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GUEST EDITORIAL:
ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS OF THE DIVINE

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Contemporary analytic philosophy of religion has focused primarily on the so-called traditional concept of God, according to which God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, and morally perfect creator of the universe. Many impressive works have explored this concept, thereby shaping the character of research on the nature of God. Recently, however, we have tried to shed light on oft-neglected alternatives to the traditional concept.[1] Our aim has not necessarily been to defend any specific type of alternative concept but to enrich the debate over the metaphysics of the divine by comparing and contrasting a variety of concepts.

The authors of the papers that fill this special issue discuss a wide range of concepts of the divine, including traditional theism (Diller), pantheism (Byerly, Leslie, Steinhart), panentheism (Crisp, Göcke, Meister) and nothing-elsism (Lebens). In discussing these concepts the authors also address important issues in the philosophy of religion, such as God's perfection (Diller), the emotion of awe (Byerly), the relationship between God and the universe/world (Crisp, Lebens, Meister, Steinhart), and the problem of evil (Göcke, Leslie, Meister).

Whether or not alternative concepts are ultimately tenable we hope this special issue will further expand the scope of philosophy of religion in a fruitful manner.[2]

THE AWE-SOME ARGUMENT FOR PANTHEISM

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Abstract. Many pantheists have claimed that their view of the divine is motivated by a kind of spiritual experience. In this paper, I articulate a novel argument, inspired by recent work on moral exemplarism, that gives voice to this kind of motivation for pantheism. The argument is based on two claims about the emotion of awe, each of which is defended primarily via critical engagement with empirical research on the emotion. I also illustrate how this pathway to pantheism offers pantheists distinctive resources for responding to persistent objections to their view, and how it might lead to more exotic views incorporating pantheistic elements.

Many pantheists have noted that to a significant extent their view of the divine is motivated by a kind of spiritual experience (see, e.g., the references in Levine 1994, ch.2). The cosmos just seems to be divine to them, we might say. In this paper, I articulate a novel argument that gives voice to this kind of motivation for pantheism. The argument is based on the emotion of awe, and draws inspiration from recent work on the emotion of admiration conducted by advocates of moral exemplarism. The basic idea is that awe functions in the spiritual domain in the way that, according to these authors, admiration functions in the moral domain; but, given that it does, there is a plausible route to affirming pantheism. The argument is bolstered to a significant extent through critical engagement with empirical research on awe.

I set out this argument in further detail in Section I, identifying some considerations in its favor and explaining how it might prove attractive to certain audiences. I then show in Section II how this approach to justifying pantheism offers the pantheist distinctive resources for responding to three historically influential objections to pantheism. In the concluding Section III, I discuss three further questions about the argument that serve to highlight interesting ways in which the considerations here adduced in favor of pan-

theism could lead to more exotic versions of pantheism or even to views that resist easy classification as pantheistic or not pantheistic.

I. THE AWE-SOME ARGUMENT FOR PANTHEISM

The novel argument for pantheism I will develop is based on two claims about the emotion of awe. One claim pertains to the function of awe, while the other pertains to the proper objects of awe.

The argument's claim about the function of awe is based on the idea that awe functions in the spiritual domain in the way that admiration does in the moral domain, according to recent advocates of moral exemplarism — Linda Zagzebski (2017), in particular.[1] According to Zagzebski, the emotion of admiration is a fallible guide to the moral domain. Moral features, such as the *good life*, *virtues*, or *obligatory actions* can be defined ostensively via direct reference to those for whom admiration survives critical scrutiny. The good life is a life lived by an admirable person, virtues are traits of character we admire in admirable people, and obligatory acts are acts that an admirable person demands of herself and others. Defining these moral features in this way does not reveal the content of the relevant moral concepts, but instead facilitates identification of these features in the real world, which can then itself enable empirical study of their underlying nature. Admiration leads us to exemplars, and by studying these exemplars empirically we can understand what the nature of the good life, virtue, or obligatory action is.

According to my argument, the emotion of awe functions in similar fashion as a fallible guide to the spiritual domain — a domain commonly characterized as transcendent or spiritually ultimate or divine. The *divine* can be defined ostensively as that for which awe survives critical scrutiny, and the *spiritual life* can be defined as that life that exhibits proper responsiveness to the *divine*. As with exemplarism, the awe-based approach to the divine doesn't in providing these definitions seek to identify the content of the relevant concepts, but rather seeks to identify a procedure for discovering their

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1   The idea here is not that moral exemplarism must be true in order for what I claim regarding the function of awe to be true, or vice versa. Rather, moral exemplarism provides a useful heuristic for approaching what I claim regarding the function of awe; and, to the extent that the former has attracted much scholarly attention, we might anticipate similar scholarly interest in the latter.

nature. According to the awe-based approach to the divine, following the emotion of awe can lead us to detect divine things, the underlying nature of which we can then seek to understand.

The second claim of the argument regards the proper objects of awe. It affirms that the cosmos is the most proper object of awe. The cosmos is that object for which our awe would most survive critical scrutiny under idealization. If we were to imagine a perfecting of our emotional sensitivity of awe through time comparable to the sort of idealization of science often discussed in the philosophy of science literature (e.g., Putnam 1981), the second claim of my argument maintains that idealized awe of this sort would hone in on the cosmos as its most fitting object.

Putting these two claims together, we can state what I will call the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism as follows:

Functional Claim	That which most continues to elicit awe under critical scrutiny is most divine.
Objectual Claim	The cosmos is that which most continues to elicit awe under critical scrutiny.
Conclusion	So, the cosmos is most divine.

I treat this argument as an argument for pantheism, because the conclusion of the argument is an affirmation of pantheism as this view is commonly understood. At least, it is an affirmation of pantheism as long as in being the *most* divine the cosmos is also *very* divine. Notably, the conclusion is compatible with the idea (affirmed by some pantheists) that sub-parts of the cosmos are also divine, albeit less so than the cosmos itself. Also notable is the fact that the conclusion does not rule out the existence of a creator of the cosmos (also an idea affirmed by some pantheists), even one of the sort regarded as divine by the Abrahamic faiths — an observation to which I will return below, especially in Section III. In the remainder of this Section, I will adduce some considerations in favor of the Functional Claim and the Objectual Claim of this argument, and offer some comments regarding the sorts of audiences for whom the argument might exercise persuasive force.

First, consider the Functional Claim. At least four lines of evidence can be cited in favor of this claim. First, practitioners of very different spiritualities have in fact claimed that awe functions in this way. For example, Abraham Heschel, a Jewish theist, says that "Awe rather than faith is the cardinal at-

titude of the religious Jew. … In Judaism, *yirat hashem*, the awe of God, or *yirat shamayim*, the awe of heaven, is almost equivalent to the word 'religion'" (1955: 77). Howard Wettstein, a philosopher attracted to a form of naturalist spirituality, proposes that "where there is awe, there is holiness. It is as if awe were a faculty for discerning the holy" (2012: 33-4). On both accounts, awe is the primary emotion that first enables contact between a person and God, or that which is most spiritually ultimate. To the extent that these authors and other spiritual practitioners who would agree with them are to be trusted as authorities regarding the origins of the spiritual life, their affirmations provide some evidence in favor of the Functional Claim about awe.

Second, there is experimental evidence linking experiences of awe and religious commitment. Psychological research has revealed that people who experience awe-inducing stimuli such as videos of natural beauty report higher levels of spirituality (Saroglou, Buxant, and Tilquin 2008) and belief in transcendent realities (Valdesolo and Graham 2014) than people who experience stimuli that do not tend to induce awe. This evidence would be explained well if part of the function of awe was to put experients in contact with the spiritually ultimate, as per the Functional Claim.

Third, scholars who have been involved in cross-cultural studies of diverse religions have found that awe is a persistent marker of the origin of religion. For example, Peterson and Seligman, after conducting their research on cross-cultural strengths of transcendence, reported the following:

> The preceding analyses could be taken to show that awe is the proper response to seeing any manifestation of God, God's power, or God's goodness, revealed in any aspect of creation, be it a landscape, a thunderstorm, a cathedral, or a virtuous person. However, the reverse causal path is just as plausible: People have an innate tendency to be moved by beauty and excellence, and whenever these profound and ineffable feelings are triggered, people attribute the cause to the presence of God. This analysis would suggest that it is the very existence of the human capacity for appreciation that generates religions across human societies. Many of the accoutrements of religion (music, architecture, ritual, stories about saints) can then be seen as attempts to amplify these feelings of awe-filled appreciation. (2004: 542-3)

Awe is that emotion by virtue of which people the world over feel connected to the divine; if the feeling is trustworthy when subjected to critical scrutiny, then the Functional Claim follows.

Finally, some support for the Functional Claim can be identified in failures of non-spiritual accounts of the function of awe. Instructive here is the work of Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt on the impact that the cognitive science of aesthetics should have on our assessment of the natural theological argument from beauty. The latter argument maintains that the universal human propensity to experience awe in the face of beautiful stimuli of widely different types is best explained via appeal to an aesthetically sensitive deity who can be encountered via experiencing beauty. De Cruz and De Smedt (2014) argue that the failure of purely naturalistic, non-spiritual accounts of the human propensity for awe lends some support to this argument. For example, the purely naturalistic biophilia hypothesis (Wilson 1984), which maintains that the function of human awe was to motivate early humans to remain in natural environments suitable for their survival, does not adequately explain why natural environments so *in*hospitable for human survival are also among the best represented objects of awe. Likewise, Keltner's and Haidt's (2003) highly influential proposal that awe was primordially a response to displays of social dominance and functioned to maintain social hierarchies is difficult to square with the evidence that awe's "most important elicitor" (147) is non-social, natural beauty. In the face of the inadequacies of non-spiritual accounts of the function of awe, De Cruz and De Smedt write, "There is at present no satisfactory naturalistic explanation for why humans value natural beauty that does not conform to their evolved tastes. Hence, the proponent of the aesthetic argument can hold that God is currently the best explanation for this sense of beauty. . . . our tendency to seek beauty can be explained as a quest for God" (154).

Now, when De Cruz and De Smedt here appeal to "God," they are intending to appeal to a God of the traditional theistic sort — one who is the creator of rather than identical to the cosmos. They maintain that the failure of purely naturalistic, non-spiritual accounts of awe lends some credence to the idea that part of the function of awe is to put human beings into contact with *this* sort of God. Still, to the extent that their argument is successful, it should also lend support to the more general hypothesis invoked here, that the function of awe is to put human beings into contact with the *divine*, where the notion of divinity is not (yet) further specified, whether in the direction of traditional theism or another direction. Put differently, awe experiences signal the satisfaction of a need; the unavailability of a purely naturalistic,

non-spiritual account of what this need is lends credence to the idea that the need is instead a spiritual one — a need for connection to, experience of the divine. If this is true, it provides confirmation of the Functional Claim of the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism.

Before moving on to the Objectual Claim, we might pause to note the kind of audiences for whom the Functional Claim might have appeal. On the basis of the considerations adduced above, we might expect the Functional Claim to have appeal for at least some theists, some naturalists attracted to a naturalistic spiritual life, and, of course, those who are antecedently attracted to pantheism. To a lesser extent, it may prove attractive to naturalists not antecedently attracted to a spiritual life, who find the evidence adduced in favor of the claim persuasive.

Move then to the Objectual Claim — that the most fitting object of awe is the cosmos. The primary route to affirming this claim is to proceed by identifying the qualities exhibited by objects for which our awe most survives critical scrutiny, and then noting that the cosmos exhibits these qualities *par excellence*. Since it does, we can conclude that idealized awe would take the cosmos as its most proper object. This style of argument by its nature is always subject to further empirical testing. My proposal here is that an argument of this kind can be made that is attractive from the standpoint of existing conceptual and empirical research on awe; further empirical work could certainly further support it or impugn it.

Specifically, my proposal is that objects for which awe most survives critical scrutiny have the following two features. First, they exhibit complex functioning in the production of a valuable end. The end needn't be an overall valuable one — one whose total good-making features outweigh its total bad-making features. But, it must exhibit good-making features, and it is in virtue of the good-making features that the object properly elicits awe. I will call this feature *apparently directed complexity*. Second, proper objects of awe are in-principle producible objects the production of which outstrips the experient's productive capacities. The most fitting objects of awe are strictly speaking creatable, though for them to remain objects of awe their creation must outstrip the experient's current powers of creation. I will call this feature *beyondness*.

The claim that the most fitting objects of awe exhibit apparently directed complexity and beyondness receives considerable confirmation when examined in light of existing conceptual and empirical work on awe. Current empiri-

cal research strongly confirms the claim that proper objects of awe exhibit complex functioning. The dominant contemporary empirical model of awe conceives of awe as one of several "epistemic" emotions, the function of which is defined via its relation to knowledge and understanding (Valdesolo, Shtulman, and Baron 2017). Researchers have found that awe is "elicited by perceptually or conceptually complex, information-rich stimuli" (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007: 947) and that experiencing awe is correlated with the activation of reward- and motivation-related brain areas sensitive to aspects of experience carrying significant information (Vartanian and Goel 2004). Experiencing awe is correlated with the perception of patterns (Valdosolo and Graham 2014) and the "motivation to find order and explanation" (Valdesolo, Park, and Gottlieb 2016: 1), whether from a scientific or religious source.

The empirical literature on awe not only provides reason to think that proper awe-elicitors exhibit complexity, but it provides reason to think that they exhibit this complexity in the production of a *valuable* end. First, the fact that experiences of awe often engender a search for specifically *agentic* explanations (Valdesolo and Graham 2014) corroborates the proposal that ideal awe-elicitors will exhibit complex functioning toward a valuable end, given modest assumptions about the exercise of agency. Second, while some researchers have wished to remain open to the idea that awe experiences can have negative stimuli (e.g. Keltner and Haidt 2003, Roberts 2003), reported awe-elicitors are in fact overwhelmingly interpreted as positive. Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman write regarding their work on elicitors of awe that "One striking feature of the awe-eliciting events described by participants is that all were interpreted as positive" (2007: 950). An attractive explanation of why this is so is that awe-elicitors exhibit apparently directed complexity of the kind described — complex functioning productive of an end that has salient valuable features, even if it is not overall better that the end obtained. In order to induce awe, there must be something about the experience that the experient interprets as positive. Kristján Kristjánsson appears to share this view: "I doubt that experiences of awe can be entirely negative" (2017: 133). To appropriate an idea from Keltner and Haidt (2003), I would suggest that, rather than concluding that awe-elicitors can be interpreted as entirely negative, what instead occurs is that awe experiences can be "flavored" by accompanying experiences, including the experience of fear. The complexity of some awe-elicitors, such as Roberts's (2003) example of an atom bomb, involves the exercise of immense transformative

power. Such transformative power is itself naturally interpreted as positive, though of course the destruction caused by this power is just as naturally interpreted as overall negative and fear-inducing. My proposal is that to the extent that such elicitors are proper elicitors of awe, it is because of their positive elements. The proposal that proper awe-elicitors exhibit apparently directed complexity thus receives considerable confirmation from contemporary conceptual and empirical research.

