For Hartshorne, the world is very much a part of God, but God's mental life is more than just the physical world. Like we commonly conceive of a human mind directing the actions of a body, God is the mind, or soul, that directs the world. Representing the weak view of the analogy, Peterson notes that when this analogy is used in the contemporary science and religion

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[25] Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, pp. 62-63.
[26] Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, p. 94.

dialogue, which is the source of the majority of current work on panentheism, it arises within an emergentist framework where mental properties are seen as arising out of biological processes. Further, once these mental properties emerge, they take on a supervenience relationship with physical processes, such that the mental exercises causation over the physical.[27]

A full explanation of what emergentist supervenience entails is beyond the scope of this thesis, so an abbreviated discussion must suffice. In short, "emergence" refers to the idea that complex processes and entities arise out of ones less complex, and the more complex emergent properties cannot be understood in terms of the less complex properties; they are explanatorily irreducible. "Supervenience" refers to the idea that "a set of properties A supervenes upon another set B just in case no two things can differ with respect to A-properties without also differing with respect to their B-properties."[28] Emergentist supervenience occurs when emergent properties supervene upon the properties from which they emerged. In terms of the mind/body analogy, mental properties emerge from the physical states of the brain. These emergent mental properties then supervene on brain states such that changes in mental properties entail changes in brain states. Within this framework, when God is understood as the mind of the universe, God is seen as the prime agent who is able to exercise causation on all physical processes, while avoiding the problems related to explaining this interaction that are inherent in mind/body dualism. Clayton argues that emergentist supervenience of this

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[27] Peterson, p. 401.

[28] Brian McLaughlin and Karen Bennett, "Supervenience," ed. Edward N. Zalta, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/supervenience (Accessed March 11, 2010).

sort offers a holistic account of mental causation that offers a *via media* between dualism and physicalism.[29] From here we can begin discussing how the mind/body analogy addresses divine action.

For Hartshorne, God's act of exercising causal influence on the world is best understood as being analogous to the way a mind acts on a body: God envisions future possibilities and has plans to bring about certain possibilities and not others.[30] The world has its own autonomy in the same sense that the human body is able to perform tasks autonomous of the mind (e.g. breathing and microscopic biological processes). Hartshorne does note that God is somewhat different from a human person in several respects: God has knowledge of all possibilities; God is immortal; people relate to others externally, but all relationships are internal for God; and God is aware of all the activities of individuals within his body at all times, but humans are only aware of some of their internal activities, and have no access to many of them. However, Hartshorne does not find these differences sufficient to make the mind/body relationship disanalogous with God's interaction with the world.[31]

For supporters of a weak mind/body analogy, God acts in the world in a way quite similar to the one attested by Hartshorne, but for different reasons. Hartshorne focuses on God's embodiment in order to demonstrate that God is a kind of living person, whereas the weak analogy wants to demonstrate how God can interact with the world without violating natural laws. In this vein, Peterson says, "Just as the mind is capable of having a causal effect on the body without violating any natural laws, so too can God

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[29] Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, pp. 252-257.
[30] Cooper, p. 178.
[31] Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, p. 94.

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have a causal effect on the world while keeping physical laws intact."[32] Remember that

the weak mind/body analogy is based on a monistic supervenient emergentism that

supposes a form of mental causation to exist. Given that assumption, God acts like a

human mind and affects the world (body) not as an intervening force from outside the

natural system, but as a natural force supervening on God's own body. Peacocke

discusses God's ability to interact with the world using systems terminology. He argues

that God incorporates all systems within Godself (cf. his above definition of

panentheism), and that the universe can be seen as the system-of-systems, such that God

is present to every layer of all existing systems within Godself, so that God is "present to

the wholes…as well as the parts."[33] Because God is different from people in God's

ability to know all things happening within Godself (a la Hartshorne), God, as mind, is

present to all processes occurring in the world (God's body). So, for Peacocke, God acts

on these systems as a mind acts on a body, and God acts with perfect knowledge of these

systems because God is present to them at all levels. However, it must be stressed that

the weak analogy only sees the world as *like* God's body, contra Hartshorne. The

purpose of the weak analogy is to explain how God can interact with the world, and that

analogy breaks down if it is presented in a stronger sense because the differences between

God and humans are so severe that they undermine the basis upon which the analogy is

grounded. Advocates of the weak analogy do admit that the world is part of God, but not

in the form of being God's body. Clayton writes, "Since God is present in each physical

interaction and at each point in space, each interaction is a part of his being in the

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[32] Peterson, p. 401.
[33] Peacocke, p. 23.

broadest sense…"[34] The phrase, "in the broadest sense," is vague and does not answer exactly how the world is part of God's being. Clayton, Peacocke, and other partisans of the weak analogy can only say that the world is *like* God's body.

This analogy is not without criticisms. Peterson points out that advocates of the weak analogy emphasize the benefits of the analogy while referring to it as a disanalogy in problematic cases.[35] For example, thinking of God as having an emergentist supervenience relationship with the world would seem to indicate that God is an emergent property of the world and is therefore created by the world. Clayton claims that the analogy does not hold on this point, because God is different from humans in important respects, specifically that God is uncreated.[36] If Clayton is granted that God is simply uncreated, it becomes hard to imagine how the emergence relationship can come about. Emergence supposes that complex things arise from those that are less complex, but it is not able to explain how an already complex existing thing can come into a supervenience relationship with another existing thing such that it could exercise influence upon it. This is further confounded by the fact that Clayton denies the divinity of the world. If the physical world itself were divine and uncreated, then God's mental capacities could emerge over time from the basic physical elements of the divine and uncreated universe. However, because Clayton contends that the universe is not divine, a God who emerges out of a non-divine state of affairs would have to be understood as being created by that state of affairs. Given a God/world dualism, if Clayton's God is emergent, then Clayton's God is created by the world. In this case, Peterson's criticism

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[34] Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, pp. 100-101.
[35] Peterson, p. 402.
[36] Peterson, p. 402.

that Clayton exaggerates the benefits of the mind/body analogy while ignoring its problems appears to be sustainable.

The final problem we consider with the analogy is that it is highly anthropomorphic to think of God's consciousness in terms of human consciousness. While it is possible to suppose that God's mental life might be similar to human mental life, it is by no means necessary to make that supposition. Because God is very different from humans in many important respects, such as being omniscient, infinite, and necessary, it would be plausible that a divine consciousness might operate quite differently than a finite and contingent human. Because the differences between God and humans are vast, it might not be appropriate at all to compare God's consciousness to human consciousness in that fashion.

In comparison, the primary problems with the strong version of the analogy are that thinking of the universe as the literal body of God conflicts with traditional Christian orthodoxy about God's immateriality and transcendence, and that it is difficult to conceptualize a traditionally understood God in that way. However, as alien as Hartshorne's strong analogy may be, its problems do not seem as foundational as the problems of the weak analogy. The weak analogy raises, and does not deal with, difficult problems with how God could have an emergent supervenience relationship with the world without being created by or after the world, which threaten the validity of the analogy. The strong analogy, on the other hand, only conflicts with traditional orthodoxy and does not struggle with maintaining internal consistency. Thus, the strong analogy, while being unfamiliar at first to those uninitiated in non-Western philosophy, is not as

problematic as the weak analogy and holds a strong advantage in being able to explain

God's relationship to the world without generating so many extra metaphysical problems.

The Locative Metaphor

 The locative metaphor explains the world as being in God in a spatial, or locative,

sense, and is one of the most basic interpretations of what it means for the world to be in

God. Peterson comments that the idea of location can be interpreted two ways: as a

part/whole spatial relationship such that the world is in God as part of God, or as a

container spatial relationship such that the world is contained by God.[37] The part/whole

interpretation tends to be more prevalent in the literature, but is largely coextensive in

content with the mind/body analogy, so it is discussed first in brief.

 The part/whole analogy shares important features with the mind/body analogy in

that the world is seen as the part (body) and God is seen as the whole (mind/embodied

person). God includes the world, but is more than the world. The part/whole analogy is

primarily different from the mind/body analogy in its explanatory limitation; the

mind/body analogy is much more specific and attempts to answer an array of concerns.

An exception to the limitedness of the part/whole analogy is found in Peacocke's idea of

layered systems. Peacocke views the world as consisting of various systems of activity,

which can be purely physical, biological, or social. For Peacocke, each system, from

subatomic systems to the organization of atoms into life to the organization of life into

culture, is part of a bigger whole, which is God.[38] Peacocke labels his view emergent

monism, and applies it in a fashion similar to Clayton's use of the mind/body analogy.

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[37] Peterson, p. 400.
[38] Peacocke, pp. 23-24.

Peacocke's account suffers from a particular ontological confusion. He asserts that all things are parts of God, but he also asserts that the world is not itself divine and only participates in God because God transcends the world.[39] Peacocke supposes here the same God/world dualism discussed in the mind/body analogy. He attempts to offer a naturalistic account of the world's relationship to God, but needs to suppose a dualism in order to retain God's transcendence. The easiest solution to Peacocke's problem would be to admit the divinity of the world after the fashion of Hartshorne. Attempting to explain panentheism while maintaining a God/world dualism, if possible, is excessively complex when a simpler option is available.

Peacocke's appropriation of the locative metaphor is atypical, as the locative metaphor is more frequently used to make less complex and involved claims. For instance, Clayton uses the idea of absolute space to present the locative metaphor. He argues that the world is in God in the sense that God is infinite in a way that is qualitatively rather than quantitatively different from the rest of the universe.[40] While the universe may be infinitely extended into space, Clayton argues that the infinite existence of God is an absolute space in which the universe is located.[41] Clayton claims that God should be understood as "coextensive with the world: all points of space are encompassed by God and are in this sense 'within' him... Finite space is contained within absolute space, the world is contained within God; yet the world is not identical to God."[42]

Jurgen Moltmann criticizes the appropriation of absolute space as described by Clayton. He argues that understanding absolute space as a property of God's existence,

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[39] Peacocke, p. 23.
[40] Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, p. 90.
[41] Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, p. 90.
[42] Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, p. 90.

more specifically by the extension of God's existence, does not allow the possibility of divine creation and that it negates the contingency of the world.[43] Moltmann argues, "If space were equated with the extension of objects [in this case, the extension of God's infinite being], it would be difficult to evade the notion of an eternal and infinite world, existing of its own self."[44] Moltmann's point is that a space created by God's extension can have no room for noneternal, created things within it. If the world is contingent upon God's creating it, it must exist in its own space, which is created by its own extension. Moltmann's suggestion is to appropriate the Jewish kabbalistic notion of *zimzum*, which entails that God withdrew God's presence from a portion of reality in order to make space for creation.[45] The space ceded by God is still *in* God because God creates the absolute space of reality through God's being and thus surrounds the space of creation on all sides, but that space of creation ceded by God is separate from God because its extension is not created by God's being, but rather by its own because God's presence has been withdrawn. Thus, for Moltmann, the world is not *part* of God; it is only *in* God.