Likewise with the proposal that the most proper awe-elicitors are in-principle producible objects the production of which outstrips the productive capacities of the experient. Start with the second part of this feature — that the objects of awe outstrip the productive capacities of the experient. This idea is widely endorsed, though language referencing productive capacities is not always used. It is very common for accounts of awe to reference some way in which the awe-elicitor is perceived to be *beyond* the experient. For example, Kristjánsson writes that "The *object* of awe is captured by the cognition that the subject is experiencing or has experienced an instantiation of a truly great ideal that is mystifying or even ineffable in transcending ordinary human experiences" (2017: 132). The perception of the awe-elicitor as in some sense beyond the experient can help explain why it is common for experients of awe to report that their experience made them feel small or insignificant (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007: 953).

When pressed for further details regarding in what precise way the proper awe-elicitor is *beyond* the subject, scholars have produced a variety of answers none of which is particularly compelling. Kristjánsson, as we saw above, appeals to the idea that the elicitor is beyond *ordinary* human experience. But this conflicts with the idea, voiced by others, that humans can and should be in awe of many ordinary experiences (cf. Wettstein 2012). These experiences might include childbirth, for example — something that has been used as a prime example in the empirical study of awe (e.g., Van Cappellen and Saroglou 2012). In the empirical literature, the standard account of that in virtue of which the awe-elicitor is beyond the subject is that it is not understood by him — it does not conform to his existing paradigms for making sense of the world. Valdesolo, Shtulman, and Baron write, "Awe is triggered by an unexpected event, like surprise, and involves the salience of a gap in knowledge and a desire to acquire more information, like curiosity and wonder, but it also entails an inability to assimilate information into existing

mental structures and a resulting need for accommodation" (2017: 3). But this proposal suffers from two serious problems. First, as Krisjánsson (2017) points out, it is perfectly legitimate — even common — for people to continue experiencing awe for a phenomenon after appropriately accommodating for phenomena of that type. In these cases, the awe-elicitors needn't be beyond their experients in terms of the experients' understanding or lack of accommodation for them. Second, if the function of awe were to motivate accommodation in the way voiced in the quotation from Valdesolo and colleagues, then it would not make sense for experients of awe to report that they characteristically desire for the awe experience to *continue*. Instead, they would report wishing for it to end — wishing, in particular, for their perceived need for accommodation (part of what it is to be in awe, on this view) to end. But wishing for the awe experience to continue is precisely what awe experients consistently report (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007: 953).

So the sense in which proper awe-elicitors are beyond their experients is neither in virtue of being outside the realm of ordinary human experience nor in being beyond the experient's understanding. An attractive alternative is the one identified above: the sense in which objects of awe remain beyond a subject, even if understood by the subject and even if part of ordinary human experience, is that they are beyond the subject's productive capacities. The subject might appropriately think of them, "I would never have thought to make things that way, even if I had the ability and opportunity!" One interesting feature of this proposal is that it generates empirically testable predictions — for example, that elicitors of awe will cease eliciting awe if they become producible by the experient. For example, an artist in training once awed by his teacher's creations will no longer be awed by them when he attains the skill to reliably produce such himself. He might remain in awe that human beings have evolved to have such capacities in the first place — but here his awe takes a different object from the creations themselves.

Before turning to the first part of the beyondness feature, it is worth remarking that the defense thus far offered is compatible with a certain evolutionary story about the primordial function of awe (recall Keltner's and Haidt's alternative story about the primordial function of awe discussed above). According to this story, the primordial function of awe was to reward with positive affect experiences of producible objects that outstripped the experient's current productive capacities. These experiences would have much

the effect highlighted in the contemporary psychological literature with respect to generating learning. They would render early hominids more open toward encountering new, complex objects that could aid in their survival. Such a stance could help explain the prevalence of tool-use in hominids when contrasted with other primates (cf. De Cruz and De Smedt 2014: 67). Given the Functional Claim of the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism, this epistemic function is not the *only* function of awe — at least not in its contemporary expressions. But, it may nonetheless have been an important function of the emotion, and it may continue to be. It may have been that early on awe attached to more easily producible objects than it does now, but as human capacities for production advanced the remit of awe also advanced, until awe as we now know it can be directed toward any in-principle producible object, including the cosmos.

This last remark leads us finally to the first part of the beyondness feature — that proper objects of awe are in-principle producible. As just suggested, some of awe's objects are in fact producible and even produced by other human beings (as in the case of works of art or sophisticated tools). Others of awe's objects are not typically produced by human beings, but could be produced through concerted effort. This could even be true of incredible landscapes. In the limiting cases, proper objects of awe may only be producible by a superior intelligence rather than by human beings. This may be the case with the cosmos as a whole.

The hypothesis that proper objects of awe are in-principle producible fits well with data regarding elicitors of awe. The significant majority of reported awe-elicitors are either human works of art or accomplishment or natural phenomena (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007) — each of which coheres with the present feature. On the other hand, some authors give the impression that other persons, including divine persons, are proper objects of awe. Thus, for example, Robert Roberts writes, "You can properly be in awe before God" (2003: 269), having in mind a God of the traditional theistic sort (cf. also Wettstein 2012). Given that such a God is supposed to *not* be in-principle producible, this may seem to furnish a counterexample to the proposed feature of awe. But, I doubt the counterexample has much force. Among potential objects of awe, other persons — even divine persons — occupy a precarious position. Kristjánsson writes, "Reverence for a person (human or divine) is sometimes described as 'awe,' but I find that an infelicitous

extension" (2017: 132, n.2). Indeed, when people report awe that is directed toward another person, they tend either to focus on the other's accomplishment, or on some kind of significant transition that person (and others) went through (see again Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007). The focus tends to be then either on something the other person does or on some process in which the other is involved — each of which is producible. The same can be applied to awe of a God of the traditional theistic sort. When awe is properly directed toward such a God, it is directed toward this God's work rather than toward this God *simpliciter*. Recall the earlier quotation from Peterson and Seligman, now with some added italics: "awe is the proper response to seeing any *manifestation* of God, God's power, or God's goodness, revealed in any *aspect of creation*, be it a landscape, a thunderstorm, a cathedral, or a virtuous person." When we most properly stand in awe before a theistic God, we do so by experiencing awe for this God's productive efforts.

There is considerable support, then, for the idea that proper objects of awe are in-principle producible objects that are beyond the experient's productive powers, and that exhibit complex functioning in the production of a valuable end. What remains is to show that the cosmos exemplifies these features *par excellence*; it is the most comprehensive entity that exhibits both apparently directed complexity and beyondness, and as such is the object for which awe will most survive critical scrutiny in idealized conditions. Establishing this claim, I take it, is somewhat less difficult than establishing the preceding claims about the nature of awe. After all, it is precisely this way of thinking about the cosmos that motivates the contemporary fine-tuning argument. According to this argument, if the fundamental constants and laws of the universe had been only slightly different, the universe would not have been life-permitting (Manson 2009). The universe as a whole then involves a vastly complex process governed by certain defining parameters that enable the whole to exhibit the positive feature of permitting goods of life. Whether or not we agree ultimately with the conclusion of the fine-tuning argument that this apparently directed complexity indeed calls for the direction of an intelligent designer, the premise alone — which tends to be accepted by both sides in the debate — is enough to confirm what is at issue in completing the present argument for the Objectual Claim of the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism. The universe as we know it most thoroughly exemplifies those features toward which proper awe is sensitive; it is in-principle producible,

vastly beyond the productive powers of experients of awe, and involves incredibly complex functioning in the production of a valuable end.

I doubt there are very serious limitations regarding the sort of audiences likely to find my contentions in defense of the Objectual Claim attractive. Thus, the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism as a whole should be appealing to the audiences already identified in discussion of the Functional Claim: namely, many already attracted to pantheism, some theists, some naturalists inclined toward a spiritual life, and perhaps even some naturalists not so inclined.

II. RESPONDING TO OBJECTIONS TO PANTHEISM

The Awe-some Argument for Pantheism offers more than just an isolated argument for pantheism. It offers a route to pantheism that provides pantheists with distinctive resources for defending their position against objections. In this section, I will briefly address how taking the route to pantheism provided by the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism allows the pantheist to deftly handle three persistent objections to pantheism: the problem of personality, the problem of unity, and the problem of evil.

The problem of personality maintains that pantheistic conceptions of the divine are inadequate for theological discourse because they are committed to an impersonal divinity. Being divine, according to this objection, requires being personal. Nothing impersonal, such as the cosmos, could be divine. The objection is often wielded against pantheism by traditional theists: "traditional theism has regularly opposed pantheism on the grounds that it tends to be impersonal," writes William Mander (2016). Sometimes the objection is generated by appealing to properties the divine must have beyond the property of personhood — such as worship-worthiness (Leftow 2016) — where these properties themselves entail that the divine must be personal.

Of course, not all pantheists will be worried by this sort of objection. In particular, some pantheists *do* attribute personality to the cosmos, and even worship-worthiness (e.g., Forrest 2016). An advocate of the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism is as welcome to pursue these alternatives as other pantheists. But the point I wish to make here is that the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism makes more viable an alternative response that *doesn't* require attributing personality to the cosmos. This is because, given this argument, *divinity* is defined ostensively as that which most continues to elicit awe. Whether the

divine so defined must be personal or worship-worthy is an empirical question, not something to be decided from the armchair. When we do the empirical work, as proposed in the previous section, we do not find that personality is a good candidate for features of the divine defined in this way. Products of persons, rather than persons, tend to be among awe's most proper objects.

Turn then to the problem of unity. This persistent objection to pantheism maintains that the cosmos is not sufficiently unified or singular to be divine. It is a diversity of many things, not a single thing. It isn't even properly an "it." Michael Levine (1994, ch.1) claims that, by definition, pantheism involves the view that all that there is forms a unity, and he maintains that it is among the central problems of pantheism to explicate just what sort of unity this is. Some pantheists have fulfilled this ambition by endorsing views of the cosmos that are often perceived by others as metaphysically extravagant, such as Spinoza's view that the cosmos as a whole is the only substance, and that what seem to us to be substances within the cosmos are simply modes of the cosmos. Certainly, these ways of specifying pantheism are not unavailable to advocates of the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism. But, again the point I wish to stress at present is that this Argument makes available for pantheists a way of engaging with the problem of unity that does not require specifying pantheism in this way.

To see why, return to what was said in the previous section on behalf of viewing the cosmos as the most proper object of awe and hence the most divine. What makes the cosmos the most proper object of awe is that it exhibits apparently directed complexity and beyondness *par excellence*. It is primarily the feature of apparently directed complexity that accounts for in what way the cosmos is unified on this account. It is unified by having laws and constants that govern the functioning of all of its components, and do so in such a way as to make the whole life-permitting. The sort of unity required for the cosmos to be divine is just this sort of unity, and needn't be more given the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism. Since this sort of unity is often ascribed to the universe independently of any kind of pantheistic or other spiritual commitment, it is a sort of unity that is likely to be viewed less objectionably by critics of pantheism. Notably, it has been a unity of much this that kind has in fact been the predominant view of pantheists historically (Levine 1994: 40). The Awe-some Argument for Pantheism in this way offers the pantheist a way of explicating her notion of divinity where it doesn't require an account

of the unity of the cosmos that is likely to be viewed suspiciously by her critics.

Turn finally to the problem of evil. The problem of evil for pantheists amounts to the difficulty of explaining how it could be that there is evil at all in the cosmos, if the cosmos is itself divine. As Mander puts it, "it is challenged that if God includes everything and God is perfect or good, then everything which exists ought to be perfect or good; a conclusion which seems wholly counter to our common experience that much in the world is very far from being so" (2016). Mander points out that one route pantheists have taken in response to this difficulty is to argue that apparent evils are merely apparent. *Sub specia aeternitatis* all there is in the cosmos is indeed good, and the objection is answered. Again, my contention here is that the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism offers another way out.

As with the problem of personality, the problem of evil for pantheism relies upon a conception of God that needn't be accepted by the pantheist who reaches pantheism via the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism. It relies upon a conception of God as perfect or good. But, whether God is perfect or good, given the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism, is something that must await empirical investigation of the objects of awe. When we investigate proper objects of awe, we do not find that they are perfect. So, the version of the problem of evil for pantheism based on this claim about the divine needn't move travelers on this route to pantheism. We *do* learn something about the goodness of the divine via attending to proper objects of awe, however. We learn that proper objects of awe exhibit complex functioning in the promotion of a good end. So, there must be *something* good about the cosmos if it is to be divine. Yet, the demand of goodness required is still much less than is needed to make the problem of evil for pantheists very worrisome. For, as we saw above, proper objects of awe can certainly have negative features. They may not even need to be all-things-considered valuable. Thus, the mere existence of evils within the cosmos is no threat to pantheism reached via this route.

There may be other versions of the problem of evil that still have some force against this version of pantheism. In particular, we might ask whether the evils of the cosmos (or comparable evils) are required in order for the cosmos to exhibit the complex functioning it does in the production of the valuable ends it does — if, in particular, the evils of the cosmos are required for the cosmos to sustain goods of living beings. The question is worth asking

since it may be that if the cosmos does not require the sorts of evils that exist in it in order to exhibit the features of properly awesome objects, then what is really most properly awesome is not the cosmos itself, but the cosmos *minus* these features. I say that this *may be* so, because whether it is so is to be determined empirically by whether our awe is in fact sensitive to these nuances. I leave it as an open question here whether this is how idealized awe operates.

If this is indeed how idealized awe operates, then there is a version of the problem of evil for pantheism of the kind advocated in this paper that retains some force. But there are two reasons to think that the force it possesses is not all that forceful. First, for pantheists of the kind in view here, evils of the kind that occur in the cosmos must at most be necessary for the cosmos to exhibit complex functioning in the production of a *good* end. By contrast, it is typically maintained that traditional theists must claim that the evils of the cosmos are required for the cosmos to exhibit *outweighingly valuable* goods — goods that outweigh in value the evils in question. Thus, the version of the problem of evil that perhaps retains force against pantheists of the sort in view here is a less demanding version of the problem than that which has force against traditional theists. Second, suppose that it turned out that evils of the sort that occur in the cosmos are not required for the cosmos to exhibit the complex functioning it does in producing life-permitting goods. This shouldn't lead to a complete abandonment of pantheism, but to a refinement of it. Those attracted to the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism shouldn't claim that there is no most divine thing; they should just claim that the most divine thing is not the cosmos as a whole, but the cosmos as a whole with some holes — holes at the sites of the relevant evils. Pantheism with holes — albeit at different sites — has in fact been defended by others, notably Peter Forrest (2007). So such a view is not without precedent.

Historically, the problems of personality, unity, and evil have exercised considerable force against pantheists. While there are various ways pantheists can respond to these problems, the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism offers distinctive resources which pantheists can employ to eliminate them or reduce their force, and this is an additional reason for the argument to be given a hearing.

III. QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

I conclude this paper by exploring three critical questions about the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism that help illustrate various ways in which the basic view sketched here can be developed in different, more detailed directions. These include more exotic versions of pantheism as well as views that resist easy categorization as pantheistic or not pantheistic.

The first question is, *What if the cosmos is a multiverse?* Throughout this paper, I have used the term cosmos without defining it. In using the term, I have primarily been conceiving of the cosmos as the universe — our universe. But it has become increasingly popular to think of the cosmos as not just a single universe, but a multiverse — a plurality of universes (see Kraay 2014). There are various competing conceptions of what such a multiverse would be like. And some authors have defended pantheistic or panentheistic views of one or another kind of multiverse (e.g., Nagasawa 2014). I'll briefly consider here what implications there would be for the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism if the cosmos is one or another kind of multiverse.