These usages of the locative metaphor raise important concerns. Peterson criticizes the part/whole aspect of the locative metaphor on the grounds that when the parts act, the whole acts as well.[46] For example, if a part of God commits an evil act, then the whole of God commits an evil act. However, it is not obvious that action, or at least responsibility for action, is transitive from the part to the whole. To illustrate this distinction we could imagine the relationship between myself as a person, with some set of mental capabilities which endow me with my own free will to act, and my white blood

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[43] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 156.
[44] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 154.
[45] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 156.
[46] Peterson, p. 400.

cells, which perform tasks as part of my immune system and do so autonomously with no input or guidance from my consciousness. The difference between a person as a whole, with the ability to act as a whole, and the parts of that whole that have the ability to act on their own, is analogous to God as the whole and the world, containing autonomous agents, as part. To put this example into action, we can say that if my white blood cells were busy staving off an infection, it would seem wrong to claim that I, consciously, am actively staving off an infection. In common speech, one might indeed say, "I am fighting off a cold," but that locution would carry the same meaning as "My white blood cells are fighting a cold," and would not mean, "I am consciously fighting off this cold through an act of willful volition." My own autonomous immune system is acting on its own without my input, and it does not make sense to say that the whole of my person is acting in that way because I am not using any mental capacity or force of will to fight the infection along with my white blood cells. In the same sense, if people are autonomous agents who are parts of God, but are not identical to God, they might be performing any number of activities, such as harming other autonomous agents or any other evil act that conflicts with the existence of an omnibenevolent God, that do not cause God to act along with them. So long as the parts have any amount of autonomy from the whole, the whole is not implicated in the action of the parts.

Peterson's second criticism of the locative metaphor is that if the world is enveloped in God, it loses its ontological distinctiveness; God's enveloping of nature and reality mask any distinction. In a sense, panentheism collapses into pantheism. Moltmann's usage of *zimzum* can avoid his criticism by demonstrating the uniqueness of the space of creation. The world is distinct from God because it exists in its own space,

which God set apart for it by withdrawing Godself. Using a different strategy, Clayton defends the locative metaphor by supposing a dialectal relationship between God and the world. Clayton argues, following Hegel, that if God is truly infinite, God must include the finite (i.e. the world), but God is different from the world because of God's perfection and God's very infinity.[47] Clayton further argues that both of these intuitions must be maintained, and that the best way to do so is to ascribe to them a dialectical relationship: "the world is neither indistinguishable from God nor (fully) ontologically separate from God."[48] The infinite being of God encounters the finitude of the world and overcomes that distinction by creating a synthesis between the two that retains God's infinitude and preserves the finitude of the world, but combines them into a new "world-in-God." In contrast to Clayton, Peterson wants to present God's relationship with the world as an either/or: God is present in the world and the world has no identity apart from God, or God is not present in the world and the world has its own identity. Using his dialectic, Clayton sees a both/and: God is present in the world and the world has its own identity. Clayton attempts to further explain the both/and with an analogy to symbiosis. In a symbiotic relationship, the whole that is created by the two creatures exceeds the sum of their parts alone; they create a new relationship through intertwining with one another. God and the world likewise create a greater whole when the world participates in relationship with God. In this greater whole, God is affected by the world and suffers along with it when evil occurs. God does not cause suffering and does not stand idly by when it happens. God partakes in the experiences of the world as a participant. While God's experience of suffering conflicts with the classical theological attributes of

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[47] Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit*, pp. 125-127.
[48] Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit*, p. 127.

omnipotence and impassability, a panentheist would argue that God's omnibenevolence is worth defending at the cost of diminishing those other attributes. Even though Clayton creates conflict with other divine attributes, he is able to avoid saying that God caused or idly observed historical atrocities like the Holocaust, while an either/or position like Peterson's leaves no option but to make God culpable.

The responses by Moltmann and Clayton both suffer in part from their exotic nature. Clayton's response resorts to a dialectic that is difficult to articulate in common terms. While it is explanatorily beneficial to combine two contradictory intuitions into a dialectic, it is not a convincing solution. Moltmann's appeal to God's willful self-contraction, while clever, appears to contradict the notions of God's infinitude and omnipresence. If God is infinite and unbounded in any sense, it does not follow that there can be a place where God is not, nor that there can be a limit that God can bump into. Similarly, if God is omnipresent in God's being, God cannot be absent from any portion of reality. Moltmann could redefine God's omnipresence in the Thomistic sense, that God is present in a representational sense through God's power or God's knowledge, but that interpretation clashes with Moltmann's greater program of God's absolute presence in the world.

While the locative metaphor stems from the most obvious meaning of "in." it is fraught with great difficulties. Yet, these difficulties are not insurmountable, and the appeal and explanatory power of the metaphor make it too valuable to abandon. The above criticisms serve only to introduce the metaphor and further attempts at articulating and defending it are made in later chapters.

The Substance Metaphor

Peterson claims that panentheists attempt to explain their position by appealing to substance language.[49] He argues that the locative metaphor uses an underlying substance metaphysic when it postulates a spatial relationship between God and the world because God, as one kind of substance, interacts with the world, which is another kind of substance. Peterson also argues that the mind/body analogy relies on the substances of an embodied mind. Strangely, the substance metaphor is the least substantive of the three explanatory devices Peterson discusses, and thus the exposition of the metaphor ends here and the criticism of Peterson may commence.

When discussing the substance metaphor, Peterson merely points out the tension arising from the fact that panentheists tend to be sympathetic to process metaphysics or metaphysics that privilege relations over substances, and yet panentheists still appeal to the idea of substances. Peterson overstates the issue in this case by assuming that all use of substance should be anathema among panentheists. In application, even process philosophers recognize the category of substance as an important part of reality. Rather than ignore substance, process philosophers diminish its importance for metaphysical explanations and elevate processes to a higher status. While it is not the most important category in process philosophy, substance is still recognized as an important explanatory tool, and thus it finds its way into panentheistic analogies.

Another difficulty with Peterson's understanding of panentheists' use of substance has already come up in the above discussion of the locative metaphor. Peterson interprets the world and God as substances, and cannot understand how the

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[49] Peterson, pp. 401-402.

world can be in God as part of God without losing its ontological uniqueness. Clayton's example of symbiosis in nature points out that parts can participate in wholes through actions (or processes) and still retain their individuality. If the world is seen not as a substance existing as a part of another substance, but as a dynamic member of a symbiotic relationship that participates in the greater whole through action, then it is easier to see how the world retains its uniqueness. The world is part of God and interacts with God, but it is still a separate and individual thing. Granted, the world can be seen as a substance, but the world's participation as a part of God in the whole of God is through a form of action or process. The "in" here is both locative and part/whole in nature, but the relationship between God and the world is not best understood directly in spatial (and substantial) terms. The "in" can best be understood as a relation based on the world's action of participating in God.

Panentheism Defined

Having examined these three methods of explaining how the world is in God, we can see that the diversity of often-discontinuous views on panentheism leaves us still wondering exactly what panentheism is. In order to make things clearer and more concise, the following chapters will rely primarily on one metaphor and will adhere to a single, specific definition. With regard to establishing a panentheistic philosophy of time, the most useful, and least troublesome, of these metaphors is the spatial aspect of the locative metaphor. While the other metaphors will be invoked when appropriate, the reader should understand the "in" of panentheism to mean that the world is in God in the sense that while the world may extend infinitely in space (and time), God is a

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qualitatively different kind of absolute infinitude in which the world exists. This thesis will be elaborated upon and refined in the following chapters.

Further, following Gregersen's advice that one should declare which kind of panentheism he or she is defending, panentheism will be henceforth defined in Peacocke's terms as the view that "God is the circumambient reality enclosing all existing entities, structures, and processes, and as operating in and through all, while being more than all." The phrase, "circumambient reality enclosing all," is to be understood in terms of the spatial aspect of the locative metaphor. God transcends all reality and surrounds it in all respects because God is absolutely infinite and all existence that is not properly part of God via being identical to God is therefore spatially interior to God. This definition assumes that God is distinct from the world such that the world and God have separate ontological identities, yet God and the world are intimately related because God is the reality in which the world exists as a part of God. That God operates "in all and through all, while being more than all," means that the world is a divine part of God over which God is able to exert influence, but God proper exists as more than just the world.

This view should be understood in the framework a kind of neutral monism in which all things are composed of a single kind of divine stuff, but that stuff achieves its absolute best organization in the part of God that is not identical with the world. While Hartshorne espouses panpsychism and Clayton and Peacocke attempt to espouse a naturalistic materialism, neutral monism has a specific advantage over those views. The materialistic view is mired in a dubious emergentist framework that can theoretically produce mental things from physical things, but relies on an elaborate and troublesome

metaphysics to do so. Hartshorne's panpsychism has a much less complex mechanism, but makes the difficult to defend claim that all things have mental properties. While panpsychism is possible, it seems implausible to attribute mental properties to things such as rocks and teacups. Even though the argument of the thesis does not turn on its defense, neutral monism is a better choice than the other two because it allows one to attribute mental properties to things that seem like they should have them and physical properties to those that do not. Neutral monism is also able to make sense of how God is divine and has an impressive list of attributes and properties while the world is also divine yet apparently composed of matter. If the neutral stuff that everything is made of is all divine, then some of that stuff could be organized into rocks and other stuff could be organized into a deity while all still being divine. An important distinction that can be made between God and the world in this framework is that, while God and the world are made of the same stuff, God is organized in a way that is qualitatively superior to the world such that all of God's attributes, actions, and God's very being are not able to be replicated by the part of God that is the world. This qualitative superiority ensures God's transcendence while still acknowledging that the world is a part of God.

The locative metaphor and the Peacocke definition will work the best for discussing time because they are the simpler and more concise candidates. Since time is often understood to be like space, the locative metaphor is specially adapted for the task at hand. Peacocke's definition is superior because it highlights God's all-encompassing reality without supposing any special metaphysics and is not tailored toward any particular concept of God. It is generic enough to be useful and specific enough to offer some explanatory power.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the diverse variety of panentheistic viewpoints and has reviewed the most common explanatory devices used to communicate the content of panentheism. The preceding discussion is necessary for further chapters because it has established a definition to be used henceforth and it has presented a set of terms and ideas that will inform future discussion. This analysis has narrowed the topic of panentheism down to a smaller subset of views that can be defended and expressed with greater ease. We now move on to applying panentheism to the concept of absolute time.

CHAPTER THREE

A PANENTHEISTIC ARGUMENT FOR ABSOLUTE TIME

A fundamental question about the nature of time concerns whether time can exist in the absence of change. Our common understanding and use of the idea of time seems to imply that it is dependent on change, as is evidenced by the way we measure time. Reichenbach observes that when we measure time, we are not actually measuring time itself, but rather we measure the duration of processes.[50] For example, a watch measures the uniform ticks of gears in movement, and an hourglass measures the uniform flow of grains of sand. These instruments only measure physical processes and never time itself. The inaccessibility of pure time is the primary notion of O. K. Bouwsma's essay, "The Mystery of Time (Or, the Man who did not know what Time is)."[51] The essay depicts the struggle of a linoleum layer who cannot understand what time is. The "friend of linoleum" is disturbed by time because he cannot measure it with a foot-rule like he can linoleum. He concedes that clocks and hourglasses measure something, but they measure the travel of gears and the flow of sand, not *time*. Eventually, the man is firmly convinced that time must not exist because he cannot make physical sense of it. Bouwsma's confused character exposes an important tension in the concept of time: Does time exist as something that could itself be measured, or is it just a measure of change in other things? Ned Markosian offers a more refined version of this question, which he

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[50] Hans Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time*, trans. Maria Reichenbach, (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1957), pp. 115-116.
[51] O.K. Bouwsma, "The Mystery of Time (Or, the Man who did not know what Time is)," *The Journal of Philosophy* 51:12 (1954), pp. 341-363.

expresses in terms of events rather than change.[52] He posits that the question turns on

whether time is dependent on events or whether "empty time" can pass in the absence of

events. The question could be rephrased to ask: Is time just an interval between events,

or is time an existing thing in which events occur? One who favors the idea of time

existing in the absence of events espouses *absolutism about time*, whereas one who thinks

time requires events favors *relationism about time*.