Two important questions for our purposes regarding multiverse theories are the following. First, in what way, if at all, are the universes within the multiverse connected? Second, to what extent do the other universes within the multiverse resemble our own universe, specifically with respect to having constants and laws that enable them to sustain life?

It is common for advocates of multiverse theories to claim that universes within the multiverse are spatiotemporally isolated, and indeed causally isolated (e.g., Turner 2003, Kraay 2010). There is no interaction between them, and if they are without a creator they share no common causes or effects. If this is how we conceive of the multiverse, then I think it is less likely that the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism will enable us to reach a pantheistic conclusion regarding the multiverse. The reason is that, if the universes within the multiverse are isolated in this way, then it is difficult to see how the whole could exhibit the sort of complex functioning that is a hallmark of awe-elicitors. Our own universe exhibits the requisite complex functioning via the causal interactions of its components, and it is difficult to imagine that complex functioning in the production of a valuable end can be achieved without this.

Other multiverse theories permit interaction between the universes within the multiverse. Some theories allow, for example, for universes to generate fur-

ther universes — even in such a way as to pass down heritable traits (cf. Smolin 1997, Draper 2004). Other theories appeal to a creator of the multiverse, who unites all of the universes within the multiverse at least by creating each one (e.g., O'Connor 2008, Kraay 2010, Turner 2003). These theories are more likely to allow larger parts of the multiverse, if not the whole, to be divine, given the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism. For, much as processes of biological evolution can properly give rise to awe, processes of universe evolution could; and much as an ordered natural landscape can properly give rise to awe, an ordering of universes could. So, whether the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism retains its persuasive force on the assumption that the cosmos is a multiverse depends in part on what kind of multiverse we have, and in particular on whether the universes within the multiverse are causally isolated.

The implications of the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism are also influenced by the intrinsic characteristics of the universes within the multiverse. On some multiverse theories, very many — even infinitely many — possible universes exist, with vastly different constants and laws, with only very few universes able to sustain life (e.g., Smolin 1997). On other theories, only universes with intrinsic features making them relevantly similar to our own in value exist (e.g., Kraay 2010). These intrinsic features of universes within the multiverse will have implications for the extent to which individual universes are proper objects of awe, regardless of whether the multiverse as a whole is. It could be, for instance, that the multiverse as a whole is not a proper object of awe, but that many or all universes within it are, leading to a kind of polytheistic pantheism (cf. Forrest 2016, Leslie 2014).

Move to a second question. Several times now I have mentioned the possibility of a creator of the divine cosmos, whether that cosmos is a single universe or a multiverse. It is time to face head-on the question: *What if there is a creator of the cosmos?* It might seem that a pantheist motivated by the Awesome Argument for Pantheism is put in an awkward position if there is such a creator. For, such a pantheist would presumably maintain that the cosmos is the most divine thing, and yet this most divine thing has a creator. To complicate matters slightly, we might even imagine that the creator is the sort of God envisioned in the Abrahamic faiths, a God viewed by many as a proper object of worship. On such a view, pantheism is hardly a robust alternative to traditional theism; it is some kind of variant of it.

My response to these observations is to bite the bullet, so to speak, insofar as there is any bullet to bite. It is true that pantheism is sometimes presented as an alternative to traditional theism (e.g., Levine 1994). But, it is also common for pantheism of some form to be combined with traditional theistic commitments. For example, Peter Forrest combines a pantheistic conception of the universe as God's body with traditional theism. He writes, "The romantic nature religion of poets (Wordsworth, or in a more Christian way Gerard Manley Hopkins) is quite compatible . . . with the Abrahamic tradition. The divine narrative identity can give such nature worship emotionally engaging detail" (2016: 35). While I haven't addressed worship of the cosmos in this paper, the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism does provide a similar way to combine traditional theistic commitments with at least a *divinization* of the cosmos.

True enough, this combination of views does raise a perplexing question — namely, how could it be that the cosmos, rather than the perfect being who creates the cosmos, is most divine? But this question seems to me a fecund opportunity for reflection and ingenuity, rather than an stunting obstacle to theoretical exploration. One way of approaching the question, for example, is to view the creator's creations as expressions, even effusions, of the creator. They are the only way whereby that creator is ever encountered. There is, on such a view, nothing else to encounter that is any more divine than the cosmos. It is in this sense that the cosmos is most fully divine. We may properly view it as an intriguing feature to the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism that it is a route to pantheism that invites (though doesn't demand) speculation of this sort.

The final question I will address overlaps with the previous. The question is: *What if the most proper object of awe is more than the cosmos?* The question perhaps arises most naturally when we observe that many of the proper objects of awe are processes that involve the exercise of agency. For example, when I am awed by a magnificent artistic performance, I am awed not only by the physical movements of the artist and their effects, but by the exercises of creative intellect deployed in this endeavor. This total complex, including the exercises of creative intellect, is a fitting object of awe: it is an in-principle producible object that outstrips my own productive capacities, and the whole exhibits complex functioning in the production of a valuable end. Suppose now that we shift attention to awe for the cosmos, and that we are tempted to view the cosmos as the result of a process exhibiting similar

agency — perhaps the agency of the sort of God identified in the Abrahamic faiths. If awe in the two cases is to be parallel, then it is tempting to think that the proper object of awe in this latter case will be more than the cosmos as this is naturally understood. It will include the exhibitions of creative intellect undertaken by the Abrahamic God in the production of the cosmos, as well as the cosmos itself. These exhibitions of intellect are themselves in-principle producible, but it is certainly unnatural to think of them as elements of the cosmos itself. In this case, the kind of view generated by the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism is perhaps ultimately best classified as pan*en*theistic. On this view, the cosmos is a part of the most divine thing, which also includes exhibitions of agency on the part of the Abrahamic God — though not the Abrahamic God itself.

This section has explored three questions which highlight ways in which the Awe-some Argument for Pantheism can be further developed to yield more exotic versions of pantheism or even views that resist easy classification as pantheistic or not pantheistic. We have seen, in particular, that the Awe-some Argument may provide a route to multiverse pantheism, polytheistic pantheism, pantheism that incorporates elements of traditional theism, and even panentheism. In this way, the Awe-some Argument proves not only to have potential as a novel motivator of traditional pantheism, but to motivate exploration of a variety of unusual and intriguing approaches to the divine.

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AGAINST MEREOLOGICAL PANENTHEISM

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Abstract. In this paper I offer an argument against one important version of panentheism, that is, mereological panentheism. Although panentheism has proven difficult to define, I provide a working definition of the view, and proceed to argue that given this way of thinking about the doctrine, mereological accounts of panentheism have serious theological drawbacks. I then explore some of these theological drawbacks. In a concluding section I give some reasons for thinking that the classical theistic alternative to panentheism is preferable, all things considered.

All the cool kids want to be panentheists. Or so it seems from a cursory reading of much contemporary theology — particularly (though by no means exclusively) the literature on science and religion. Yet panentheism is a doctrine that has proven very difficult to define, and that has generated a range of different responses in the literature.[1]

In this paper, I am interested in what Philip Clayton calls *Christian* panentheism.[2] Amongst the many different views that go under the name panentheism there are versions that are clearly inconsistent with Christian theism, including naturalistic accounts. I shall have nothing to say about those views here. But there are versions of panentheism that have been held by Christian theologians, including "orthodox" and evangelical theologians like Jonathan Edwards. I am interested in versions of panentheism that are consistent with broadly orthodox Christian theological commitments.

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1   The literature on the topic is vast and continues to expand. Panentheism has had such an important influence upon recent theology of various stripes that Gregory Peterson quips, "We are all panentheists now." See Gregory R. Peterson, "Whither Panentheism?", *Zygon* 36, no. 3 (2001): 395. Useful surveys of panentheism can be found in John W. Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Baker Academic, 2006), and (more up to date) John Culp, "Panentheism", last modified June 3, 2017, accessed March 5, 2018, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/panentheism/. The latter includes a helpful bibliography.

2   See Philip Clayton, "The Case for Christian Panentheism", *Dialogue* 37, no. 3 (1998).

To this end, in the first section I will set out the problem of demarcating panentheism in relation to theism on the one hand, and pantheism on the other. I shall also provide one way of construing the doctrine that does, I think, reflect the way in which it is often understood in the Christian theological literature. This is the mereological version of panentheism. Then, in a second section, I give some account of the theological shape of the mereological version of panentheism, attempting to show how this might be thought to be consistent with a broadly orthodox Christian theology. Armed with a working definition of this version of the doctrine, I shall set out some serious theological problems with the doctrine in a third section, exploring why these render the doctrine unfit for theological purpose. In a short concluding section I turn to consider the theistic alternative to panentheism as a preferable account of God's relation to the created order for the purposes of Christian systematic theology.

I. PROBLEMS DEMARCATING PANENTHEISM

There is dispute about how to demarcate panentheism. As R. T. Mullins has put it in a recent essay on the topic, "One of the most notorious difficulties for panentheism is its vagueness. It is incredibly difficult to pin down exactly what panentheism is and how it differs from rival models of God."[3] Similarly, Gregory Peterson writes, "panentheists must begin to look more closely at the *en* that holds the position together and distinguishes it from its rivals."[4] Some scholars despair of giving any useful account of panentheism. Thus, for example, Patrick Hutchings writes, "I cannot *admit to being* a panentheist, unless there is something different (from the other possibilities) which can be specified as *being-a-panentheist*. I make my avowal of being a panentheist with a false geniality, since I am — as I see it — committing myself to nothing."[5] There is, on his way of thinking, no clear, non-controversial way of demarcating panentheism from its near rivals in conceptions of God. Let us call this worry *the demarcation problem*.

Not everyone is quite as pessimistic as Mullins or Hutchings are in their assessment of the prospects for demarcating panentheism. In his widely read

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3   R. T. Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", *Sophia* 55, no. 3 (2016): 325.
4   Peterson, "Whither Panentheism?", 396.
5   Patrick Hutchings, "Postlude: Panentheism", *Sophia* 49, no. 2 (2010): 299.

theological survey of panentheism, John W. Cooper begins by giving a working definition of panentheism that he then makes the basis of a taxonomy of different versions of the doctrine.[6] He writes, "In brief, panentheism affirms that although God and the world are ontologically distinct and God transcends the world, the world is 'in' God ontologically."[7] This working definition of the doctrine informs the rest of his study. On Cooper's reckoning, panentheism and theism share common roots in Plato and Neoplatonism, which is why they share certain features in common. Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference between them, having to do with how God relates to the world, which reflects different strands of Platonism.[8] These differences are expressed in two families of views that are panentheistic in nature, says Cooper. The first of these is Neoplatonism, which "is panentheistic because everything exists within God in a series of concentric emanations."[9] A second branch of panentheism "equates God primarily with the World-Soul."[10] On this view, God is a Life Force that generates other, created life. However, some Christian theologians, like Augustine, appropriate aspects of Neoplatonism without being panentheists. Hence, on Cooper's way of thinking, one may not simple equate Christian Neoplatonism with panentheism. Yet, given this qualification about some Christian theological appropriations of Neoplatonism, Cooper writes that "it is accurate to say that the history of panentheism is largely the history of Neoplatonism."[11]

To be fair to Cooper, he does recognize that the diversity of views that claim to be panentheist — and in particular, the difficulty in pinning down how God is said to transcend the created order and what the "being of God" entails — makes his task, "more complicated."[12] But this he takes to be a prob-

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6   Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*, no. ch. 1. A similarly sanguine view is taken by Culp, "Panentheism".

7   Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*, 18. This reflects the generally accepted definition Cooper later cites from F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (OUP, 1997), 1213, 1213, which states that panentheism is the view according to which "The Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, but His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe."

8   Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*, 18.

9   Ibid..

10   Ibid., 19.

11   Ibid., 19.

12   Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*, 27.

lem that can be resolved by careful classification. Hence, he sets out five distinctions that he thinks help place particular versions of the doctrine within a taxonomy of different versions of the view. These are explicit and implicit panentheism; personal and nonpersonal panentheism; part-whole and relational panentheism; voluntary and/or natural panentheism; and classical (divine determinist) or modern (cooperative) panentheism.[13] These are helpful distinctions as far as they go. But they do tend to obscure the fundamental demarcation problem by providing a kind of quasi-Aristotelian way of categorizing the different species of panentheism into particular theological genera as if the real problem is just one of organizing the existing data according to a sufficiently comprehensive schema. This is beguiling because it is not clear that key terms that are common (perhaps, essential) in the literature on panentheism have a clear enough denotation for such categorization to be accurate. Cooper's survey of the history of the doctrine can only proceed if we accept that there is a clear enough working definition of the doctrine to begin with. But there is good reason to think that is far from obvious.

To see this, consider the words of Owen C. Thomas in an essay for the *Oxford Handbook to Science and Religion.* He writes,

> There are some serious problems in the understanding and interpretation of panentheism in what has become a fairly widespread movement that has gathered under this banner. These problems arise from the fact that panentheism is not one particular view of the relationship of the divine to the world (universe), but rather, a large and diverse family of views involving quite different interpretations of the key metaphorical assertion that the world is *in* God. This is indicated by the common locution among panentheists that the world is 'in some sense' in God, and by the fact that few panentheists go on to specify clearly and in detail exactly what sense is intended.[14]

The problem seems to be with the locution "in" and the rather different ways in which the world is said to be "in" God by different thinkers who are supposed to be panentheists. (Cooper is aware of this problem, of course. But he does not appear to think it is a fundamental problem, as Mullins, Hutchings, and Thomas, amongst others, do.) Suppose we place panentheism as a middle way between the poles of classical theism on the one end, and pantheism

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13   Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*, 27.
14   Owen C. Thomas, "Problems in Panentheism", in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton and Simpson Zachary (OUP, 2008), 654.

at the other end (a common enough taxonomical conceit in the literature).[15] The classical theist maintains that God and the world are distinct; that God freely creates the world; that the world is contingent upon God's creative action; and that God is independent of the world, that is, he exists *a se*. For many theists is it also true to say that God is intimately involved in the sustenance of the world, without which the creation would simply cease to exist. *Classical* theism offers a metaphysically richer picture of God's relation to the world than mere theism per se, including claims about God's perfection, his relation to time, and so on.[16] But for present purposes this characterization of what we might call *bare theism* will do to distinguish it from alternatives.

At the other pole, so to speak, is pantheism. As I understand it pantheism (literally, *all-is-god*) is the view according to which the world, that is, the created order, compose the parts that make up God without remainder. Sometimes it is said that pantheism is the view that God and the creation are identical.[17] However, that does not seem to be a very helpful way of putting the point, since I suppose there are pantheists who think that God is not identical to the world, strictly speaking. For just as the marble composes the statue though it is distinct from it, so it may be that God is composed by the world, though he is distinct from it.

According to Michael Brierley, pantheism could include the notion that "God is totally dependent on, or coterminus with, the cosmos."[18] But to my way of thinking, being totally dependent on the creation is not a sufficient condition for pantheism. Suppose the sum of all the proper parts of the cosmos composes God. Under these conditions, what would it mean to say that God is totally *dependent on* the cosmos? Perhaps it means no more than that

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15   A good example of this is Michael W. Brierley, "The Potential of Panentheism for Dialogue Between Science and Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton and Simpson Zachary (OUP, 2008), 637–38.

16   Mullins gives a good account of classical theism in his taxonomy. See Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism".