Arguments for the existence of an absolute time have traditionally been put forth

in support of things like temporal vacua, or periods of empty time. These arguments

support the idea that time can pass even if there is no change. Doubters of the existence

of absolute time argue that it is nonsensical to speak of empty time because our concept

of time is dependent on change. A relationist contends that time is nothing more than

change. There are, however, some other issues beyond temporal vacua that hinge on

whether time is relative or absolute, and one of these issues concerns God's relationship

to the world. Isaac Newton, for example, argued that absolute space is an emanative

effect of God's omnipresence, and that absolute time is an emanative effect of God's

eternality. Essentially, this means that the existence of the time and space of the universe

is dependent upon God's being.

To present an example of an application of Newtonian absolute time, William

Lane Craig has attempted to use absolute time to establish a mechanism whereby God is

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[52] Ned Markosian, "Time," ed. Edward N. Zalta, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/time (Accessed April 2, 2010).

able to perceive which events are absolutely simultaneous to any given now.[53] Craig's

argument is motivated by his position that God is temporal and experiences the passing of

time. Further, if God is temporal, then, given relativity theory, there must be an

explanation for how God can know when now is, given that relativity theory dictates that

time is relative to inertial frames of reference and therefore there is no absolute now, but

rather only localized nows as dictated by those inertial frames of reference. So, if God is

temporal, then God too must be subject to the effects of relativity theory, and an

explanation for God's ability to know when now is would be appropriate. We now look

at Craig's proposal for explaining how God interacts with time given the truth of

relativity theory.

As a response to the issues raised by understanding the universe as relativistic,

Craig argues that God has access to the real now of absolute time, so God can also have

access to a universal now in physical time.[54] Craig reaches this conclusion by arguing

that absolute time, which is created because of God's duration, measures God's duration.

According to Craig, the now for God at any given moment is equivalent to the now of

absolute time at any given moment.[55] Craig holds that God was timeless before creation

and became temporal after the world was created,[56] so any measure of God's

metaphysical time will overlap with absolute time, as they are different measures of the

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[53] William Lane Craig, "The Elimination of Absolute Time by the Special Theory of
Relativity," in *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*, ed. Gregory Ganssle and
David Woodruff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 129-152.
[54] Craig, p. 147.
[55] Craig, pp. 130-131.
[56] William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time*
(Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), p. 236. There are some simple and powerful
reasons to reject this claim, but, for the sake of argument, we will grant that Craig is
right.

same span; metaphysical time measures God's awareness of the temporal world and absolute time measures God's duration after God became temporal.[57] Craig further argues that once God's awareness of the absolute present is established, it follows from God's omniscience that God knows all things which happen at any given now.[58] Further, because God knows the absolute time without needing to refer to any clocks and since God knows all things without needing to physically perceive them, God's knowledge of the absolute now is independent of relativity effects because it is obtained via God's omniscience and not by physical senses.[59] Thus, God's awareness of the now of absolute time gives God a universal frame of reference that mitigates all relativity effects and allows God to perceive absolute simultaneity of events in the actual present. Craig compares this view to the cosmic frame of reference in the general theory of relativity, which refers to a frame relative to the whole of cosmic matter at rest.[60] While it is generally understood that there is no one privileged absolute frame of reference in relativity theory, Craig argues that the cosmic frame of reference presents a God's-eye view that gives the observer something fundamentally equivalent to an absolute frame of reference.[61] Appropriately, God has this God's-eye view which puts God in a place to

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[57] Craig, "Absolute Time," p. 145. This distinction between absolute time and metaphysical time plays an important role in Craig's argument and will be dealt with in detail later.

[58] Craig, "Absolute Time," pp. 138-139.

[59] Craig, "Absolute Time," pp. 138-139.

[60] Craig, "Absolute Time," p. 141.

[61] Craig is endorsing a minority view here that stands in tension with the normal interpretation of the General Theory of Relativity. One of the purposes of the article from which this argument is taken is to argue that relativity theory is actually open to the existence of absolute time because of the cosmic frame of reference and because the rejection of absolute time is dependent on verificationism. Craig essentially argues that if God exists, then God is able to observe the universe from a frame of reference that is inaccessible for any being other than God. So, while there is no privileged frame of

observe all of existence at rest. This allows God to know both the true absolute time and grants God the ability to perceive which events are simultaneous with the absolute now.

If Craig's argument succeeds, he is able to explain how God can know several temporal things, such as when a prayer was offered, when it should be answered to be effective, or what is actually happening in the world at any given time. Better yet, in addition to God's knowledge of these things, Craig is able to demonstrate a working model for how God would interact with time given relativity theory. But, while Craig's endeavor is fascinating and has a very appealing outcome if it is successful, his attempt fails because he is committed to understanding God in a theistic sense that separates God from the world and generates an important contradiction. This chapter demonstrates the incompatibility of absolute time and theism as construed by Newton and Craig and then demonstrates how panentheism can resolve the issue and retain the benefits of Craig's argument. Further, the chapter argues that if absolute time exists, it must exist within a panentheistic framework in order to avoid being self-contradictory. After that, the chapter explores how absolute time could be explained using our panentheistic metaphors and analogies. The discussion begins with an exposition of Newton's position and then proceeds to demonstrate that absolute time is incompatible with theism and should be understood in a panentheistic sense.

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reference from a human perspective, if we grant that God exists, then there can also exist a cosmic frame of reference that is available only to God. He further argues that the only reason to reject the existence of this frame of reference is that its existence cannot be verified, which Craig argues is no longer an acceptable reason for rejecting something's existence. See Craig, "Absolute Time," pp. 132-137 for Craig's argument.

Newton on Absolute Space and Time

Isaac Newton's ideas about absolute time and space are fertile ground for panentheistic speculation. Newton's understanding of God's infinite spatial and temporal extension leads him to make statements quite similar to the locative metaphor, such as when he states in the *General Scholium* to the *Principia*: "God is the same God, always and everywhere. He is omnipresent not virtually only, but also substantially; for virtue cannot subsist without substance. In him are all things contained and moved; yet neither affects the other: God suffers nothing from the motion of bodies; bodies find no resistance from the omnipresence of God. It is allowed by all that the Supreme God exists necessarily; and by the same necessity he exists always and everywhere."[62] It should be noted that while Newton does claim that the world is in God, he appears to deny that the world has any effect on God. This presents a problem for using Newton's ideas panentheistically, because the ability of the world to affect God is a vital aspect of panentheism, as Clayton identifies the ability of the world to affect God as the one things that almost all forms of panentheism have in common.[63] The problem here, however, is easily resolved. When Newton says that "neither affects the other," with regard to God and the world, he is explaining how the world can be in God without coming into physical contact with or bumping into God. Newton says that the motion of bodies does not affect God and bodies are not affected by God's omnipresence. Newton here is working with purely physical ideas. He is saying that the world is not in God in the sense

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[62] Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His System of the World*, ed. Andrew Motte, (1846; reprint, Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. 545.
[63] Philip Clayton, "Panentheism Today: A Constructive Systematic Evaluation," in *In Whom We Live*, p. 252.

that God is not a box that contains the world, but rather that God's omnipresence creates

the reality in which the world exists. By observing this distinction, we can conclude that

Newton does not appear to prohibit interaction between God and the world in a

metaphysical sense. Next, we further examine what Newton thinks his conceptions of

absolute time and space mean with regard to their relationship to God.

Newton offers a good introduction to his thoughts on God's relationship to

absolute space and time at another place in the *General Scholium* to the *Principia*:

> He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches
> from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity; he governs all
> things, and knows all things that are or can be done. He is not eternity and
> infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is
> present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and, by existing always
> and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space. Since every particle of space is
> *always,* and every indivisible moment of duration is *everywhere,* certainly the
> Maker and Lord of all things cannot be *never* and *nowhere*.[64]

From this we can surmise that Newton believed God's omnipresence and eternity are the

source and cause of absolute space and time. By this he means that because God is

infinite and exists everywhere, God's presence creates an absolute space, and because

God endures eternally, God's enduring existence creates an absolute time. The nature of

absolute space and time is a matter of frequent dispute. It is often claimed that Newton

thought of absolute space and time as substances, which would lead to a container view

that understands absolute time and space as empty containers waiting to be filled with

bodies and events. One reason for accepting this view is that Newton argued that

absolute time would exist even if there were no events or physical things to occur or exist

within them. Newton, however, had different reasons for positing absolute time and

space. He argued that they existed as effects of God's omnipresence and eternity.

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[64] Newton, p. 545.

Because God exists always and everywhere, there must be an always and everywhere. Further, according to Newton, always and everywhere (absolute time and absolute space) do not exist in themselves as substances or containers. Craig argues that they are simply effects of God's existence in some emanative sense, and that absolute space and time are contingent upon God for their being.[65] Finally, absolute time and space are not parts of God. Newton says, "He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present," which makes it clear that absolute time and space are ontologically distinct from God's being.

Before moving on, it will be helpful to look at Newton's definition of absolute time. Newton laid out his definition of absolute time in his *Scholium on Absolute Space and Time*: "Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent, and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by the means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time; such as an hour, a day, a month, a year."[66] From this definition, we can see that Newton also had a category for the physical time we actually measure, which he called relative time. Relative time differs from absolute time in that it is dependent on measurement of change or motion, while absolute time is simple duration. Recalling the above discussion of temporal vacua, absolute time measures that true duration of elapsed time even if we are unaware of its passage due to lack of motion or change. Understood in this fashion, it is easy to see why absolute time is thought of as a container, because it can pass even if it is "empty" and lacks the presence of changing events.

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[65] Craig, "Absolute Time," p. 130.
[66] Newton, p. 6.

In summary, Newton's understanding of the relationship of God to absolute time and space is that God creates an always and everywhere by being eternal and infinite. This time and space are not parts of God and are contingent on God for their existence. Looking at Newton's views on absolute time in this manner does not look entirely promising for panentheistic application. However, Newton's view has internal tensions that, when resolved, will make his views much more useful for a panentheistic philosophy of time.

Analysis of Newtonian Absolute Time

If Newton's understanding of absolute time is sound, then he is able to establish God as a necessary component of his physics because God would be the cause and sustaining force of absolute time and space. God's existence becomes the reason for the existence of any other thing. Newton attempts to maintain the theistic separation of God from the world by stipulating that absolute space and time are separate from and dependent on God, and thus has created a theistic physics. This section argues that Newton's framework for absolute time is flawed so long as it is held in conjunction with a theistic separation between God and the world. The primary problem with Newton's view is that an absolute time that exists separately from God conflicts with his definition of absolute time as "flow[ing] equably without relation to anything external." If absolute time is separate from God, then we are posed with the following dilemma: Absolute time must either

(1) depend on God for its metric (the rate at which it passes), in which case it flows with relation to something external, or

(2) have a metric independent of God.

It will be demonstrated that the only way to resolve this dilemma is to abandon the theistic distinction between God and the world and to adopt the panentheistic position that the world, and thus absolute time, is *in* God. We now discuss the two positions that (1) absolute time is separate from, but dependent upon God for its metric, and (2) that absolute time has its own metric that is independent from God.

Absolute time as dependent on God for its metric

By definition, absolute time is non-relative and makes no reference to any other time. Newton, however, appears to believe that absolute time is dependent on God's eternal duration, as he claims that absolute time exists because of God's duration. Craig supports this view and argues that absolute time is equal to God's metaphysical time.[67] By metaphysical time, Craig means the duration between events or changes in God's mental life. He illustrates this by imagining God doing a mental countdown before the creation of the world when there were no physical events.[68] If God thinks, "…3, 2, 1, *fiat lux!*" before the creation of any physical events, it would make sense to think of these mental activities as having some sort of temporal relation because some thoughts would occur before others and create a temporal succession. So, Newton and Craig both argue that God experiences some sort of duration, which we can call metaphysical time, and that there is an absolute time that exists separately from God. This is clearly a contradiction of the definition of absolute time. If absolute time is truly absolute, it cannot make reference to God's metaphysical time, because absolute time, by definition,

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[67] Craig, "Absolute Time," p. 145.
[68] Craig, "Absolute Time," pp. 130-131.

is the most fundamental time to which relative time makes reference. If absolute time makes reference to metaphysical time, the metaphysical time is more fundamental than absolute time, and the contradiction of absolute time is violated. Thus, for absolute time to be truly absolute and to satisfy its own definition, it must have its own metric.

Absolute time as having its own metric independent from God

Newton thought of absolute time as a contingent effect of God's duration. If absolute time cannot mean an ontologically distinct thing that is dependent on God's metaphysical time for its metric, then it must be a contingent effect of God's existence that has its own metric. In this case, we have a system with two times: God's metaphysical time, and the absolute time created by God's duration. Craig's account of God's metaphysical time and a separate absolute time is nearly identical, but Craig goes further by claiming that metaphysical time and absolute time are synchronized such that there is only one absolute now represented by both. While this may initially seem to resolve the problem of defining absolute time, thinking of absolute time in this way creates a new problem. If God causes absolute time to exist, but has no control over its metric, then God has caused something that God does not control. Newton claims that God "governs all things," which cannot be the case if God does not govern absolute time. The separation of absolute time from the being of God creates a new entity that God does not control. This conclusion is not acceptable if one wishes to maintain a theistic understanding of God.

Both solutions to the problem of understanding absolute time as a distinct entity share another flaw: if absolute time and metaphysical time both tell the same time and

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result in the same now, one of them would appear to be redundant. Craig argues that metaphysical time and absolute time both start with the creation of the world, so both times would measure the time since creation. It is unnecessary to have one time experienced by God and one time caused by God if they both measure the same thing. The primary purpose for positing this two-timed system is to ensure that absolute time is distinct from God, but maintaining this distinction between God and absolute time has only led to difficulties. It is possible, however, to resolve the problem of absolute time by removing the prohibition against time being a part, or property, of God.

Panentheistic Absolute Time

There is a serious tension in the way Newton talks about God's relationship to absolute space and time. On one hand, he says, "In him are all things contained and moved," yet, on the other hand, he wants to maintain a strong separation between God and absolute space and time so that they are ontologically distinct. We have already seen that absolute time is incomprehensible if it is understood as being separate from God. Further, if Newton wants to say that God contains the world, it seems more intuitive to make absolute space and time parts or properties of God. It appears redundant to claim that God's omnipresence and eternity create an absolute space and time that then contain relative time and space. Eliminating the idea of absolute space and time as effects and instead understanding them as parts or properties of God is simpler and does not raise any new difficulties. Thinking of absolute space and time as properties of God invokes the locative metaphor, whereas thinking of absolute space and time as parts of God invokes Hartshorne's strong mind/body analogy. The following investigates the possibilities of

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both approaches.

Absolute Time and Space as Properties of God

It is not much of a stretch to amend Newton's view by thinking of absolute time as a property of God. Samuel Clarke made this very maneuver while defending absolute time from Leibniz's criticisms in their correspondence, although it is not clear whether Clarke understood that doing so strongly implies panentheism. Leibniz forced Clarke to admit that absolute space and time are properties of God by demonstrating that thinking of absolute time and space as substances was problematic because it violates the principle of sufficient reason.[69] Leibniz argued that if space is absolute, then God could have created the universe with a certain orientation or another (e.g. God could rotate the universe 90 degrees in one direction or the other), but there is no reason why the universe should be that way rather than another way. Leibniz's argument refers to a family of arguments for absolute space of which Newton's rotating globes experiment is a good example. Following an account offered by Robin Le Poidevin,[70] let us imagine two identical rotating globes attached to one another by a cord and rotating around the midpoint of that cord. The two globes are not in relative motion to one another because they are traveling at the same speed around the midpoint of the cord and their distance from and orientation to one another do not change, and therefore the globes appear stationary to one another. There is, however, tension on the cord that indicates centrifugal force created by their motion. If we imagine that these globes are the only

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[69] G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clark, *Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), pp 14-15.
[70] Robin Le Poidevin, *Travels in Four Dimensions: The Enigmas of Space and Time* (New York: Oxford, 2003), pp. 46-47.

objects in the universe, there would be no relative motion, so the tension of the cord would have to be explained by appeal to absolute motion relative to an absolute space. Returning to Leibniz's argument, if absolute space is a substance in the container sense, then the universe could have any number of orientations with regard to that absolute space, and there is no good reason why God should have chosen any of them.

Clarke responded by arguing that absolute time and space are not substances but are properties of God. However, he still maintained a separation between God and these properties and argued that eternity and immensity are not God, so absolute time and space are not God.[71] Leibniz countered Clarke by pointing out that if absolute time and space are created by God but separate from God, then God is powerless to change or destroy them, which mirrors the problem discussed above concerning absolute time having a metric independent of God.[72] If God creates or causes a separately existing absolute time and space, then these things will limit God because they are absolute and immutable things that are not God. Leibniz also argued that if absolute time and space are necessary effects of God's eternity and omnipresence, then God is in some way dependent on them.[73] In other words, if God's omnipresence creates absolute space as a container, then God needs that container in order to be in any place, and likewise for time. These difficulties forced Clarke to propose the solution that absolute time and space are not "*hors de Dieu*,"[74] which literally means, "outside of God," but could reasonably be interpreted to mean, "not other than or additional to God." In defense of

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[71] Leibniz and Clarke, p. 19
[72] Leibniz and Clarke, p. 23.
[73] Leibniz and Clarke, p. 48.
[74] Leibniz and Clarke, p. 30.

this alternative translation, both H. G. Alexander's standard interpretation[75] of the

correspondence and Ariew's modern translation leave *hors de Dieu* untranslated, which

perhaps indicates some ambiguity in Clarke's intended meaning. One key to unlocking

Clarke's intended meaning might be found in the sentences preceding the above

quotation, in which Clarke uses the same phrase and the translators also leave it in the

French. Clarke says, "Space is immense and immutable and eternal, and so also is

duration. Yet it does not at all follow from this that anything is eternal *hors de Dieu*."[76]

In this passage it appears that Clarke means that nothing other than God is eternal. If we

read *hors de Dieu* as "other than God," in the second instantiation of the phrase, then

Clarke could be understood to say that absolute time and space are not other than God.

Further, if, as Clarke claims, if nothing other than God is eternal, then if would be

equivalent to say that nothing additional to God is eternal. From this we can conclude

that absolute time and space are not additional to God as well as not other than God. So,

in essence, Clarke claims that absolute time and space are not other than or additional to

God in order to evade Leibniz's critique that absolute time and space would limit God if

they existed.

After this point in the correspondence, Leibniz opens the floodgates of criticism on

Clarke's property view and makes it the subject of frequent and intense ridicule, because

it is not obvious what Clarke could intend absolute space and time to be if they are

neither other than nor additional to God.[77] Leibniz had demonstrated that absolute space

and time impose limits on God if they are separately existing entities, but Clarke did not

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[75] H. G. Alexander, ed. *The Leibniz-Clark Correspondence*, (Manchester: University
Press: 1956), p. 47.
[76] Leibniz and Clarke, p. 30.
[77] See Leibniz and Clarke, pp. 42-49.

appear willing to give up his theistic separation between God and the world, so he claims that absolute space and time cannot be additional to God. The meaning of this phrase is unclear. Clarke might have meant that absolute space and time are properties that add nothing to God's existence, but, in that case, it is not clear why they would exist. In the spirit of Ockham's razor, we can argue that the existence of a property is justified by the work it does, by what it adds to the subject who possesses it. If absolute space and time add nothing to God, then Clarke cannot justify their existence. A better interpretation of Clarke's move is that he was implying panentheism but either did not know how or was not willing to explain such a move. If absolute space and time are supposed to do work for Clarke, but are difficult to conceive of as properties that are not a part of God's essence, then perhaps the only move available that can make absolute space and time work is to make them part of God's essence. They are not other than or additional to God because they are part of God. If Clarke is understood as saying that absolute time and space are not separate entities existing apart from God, nor properties that add to God, but are parts of God's nature, then Leibniz's counter arguments lose their force. By making absolute time and absolute space parts of God, Clarke could finally make sense of Newton's claim that God contains the world.

Leibniz's responses after this point demonstrate that he does not fully grasp the import of what Clarke has done.[78] Leibniz accused Clarke of claiming that God is in time and space because God is present in all places, but also that time and space are in God because they are properties of God, resulting in the supposed absurdity that God is in

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[78] Leibniz did accuse Clarke of a Stoic variety of pantheism because he thought Clarke's inclusion of absolute space in the essence of God made nature divine. Leibniz, however, does not deal with the possibility that things in space could be in God without being themselves divine.

time and space and time and space are also in God.[79] Leibniz encountered this difficulty

with Clarke's proposal because he was still committed to interpreting Clarke using the

notion that absolute time and space exist as properties that are discernable from God's

being. Leibniz seemed to imply that for God to be present God must be *in* a specific

place; God is in the absolute time created by God's duration and God is in the absolute

space created by God's omnipresence. However, by depriving absolute time and space of

independent status, Clarke's idea was that God is no longer in absolute time and space.

Rather, absolute time and space become defined by God's eternity and omnipresence

such that God's being constitutes absolute time and space. God is not in any location nor

contained by any property. God's eternity and omnipresence create the absolute time and

space in which other things exist. If absolute time and space are parts of God which are

not other than or additional to God, then absolute time and space are truly parts of God.

This defeats Leibniz's objection because God is no longer in space by being present

somewhere, but rather is making the existence of that place possible by being present

there. God is not in space; the part of God that is absolute space is the space in which

locations exist.

Absolute Time Must Be a Part of God

Our discussion up to this point has demonstrated that the idea of absolute time is

only coherent when it is considered a part, or aspect, of God. If absolute time is

understood as being an effect of God's duration that exists independently of God, then it

either contradicts its definition or places a limit on God. If absolute time is thought of as

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[79] Leibniz and Clarke, pp. 44-45.

a property of God that is not part of God, then it still effectively limits God by either making God dependent on it or by being an immutable thing upon which God cannot exert any influence. If absolute time is a property that is not other than God, but also does not add to God, then there is no reason to justify the existence of that property. The only way to make the idea of absolute time work is to make it a part of God. If absolute time is a part of God, then everything that exists in that absolute time is in God, and panentheism results. When understood in conjunction with theism, the concept of absolute time is either self-contradictory or creates conflict with God's omnipotence, whereas absolute time works in conjunction with panentheism. From this we can conclude that absolute time is incompatible with theism and strongly implies panentheism. Now that it has been determined that panentheism and absolute time work together, we proceed to offer an analysis of how absolute time interacts with panentheistic metaphors, which is followed by a panentheistic application of Craig's argument for the use of absolute time.