17   Thus Mullins: "On theism, God and the universe are distinct, whereas on pantheism, God and the universe are identical." in Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", 326. Later he characterizes the core metaphysical commitment that informs pantheism thus, "The one substance that exists is God. All else is a mode or manifestation of God. This comprises the hard core of pantheism." (Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", 333.) But this does not require that God and the world are *identical*. For one could think that statue is a mode of the marble from which it is carved.

18   Brierley, 638.

God has the same dependency relation to the cosmos that, say, a table has to the parts that make it up: if one of its legs is suddenly annihilated, the table is no longer whole, and (so one might think) the continued existence of the table depends on the continued existence of this leg. *Mutatis mutandis*, God's continued existence depends on the parts of the cosmos not being annihilated. What about the notion of the cosmos and God being "co-terminus"? Well, that gets closer to my claim about the composition of the cosmos and God, but two things can be coincident without being identical. The statue is spatially coincident with the block of marble, but it is not identical with the marble. It has different persistence conditions for one thing: I can efface the statue without thereby destroying the block of marble. Perhaps the relation between God and the cosmos is like that according to some versions of pantheism. Then, God and the world are not identical, though they are coincident.

Panentheism, so it is frequently said, falls somewhere between theism and pantheism. The world is not identical to God, according to panentheism. Nor is it the case that the world (i.e. the cosmos) comprises the parts that make up God without remainder. The world is not coincident with God either. Here the panentheist agrees with the theist that the world is distinct from God. Yet unlike the theist, the panentheist claims that the world exists "in" God — which is the problem to which Owen Thomas introduced us earlier. How does the world exist "in" God, exactly? At this juncture, different analogs or metaphors are cited, depending upon the version of panentheism under discussion. According to some panentheists, God is to the world as the soul is to the body. Yet this does not offer much by way of *explanation* of the God-world relation, which is what we are after. (Similar things could be said about other analogs used by panentheists to this end.)

Recently there have been several proposals that attempt to press beyond the appeal to metaphor, in order to provide some way of explicating how the world may be "in" God. One such argument has recently been put forward by Benedikt Göcke. He maintains that the only real distinction between theism and panentheism regards the modal status of the world. He writes,

> According to panentheism, the world is an intrinsic property of God — necessarily there is a world — and according to classical theism the world is an extrinsic property of God — it is only contingently true that there is a world. Therefore, as long as we do not have an argument showing that

necessarily there is a world, panentheism is not an attractive alternative to classical theism.[19]

So, on Göcke's view, it seems that the "in" in panentheism has to do with an intrinsic property of the divine nature that entails that God necessarily creates the world — something not true of classical theism. But there appear to be counter-examples to this claim, such as Jonathan Edwards. He aligned himself with classical theism, yet also maintained that God is essentially creative such that he must create a world and must create this world.[20] On Edwards's view, God has an essential disposition to create. But if that is right, then the world is a necessary output of the divine nature. It might be thought that whether Edwards held such a view or not, Göcke's claim is about the internal logic of panentheism versus classical theism, which is an issue that is independent of the views of particular theologians. But the claim that God necessarily creates is not obviously inconsistent with classical theism. God may be the source of his action, and act in a manner that is free, and yet act from an internal necessity of some kind (such as Edwards's notion of divine moral necessity). Provided one can show that there is a distinction between how God *in se* is logically independent of God acts *ad extra* in creation, one may (like Edwards) hold to a kind of theological compatibilism with respect to God's creative action in bringing about the world and yet still be counted a classical theist of a sort.[21]

A more promising attempt to provide some account of "*en*" in panentheism is provided by R. T. Mullins. He suggests that one way a panentheist could make sense of the way in which the world is said to exist "in" God is by making space and time divine attributes.[22] Suppose, with Mullins, we distinguish between metaphysical space and time and physical space and time. Metaphysical time exists independent of any measurements we take of it and independent of the existence of any particular physical object. By contrast, physical space and time only exist if physical objects exist. We might say that

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19   Benedikt P. Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism", *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013): 61. Mullins also offers a critique of Göcke's work in Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", 338–42.

20   This matter is discussed in more detail by Oliver D. Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (OUP, 2012).

21   This point has recently been argued by Justin J. Daeley, "Creatio Ex Nihilo: A Solution to the Problem of the Necessity of Creation and Divine Aseity", *Philosophia Christi* 19, no. 2 (2017); especially 311-312.

22   Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", 342.

physical space and time exist "within" metaphysical space and time. Given this distinction, says Mullins, "the panentheist would be saying that absolute space and time are to be construed as metaphysical space and time. These are divine attributes, whereas physical space and time are not. When God creates a universe, God creates physical space and time. Physical space and time exist within metaphysical space and time/God."[23]

This is a better way of trying to get at the "in" of panentheism because it does not make a judgment about the necessity or contingency of the universe (which, as we have seen, is a matter of dispute in this debate). Yet, as Mullins points out, on his view "the universe is literally in God because the universe is spatially and temporally located in God. The universe is located in space and time, and space and time are divine attributes."[24] Here the "in" of panentheism is not metaphorical, but metaphysical. Hence, unlike much of the literature on the topic, there is real explanatory power to Mullins's proposal.

However, as attractive as this strategy is, it is not without theological cost. Orthodox Christian panentheists like Edwards will baulk at making space and time divine attributes because it entails that God is located and has extension.[25] There are some recent philosophical proposals that suggest God is located at all points in space.[26] Yet, on this way of thinking, God's presence is not so much *circumscriptive* as *definitive* (to borrow and repurpose a medieval eucharistic distinction[27]). That is, his presence is not such that he is

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23   Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", 343.

24   Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism", 343.

25   In an early notebook Edwards does endorse Henry More's view that God is space. However, as his views developed, he left this notion behind for a more thoroughgoing immaterialism.

26   See, e.g. Hud Hudson, "Omnipresence", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (OUP, 2009); Alexander Pruss, "Omnipresence, Multilocation, the Real Presence and Time Travel", *Journal of Analytic Theology* 1, no. 1 (2013); and Ross D. Inman, "Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial", in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion Volume 8*, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (OUP, 2017).

27   Thus, Marilyn McCord Adams: "Confronted with the problem of eucharistic presence, however, Aquinas, Scotus and Occam all reasoned that just because material things have parts and so can be and normally are in a place by being extended in it, it doesn't follow that it is metaphysically impossible for material things to be located in a place without being extended in it. Why would it be impossible for Divine power to make a material thing to exist in a place definitively, so that the whole thing was in the whole of the place, and the whole thing was in each part of the place as well? Instead of making each part of a thing exist in a different part of the place, God could make all the parts of the thing exist in each and all parts of the place at once." Marilyn M. Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (CUP, 2006), 300.

distributed in a given area, with certain parts in certain distinct places like a human body has a hand in one place and a foot in another so that the whole body is distributed over a given area (which is a kind of circumscriptive presence). Instead, it may be that God's presence entails his being wholly at a place without being extended or distributed into parts that are at a distance, or in different spatial regions from one another. In addition to this, Mullins's account requires that time is a divine attribute, thereby making God temporal. This too will be a difficult pill to swallow for those panentheists who are of a *classical* orthodox theological persuasion. For these reasons, it may be better to try to find another metaphysical way to make sense of the way in which the world is said to exist "in" God.

One promising way to construe the sort of panentheism we are after — that is a panentheism consistent with traditional, orthodox Christian theology — is as a mereological claim, to wit, that the created order is a part of God. That is, God has a part that comprises the creation, and a part that does not. This would give some metaphysical explanation of the phrase "the world is 'in' God" used by panentheists that would also demarcate it from theism and pantheism. For, on this construal of the term, the world is "in" God in the sense that it exists as a part of God, though not the only part of God. This is clearly distinct from theism, since the theist claims that God and the world are not parts of one mereological whole. It is also distinct from pantheism, because the pantheist claims either that God and the world are identical (so that there is no non-trivial part-whole relation that applies to the God-world unity aside from the relation of identity), or that the world composes God, without remainder (which is more like the claim that God and the world are co-located, or share all and only the same parts).[28]

Nevertheless, on the face of it this mereological proposal is a rather strange notion, not least because it seems to require a very different conception of the divine from that held by the vast majority of historic orthodox Christian thinkers, for whom God is a being without composition.

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28   Objection: isn't Mullins's account a mereological account? If so, how is this suggestion distinct from that offered by Mullins? Response: Yes, Mullins's account is a mereological account of a sort. But this mereological proposal does not make specific the way in which the world is a part of God. This is a benefit because of the worries about the theological costs involved in Mullins's solution, previously discussed.

II. MEREOLOGICAL PANENTHEISM

Let us attempt to get a clearer picture of the mereological version of panentheism. To that end, here is a metaphysical just-so story that expresses one (but not the only) way of thinking about the mereological account and that borrows a number of key motifs from much recent theological discussion of panentheism.

> God creates from a necessity of his own nature. Though he is free in his action, his freedom is consistent with the fact that he must act according to his nature: he is the source of his free choices. Yet God is also essentially creative. It is part of his nature to be creative, such that the creation is the necessary output of divinity. God does not create a world outside of Godself; he does not bring about something entirely distinct from Godself. Rather, he (somehow) "makes room" *within himself* for the created order. The creation is radically dependent upon God for its existence. Yet it is also the necessary output of the divine nature. God is not truly happy without the creation because it is by means of creation that he is able to express his love *ad extra* in a manner consistent with his essentially benevolent nature. Thus, creation is a "part" of God. There is God; and there is the world he creates; and these are two overlapping entities that together comprise one mereological whole that is God plus the world.

Although this is a toy version of the mereological account it shares much in common with a number of contemporary theologians who are said to be defenders of versions of panentheism. Several representative examples will make the point.

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann writes, "*Christian* panentheism … started from the divine essence: Creation is a fruit of God's longing for 'his Other' and for that Other's free response to the divine love. That is why the idea of the world is inherent in the nature of God himself from eternity."[29] Later he says, "In order to create something 'outside' himself, the infinite God must have made room for this finitude beforehand, 'in himself.'"[30] This leads into his famous discussion of the notion of *zimzum*, that is, the divine contraction within Godself by means of which

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29   Jürgern Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (SCM Press, 1981), 106. A helpful discussion of Moltmann's position is given in Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*, no. ch. 10.
30   Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109.

he makes an internal "space" in which the creation can come to be. It is, on his way of thinking, literally inconceivable that God could fail to create in this manner, such that "it is impossible to conceive of a God who is not a creative God."[31] Whatever else we think of Moltmann's discussion it should be tolerably clear that his view entails that there is God who is essentially creative, and that the creation is somehow eternally contained "within" God. These two — God and the world he creates — are distinct parts of one mereological whole that comprises *God plus the world*. Because God is by nature creative, the world he brings about is a kind of essential divine output, without which his eternal love would find no adequate fulfilment.[32]

The American Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson takes a rather different view of this matter. Nevertheless, he says something similar to Moltmann in connection with God's relation to the created order. Jenson writes, "for God to create is for him to *make accommodation* in his triune life for other persons and things than the three whose mutual life he is. In himself, he *opens room*, and that act is the event of creation."[33] He even identifies "roominess" in connection with the creation as a divine attribute.[34] Such enthusiasm for what Colin Gunton has called "self-realization through the other"[35] strongly suggests that God somehow needs the world to be truly happy — a point not lost on Jenson's critics (like George Hunsinger and Thomas H. McCall).[36]

Like Moltmann, Jenson seems to think that God somehow requires the creation — his nature is so constituted that he is only truly happy when "making room" for the created "Other." But this means that God and creation are two "parts" of one symbiotic whole. Even though Jenson does not use mereo-

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31 Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 106.
32 Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 106, writes, "if God's eternal being is love, then the divine love is also more blessed in giving than receiving. God cannot find bliss in eternal self-love if selflessness is part of God's very nature."
33 Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2: The Works of God* (OUP, 1999), 25. Emphasis original.
34 "God, to state it as boldly as possible, is roomy. Indeed, if we were to choose to list divine attributes, roominess would have to come next after jealousy. He can, if he chooses, distinguish himself from others not by excluding them but by including them." Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology Vol. 1: The Triune God* (OUP, 1999), 226.
35 Colin E. Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (T&T Clark, 1991), 135.
36 For discussion of this point, see Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2010), ch. 4.

logical language as such, his views can plausibly be read as indicative of such a position.

Now, the question is: does the mereological account (or some version thereof) avoid the demarcation problem? Does it represent a stable theological alternative to bare theism on the one side, and pantheism on the other? If God and the world are two parts of a larger mereological whole then the view is clearly distinct from bare theism. For, recall, the bare theist is committed to the claim that God and the world are distinct, non-overlapping entities. The bare theist is also of the view that the world is contingent upon divine action (creation and conservation), whereas God is not dependent upon the world. Neither of these claims are consistent with mereological panentheism. So it seems that bare theism and mereological panentheism are distinct. What about the difference between mereological panentheism and pantheism? The pantheism thinks that the world is either identical to God, or composes God (like the marble composes the statue). Clearly the mereological panentheist denies both of these claims. God and the world are not identical. And the world does not compose God (nor, for that matter, does God compose the world). Instead, God and the world are two overlapping parts of one mereological whole.

However, the defender of something like Mullins's account may raise an objection at this juncture. One of the merits of Mullins's proposal is that it prescinds from a judgment about whether or not the creation is the necessary output of the divine nature. This is an advantage because some versions of contemporary Christian panentheism (such as that of Philip Clayton) deny that God must create a world, or that the world is something intrinsic to the divine nature. But the mereological account we have sketched thus far seems to require this. (Certainly, the versions of panentheism put forward by Moltmann and Jenson seem to do so, and they have been cited here as paradigms of the sort of Christian panentheism that seem commensurate with the mereological account.)

But in fact we could adopt a mereological account that does not have this cost. Suppose God creates the world freely in the sense that although he is the source of his creative act, there is no necessity in the act of creation. God could have created some other world, and he could have refrained from creating any world. Suppose that is right. Given this way of thinking, it would still be true to say that the creation forms a part of the mereological whole God plus the world. It is just that the world is a contingent part of the whole,

not a necessary part. In a similar way, a prosthetic limb is a contingent part of the whole human amputee. But, on one plausible way of thinking about such things, the instrumental union brought about by adding the prosthesis to the amputee generates a new mereological whole, that is, the *amputee plus prosthesis*. Though the union is a contingent one, the sum of the prosthesis and the amputee is nevertheless a mereological whole. Or, if the prothesis example is objectionable, one might say that the hair of a person is a contingently related to the mereological whole of the person's body in a way analogous to the contingent relation of the world to God.

Thus, it seems that there is reason to think that the mereological panentheist can distinguish her view from both bare theists on the one hand, and pantheists on the other. There is a metaphysical cost involved in doing so, of course. But provided one is willing to pay the price and embrace the view, it is possible to do so in the knowledge that mereological panentheism is distinct from these other two positions.

III. THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS WITH MEREOLOGICAL PANENTHEISM

Well, then, what theological costs are involved in embracing mereological panentheism, and are they costs worth bearing? The most obvious theological problem for the mereological account is that it implies that God is part of a mereological sum, and this is contrary to the doctrine of divine simplicity. This is indeed a concern for those enamored of classical theism. However, our concern was not to provide some account of panentheism consistent with classical theism as such, but only with a broadly orthodox Christian theology. It is not clear to me that commitment to a broadly orthodox Christian theology implies or entails commitment to classical theism. For it seems to me that it is possible to be a theistic personalist and hold to the tenets of a broadly orthodox Christian theology. Theistic personalism is usually thought to be hostile to the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity. So, perhaps one could be a theistic personalist of a broadly orthodox theological persuasion, and entertain the prospect of Christian panentheism understood according to some version of the mereological account.

Another worry has to do with divine aseity. I take it that aseity is the claim that God is both metaphysically and psychologically independent of the cre-

ated order. God is metaphysically independent of creation if it is possible for him to exist without the world. And God is psychologically independent of the created order if he does not need creatures in order to be happy or fulfilled or complete. However, if God and the world comprise a mereological sum then doesn't this jeopardize divine aseity? Doesn't it mean that God needs the created order in some sense? He needs it metaphysically if the created order is the necessary output of the divine nature; and he needs it psychologically if he can only be fulfilled by creating a world.

As to the question of metaphysical aseity, I have already pointed out that even if the creation is the necessary output of the divine nature, provided God is logically prior to the created order, he is metaphysically independent of it. To illustrate this point, we may compare the discussion of God's relation to abstract objects by those who defend a mild version of Christian platonism, according to which abstract objects like numbers are the eternal and necessary output of the divine nature.[37] Even if one thinks that there are abstract objects and that such objects are eternally generated by the divine nature as something like epiphenomenal outputs of God, one may still maintain that God is logically prior to the abstract objects thus generated. The idea is that they are logically dependent on God for their existence, though they are eternal and necessary objects. (Such a logical dependence does not necessarily imply metaphysical dependence.) In a similar way, God may be logically prior to the created order, though the creation is a necessary divine output.

Let us turn to the question of psychological necessity. What can we say about that? Suppose God may create the world, but may refrain from creating this world, or any other world. Then, even if he freely decides to create thereby bringing about the world as a contingent "prosthesis" to which he is related as a part to a whole, he does not appear to be psychologically dependent on such action. But what if, with many contemporary panentheists, we hold that God *must* create a world, and that this world is the necessary output of the divine nature? Here too there may still be some metaphysical wiggle room. It would be odd to think that by acting in accordance with his nature God is psychologically dependent. Human beings are dependent rational animals.

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37   See Thomas V. Morris and Christopher Menzel, "Absolute Creation", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1986), 353-362, and discussion of this position in William L. Craig, *God Over All: Divine Aseity and the Challenge of Platonism* (OUP, 2016).

In thinking, humans are acting in accordance with their natures. Does that make them psychologically dependent upon the exercise of their rationality? That would be an odd thing to say. Part of the reason it is odd has to do with the fact that human beings are inherently rational; they are by nature rational. So the dependency in question is a kind of ersatz or pickwickean sense of dependency. In a similar fashion, the panentheist drawn to the notion that God must create a world according to some necessity of his nature is not *thereby* necessarily committed to saying God is psychologically dependent upon the created order for his happiness. For it may be that the divine creative action is simply the consequence of having the sort of nature God has, of being the sort of being he is.

However, there are other objections in the neighborhood of this one that do seem to tell against the mereological account. For it seems very difficult to see how one could hold to the ultimacy of God and subscribe to a version of the mereological view. I take it that the ultimacy of God is the view according to which all that exists other than God exists *through* God. There are no entities other than God that exist independently of God. A closely related concern has to do with the sovereignty of God. If God is truly sovereign over creation then there is nothing in creation that is independent of God's creative power. He is the source of all that exists. Can the defenders of the mereological account uphold divine ultimacy and sovereignty?

It would appear that she cannot. Here is why. If *God plus the world* really is a mereological whole, then at least two significant theological consequences follow. First, *God plus the world* seems to imperil divine ultimacy, for it makes the mereological sum of God and the world something that seems to be greater than God without the world. In Hebrews 6:13 we are told that when God swore to Abraham he swore by himself because there was nothing greater for him to swear by — nothing more fundamental, and nothing more excellent, than Godself. But on the mereological account it looks like that is such a thing, namely the sum of God and the world. Second, and closely related to this point, the mereological account seems to be inconsistent with perfect being theology. If God is a maximally perfect and maximally excellent being independent of the creation, then the mereological account appears to be in trouble. For on one way of construing the view, there is an axiological sense in which God's perfection is something less (i.e., something of less

value) than the mereological sum of *God and the world*. For those enamored of perfect being theology, this will be a serious problem.

The final objection we will consider here I shall call *the incorporeality objection*. According to the New Testament, God is a spirit (John 4:24). I take it that spirits are essentially immaterial and incorporeal beings. But essentially incorporeal beings cannot by definition have bodies. Yet, on the mereological version of panentheism, God has a body — or at least, God has a material part, namely, the world. We can put this worry more formally in numbered propositions. It comes in two parts. Here is the first part:

1. God is a Spirit (John 4:24). (Premise.)

2. Spirits are essentially immaterial beings. (Premise.)

3. God is an essentially immaterial being. (From (1) & (2).)

At this juncture, we may raise a complication. This is the complication of the incarnation. Suppose that God is immaterial. Christ has a physical (apparently, material) body. Does this imply that God the Son acquires location or extension on acquiring his physical body at the first moment of incarnation? No, it does not. The reason why it does not is that on any classical and orthodox Christology, in acquiring a human nature God the Son does not acquire physical (material) parts. Rather, he acquires the intimate relation of being hypostatically related to a particular human nature, the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth. But hypostatic or personal union with his human nature does not imply becoming physical or material, nor does it imply acquiring physical or material parts any more than on a Cartesian way of thinking about human souls, in acquiring a resurrected body a human soul acquires physical parts. Let us now turn to the second part of the argument:

4. The world is a material being. (Premise.)

5. For any x and y, if x is an essentially immaterial being and y is a material being, then x does not have y as a part. (Premise.)

6. God does not have the world as a part. (From (3)-(5).)

The reasoning is valid; is it sound? Yes it is — provided one thinks that the physical world is composed of matter. Not all Christian theologians have thought his is the case, however. Bishop George Berkeley and Jonathan Edwards are two of the most celebrated examples of this. They were immateri-

alists. That is, they denied that the physical world was a world composed of matter. Instead, they proposed that the physical world is composed of ideas and percepts that are communicated to minds. In which case, one way to avoid the bind of the incorporeality objection is to adopt immaterialism (and there are the beginnings of a renewed interest in immaterialism and idealism more generally amongst Christian philosophers). If the defender of the mereological account of Christian panentheism were to do that, then God may have the world as a body, but because the body in question is not a material object, but a collection of created minds and their ideas, in creating the world God is not "embodied" (i.e., does not acquire a material part).

However, for those unwilling to adopt immaterialism, it seems that the incorporeality objection does provide a serious conceptual problem for the defender of a theistic, and more specifically, Christian version of mereological panentheism.

IV. CODA: THE THEISTIC ALTERNATIVE

We have seen that one way to characterize versions of panentheism consistent with a broadly orthodox Christian theology that avoids the demarcation problem is the mereological account. Nevertheless, this has significant theological costs. It is inconsistent with divine simplicity; it is inconsistent with divine ultimacy and sovereignty, and it can only meet the incorporeality objection by way of embracing immaterialism, which is unlikely to appeal to many Christian theologians not sympathetic to idealism.

In principle, theism suffers from none of these drawbacks. The theist, and the Christian theist in particular, has no demarcation problem to address; does not require that God's relation to the world is analogous to a kind of part-whole relation; is able to affirm a doctrine of divine simplicity (given a particular construal of theism); and is consistent with divine ultimacy and sovereignty (again, given a particular construal of theism). Thus, there seem to be important theological reasons in favor of retaining theism, and rejecting the sort of mereological account of panentheism we have been considering.[38]

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BEING PERFECT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR BEING GOD

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Abstract. Classic perfect being theologians take 'being perfect' (or some careful variant thereof) to be conceptually necessary and sufficient for being God. I argue that this claim is false because being perfect is not conceptually necessary for being God. I rest my case on a simple thought experiment inspired by an alternative I developed to perfect being theology that I call "functional theology." My findings, if correct, are a boon for theists since if it should turn out that there is no perfect being, there could still be a God.

According to perfect being theology, being perfect is necessary for being God. In fact, classic perfect being theologians understand the word 'God' to have a sense, and take 'being perfect' (or some careful variant thereof) to be conceptually necessary and sufficient for being God. Descartes, for example, offers a definition of God as "the substance which we understand to be supremely perfect," and Anselm tacitly identifies the concept of "something than which nothing greater can be thought" with the concept of God.[1] For this kind of perfect being theologian, to think that there is an open question about whether God is perfect is like thinking that there is an open question about whether a triangle has three angles: in either case, this is to misunderstand the concept altogether.

Here I will argue that, whether being perfect is sufficient *de dicto* for being God or not, it is not necessary. If I am right, then *a fortiori* it is not necessary and sufficient *de dicto* for being God, and classic perfect being theology of Descartes' and Anselm's type is mistaken.

There are several possible lines of argument against perfect being theology at least in its instantiation in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the tradition which will ground my discussion here. For example, one might mount a

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1   See Descartes' Second Set of Replies, AT VII 162 (and also, e.g., Third Meditation AT VII, 46 and Fifth Meditation, AT VII, 65); Anselm's *Proslogion* ii.

scriptural case, or a historical one, or one from intuitions about ordinary use of the word 'God', or one from charitability.[2] But here I will rest my case on a simple thought experiment inspired by an alternative I developed to perfect being theology I call "functional theology." The experiment itself is brief, but to state it, it will help me first to explain functional theology and show that it is a genuine alternative to perfect being theology. I will then offer the thought experiment and close by defending it against an objection.

I. FUNCTIONAL THEOLOGY

Functional theology starts with the intuition that what qualifies something to be God has more to do with what it does than with what it is, more to do with its role in the world, with the functions it has, than with what it is like in itself.

Ia. Precedent for functional theology.

There is strong *scriptural* precedent for this intuition — for understanding who God is in terms of what God does. The Psalmists and Jeremiah, for example, identify God "by citing his deeds," as one source says, e.g., they describe God as the being who "made heaven and earth… [who] shows kindness to the thousandth generation… [who] freed…Israel from the land of Egypt."[3] The Deuteronomic code instructs parents to tell their children about God by recounting God's activity in the history of Israel. When the various writers of the Hebrew Bible refer to God, or record God referring to Godself, the phrases used often imply action (e.g., 'God the Provider', 'God of Armies', and "I am the Lord who brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians").[4] Indeed, Maimonides claims that *all* the names of God in the

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2   See Jeanine Diller, "The Content and Coherence of Theism" (Univ. of Michigan, 2000).

3   The precise wording is from Jer. 32; the other passages to which I allude are Deut. 6:20-3; 26:5-10; Josh. 24:2-13; and Ps. 78, 105, 106. These examples come from the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, which identifies them as 'Israelite credos' — short statements of the Jewish faith in the Hebrew Bible — and characterizes them thus: "When Israel wished to profess its belief in Yahweh, its 'knowledge' of him, it uttered its profession by reciting his deeds in history" (Raymond E. Brown, Joseph E. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Prentice-Hall, 1990), 77:50 and 115).

4   Ex. 6:7 and Lev. 19:36. Again, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur" (Gen. 15:7); and "I am the Lord who sanctifies you" (Lev. 20:8; variations, 21:15, 22:16, 32).

Hebrew Bible — save YHWH — are derived from verbs.[5] Such identifications of God run over into the New Testament, e.g., according to one source: "After Easter, for the believing community, God is preeminently the 'God who raised Jesus from the dead'. Insofar as there is any specific New Testament definition of God, this is it."[6]

There is also *theological* precedent for identifying God in terms of God's actions. Aquinas does this in the Five Ways when he identifies God as the First Mover, the First Cause, etc. Davies explains this Thomist theme: "We do not start with a knowledge of God. We begin as knowing the world in which we live" (25).

We find even stronger precedent for identifying God by God's actions in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, especially I.52-54. Maimonides famously says here that statements of the form 'God is P' are *false* when P is a "definition" or "part of its definition" or a "certain quality" of the thing, or even "a relation."[7] Among his reasons for these denials is that these predicates entail composing their subjects into parts and also entail the subject's dependence on these parts, both of which are anathema since God is essentially one and independent. In sharp contrast, Maimonides takes statements of the form 'God is P' to be at least potentially *true* when P accurately states *God's actions*; he calls these predicates "attributes of action." The key reason they can be true is because attributes of action are "remote from God's essence." Look here:

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5   See *Guide* I: 61.

6   Reginald Fuller, "God in the New Testament", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*: *Vol. VI.*, ed. Mircea Eliade (Macmillan Publishing Co, 1987), 9 citing Rom. 10:9. Cohen tells a marvelous story that makes the same point: 'After hearing a pastoral letter form the bishop of Alexandria and a sermon from his abbot which insisted that…God has no shape, one elderly monk arose to pray but could not. 'Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me!' he wailed. Popular piety does not need or want an immutable and shapeless Prime Mover; it wants *a God who reveals himself to people, listens to prayer, and can be grasped in human terms*. This is the God of the *Shema*, the Bible and the liturgy. This is the God of practically all the Hebrew and Aramaic, and some of the Greek, Jewish literature of antiquity. It is not, however, the God of the philosophers" (87, emphasis added). See also William J. Hill, "The Attributes of God", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (Macmillan Publishing Co, 1971), 512 and Walter M. Horton, *Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1958), 85.

7   This is tantamount in contemporary jargon to saying that 'God is P' is false when P is a conceptually necessary and sufficient condition, or just a conceptually necessary condition, or an accidental intrinsic property, or an *n*-place relation.

> I intend to signify by the words, 'his action' [mention quotes mine], the action that he who is described has performed — as when say *Zayd is the one who carpentered this door, built this particular wall or wove this garment.* Now this kind of attribute is remote from the essence of the thing of which it is predicated. For this reason it is permitted that this kind should be predicated of God, may He be exalted, after you have…come to know…that the acts in question…are all of them carried out by means of His essence and not by a superadded notion. (I.52)

Again, in I.53:

> Fire, for example, melts some things, hardens others, cooks, burns, bleaches, and blackens. If a man were to describe fire as *that which bleaches and blackens, burns and cooks, hardens and melts,* he would be right. Someone who did not understand the nature of fire would suppose it contained six different principles … but someone who understood the nature of fire would understand that it brings about all these different effects by one active quality, heat. If this occurs with things which act by nature, how much more would it be so with a voluntary agent — how much more so with Him who transcends all description …

How do attributes of action of a thing manage to stay remote from its essence in these examples? In both, Maimonides distinguishes between two aspects of a thing: (1) its actions and (2) its essence or nature that underlies these actions. Specifically, he identifies the thing — Zayd in the first case and fire in the second — *by way of* its actions — e.g., carpentering the door, blackening and burning, respectively, while at the same time assuming that (2) its underlying nature equips it to do these observable actions but is (crucially) left underdetermined by the actions. In the Zayd case, Maimonides merely *states* the underdetermination by saying that carpentering the door etc. are "remote" from Zayd's underlying essence. But in the fire case, he *demonstrates* the underdetermination by indicating that two very different underlying natures — "six different principles" or "one active quality, heat" — might be equipping fire to do the blackening, burning, etc. So in identifying fire as that which blackens and burns, we have not committed ourselves to much about its underlying nature — only to its having what it takes to blacken and burn, and that could be six principles or one or presumably any number between.