Metaphors for Absolute Time

Of the panentheistic metaphors that were discussed in Chapter Two, the locative metaphor and the strong mind/body analogy are the most applicable to thinking of absolute time in a panentheistic sense.

The Locative Metaphor

Clarke's understanding of absolute time and space as parts of God offers a nice example of the locative metaphor. Everything is in God because God creates the ultimate

reality in which things exist. In effect, God's omnipresence is the circumambient reality

mentioned in our definition of panentheism. The kind of absolute time we have derived

from Clarke and Newton is very similar to the account put forth by Clayton that is

discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. As a part of God, absolute time and space are

qualitatively different from any kind of physical eternity or infinity. Even if physical

space extends infinitely and physical time is eternal, God still transcends them because

God is the source and location of their existence. Relative time and space are in God

because God provides the absolute reality in which they inhere. If not for absolute space

and time being parts of God's existence, relative space and time would not be possible.

Relative space and time exist in God in the sense that God provides a container for them

via God's absolute time and space. At the same time, the presence of God permeates all

time and space such that the world is in God and God is in the world in a way that

escapes Leibniz's criticism.

If this usage of absolute time endorses the locative metaphor, then it needs to

answer the criticism raised in Chapter Two, specifically, that if God envelops the world,

then it loses its ontological distinctiveness. The previously discussed defense offered by

Clayton was found to be lacking because it resorted to using a questionable dialectic

between God and the world that did no more than dodge the issue. Absolute time as we

have argued for it in this chapter, however, is more easily defended. One simple way to

defend the locative metaphor against this criticism is to point out that God is infinite and

the world is finite. If absolute time and space take on the infinite nature of God, then

there is an obvious contrast between the finite things that exist in the world and the

infinite nature of God's absolute time and space. Finite things exist with specific

limitations related to their temporal and/or physical extension that make them distinct from the limitless God.

The Strong Mind/Body Analogy

God's relation to the creation of space and time through God's omnipresence and eternity make an interesting case for thinking of the universe as God's body. The fact that absolute time and space are parts of God makes it possible to explain God's temporal and spatial existence in a way that is analogous to physical beings. Let us consider that absolute time and space are God's body. God's body then, is not physical, but is temporal and spatial in the sense that it constitutes time and space. Let us compare God's body to a human one in order to advance the analogy.

God has a presence that is always and everywhere just like a physical being has a presence that is now and here. These presences are vastly different in that one is temporary and the other eternal and one is limited to a specific place and the other is in all places, but both kinds of presence are still spatial and temporal. Further, a body allows a mind to exist in a place and time. A human body allows a human to be eating lunch in the kitchen at noon, and God's body allows God to be engaged in fully actualized activity in everywhere and at everywhen. One might object that an immaterial thing, like a soul, can be in a place and time while not being tied to a body. It is here that the distinction between the soul/body and mind/body analogy becomes important. The mind/body analogy is committed to understanding minds only insofar as they are tied to or emergent from physical bodies. If one believes in souls, then one can posit that a soul is an immaterial substance that can exist without a body, but then the defender of souls is

faced with difficult questions about where souls come from and how they are related to the body. It is simpler to reject soul/body dualism in favor of a monistic account of mind and body where minds are dependent on bodies. Additionally, working from a monistic account makes dialogue possible with the current prevailing preference for naturalism in philosophy of science. So, if we support the mind/body analogy, then we must concede that a body must be present for a mind to be present. And herein lies the benefit of the panentheistic mind/body analogy when applied to absolute time and space: God has a body that exists in all times and places, so God is able to be present to all times and places.

A primary difference between a human body and God's body is that one is finite and the other is not. Because a human body is finite, it is localized in time and space. God's body, however, *is* absolute time and space because absolute time and space represent the spatial and temporal extension of God's being. A human body is localized not only in the sense that it exists in a specific time and space, but in the sense that it only exists in that one specific time and space and there are other things which exist outside the boundaries of the human body. Because God's body is made up of absolute time and space, which are never-ending, there is nothing that is outside of God. God is not localized like humans are. One might object that this difference is severe enough to disqualify the analogy because the idea of an infinite and eternal body is not a proper analogue to a human body. A human body serves the purpose of interacting with an external environment. In fact, this external environment is what makes the concept of a body possible. Bodies exist in an external world and allow a person to interact with that world. If God is the reality in which the world exists, then God has no external

environment within which to act or be, thus eliminating the purpose of and need for a body. Therefore God cannot have a body. Hartshorne offers a response to this objection. He argues that while God has no external reality, God does have an *internal* reality with which to interact and of which to be aware.[80] God is still engaged in interaction with a separate reality, but this reality is inside of God rather than outside. There is no reason to disqualify the analogy for operating in a reciprocal fashion. It would be helpful to concede that the condition that a body is used to interact with an external reality is not necessary for the concept of a body. Instead, a body could be understood as something used to interact with an other reality and not specify whether it is internal or external. This distinction may not be important for the everyday concept of a body, but it seems perfectly possible to remove the condition of external interaction and still retain a full and robust concept of the purpose of a body.

Both the locative metaphor and the mind/body analogy offer useful insight into the utility of understanding absolute time panentheistically. Now that we have established what panentheistic absolute time looks like, we can move to re-appropriating Craig's argument for God's knowledge of absolute simultaneity using absolute time.

God's Knowledge of the Absolute Now

In review, Craig argues that God is able to know when now is because God has a special frame of reference from which God can see the entirety of the cosmos at rest. Additionally, God knows when the absolute time is because absolute time is equal to God's metaphysical time. Given God's perspective and God's knowledge of the now of

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[80] Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, pp. 134-135.

absolute time, God knows exactly what moment is present for the entire universe. We have concluded that Craig's proposal cannot work so long as absolute time is not considered to be a part of God. However, once we have resolved the difficulty of identifying absolute time as something other than God, and have come to a panentheistic conclusion that absolute time is a part of God, it is possible that Craig's proposal could work. In the following we attempt to determine whether Craig's usage of absolute time is compatible with panentheism and whether it achieves the same result.

What does absolute time measure?

An important difference between Craig's view and a panentheistic view is that Craig's system has two temporal dimensions, but a panentheistic system has only one. In Craig's view, absolute time measures the temporal duration of the world and metaphysical time measures God's duration. According to Craig, these times are actually both the same because God becomes temporal only after the act of creating. If God were temporal before creation, then this system would seem warranted, but as Craig does not hold that view, one of the times is redundant. We, then, must decide just what it is that absolute time measures, which is dependent upon our view of God's relationship to time. A panentheistic view has some relevant alternative options to consider with regard to God's relationship to time. In addition to Craig's view, God could be always atemporal and never experience time, or God could always be temporal and always experience time.[81] If God were atemporal, the absolute time would only measure the time since the creation of the world, since the world is the only thing that experiences duration. If God

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[81] The next chapter deals with God's relationship to time in detail.

were temporal, then absolute time would measure God's duration. If we adopt Craig's view, then it would make the most sense for absolute time to measure the time since the creation of the world, since Craig claims that God was not in time before that. An argument will be offered for God as existing outside of in the next chapter, but for now let us assume Craig's view in order to test his proposal for God's use of absolute time in order to know what time it is.

So, if we assume Craig's view of a God who becomes temporal and who has an absolute time which measures the duration of the world as a part of its being, we are simply left with the task of asking whether or not the story Craig tells is coherent. To begin the discussion, we can identify that the story is more coherent once we reduce absolute time down to one metric, which is a part of God. This move eliminates the redundancy of having two metrics and makes absolute time truly absolute because it is God's time, which is the source of all other relative times. If absolute time is synchronized with the time of the world, then it does not appear that there would be any intrinsic barriers to God having to compare timescales and convert from absolute time to relative time. The one true, absolute time is the same from God's perspective as it is from the world's perspective because they both start at the same point and progress at the same rate. Given Craig's view, there does not appear to be any extra difficulty introduced into the story by adopting panentheism. Quite the opposite, panentheism simplifies the explanation and relieves major difficulties. Whether Craig's proposal truly works or not is still far from decided, but adopting panentheism certainly makes it more plausible.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that if absolute time exists and functions in a way described by Newton, then it cannot be used in conjunction with theism, but it works well when used in conjunction with panentheism. Further, absolute time works well within the context of panentheistic metaphors and analogies. It is able to explain how the world is in God and how God could have a body. Finally, adopting a panentheistic approach to absolute time makes Craig's proposal for using it in order to explain God's knowledge of the absolute now more plausible. Concerning Craig's proposal, it should be noted at this point that we have glossed over several potential difficulties. There has been no argument given in support of adopting Craig's view that God is atemporal before creation and temporal afterward. This issue has been neglected because it is taken up in the next chapter, where we discuss whether a panentheistic God is temporal or eternal. We have also neglected to examine whether Craig's proposal is based on presentism, eternalism, or another view of the nature of time. This issue will also be taken up in the next chapter. The present chapter has served the purpose of demonstrating that absolute time might be a useful concept for explaining how God can know when now is. The next chapter builds upon this idea by applying it to a specific view of God's relationship to time and a specific view of the nature of time.

CHAPTER FOUR

A PANENTHEISTIC ARGUMENT FOR THE COMPATIBILITY OF DIVINE

ACTION AND ETERNALISM

In the previous chapter we discussed whether time is an existing thing in which

events occur, or whether it is just a relation between events. Another fundamental

question about the nature of time concerns whether time exists at all or if it is actually

just an illusion. J. M. E. McTaggart famously raised this question in his essay, "The

Unreality of Time."[82] McTaggart argued that there are two ways to order temporal

events. He labels the first way the "A series" and the second way the "B series." In the

A series, positions in time are ordered in terms of past, present, and future, whereas in the

B series, positions in time are either earlier or later than other positions.[83] A fundamental

distinction between the A and B series is that the distinctions in the A series are

temporary and the distinctions in the B series are permanent. In explanation, McTaggart

says, "If M is even earlier than N, it is always earlier. But an event, which is now

present, was future and will be past."[84] McTaggart's point is that the B series explains

time as a series of permanent relations and the A series explains time as a set of

temporary properties. In light of this distinction, we will refer to "past, present, and

future" as A-properties and to "earlier and later than" as B-relations. In terms of the B

series, if the French Revolution happened later than the American Revolution, then it will

always have happened later than the American Revolution. However, when understood

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[82] J. M. E. McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time," in *Time*, ed. Jonathan Westphal and Carl
Levenson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), pp. 94-111.
[83] McTaggart, p. 95.
[84] McTaggart, p. 95.

from the A series, the French Revolution was in the future at the time of the American

Revolution, was in the present at the time of the French Revolution, and is now in the

past. The properties of past, present, and future change, whereas the relations of earlier

than and later than are fixed and static.