Maimonides cashes in on this distance between actions and underlying essence in the God case. He presses that a thing does not have to have parts to have multiple actions. If fire can blacken and burn without being compound, how much more can God do multiple things without being compound? So

for Maimonides attributes of action have a negative virtue. Like children who can be seen but not heard, it is what they do *not* do that makes Maimonides like them: they do not entail much about essence, thus in particular they do not entail God's essence is compound.

Moreover, attributes of action have a positive virtue that Maimonides seizes on in I.54: they are our way of knowing God. We see this in Maimonides' fascinating interpretation of Moses' two requests of God in Exodus 34, first to "show me Thy ways that I may know Thee" and second to "show me Thy Glory." God denies the second request — "Thou canst not see my face" — which Maimonides interprets as meaning that no one can know God's essence. But God grants the first request: "Thou canst see my back." The fascinating moment for my purpose here is that Maimonides stresses that the way Moses in fact sees God's back is *by* seeing God's ways, to quote: "his saying '*Show me now Thy ways, that I may know Thee*', indicates that God, may he be exalted, is known through His attributive qualifications; for when [Moses] would know the *ways*, he would know Him." The passage climaxes in Moses' seeing the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy when he sees God's back ("The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love…" etc.),[8] and in Maimonides' saying that "the apprehension of these actions is an apprehension of [God's] attributes…with respect to which He is known" (I.54). These are strong words. For Maimonides, knowing God's actions is how we know God's attributes. Though we cannot know God's essence, we can know God's actions, and that is knowing God as best we can.

Ib. Functional theology.

I do not agree with all of Maimonides' reasons for his focus on divine actions as the way to right speech and knowledge of God, e.g., I am not sure that God must be one undifferentiated unity, or that attributes of quality deny such unity by entailing composition in their subject. But I am still enamored with

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8   The full passage is at Ex. 34:6-7 and reads: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children." Incidentally Maimonides takes these to be 12 attributes of mercy with the last attribute ("visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children…") not mercy but rather a sort of destructive providence, required to put an end to "all obstacles impeding the achievement of the perfection that is the apprehension of Him."

Maimonides' view for some of his other reasons. He is right that resisting talk of God's essence *de re* is epistemically humble: if there is a God, God must be beyond our ken since, for starters, God's creating the world entails God's being qualitatively different from everything within it.[9] Maimonides is also right that talk of God's actions does not say much about God's essence while still allowing us to "back into" (forgive the pun) some information about God: when we say that God "forgives iniquity," for instance, though we do not state God's essence, we do say that, whatever God is like, God must be the kind of thing that can forgive. Divine action talk is thus specific (not vague, cf. to Philo's "the intelligible sun of the sensible sun" etc.), and in principle knowable, since it starts with putative records of human experience. It begins with "knowing the world in which we live," as Davies says of Aquinas.

In light of these many advantages, I use Maimonides' focus on divine action as the foundation stone for building functional theology. I also am inspired by work on functionalism in the philosophy of mind for identifying mental states by their function vs. by their constitution.[10] The standard example of a functional role there verges on the irreverent here, but it is still instructive: what makes something a carburetor is not that it has a particular shape or that it is made of steel or an alloy, but rather that—whatever it is like intrinsically—it mixes gasoline and air and then sends the combination out for ignition.[11] To replay Maimonides' example in this key: what makes something fire is not its internal constitution but rather that—whatever it is like intrinsically—it melts some things, hardens others, cooks, etc. Similarly,

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9   Leibniz drives this point home masterfully in his cosmological argument in the Monadology: after being unable to find a sufficient reason for the universe within the series of contingent things comprising it, he is forced to conclude that "the sufficient or final reason must be outside of the sequence or series of particular contingent things, however infinite this series may be" (37).
10   The affinity between my approach and functionalism in philosophy of mind is rough because a functional role in philosophy of mind is limited to extrinsic properties (or, according to some, even to strictly causal relations). As alert readers will notice in a moment, while the divine role I have in mind contains mainly extrinsic properties, it also contains some intrinsic relational properties (such as being the *proper* object of worship, trust, etc.).
11   The example is from Ned Block, "What is Functionalism?". In *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology: Vol. 1.*, ed. Ned Block (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univ. Press); Block, "Block" in *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, 174–75. David Wiggins suggests that artifacts in general—clocks, pens, chisels, drinking vessels, etc.—might be similar examples. See David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1980), 87.

I am thinking, what makes something God, if anything is, is not its internal nature or constitution, but rather that — whatever it is like intrinsically — it plays a certain role in the world.

Once we adopt this strategy for identifying God, the next question is: what *is* the functional role of God? What is the divine analogue of 'a carburetor's being the thing that mixes gas and air and sends them out for ignition' or of 'fire's being the thing that melts some things, hardens others, etc.'?

Though it is an anachronism to say this, if Maimonides spoke in our terms he might well answer that the divine analogue of a functional role just is the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy he lighted on in the passage above: showing steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquities, not clearing the guilty, etc. I concur that these are a strong start to such a role. But they are incomplete; they do not include other important divine actions that surface in the central texts of the Jewish and Christian traditions.[12] It bears mention as I say this that turning to the central texts of the Jewish and Christian traditions to identify God as I am about to do and as Maimonides did in his way before me implies use of a criterion of adequacy for what makes something count as a genuine notion of God — namely, that *the candidate notion captures the God implicit in a tradition's major texts*. This criterion for adequacy is as good as any: it rightly restricts the notion of God to the God of a particular tradition[13], and uses publicly accessible and widely revered sources within the tradition to represent it. Still, there are of course other options, other possible criteria of adequacy, for identifying a notion of God as genuine. For example, John Bishop, at least back in 1998, constructed a role out of the "psychological economy of the believer." Identifying the options for criteria of adequacy and deciding which should be normative constitute important areas for future research.

After prolonged study of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, creeds, and major theologians,[14] I found marked agreement in these texts on a set of di-

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12   Moreover, some of the Thirteen Attributes sound less functional and more intrinsic, e.g., "merciful and gracious," "slow to anger." I think ultimately these can be read functionally, but it would take additional work to show how.

13   I don't know how to make sense of 'God' simpliciter, traditionless, see e.g. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher, eds., *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities* (Springer, 2013), Introduction.

14   Specifically, for the scriptures in the English I turned to the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh* for the Hebrew Bible and the *Oxford Study Bible* for the Christian New Testament. I used Bettenson's English renderings of the Christian Nicene and Apostle's Creeds, and singled them out since both are of contemporary and historical importance: currently, they are both

vine attributes of action which were frequently stated or implied and, as far as I saw, never denied in these texts: God is that which *explains the existence of the universe, intervenes both providentially and miraculously in it, generates or affirms our moral obligations, ensures human flourishing, and delivers justice in the long run*. God also is *the actual and proper object of the religious attitudes of awe, hope, fear, trust, and love so plentiful in these texts, as well as the object of the firmly established practices of worship and prayer*. For convenience, call these actions the "divine jobs." We can use this role to construct the following claim to comprise the heart of functional theology: God is whatever does some substantial or central number of the divine jobs in the actual world, if anything does.[15]

I have laid out the divine functional role in the chart below. As it shows, the individual divine jobs grouped fairly naturally under five larger tasks — meaning clusters of jobs that comprise a larger function God is assumed to undertake according to these texts.[16] Notice that the Thirteen Attributes fall into the moral, providential and personal tasks, but they do not capture the transcendental or cosmological ones.

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doctrinal statements of the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Anglican, African Orthodox, and Lutheran Churches, and historically, the Apostles' Creed is derived from the Old Roman Creed, among the early and most important creeds in the West, while the Nicene Creed comes from the Creed of Caesarea, among the early and most important creeds in the East (see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Longmans, Green and Co, 1950)). I used the *Shema* as a creedal stand-in for the Jewish tradition. As Shaye Cohen says, "Defining Judaism in this [creedal] way is completely foreign to antiquity. Ancient Judaism had no creeds … [However] the *Shema*, by virtue of its central place in the liturgy, serves well as a convenient outline of Jewish beliefs, much as the Ten Commandments served Philo and some medieval Jewish philosophers as a convenient summary of the laws of the Torah" (Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Westminster Press, 1987), 62, 79). For central Jewish and Christian theological texts, I turned to Augustine's *Enchiridion*; Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith and selections from Part I of his *Guide of the Perplexed*; and Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, part I, questions 1-26.
15   With the addition of 'in the actual world', functional theology makes 'God' a name (like 'YHWH') that rigidly designates a specific thing in the span of all possible worlds if it designates at all vs. a title (like 'the President') that non-rigidly designates whatever answers to it in a given world. This stipulation reflects the consistent use of 'God' in the tradition to pick out a specific thing that people take themselves to have had contact with in the actual world in the way the jobs describe. It also permits us to ask about that thing's nature and activity as Maimonides does for Zayd, e.g. is whatever does the divine jobs here, if anything does, a person or not? Could it be natural? Is it metaphysically necessary or not? Does it do the divine jobs in every world? etc.
16   For a detailed explication of passages from the authoritative texts that ground these jobs, see Chapter 4 of Diller, "The Content and Coherence of Theism".

Functional Role of the Judeo-Christian God

	Causal Relations	Normative Relations	
Task	*Phenomena* God is taken to explain (theoretical phenomena underlined[17])	*Attitudes and emotions* of which God is taken to be the actual and proper object	*Practices* of which God is taken to be the actual and proper object
Transcendental	Numinous experience	Awe	Worship
Cosmological	Existence of the universe	Gratefulness, anger	Praises, laments
Moral	Rules of conduct;[18] ultimate justice and mercy; redemption	Hope, fear	Service, penitential prayer
Providential	Providential care, miracles	Trust	Petitionary prayer
Personal	Religious experience, scriptures	Love	Communing prayer
Singular	Be a single individual who does the other divine tasks		

The divine role just identified has *slack* in it: that is, to occupy the role, one does not have to do every single job exactly as stated, but rather, some central subset of them, in something like the way they are described. The slack is necessary, here and in other cases where roles help comprise associated descriptions, because we are fallible theorizers.[19] Bohr *was* talking about atoms, it seems, even though he gave them a job involving orbitals they do not have; Newton *was* talking about gravity, even though he was wrong about its jobs far from the surface of the earth. Similarly, we could be talking about God, even if we are wrong about some of the jobs, in some way.[20] Of course, we should indulge our fallibility only so far; we should allow the role to flex only so much. We are right to say that there is no phlogiston, there are no unicorns, there is no Santa Claus, because there is nothing that does even a fair share of the jobs in the role associated with these terms. So also we would

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17   The underlined terms have reference only if the theory that the traditional texts present about reality is true.

18   Though 'explain' is apt here on a voluntaristic conception of God's relationship to morality, it is too strong on a non-voluntaristic conception.

19   See, e.g., David Lewis, "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 50 (1972): 252; and Peter Railton, "Non-cognitivism about Rationality: Benefits, Costs and an Alternative", *Philosophical Issues* 4 (1993): 47–48.

20   Saying there is slack in the term 'God' implies a certain fallibility in the texts of the tradition. This is, of course, a controversial claim in religious circles, but I espouse it.

be right to say there is no God if there is nothing that does a fair share of the jobs in the divine role.

How wrong can the story go, how much of the divine role could something fail to do and still be thought to occupy it? As Wittgenstein said about the term 'Moses', it is hard to say — in advance, in general — how much must be proved false or impossible about God to give up the proposition that God exists (1958, sec. 79). I suspect that, when faced with the possibility that a being cannot do one or more of the jobs in the role, that for some combinations, 'this is God' will be obviously true; for others, it will be obviously false; and for others, we will throw up our hands and, if forced, make a judgment call. We will in fact have to exercise this kind of judgment below at the close of this paper.

Notice how the divine role thus understood fixes the referent of 'God' in a way that stays quiet about God's essence — a central boon I was seeking in constructing functional theology. That is, functional theology stipulates that God is the being who does a central subset of these jobs, but leaves open the question: what *de re* properties equip the being to do these things? Wonderfully for staying quiet about essence, the answer here comes in terms of a disjunction because the role *constrains* the nature of the thing that can fill it but does not *determine* it. Think back to carburetors for a moment. Not just anything can be a carburetor: steam cannot, for instance, because steam does not have what it takes to do a carburetor's jobs — the ability to receive and mix air and gas and send them out for ignition. Still, many other substances *can* be carburetors: steel, metal alloys — we can even make a whole room into a carburetor with a pool of gas and some fans.[21] Similarly, not just anything can be God because the jobs demand a lot out of an occupier: one has to have what it takes to create and redeem the world, be a plausible and worthy object of worship, etc. You and I, for instance, are not going to qualify. But a variety of natures *can* equip something to satisfy the role, including natures with less than the perfections.

Ic. Functional theology is distinct from perfect being theology.

Recall that what it takes to be God on perfect being theology is to be perfect. What it takes to be perfect on standard iterations of a perfect being theology

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21   I am indebted to Karen Bennett for the steam example, and to Lawrence Murphy for describing some of the mechanical constraints on carburetors.

is a compossible array of 'the omni's' (omnipotence, omniscience, omnibe-nevolence, omnipresence), 'the im's' (immutability, impassibility, impeccabil-ity), and a few other properties commonly taken to be perfections (incorpo-reality, necessity, aseity, timelessness, and simplicity).[22]

I grant that it is possible to be both perfect in this sense and able to do the divine jobs. But on point here it is also possible to be both imperfect in this sense and still able to do the divine jobs. For instance, doing the divine jobs does not *require* either of the two most important perfections, omnipo-tence and omniscience. A being who does the divine jobs has to have enough power to create the world and break the laws of nature. This is obviously a vast amount of power — enough, I think, when combined with appropriate amounts of knowledge and love, to inspire us to trust and pray to this being, even to worship this being. But such a being need not have *perfect* power in order to do these jobs. It could have lacked the power to make the universe twice as big as it is, or to make it more quickly than it did, or to dismantle the sun in five seconds flat. The same holds true for the amount of knowledge a divine job doer needs. It has to know an immense amount — enough to make the world, to know each of our prayers, to assess our true natures so she can judge fairly when the time comes. But it need not know absolutely every-thing to do the jobs. It could fail to know fully what it is to despair; or fail to know the truth of counterfactuals in worlds sufficiently dissimilar to ours to be irrelevant to her intervening in this one; or perhaps even fail to know the three-thousand-forty-seventh digit of pi, if it turns out to make no practical difference to getting the jobs done. Thus, a less than perfect being can do the divine jobs.

II. THE THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

Now envision what I will call the 'Adequate World' or '*A*', in which there is no perfect being but there is a less than perfect being who can, and in fact does, do the divine jobs. The being creates the world, intervenes in it providentially

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22   These are the main properties that surface time and again in Augustine's *Enchiridion*, Anselm's *Proslogion*; Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (Ia. 2-16); and Maimonides' *Guide to the Per-plexed*, to name a few sources. For the record, from my research, the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience are the most widely cited, with some form of perfect goodness, immutability, incorporeality, and necessity next in line.

and miraculously, constitutes the source of greatest human fulfillment and flourishing, communes with the saints of the past, present and future, etc. The question is: is this being God?

The answer, it certainly seems to me, is yes. That is, if *A* were the actual world, I cannot picture even a staunch perfect being theologian facing this being and saying: "Yes, you are the one who created the world, and you are the one to whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were talking, and you are the one who has heard my prayers, and who will help provide for ultimate justice in my life and in the world at large, etc., but, with all due respect, I am not ready to call you 'God', for you are not the being than which no greater can be conceived." This response seems to me entirely out of keeping with what the Judeo-Christian tradition would suggest one should say in this situation — certainly out of keeping with what the scriptures would indicate.

If this thought experiment works, it licenses at least two interesting conclusions. First, it shows that doing the divine jobs is sufficient *de dicto* for being God, since the reason we are calling this being in *A* 'God' is that the being is doing the divine jobs. Second, this thought experiment shows this paper's thesis to be true: because an imperfect being can count as God by doing the jobs, being perfect is not necessary for being God.

III. OBJECTION AND REPLIES

Back in 1984, in the midst of an argument for perfect being theology (which he calls "Anselmianism"), Thomas Morris envisioned a being who is strikingly like the imperfect divine job doer in my thought experiment, i.e., a being that is not perfect but that:

> had created our universe and was responsible for the existence of intelligent life on earth … had been the one to call Abraham out of Ur, to speak to Moses, and to send the prophets … had somehow become incarnate in the man Jesus,… will be the one responsible for giving eternal bliss to all who are properly related to him … even sustain[s] directly the universe moment to moment…[23]

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23   The passage appears in Thomas V. Morris, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Anselm", *Faith and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1984); Morris, "The God of Abraham", 183. Notice Morris touches on jobs here that in my idiom fall into the cosmological, personal, and moral tasks.

Relying on the assumption that the ontological argument is sound, Morris goes on to build a thought experiment that constitutes an objection to mine:

> Call the less than Anselmian being [the imperfect divine job doer] 'El' and the world in which he accomplishes all those prodigious feats [the divine jobs] '*W*'. If Anselmianism is coherent, an Anselmian being exists in some possible world. But by virtue of being necessary, he exists in every other world as well, including *W*. Now if in *W* there is a being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and all the rest, surely El is not God, but rather, at best, the vice-regent or deputy of God, a sort of demiurge. If El is less than omnipotent, and there is an omnipotent, omniscient individual, then clearly anything El accomplishes is done only at the good pleasure, or according to the wishes of, the Anselmian being. El would not be the ultimate reality. He would not be God. I think this conclusion is fully in accord with the properly religious usage of 'God' in Judeo-Christian orthodoxy, and in fact that it is a conclusion forced on us by that usage. If the object of worship in the Western tradition of theology is intended to be the ultimate reality, and if the Anselmian conception of God is coherent, the God of religious devotion is the God of the philosophers.

In other words, Morris claims that since a perfect being is possible, and, if possible, necessary, there is a perfect being in *every* world. So any time an imperfect divine job doer exists, it *coexists* with a perfect being. Moreover, put a perfect being head to head with an imperfect divine job doer and the perfect being will count as God since the perfect being will be the more "ultimate reality" of the two. So, to use my language, Morris concludes that being a divine job doer is not a sufficient condition for being God after all, since there is no world in which doing the jobs is sufficient for being God, and in fact that there is a world *W* in which doing them is *not* sufficient for being God. Thus, Morris would press that for all I have said, being perfect still seems necessary for being God.

But two replies back, the first of which is short and satisfies me, the second of which is long and I hope satisfies a perfect being theologian. First, as Morris knows, it is only if "Anselmianism is coherent"—if a perfect being is possible and thus necessary—that the Adequate World *A* without a perfect being is impossible. But I and many others are not convinced that a perfect being *is* possible, or that if it is, that it must be necessary.[24] If we are right, then

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24   Here I echo Wierenga who, in the process of responding to this very passage from Morris, quotes Wainwright that Morris' argument "won't seem compelling to a person who doubts that the concept of a maximally perfect being is coherent, or wonders whether it includes necessary existence. Theists as well as nontheists often wonder both" (Edward Wierenga, "Augustinian

for all Morris has said, *A* is possible, my thought experiment stands, and filling the divine role is sufficient for being God.

Second, if Anselmianism *is* coherent, then *A* would be impossible, *W* would be possible, and Morris would be right that the Anselmian being would be God in *W*. But, crucially and as I will argue, it would turn out that the Anselmian being is the ultimate divine job doer in *W*, too. That fact makes *W not* a counterexample to functional theology but instead idle against it; indeed, it may even confirm functional theology, if my closing comments are correct. Let me explain.

It will help me to start by explaining how I came to discover that the Anselmian being would be the ultimate divine job doer in *W*. For years, I was convinced that *W* as Morris describes it would be impossible even if there were a necessary perfect being and that thus it could pose no threat to functional theology. It seemed that if the Anselmian being were in a world filled with sentient creatures as in *W*, then its perfect goodness would send it to be involved with these creatures directly in the way the jobs describe: out of perfect love it would be the one to have created them, actively watch over them, help them flourish, etc. Why pass off this work to El? Would it even be responsible to do so, given that El is imperfect? However, prompted by Dean Zimmerman, I began to wonder whether there might be coherent situations in which an imperfect being is doing the divine jobs while a perfect being is standing by that could make *W* possible. I arrived at two.

The first reading is inspired by Plotinus: the Anselmian being could *emanate* El in the way Plotinus' the One emanates the demiurge.[25] To use the common neo-Platonic metaphors for emanation, in the same way that a fountain naturally (out of its nature) sprays its droplets or the sun beams its rays, so also the Anselmian being could be an impersonal, active first principle removed from the universe that naturally outpours El, a procession at a lower level of reality involved with the universe by creating it and doing the rest of the jobs in it. Just as the droplets and rays are how the fountain's and sun's natures appear further from them, so also El and its divine-job-doing might be how the Anselmian being's nature appears further from the source,

25   Morris glosses El as 'a demiurge', so he may read *W* neo-Platonically himself.

slowed down. Interestingly, this reading of *W* is not only a possible but in fact a common way to envision how the divine relates to the universe in neo-Platonic thought.[26]

On a second reading of *W,* the Anselmian being freely *creates* El out of nothing, and El in turn freely creates its own universe and tends the creatures in it as the divine jobs describe. In this case leaving the jobs to El would be a matter of the Anselmian being's voluntary choice, not an ineluctable overflow of its nature. So it is essential to stipulate additionally that in *W,* as in the problem of evil discourse, the Anselmian being has a justifying reason for that choice, since as intimated above it is an act of apparent negligence for a perfect being to rest the creation and care of especially sentient creatures in imperfect hands. Theodicies defending this choice could abound. To give one example, perhaps the Anselmian being stands back from the universe in order to give El the freedom necessary to develop and enjoy love, the greatest good, not unlike the way some theodicists think the creator of our universe does for us. We could also envision a multiverse version of this "creation" reading of W, in which the Anselmian being creates not just one but multiple Els each of whom in turn create and tend their own universe(s) in a way which produces some greater good overall than the perfect being creating and tending these universes itself.[27]

Both the emanation and creation scenarios are possible, and both realize the picture Morris stipulates for *W*: the Anselmian being is perfect and *not* doing the divine jobs as we read them in the texts for our universe, El is imperfect and *is* doing these jobs, and El or the Els serve "at the good pleasure of" or at least with the permission of the Anselmian being. Thus, these readings constitute two ways in which *W* is possible, two ways in which *W* might

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26 See John P. Kenney, "The Platonic Monotheism of Plotinus", in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (Springer, 2013), 778–79. His explication of Middle Platonic theology before Plotinus sounds particularly like the relationship between the Anselmian being and El in W: "The theologies of Numenius and Alcinous both … presented the divine mind as distant and removed from materiality and the physical world. Emphasis was then placed upon a secondary mind or demiurge understood as the fashioner of the cosmos. This demotion of the demiurge to a secondary status suggests a deliberate effort to clarify the character of the first god [which Morris would call 'God'] such that it is wholly removed from any contact with materiality. The details of this model varied among the Middle Platonists, but it was common for active agency to be located in a secondary or even tertiary power" (778).

27 Thanks to a commentator for encouraging me to think about a multiple Els scenario.

be. In fact, for reasons I relegate to a footnote, Morris' stipulations about *W* entail that these ways, or something very like them, are how *W* must be.[28]

Now it turns out that the *Anselmian being* is the ultimate divine job doer in *W*, even though it seems for all the world that El would be, given Morris' stipulations. Saying this requires making a judgment call of the kind I warned we would sometimes face: when a candidate is only partly filling the divine role or filling it in some non-standard way, we have to determine if it fills the role *enough* to count as God. Here the Anselmian being is filling central parts of the cosmological, moral and transcendental tasks in the most fundamental way in *W*, but not much if any of the personal or providential tasks. Take the cosmological task. The Anselmian being in *W* is metaphysically prior to El or the Els and their activity: it is producing (by emanation or creation) the El(s) and the conditions for universe-making which in turn produce the universes. So while it is true that El or the Els explain the existence of the *universe*, a term I will use hereafter to mean our physical universe and any other physical universes El or the Els might make, the Anselmian being explains the existence of *all there is*, meaning the full ontology of what is real, which in *W*

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28   Morris' description of *W* entails that these are the two main ways *W* could be. To see that, notice the description leaves a key question hanging: how do the Anselmian being and El come to be in *W*? There are three options: either (1) the Anselmian being and El each explains its own existence, or (2) El explains the Anselmian being's existence, or (3) the Anselmian being explains El's existence. Option (1) is inconsistent with Morris' stipulations about omnipotence. Even if an imperfect being such as El can be necessary (and that is a big "even if"), and even if it were possible for there to be two beings to be simultaneously necessary, if one of the necessary beings were omnipotent and the other not, then the non-omnipotent being is *not* explaining its own existence after all, since at least part of the explanation for its existence lies in the omnipotent being's allowing it to exist, as Morris implies. So option (1) cannot describe how the Anselmian being and El come to be in *W*. Option (2) — that El explains the Anselmian being — is also inconsistent with Morris' stipulations, specifically those that say the Anselmian being is necessary and that it has "all the rest" of the perfections, which I assume includes aseity. Even if El were also necessary (again, a big "even if"), and even if El necessarily emanated the Anselmian being to make the Anselmian being necessary too (as in Spinoza's *natura naturata*), still El could not emanate the Anselmian being without compromising its aseity, since the Anselmian being would rely on El for its existence and an *a se* being exists only from itself. So option (2) cannot describe how the beings come to be in *W* either. So *W*'s metaphysical backstory must be option (3): the Anselmian being must explain El's existence. Since Morris also takes El to be creating the universe, his description thus entails a chain in W: the Anselmian being explains El who in turn creates the universe. There are two main ways the Anselmian being might explain El: by emanation or by creation. Hence the two scenarios.

will include not only the universe(s) but also El or the Els, the conditions for creation and the Anselmian being itself. Moreover, the way the Anselmian being explains all there is in *W* survives the counterfactual test: if there were no Anselmian being, there would be no El(s), no conditions for creation, and no universe(s). The Anselmian being is thus the ultimate, meaning the most fundamental, source of reality in *W* and the ultimate, or most fundamental, doer of the key part of the cosmological task, the job of explaining what there is. Similarly, the Anselmian being is doing a key part of the moral task. As a morally perfect ultimate source of all reality, it is the ultimate exemplification of (or perhaps even the source of) value in *W* — either efficiently and materially in the emanation case or efficiently in the creation case by creating El or the Els who bring about the flourishing of the universe(s), perhaps as medium for their own flourishing.[29] Finally, though I will not detail this here, at least the normative part of the transcendental task follows from the cosmological and moral tasks: a source of all reality and perfect goodness within a world would be properly worthy of worship there. That makes the Anselmian being the most fundamental doer of the most important parts of the cosmological, moral and transcendental tasks — what I have always taken to be the most central tasks in the job description. It is true that the Anselmian being is *not* doing the providential and personal tasks, or is doing them unevenly. If the Anselmian being is emanating El, it will be overflowing but not tending or relating to El or the universe. If it is creating, the Anselmian being may be doing the providential and personal tasks — not in the universe(s) since by hypothesis only El or the Els do that, but possibly for the Els themselves (see footnote 26).

If the Anselmian being were solo in *W*, without El or a competitor being God, in my judgment the jobs it *is* doing there would suffice to count it as God there, despite the divine jobs it is *not* doing. As my own research found and as David Burrell's research implies, explaining the existence of the universe is either a, or maybe even *the*, most central job of all the jobs in the

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29 The "source" claim would hold on a voluntaristic conception of God's relationship to morality, and the exemplification one on a non-voluntaristic one. Regarding helping the Els flourish: the fact that the Anselmian being has a justifying reason for allowing the Els to do the divine jobs may imply it is watching over them, since such reasons often involve the well-being of those involved.

divine role.[30] The fact that the Anselmian being is doing not only that crucial job but also is exemplifying moral value and is worthy of worship — well, if no one else were making a claim to be God, it seems obvious we would take it to be the divine job doer and thus God. In my view, this claim will hold even once we add El back as a contender for the title in *W*. Though by Morris' hypothesis El is completely filling the divine role in *W*, it is doing so only for *our universe*, while the Anselmian being is filling it at the more fundamental level of *all there is*. Moreover, the Anselmian being's divine job doing at the base level makes possible (in the counterfactual sense) El's divine job doing at the universe level as well. Thus, my judgment call: the Anselmian being is the ultimate divine job doer in *W*.

Assuming the Anselmian being is the ultimate divine job doer in *W*, we can draw the final conclusion of this, my long second reply to Morris: even if *W* is possible, Morris cannot point to *W* as a world in which a divine job doer fails to be God, since the divine job doer in *W is* God. So even if there is a necessary perfect being and *W* is possible, Morris' thought experiment does not show that functional theology is wrong. Moreover, as argued in my first reply, if there is no necessary perfect being and *A* is possible, for all Morris has said, my thought experiment shows that functional theology is right.

To close with a broader perspective: although I have argued here that filling the divine role is a sufficient condition for being God, I want to underscore that I take being perfect to be a sufficient condition for being God, too, in light of the tradition's emphasis on the perfections visible in this paper and beyond (more can be said here, but this suffices for now). That is, just as in *A* where nothing is perfect but a being is doing the divine jobs we count this being as God *in virtue of its doing the divine jobs*, so also in the converse world, call it '*W2*' where nothing is doing the divine jobs but a being is perfect we would count this being as God *in virtue of its being perfect*. The fact that

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30 Kenney on Burrell: "Burrell has discussed various ways by which Western monotheists, including Plotinus, have articulated their understanding of God's transcendence, emphasizing what he calls 'the distinction' [David B. Burrell, "Thomas Aquinas and Islam", *Modern Theology* 20, no. 1 (2004)]. The core credendum of all monotheism is that the first principle is distinct from the world which it is invoked to explain. As such, it must be seen as the One from which all things come forth, but it cannot be part of that universe" (Kenney, "The Platonic Monotheism", 779). There is a conjunction of ideas here: the core understanding of God is that it brings forth all things, and it is distinct from them. I lean on the first conjunct here.

both these conditions are sufficient should come as no surprise given their long lineage in the Judeo-Christian tradition: they are conceptual traces of the ancient Jewish and Greek views about God, respectively — views which met in the Middle East during a period of Hellenization there under Alexander the Great.[31] The fusion of these two ways of understanding God had shadowy beginnings in the Jewish wisdom literature, was unmistakable by the time of Philo,[32] and settled in as orthodoxy by the time of Augustine.[33] Western monotheism has been thinking of God by mixing both views ever since. Though there are conceptual tensions between the two views that have resulted in infighting about whether God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the divine job doer in my idiom) or the God of the philosophers (the perfect being), orthodox thinkers such as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and Maimonides have always taken God to be *both*, as Wierenga, Stump and others have forcefully argued.[34] It is traditional that God is not *just* perfect or *just* a divine job doer but rather that God is a *perfect divine job doer*.