After explaining the two ways of ordering temporal events, McTaggart concludes

that the A series and B series are both essential aspects of time, but the A series is more

fundamental to time than the B series because the B series is fixed and void of change,

yet time must involve change.[85] Therefore, McTaggart argues that a B series alone

cannot give us a complete picture of what time is. However, McTaggart also argues that

the A series is problematic. According to Markosian's account of McTaggart, the A

properties of pastness, presentness, and futureness are incompatible with one another; a

time cannot be both past and present at once.[86] But, because all moments will have these

three properties as they progress through time, it is necessary that each moment have

each property. McTaggart argues that there is no way to account for how a moment can

change its A-properties without creating an infinite regress of secondary times.

According to Markosian:

> One response to this argument that McTaggart anticipates involves claiming that
> it's not true of any time, t, that t is both future and past. Rather, the objection goes,
> we must say that t was future at some moment of past time and will be past at
> some moment of future time. But this objection fails, according to McTaggart,
> because the additional times that are invoked in order to explain t's possession of
> the incompatible A properties must themselves possess all of the same A
> properties (as must any further times invoked on account of these additional
> times, and so on ad infinitum).[87]

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[85] McTaggart, p. 100.
[86] Markosian, "Time."
[87] Markosian, "Time."

Because of this difficulty, McTaggart concludes that the A-series is incoherent. When combined with his position that the B series alone is not sufficient to explain time, McTaggart concludes that time must be unreal.

While it is not common to come across the view that time is unreal, as McTaggart concluded, his argument is a contributing cause to a pair of oppositional views on the nature of time.[88] Some people think that McTaggart's criticism of the A series is successful and adopt the view that the B series is the best way to order temporal events. Other people do not find the A series to be problematic and instead opt to defend the A series instead of the B series. *Presentism* is a view that emerges from the A series. Presentism is the view that only the present exists. Employing greater technical precision, Markosian defines presentism as the view that, "necessarily, it is always true that only present objects exist."[89] Given this definition, a presentist does not believe that past or future objects exist. Past objects have ceased to exist and future objects have yet to exist. The opposing view, which stems from privileging the B series, is called *eternalism*. Eternalism is the view that objects exist at all times. There is only a set of earlier than and later than relations among specific moments in time. An eternalist will still use terms like past, present, and future, but these terms are only relations to the specific present occupied by the person who utters them. Eternalism can alternately be described by a view of time from physics, which is called the *block universe*. The block universe view says that the dimension of time is much like space, and that it is possible to describe the location of an event or object using a set of three spatial coordinates and one

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[88] There exist other views than the ones discussed here, but our discussion will be limited to the two following views for the sake of space and simplicity.
[89] Markosian, "Time."

time coordinate. The block universe is similar to eternalism because both views claim that all objects at all points in time exist. For example, a particular rock in the year 3000 BCE exists and another particular rock in the year 3000 CE also exists. In the block universe, the past and future are only relations to any given time coordinate. Both of these views make the claim that there is no now anywhere in the universe. The idea of a now or a present is just an illusion. All events in the universe are fixed in their B-relations and time does not pass, it simply exists through these static relations.

If eternalism is true, and the universe actually is a block universe, then we would have to do some work on understanding what that means for God's relationship to time. We might wonder if God actually answers prayers if the future is already fixed. We might also wonder if God can interact with a static universe. However, these problems are not inherent only to the block universe. In his essay, "The Nature of Time," John Polkinghorne observes that some ancient accounts of God's relationship to time are remarkably compatible with the block universe.[90] Polkinghorne says, "Classical theology…pictured God as existing in eternity, wholly outside time and looking down on the whole history of creation, laid out before the divine eye 'all at once' so to speak."[91] The classical tradition claimed that God sees the universe all at once with no distinction between past, present, or future, which does sound strikingly familiar to the block universe. Interestingly, the problems of answered prayer and divine interaction hinder an atemporal God just as much as they do a God who attempts to interact with a block universe. If these problems are so tightly intertwined, then they might have similar and

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[90] John Polkinghorne, "The Nature of Time," in *On Space and Time*, ed. Shahn Majid (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 282.
[91] Polkinghorne, p. 282.

related solutions. One possible solution is to look at the problems panentheistically. Panentheism supposes that there is a part or aspect of God's existence, the part of God that is more than the world, which transcends the universe and thus has the perspective to see all of time and space, or all of spacetime, at once. Panentheism also has mechanisms for dealing with issues of divine interaction with the world, which makes it a good candidate for understanding how God could relate to and interact with a block universe.

This chapter will assume that eternalism is true and that our universe is of the block universe variety. Given that assumption, this chapter attempts to answer whether panentheism is compatible with these views, and if so, how. In order to address this problem, we need to discuss God's relationship to physical time. If God is able to interact with any universe, let alone a block universe, then we must offer an account of God's relationship to time. We answer this question by outlining specific criteria regarding time that a panentheistic God must fulfill and then by developing a view that satisfies those criteria.

Developing a Panentheistic God/Time Relationship

Following are four criteria a panentheistic God must satisfy. First, panentheism requires that God is able to change. God must be able to respond to the world and be affected by the world. Second, God must be able to exercise some sort of causal efficacy, so God must stand in a temporal relationship to the world that allows for divine causation. Third, God must transcend the world, and thus God must transcend physical time. Transcend here should be taken to mean, "to surpass," "to be more than," and "to not be dependent upon." Part of God transcends physical and material existence, and thus

that part of God must transcend physical time by surpassing, being more than, and not depending on physical time. Fourth, physical time must be in God in some sense; God must be circumambient of time. The view that best satisfies these four conditions will be an appropriate mode of temporal being for a panentheistic God.

Another relevant consideration concerning panentheism and time is that panentheism holds that the world is part of God, but God is more than (transcends) the physical world. Because the world is part of God, there is a sense that whatever kind of time the world experiences will be experienced by God. This can be granted. However, there is a part of God that transcends the world. This transcendent part of God is the part of God with which we are primarily concerned. Another consideration for our discussion is that the block universe concept is inherently atheistic, meaning that it does not make any appeal to the existence of a God and God serves no function in the block universe. Obviously, this chapter is about God and the block universe, so part of our task is to determine how God fits into this picture. One important consequence of including a panentheistic God in the block universe is that God's existence provides a specific location for the universe: it exists in the part of God that transcends the universe. Because the universe exists in God, the universe is relative to God's circumambient existence. Therefore, there is a reality (God) that transcends the block universe. Aspects of this reality, such as God's attribute of absolute time, will have specific functions in the universe.

We now discuss two specific views on God's relationship to time. Many more views are possible and have been held at various times in history, but for the sake of brevity, we examine only the following two because they draw out important issues and

distinctions. These two views are atemporality and omnitemporality. Atemporality is the classical view that God exists outside of time, and omnitemporality supposes that God in metaphysically, but not physically, temporal. Atemporality is included in our discussion because it highlights the impossibility of divine action if God is outside of time. Omnitemporality is included in order to demonstrate a failed theistic attempt at explaining how God can be both outside of time and yet involved in the world. The two views are outlined below with comments and analysis following the introduction of each view.

Garrett DeWeese defines atemporality as follows: God is atemporal if and only if God has no A-properties or B-relations.[92] That is, an atemporal God is not past, present, or future, and God is not earlier or later than any moment, event, or object. An atemporal God has no relationship to time. Another aspect of atemporal entities is that they cannot change. For an atemporal entity to change, it would have to possess property X at time t that it did not possess at time t_1. For this to be the case, however, an atemporal entity would have to stand in a B-relation because it would have had X after it did not have X.[93]

Next we examine atemporality according to the panentheistic criteria. An atemporal God meets the transcendence requirement, and may meet the circumambience requirement, but does not obviously meet the action and causation requirements. The transcendence requirement is satisfied by the definition of atemporality. If God does not stand in any kind of temporal relation, then God surely transcends time. With regard to divine circumambience, it does not appear contradictory to say that physical time could be inside a God who transcends time, so long as only the locative metaphor is used. The

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[92] DeWeese, p. 52.
[93] DeWeese, pp. 53-54.

mind/body analogy would complicate the issue because then part of God would be temporal while part had no temporal relations. This kind of view appears dangerously close to something akin to Cartesian dualism: part of God is atemporal and part of God is temporal. As with Cartesian dualism, it would be quite difficult to describe how the two parts could be related while retaining their respective properties concerning time. Once we move on to God's ability to exercise causation on the world or change, the problems inherent in the mind/body analogy again become relevant. This problem arises because of the difficultly of explaining how a timeless being can act at all, let alone exert action up a temporal world. According to DeWeese, if God is atemporal, then God is also changeless, which means that, while God may exert some force of changeless will that exercises causation on the world, God cannot act in response to the world.[94] Even if DeWeese is wrong and atemporality does not necessitate changelessness, it is still unclear how God could interact with the world without somehow becoming temporal. For example, if God acts on the physical world at physical time t and again at time t_1, then God's actions stand in B-relations to one another because the second is later than the first, and God is consequently no longer timeless. Given the DeWeese definition of atemporality, God cannot be atemporal given panentheism, and likely cannot be atemporal at all.

DeWeese posits another kind of God/time relationship, which he calls omnitemporality. Omnitemporality is an attempt at trying to explain how God could transcend physical time while still being active in the world. We will outline this view and then criticize it. According to DeWeese, God is omnitemporal if and only if God is

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[94] DeWeese, pp. 53-54.

necessarily metaphysically temporal and if God necessarily exists.[95] By metaphysically

temporal, DeWeese means that there exists a metaphysical time that is distinct from

physical time, and God experiences a succession of presents in metaphysical time.

DeWeese defines "metaphysical time" as "the succession of moments or events through

which concrete objects persist."[96] So, for DeWeese, metaphysical time is an alternate

time to physical time. He argues that metaphysical time measures the duration of

immaterial objects, saying, "but since concrete objects need not be material objects,

metaphysical time is not identical to physical time."[97] DeWeese appears to believe that

there exist two timelines, one of which is physical and the other metaphysical. He

contends that metaphysical time is more foundational and that physical time is dependent

on it. He says, "The flow and direction of metaphysical time grounds the ordering

relations of physical time."[98] So, if God is omnitemporal, God experiences temporal

succession, but this succession is defined with reference to metaphysical time and not

physical time. DeWeese further explains metaphysical time by asserting that

metaphysical time does not require an intrinsic metric, which means, "It is possible that

no quantitative temporal relations – e.g., temporal distance – hold for [God]."[99] The

consequence of the lack of an intrinsic metric to metaphysical time is that although one

could place moments in the temporal world in direct correspondence with moments in

metaphysical time, one could not claim that any particular amount of duration passed

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[95] DeWeese, p, 56.
[96] DeWeese, p. 50.
[97] DeWeese, p. 50.
[98] DeWeese, p. 50.
[99] DeWeese, p. 56.

between moments in metaphysical time.[100] An omnitemporal God is able to change but does so in a way that retains a sense of God's actualization. The kind of change that occurs in God is change in God's temporal relations to other objects. For example, God can be pleased with Jones at metaphysical time t and displeased with Jones at metaphysical time t_1.[101] Because God has a series of successive mental states, God's experience of metaphysical time allows God to change in attitudes and dispositions at particular times without causing a change in God's nature.

Omnitemporality relies heavily on the existence of two separate times: metaphysical time and physical time. DeWeese introduces metaphysical time as a way to secure for God a distinct kind of temporal existence and experience. This account fails because it offers no justification for exactly what metaphysical time measures or where it comes from. DeWeese recognizes that God cannot act, or possibly even exist, if God is outside of time. So, in order to maintain God's transcendence, DeWeese posits that God has a separate timeline that is more fundamental than physical time, though the two can be related. Further, in order to secure a different experience of time, DeWeese posits that there is no temporal distance between moments in metaphysical time. If DeWeese's story makes sense, then he secures a God who transcends physical time, has a unique experience of time, and is able to act in physical time because physical time can be synchronized with metaphysical time. However, DeWeese's story is not explanatory, because the presence of two separate and distinct timelines is problematic. The only purpose metaphysical time serves is to give God a special experience of time. There is no defense of the origin of metaphysical time or any evidence of its existence.

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[100] DeWeese, p. 56.
[101] DeWeese, p. 57.

Omnitemporality has been labeled a failed "theistic" attempt at explaining God's relationship to time because it maintains a strong distinction between God and the world. Metaphysical time is posited to be a timeline external to God's existence in the same fashion as physical time. Holding that metaphysical time is external to God puts DeWeese in the position of having to defend the existence of an extra existing item in addition to God. He must defend God and metaphysical time. This introduces unnecessary entities and only increases the complexity of defending God instead of making the task simpler.

In contrast, we have demonstrated a panentheistic mechanism that can secure the benefits of omnitemporality without introducing a secondary timeline or resorting to concepts such as time with no temporal distance. This mechanism is absolute time. In Chapter Three we determined that if absolute time exists, it is a part of God. To refresh our memories about how we are using the idea of absolute time, we can refer to the following description. Absolute time is the part of God that is created by God's eternal duration. Absolute time is the most fundamental time because it is the container in which physical events, and thus physical time, occurs. Absolute time is not dependent upon events, whereas physical time is. Absolute time is the duration of the everlasting God who exists necessarily. Even if there were no physical events in the universe, God's necessary existence would endure, and thus absolute time would continue to pass. From this description of absolute time and the definition of panentheism, we can say that physical time is relative to absolute time as the world is relative to God. God is the fundamental reality in which the world exists and absolute time is the fundamental time with respect to which physical time passes. Physical time pertains to events in the world

and absolute time pertains to the unending duration of the part of God that transcends the world. In a certain sense, part of God is subject to physical time because the world is part of God. However, the part of God that transcends the world experiences absolute time. Let us refer to a God whose being includes absolute time as absolutely temporal.

We now must check to see whether absolute temporality satisfies our criteria for a panentheistic God/time relationship. With regard to change, part of God (the world) experiences physical time and thus experiences continual change. Norman Kretzmann observes that a God who knows what time it is experiences change because God knows that it is half-past-noon at one moment and that it is five-of-one at another moment.[102] The experience of any physical time necessitates change. The part of God that transcends the world experiences absolute time, which does not require change, but God's knowledge of the part of God that is the world does require that God change. Concerning causation, an absolutely temporal God endures along with all physical times caused by events. Additionally, God's omnipresence provides the absolute space in which events can occur. If there exists an event in physical time, that event is possible because God's endurance made the absolute time in which that event could happen. If a person prays at noon on April 9, 2010, then God is able to hear and answer that prayer at that time because God's enduring presence is the very thing that makes the prayer possible. If God did not provide absolute time by God's endurance, then there would be no physical time at which the supplicant could pray. Transcendence and circumambience are also easily secured by absolute temporality. God's absolute time surpasses, is more than, and is not dependent on physical time. Absolute time is the fundamental time created by God's

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[102] Norman Kretzmann, "Omniscience and Immutability," in *God,* 2nd Edition, ed. Timothy A. Robinson (Hackett: Indianapolis: 2002), pp. 167-181.

duration that is not dependent on physical events. Finally, because absolute time is part

of God and the world is in God and God is circumambient of the world, absolute time is

circumambient of the world. An absolutely temporal God is able to have a particular and

appropriate transcendence of time while still being involved in the world.

Panentheism and the Block Universe

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, classical theology appears to be

surprisingly compatible with the block universe with regard to time. However, classical

theologians attempted to explain God's relationship to time in an atemporal fashion,

which we have found to be problematic earlier in the chapter. Despite the presence of

some problems, the classical accounts offer an excellent starting point for building an

absolutely temporal understanding of God. Because of their value, we will discuss these

views and then amend them as is appropriate.

Two Classical Approaches to Divine Atemporality

The two primary historical sources for an atemporal understanding of God's

relationship to time are Book XI of Augustine's *Confessions* and Book V of Boethius's

The Consolation of Philosophy. These sources articulate how God can exist outside of

time, although they do so for different reasons. Augustine argued that God must be

outside of time because God is fully actualized and is not subject to change.[103] Augustine

argued this way because he thinks that anything that is created is subject to change

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[103] Augustine, "Time Tends Not to Be," in *Time*, ed. Jonathan Westphal and Carl
Levenson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. 9.

because it is in the process of becoming.[104] God was not made, and therefore God is not in a process of becoming because God is already complete. Augustine linked becoming to existing in time. Since God does not experience becoming, God cannot be in time, and therefore exists outside of time. Augustine describes God's timeless existence as a sort of eternal present. He says:

> It is not in time that You are before all time: otherwise You would not be before all time. You are before all the past by the eminence of Your ever-present eternity: and You dominate all the future in as much as it is still to be: and once it has come it will be past: but *Thou art always the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail*. Your years neither go nor come: but our years come and go, that all may come. Your years abide all in one act of abiding: for they abide and the years that go are not thrust out by those that come, for none pass: whereas our years shall not all be, till all are no more. Your years are as a single day; and Your day comes not daily but is today, a today which does not yield place to any tomorrow or follow upon any yesterday.[105]

In the picture painted by Augustine, God appears to experience past, present, and future all at once without experiencing change. A key concept in the above passage is the abiding of God's years. The Latin word that is translated as "abide" is *stant*, which is a form of the verb *stare*, which means, "to stand." To further emphasize the temporal usage of this verb, it is helpful to note that *stare* is part of the Latin phrase, *nunc semper stans*, which literally means "now ever-standing," and is typically understood to refer to an eternal now. If we use the idea of "standing" or "lasting" to inform our reading of the word, "abide," then we can read the above passage to clearly say that God's years stand, last, and remain; they stand and last and are not displaced by the years that come because time does not pass. All of God's years last together at the same time "in one act of abiding."

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[104] Augustine, p. 9.
[105] Augustine, p. 14.

This excursion into the idea of abiding serves to demonstrate what kind of a present Augustine thought God experienced, which is an unchanging present that is comprised of all times existing together at once in a static fashion. As Polkinghorne observed, this description does sound very similar to the block universe with regard to time. God sees all of time at once in a single, static, abiding block. Having demonstrated that Augustine's idea of God's temporal mode of being can plausibly be understood in terms of a block universe, let us move to the next case.

Boethius approached the issue of God's timelessness for a different reason than Augustine. While trying to comprehend God's foreknowledge, Boethius realized that if God sees something that will happen to a person in the future, then that event is destined to happen, and the person in question effectively loses his or her free will to cause or avoid that event.[106] In a sense, God's foreknowledge fates future events to happen. In order to resolve the conflict between free will and God's foreknowledge, Boethius posited that God exists outside of time. More specifically, God sees all of time at once in an eternal present. In order to make sense of an eternal present, Boethius devised a special definition of eternity. He defined eternity as "the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life."[107] The result of being eternal is that God lives all of God's existence in one simultaneous present. From this temporal mode of being, Boethius reasoned that God does not see future events because God does not see the future; God sees all events simultaneously, which removes the conflict between foreknowledge and free will: if God knows something in the present, then God does not

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[106] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Richard H. Green (Mineola: Dover, 2002), pp. 94-95.
[107] Boethius, p. 104.

predetermine it to be.[108] Although Boethius arrives at the conclusion that God exists in

an eternal now for different reasons that Augustine, the effect is still the same. If God

sees all times at once, then God could plausibly have a perspective on time quite like that

of the block universe.

Now that we have established that Augustine and Boethius offer accounts of how

and why God exists outside of time, it is time to rework their ideas to bring them into line

with an absolutely temporal understanding of God's relationship to time, which shifts the

focus from existing outside of time to transcending time. It is also time to demonstrate

how the existence of a block universe helps provide God with a perspective that is

functionally equivalent to an eternal now. As noted above, an atemporal God is not

compatible with panentheism for two primary reasons: (1) A God who does not change

cannot respond to events in the world, and (2) a God who is completely outside of time

cannot interact with the world in a causal fashion. The basic premises of absolute

temporality offer an effective solution for (1) and the idea of eternalism can help to

resolve (2).

With regard to (1), absolute temporality dictates that God can transcend time in a

meaningful way while still experiencing change. When Augustine and Boethius claimed

that God was outside of time, they were trying to demonstrate that God exists in a

different way than do physical objects. For Augustine, God needed to be outside time

because God is fully actualized and does not experience becoming or change, which

Augustine held to be necessary effects of existing in time. Augustine's concept of time,

however, was physical, depending on the flow of hours, days, and years. An absolutely

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[108] Boethius, pp. 104-106.

temporal panentheistic God can secure a special type of temporal existence by being the source of physical time. Hours, days, and years measure physical events, but God's experience of absolute time need not be of that sort. Absolute time is a form of brute endurance that is independent of events. Events happen in physical time, which is in God. An absolutely temporal God endures in a way that creates the time in which physical events can happen. This God is not victimized by the passing of time in the way Augustine describes. This God is rather the source of the passing of time. As described above, an absolutely temporal God is able to change. This leaves us with a God who can be outside of time in a way that would please Augustine, and that would still be able to change.

The problem Boethius encounters concerns (2), which is also a problem for Augustine. If God is not related to time, by which we mean that God has no A-properties or B-relations, then God cannot interact with the temporal world without also becoming temporal. Absolute temporality in conjunction with eternalism can fix this problem as well while retaining Boethius's claim that God grasps all of God's existence at once, and Augustine's claim that God does not experience the passing of time like humans do. Given eternalism, all objects from all times exist. Given an appropriate perspective that is not bound by a particular location in physical time, one could observe them all at once. God obviously would have a spatial perspective to see the entire universe at once, but how God would have the appropriate temporal perspective is less clear. In order for God to see all of time at once, God would need to be able to perceive future and past events and objects simultaneously. This kind of simultaneous perception of future and past objects and events is only possible if they exist. According to eternalism, they do. Given

the definition of absolute time, if something exists in the future, its temporal existence is dependent on God's duration. In fact, the existence of all physical time is due to the fact that God has endured *then*. Given that there are past and future objects, God must have endured in the past and the future. The mere existence of a block universe entails that God has endured through all times that the block universe inhabits. This raises a peculiar question: When is God? If there is no now in the block universe, then it is not clear exactly where God would be temporally located. The best answer would be to say that God exists at all times because God is the necessary and eternal source of time. God has always endured, so God is present at each time and space in the block universe. If God is present everywhere and everywhen and there is no now, then we could plausibly say that God experiences all nows at once because of this peculiar perspective. Returning to the objection that a God who is outside of time cannot act, we have shown that if eternalism is true, an absolutely temporal God is actually present at all times. This God is not outside of time, but rather transcends physical time in a special way.

Divine Action in a Block Universe

Up to this point we have demonstrated that a panentheistic God has the perspective to see the entirety of spacetime at once. God can see every point of space at any given moment of time, and God can see every moment in time at any given point of space. If, as we mentioned in the introduction, there is no actual and universal present moment, then we have some work to do in order to understand what it means for God to interact with the world. God's ability to act on and interact with the world is one of the primary tenets of panentheism, and this picture of the block universe does not

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immediately appear to be compatible with divine action. In fact, there is a sense in which the block universe is not compatible with *any* action, because the whole of spacetime is static. If we can demonstrate that change is, or was, possible in the block universe, then we can open a door for explaining divine action.

Change in the Block Universe

The very idea of a block universe implies a changeless existence. When we think of the future from the perspective of tensed time (time thought of as past, present, and future), we think of the past as fixed and the future either as undecided (if one believes in free will), or as not yet actualized (if one is a determinist). However, from the tenseless perspective (time in the block universe sense), the future exists just as much as what we perceive to be the present. If the future is not only decided, but already exists, then it is hard to find any room for change: all of reality appears to be fixed and static. If all of spacetime is static, then there is no room for action, whether human or divine. In a fortunate turn for believers in action and change, there is a serious problem with thinking of the block universe in this fashion. If there is no change, then either nothing ever happens or has ever happened, or everything was always as it is. There are good reasons to reject the notion that nothing has ever happened. The world is teeming with empirical data that confirm that things happen constantly. From the vibrations of electrons on a sub-atomic level to the rotation of the earth around the sun on a cosmic level, things are always happening. If the universe if fixed and static, then it must be so in a way that does not demand the lack of events.

Another way to explain how the world came to be at its current state if all of spacetime is static is that the world was simply always as it is. Every event that takes place at every point in spacetime has always existed at that point in spacetime. Looking at it another way, there really are no events. Rather, all so-called "events" in the universe are nothing more than discrete points in spacetime with a specific content unique to each point. Imagine that each point in spacetime is a page in an old-fashioned flipbook. The individual pages are static and depict one discrete part of what we would call an event. It is only when you look at the pictures in a continuous series and at the right speed that you observe what appears to be a continuous action. When you flip through the book, you no longer see a series of pictures. Instead, you see a dancing penguin, or a boy kicking a ball. Perhaps the universe is the same way. It is like a flipbook that has always existed and is truly static, but appears to be changing when viewed in the right way.

In a certain sense, this kind of scenario is plausible for panentheism. God would have the appropriate perspective to see the flipbook as if it were truly moving. Perhaps God created the entire universe in a fully realized state. The problem with the flipbook idea is that there is still no human action and there does not appear to be divine action. If humans are nothing more than a series of spacetime pages that only appear to act as they are flipped along, then human action is only an illusion. Further, if God created a fully realized universe, then God no longer acts in it; God acted at creation, but now only observes. A static universe also implies that the world does not affect God, which conflicts with a basic component of panentheism. This kind of flipbook God is not the God of panentheism, but rather of deism. Additionally, assuming that the world always has been as it is still denies that anything ever happens. If the universe has eternally

existed in its current static state, then nothing ever happened. While the flipbook example demonstrates that we can make sense of a static universe, it still says nothing about how the universe came to be. There must be a third response to the question of how the universe got to be as it is if it is indeed a block universe.

Perhaps it is wrong to deny that change happens, or has happened, in the block universe. One of our most basic principles about the physical world is that all events are caused and that effects always occur after their cause. If this is true, then whatever happens in the future will be caused by what is happening in the present, just as everything that happens in the present is caused by events in the past. If there were no change in the block universe, then it would be very difficult to understand how anything ever came to be, as there would be no causes or effects. Having rejected the idea that cause and effect are illusions and that the universe has always existed as it is, we need to offer an alternative explanation for how the future could be caused by the past if the future exists just as much as the past does.

Once again, the problem at hand may simply be an issue of perspective. No human is able to see the block universe because humans cannot move forward or backward in the time dimension. Humans must pass from moment to moment in an orderly fashion. From such a temporally bound perspective, it seems as if there is a problem with the future existing now because the future is supposed to happen later. However, if we remove ourselves from a temporally bound perspective and take a God's eye view, perhaps there is no conflict with the past and present existing at once. God's perspective, as described by Augustine and Boethius, sees all of time at once in an eternal present, whereas humans see a linear progression of time that we experience moment by

moment. If God does not observe the passing of time in the way that humans do, then God might be able to make sense of how the block universe comes to be. From God's perspective things are happening in all times, and events that happen earlier in time cause events that happen later in time, even though God sees all of time at once. From a temporally limited perspective, a block universe cannot change, and the past cannot cause the future because they exist at the same time. In contrast, from a panentheistic perspective, the block universe is filled with change and the past causes the future, even though they exist at the same time in a certain sense. Now that we have concluded that change is possible in the block universe, we must determine how divine action works.

Applying Craig's Proposal for God's Usage of Absolute Time

The two primary problems that stand between the block universe and divine action are (1) the lack of a universal now, and (2) that God's eternal now does not specifically correspond to any particular now experience by humans. Craig's proposal for God's usage of absolute time can solve both of these problems, which are dealt with in order.

The block universe lacks a universal now in two ways. First, relativity theory asserts that there is no universal now because different objects in the universe are moving at varying velocities and in varying directions, which means that some objects experience time differently than others. Second, all of time is on an equal footing, so there really is no now outside of some particular subjective perspective. The first problem has been addressed by Craig, and was discussed in Chapter Three. To summarize that discussion, God has a perspective, or inertial frame of reference, which can see the whole of the

cosmos, or all of spacetime, at rest. God also knows the absolute time of any given moment because absolute time is a part of God's being. Since all things in the universe occur with a particular relation to the absolute time and God knows everything through God's omniscience, God is aware of every event that is happening during any given moment in absolute time, and thus God knows which events are simultaneous.

The second difficulty with locating a universal now in the block universe is that all moments in time are on an equal footing. No one moment is ever more "now" than any other moment when the block universe is seen as a whole. The idea of a specific now is only applicable to creatures that are experiencing that moment. If God is ever to answer a prayer or perform a miracle, then God must be able to respond to people in their time of need. God needs to know when now is for a supplicant if God is going to act on that person's behalf. This difficulty can be dealt with by recalling that God sees all times at once. God sees a person lifting up a prayer as that person performs the act. It is possible that, should God want to answer a prayer, God could simply synchronize any observed moment of physical time with absolute time and act in, on, and through events in that time in order to bring about the intended result. Stated more simply, God can see all times and God knows what the entire state of the earth is at any given time, so God is able to intervene at whichever moment in physical time God desires.

We now address the issue of God's ability to act at a particular point in physical time despite the fact God exists in an eternal now that does not correspond to any particular point in physical time. This issue was broached in the previous paragraph, and interestingly enough, the supposed problem was part of the solution. While it may initially seem that a God who exists in an eternal present outside of physical time would

not be able to respond to things that happen in physical time, it is precisely God's perspective from the eternal now that allows action. God sees all of spacetime at once, and given God's ability to pick out every event that is happening at any specific point of spacetime, God is able to act on all times and places while not being in time.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a panentheistic God is plausibly absolutely temporal. There are likely other temporal modes of being that could possibly be compatible with panentheism, but of those surveyed, only absolute temporality is plausible. Once we determine that God is plausibly absolutely temporal, it becomes possible to explain how a panentheistic God could interact with and perceive a block universe. At the very least, this chapter has demonstrated that panentheism can tell a consistent story about how God is compatible with a block universe. Another outcome of this chapter is that the traditional accounts of God's existence in an eternal now offered by Augustine and Boethius have been demonstrated to be consistent with panentheism. The final, overarching outcome of this chapter is that panentheism has been demonstrated to offer a better explanation for God's relationship to time than theism. While God has not been shown to be *necessarily* absolutely temporal and the universe is not *necessarily* of the block universe variety, panentheism is a view that is capable of dealing with those possibilities in a coherent fashion.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

While there are certainly many more issues to consider concerning panentheism and the philosophy of time, we have taken a good look at a short list of problems where adopting panentheism offers a new avenue for explaining how God could be related to time. In addition to demonstrating that panentheism has interesting things to say about time, we have seen that some issues, such as absolute time, naturally lead to panentheistic conclusions. Better still, panentheism has been shown to be compatible with both ancient philosophy and modern physics, which has presented interesting opportunities for borrowing the best of the past tradition in order to supplement newer ideas.

A primary purpose of this thesis has been to point out places where panentheism can utilize ideas that theism cannot. Absolute time has been a perfect example. While absolute time is by no means a necessary concept, panentheism is able to put it to use to explain how God might know when now is, to demonstrate the world is quite possibly God's body, and to show how God might be able to act on the world of physical time from an eternal now. These results are all possible because panentheism does not maintain the same kind of ontological distinction between God and the world that theism does. Thinking of absolute time as a part of God, which is the only consistent way to understand absolute time, demonstrates how God can be intimately related to the world by making all passing time relative to God's eternal existence.

Absolute time has also been helpful for contextualizing panentheistic metaphors and analogies. When a panentheist says that the world is in God, she can offer an

example of God's making the absolute time and space in which she exists. She can also make sense of the world as God's body by using absolute time and space as organs for internal relations. If everything that exists in time and space is relative to the absolute time and absolute space that are parts of God, then everything that exists in time in space has a particular set of relations to God. Contextualizing these analogies contributes to the project of defining and explaining panentheism. Due to the difficult nature of determining just what it means for the world to be "in" God, finding ways to express the "inness" relationship furthers panentheistic discourse by offering new perspectives on God's relationship to the world.

Panentheism has proven to be a versatile view with regard to time. While this thesis chose to defend absolute time, an eternal now, and a block universe, many panentheist approaches to time defend precisely the opposite issues. In a sense, this diversity of possible positions implies that there is no singular panentheistic philosophy of time. It is likely that one could produce as many approaches to time as there are different varieties of panentheism, of which there are many. It is not clear whether this flexibility in panentheism is a strength or weakness. The lack of clear and necessary stances on some issues could be interpreted as implying that panentheism is too loose of a concept to be terribly meaningful. On the contrary, it could be countered that there really is a plurality of possibilities with regard to how one can understand time, in which case, panentheism is a strong concept because it is able to successfully dialogue with a diverse set of possibilities. Hopefully the discussion of panentheism and the block universe has demonstrated that panentheism has the resources to deal with current and difficult issues in the philosophy of time just as much as the discussions of absolute time and the eternal

now has demonstrated that panentheism can make sense of older and less fashionable ideas.

In conclusion, this thesis has argued for one particular application of a panentheistic philosophy of time. To summarize, God is an absolutely temporal being, and God's absolute time is the source of physical time. This absolute time is a part of God, and in a sense, along with absolute space, comprises God's body. Because God's duration is the source of physical time, God is still able to see the entirety of spacetime from the perspective of an eternal now by virtue of being present to all those times at once. God transcends spacetime in such a way that God can see all of it at once, even if spacetime is infinite. While observing all of spacetime at once, God can locate any particular subjective now by synchronizing the physical time of any event with absolute time and then observing all things that are simultaneous to that event. Given God's ability to know when now is for any given person at any given time, God can act in a meaningful and timely way in response to that person's needs or prayers. Given these abilities and a privileged perspective on spacetime, God can be causally efficacious even granted the existence of a block universe. Finally, while the above summary may not seem thoroughly panentheistic, each of the individual components of that story is dependent on panentheism. The God described above is only possible and coherent if panentheism is true. This God possesses a unique set of abilities and attributes, which demonstrate the possibilities of understanding God panentheistically.

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