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31   By this time, the Jews had moved from henotheism to monotheism and were taking the God who had brought them out of Egypt to be not just their God but the God of the universe, all the while identifying God by God's deeds, as explained at the start. The Jewish thinkers recoiled at the Greek polytheistic gods of the masses but noticed a harmony between their own view of God and talk of a similar ultimate creative force with universal scope under various names in the pre-Socratics, Plato and Aristotle. The Greek philosophers described such a being using the perfections — e.g., Parmenides' One Being was "unborn and imperishable, whole, unique, immovable and without end" (W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965-81), see especially 26 and 31, verses 3-5 and 22-5 of fr. 8) and Aristotle's Unmoved Mover was "eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things" (*Metaphysics* 1073a2-11) — so separate in fact that not only were the divine jobs not a focus in his thought, some of them were even impossible in it. The views were thus similar enough to combine (both were about one God), but different enough that their combination has created at least apparent conceptual tension for millennia (e.g., can an immutable being change enough to answer prayer?).

32   Philo (30 BCE-45 CE) was a perfect Greek and devout Jew who took God to be "personal, as the Jewish theology teaches, but…at the same time Pure Being, absolutely simple, free…self-sufficient … [and] absolutely transcendent" (Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Vol. I. Greece and Rome* (Doubleday, 1985), 458).

33   "If we wish to avoid blasphemy, we must either understand or hold it on faith that God is the supreme good, the being than which nothing better can be or be conceived" (Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* (Regnery Publishing Company, 1996) 1, 82).

34   This is Augustine's view according to Wierenga: "Augustine certainly thought that the perfect being he described was the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Wierenga, "Augustinian Perfect Being Theology", 145, see also 141). This is Aquinas' view according to Eleonore Stump, *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (Marquette Univ. Press, 2016), e.g. in her last

Functional theology has a nice way of framing how God could be a perfect divine job doer: a being could be doing the divine jobs and count as God *de dicto by* being perfect *de re*. That is, in the same way that Maimonides took fire to be *de dicto* anything that blackens, burns, etc. and then decided that in fact fire does all that *de re* by being "one active principle, heat," so also on functional theology we can take God to be *de dicto* anything that fills enough of the divine role, and then decide that in fact God does all that *de re* by being perfect. Indeed, though I am not at all sure this is their definitive view (or mine), there are moments where Wierenga and Stump imply that the whole reason traditional thinkers take God to be perfect is because God's perfection *follows* from God's doing the divine jobs — both historically and philosophically.[35] In such moments, functional theology looks conceptually prior to perfect being theology, and filling the divine role seems necessary *and* sufficient *de dicto* for being God. But here I have argued only that filling the divine

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sentence of the book: "And so, for that exemplary and influential proponent of classical theism Thomas Aquinas, the God of the philosophers and the God of the Bible are the same God…" (109). For Anselm, see Wierenga, "Augustinian Perfect Being Theology", 149, footnote 6 and for Maimonides see how his simultaneous use above of e.g. the Biblical passage of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and his use of perfect being theology for God assume that God is both the God of the Bible and the God of the philosophers.

35   Wierenga says that the "properties endorsed by the philosophers emerge out of philosophical reflection on and development of Biblical and religious concerns" and then quotes Kenney saying that the concepts of omniscience and omnipotence are "the result of reflection by philosophers and philosophically minded theologians upon elements in the religious tradition of western theism" and footnotes Anselm's claim that 'we ought to receive with certainty not only whatever we read in Holy Scripture but also whatever follows from it with rational necessity…'" (146). For Stump see *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (Marquette Univ. Press, 2016). Though most of the book is an attempt to show that classical theism (God's being perfect in my idiom) and biblical theism (God's doing the divine jobs, in my idiom) are consistent, at the end of the book, in a section on implications, she argues that "classical theism provides a powerful intellectual basis for the portrayal of God in the Bible" (97) — aka in my idiom, that being perfect provides a basis for God's doing the divine jobs. She proceeds to argue in fascinating ways e.g., that being eternal would help God do the providential task (98, including with answering prayers about the past 99) and the personal task by allowing it to experience suffering and death and thus co-feel with its creatures in the personal task (99-101). Moreover, God's being simple could help it do the moral task (101-2) and the cosmological task, by explaining why God would have to be necessary as required for it to explain the existence of everything else (102-3). If it works, the argument licenses the claim that a perfect being *could* do the divine jobs (a claim I hold, too). I wonder, though, if Stump would hold something stronger — that a perfect being *must* be doing the divine jobs (a claim I rejected in Part Ic above).

role is at least sufficient *de dicto* for being God. Thus, being perfect is not necessary *de dicto* for being God, and *a fortiori* not necessary and sufficient *de dicto* for being God, as Anselm and Descartes and others have supposed. Moreover, combining the idea that doing the divine jobs is sufficient for being God with the conclusion from Part Ic that it does not take the perfections *de re* to do them, we find that being perfect is not necessary *de re* for being God either. So being perfect is not necessary either *de dicto* or *de re* for being God.[36] These findings are a boon for theists. If ever we discover there is no perfect being, there could still be a God, provided something is doing enough of the divine jobs.[37]

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36 In saying this I do not mean to exclude the possibility that a being who is necessarily perfect *de re* might be doing the divine jobs and thus be God. My point is just that it is not necessary de dicto that such a being is God.

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PANENTHEISM, TRANSHUMANISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: FROM METAPHYSICS TO ETHICS

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Abstract. There is a close systematic relationship between panentheism, as a metaphysical theory about the relation between God and the world, and transhumanism, the ethical demand to use the means of the applied sciences to enhance both human nature and the environment. This relationship between panentheism and transhumanism provides a 'cosmic' solution to the problem of evil: on panentheistic premises, the history of the world is the one infinite life of God, and we are part of the one infinite divine being. We ourselves are therefore responsible for the future development of the life of the divine being. We should therefore use the means provided by the natural sciences to develop the history of the world in such a way that the existence of evil shall be overcome and shall no longer be part of the divine being in whom we move and live and have our being. The metaphysics of panentheism leads to the ethics of transhumanism.

There is a close systematic relationship between panentheism, as a metaphysical theory about the relation between God and the world, and transhumanism, the ethical demand to use the means of the applied sciences to enhance both human nature and the environment. This relationship between panentheism and transhumanism provides a 'cosmic' solution to the problem of evil: on panentheistic premises, the history of the world is the one infinite life of God, and we are part of the one infinite divine being. We ourselves are therefore responsible for the future development of the life of the divine being. We should therefore use the means provided by the natural sciences to develop the history of the world in such a way that the existence of evil shall be overcome and shall no longer be part of the divine being in whom we move and live and have our being. The metaphysics of panentheism leads to the ethics of transhumanism.

I. ALL-ENCOMPASSING METAPHYSICAL THEORIES

The world is constituted both by entities that are possible objects of inner and outer experience and by entities entailed by these. The goal of metaphysics is to develop and justify a theory of the essence and existence of the world and the place of rational agents in it that, in terms of ultimate and universal principles, categories, and entities, explains why the world exists, is as it is, and is experienced as it is.[1]

Traditionally, we engage in metaphysics to further understanding and to enable a rationally examined life directed towards the good. To achieve this, any metaphysics develops an ontology specifying what kind of entities there are and how they are causally and logically related, an epistemology indicating what, in principle, may be known about the existence and essence of the world by rational agents possessing our transcendental constitution, and a particular axiology that accounts for the meaning and purpose of existence, including the existence of rational agents. Based on its ontological, epistemological, and axiological principles and other commitments, a metaphysics is a theory of everything as a *system of philosophy*.

I.1 Systems of Philosophy as Explanatory

A system of philosophy putatively possesses maximal explanatory power: everything relevant to understanding the existence and essence of the world and our place in it is, in principle, accounted for by the system. The explanatory power of a metaphysics may *prima facie* be divided into three dimensions:

> The *atemporal-systematic* dimension of a metaphysics is an approach to the existence and essence of the world as if the world were atemporal and without value. It analyses what can be said about the constitution of the world if the flow of time and ethical and aesthetic values are bracketed.

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1   Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics* (Westview Press, 2002), 1 is right in arguing that 'metaphysics is the study of ultimate reality'. As David Chalmers, "Introduction: A Guided Tour of Metametaphysics", in *Metametaphysics*: *New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, ed. David Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (OUP, 2009), 1 states, 'metaphysics is concerned with the foundations of reality'. According to Michal Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 2002), 10–11, 'traditional metaphysicians […] insist that we manage to think and talk about things — things as they really are and not just things as they figure in the stories we tell'.

The *historic-systematic* dimension is an approach to the world as a historical phenomenon, but as though it had no ethical and aesthetic value. It is concerned with what, if anything, can be known about the course of the world from its beginning to its possible end.

The *axiological* dimension is an approach to the world as something of value. It deals with the historical existence and essence of the world as subject to ethical and aesthetic values and therefore as something with meaning and purpose.[2]

The atemporal-systematic, the historic-systematic, and the axiological explanatory dimensions of a metaphysics must, first, be mutually supportive parts of a system of philosophy and, second, be consistent with scientific knowledge.

First, from what is known about the atemporal-systematic constitution of the world, consequences regarding what is claimed to be known about the historical course of the world and its meaning and purpose follow, and *vice versa*. The reason for the mutual support between these dimensions consists in the fact that the assumption *that the existence and essence of the world is a unified phenomenon* is itself a necessary condition for the possibility of any system of philosophy that has to be mirrored in the explanatory unity of the system in question.

Second, as an all-encompassing metaphysical theory, any suggested system of philosophy has to account for the very possibility of scientific knowledge and has to integrate this knowledge in such a way that it coheres with the ontological, epistemological, and axiological principles of the system itself and therefore contributes to the overall plausibility of the system in question.[3]

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2   Because the whole history of the world could only be accessed *sub specie aeternitatis*, and therefore is not available as an object of investigation for temporal beings like us, a system of philosophy can only provide an interpretation of the whole of the history of the world based on what is known of its constitution, its value, and its past, present, and future state.

3   Although science always entails metaphysical assumptions, scientific theories are consistent with more than one metaphysics. Any candidate system of philosophy therefore has to show that it provides a coherent integration of scientific knowledge. Cf. Willem B. Drees, "Panentheism and Natural Science: A Good Match?", *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1077 'Science provides constraints, but cannot determine our choice for a particular worldview or metaphysics. A preferred interpretation of a particular worldview of religious vision will have to be argued

I.2 Metaphysical Theories and Worldviews

A metaphysics is the core of a particular worldview. A worldview is a set of assumptions, a unifying picture or narrative that shapes the way in which we understand what is taking place in our lives and in the world as a whole.[4] A worldview provides an account of the basic nature of the world, of its origin, future and purpose, and therefore is always built around a particular philosophy, whether or not this philosophy remains implicit, or is explicitly reflected upon.[5]

Evaluating a metaphysics requires showing whether it is an adequate account of the world and its history as a whole, able to integrate what we know through the sciences in a way that enables a successful practical and theoretical orientation for human beings, and therefore a plausible worldview to live by.

An all-encompassing theory of the world, its history, and our place in it is true if and only if it corresponds to the way the world really is, albeit human beings are unable to directly confirm whether a theory corresponds to the way the world really is. Therefore, the best we can do is establish a metaphysics that corresponds to the criteria of truth that have proven historically and systematically reliable for a successful theoretical and practical orientation in the world.[6] These normative criteria for evaluating a philosophy provide a matrix to judge the adequacy of any suggested metaphysics, both on its own and in relation to alternative systems of philosophy.

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with philosophical arguments and moral and existential preferences, though intelligibility and consistency with science are relevant too'.

4   Cf. Benedikt P. Göcke, "The Existence of Evil in Christian and Naturalistic Worldviews", *Synthesis philosophica* 32, no. 1 (2017) for a further analysis of the concept of a worldview and its importance for philosophy.

5   Leo Apostel and Jan van der Veken, *Wereldbeelden: Van Fragmentering naar Integratie* (DNB/Pelckmans, 1991), 29–30 specify essential questions in the analysis of worldviews as central elements of any all-encompassing metaphysical theory: '(a) What is? Ontology (model of being), (b) Where does it all come from? Explanation (model of the past); (c) Where are we going? Prediction (model of the future); (d) What is good and evil? Axiology (theory of values), (e) How should we act? Praxeology (theory of action)' (trans. in Diederick Aerts et al., *World Views: From fragmentation to integration* (VUB Press, 1994), 25, quoted from Clément Vidal, "Metaphilosophical Criteria for Worldview Comparison" 43, no. 3 (2012): 309.)

6   For a further analysis of the justification of different normative criteria and their historical development, cf. Benedikt P. Göcke, "Theologie als Wissenschaft: Allgemeine wissenschaftstheoretische Grundlagen der Diskussion der Wissenschaftlichkeit christlicher Theologie", in *Die Wissenschaftlichkeit der Theologie: Band 1: Systematische und historische Perspektiven*, ed. Benedikt P. Göcke (Aschendorff Verlag, 2018).

Popular criteria are consistency, coherence, inclusiveness, and warrant. A system of philosophy is *consistent* if and only if it does not entail any contradiction. Two assumptions are *coherent* if and only if there is mutual logical or semantic support between them, that is, entailment or sharing of key terms. The condition of coherence entails that the assumptions constitutive of a philosophy form an organic whole in which, ideally, every assumption is interwoven with every other assumption on a logical and semantic level.

In addition to being consistent and coherent sets of assumptions, a system of philosophy should be *inclusive*. Inclusiveness is a system's ability to explain new phenomena in its own terms. If some event occurs that previously was unheard of, then the system should be able to account for the phenomenon in its own terms. If the system is not able to account for the new phenomenon in question, then it has to be extended in a way that respects the conditions of consistency and coherence. If successful, the system adapts to the new situation. If, however, the system of philosophy in consideration is not able to account for the new phenomenon on the terms specified, then it will collapse in the light of the new phenomenon.[7]

Finally, *warrant* is justification. An assumption is justified either if (a) it is empirically verified, or (b) it is not empirically falsified, or (c) it is rationally justified, or (d) it is self-evident, or (e) it is revealed, or (f) it is properly basic.

II. PANENTHEISM AS A METAPHYSICAL THEORY

Panentheism is a metaphysical theory that, based on particular ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, constitutes a system of philosophy explaining the meaning and purpose of the existence and essence of the world, its history, and our place in it.[8] However, there is no single system of

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7   For a further analysis of this point cf. W. V. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiric", *The Philosophical Review* 60, no. 1 (1951) and Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996).

8   'Panentheism' was introduced by the German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause in 1828 but not 'to delineate Spinoza's alleged pantheism from the panentheist framework of the triad of German Idealism: Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling' (Harald Atmanspacher and Hartmut von Sass, "The Many Faces of Panentheism: An Editorial Introduction", *Zygo* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1032). Krause introduced the term as the name adequate to his own system of philosophy. Ff. Benedikt P. Göcke, "On the Importance of Karl Christian Friedrich Krause's Panentheism", *Zygon*

panentheism to which the term unambiguously refers.[9] 'Panentheism' refers to a family of metaphysical theories, constituting a research tradition based on these ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions:

(1) Human beings are able to rationally access, at least partly, the world and its ultimate ground. Human beings are able to deploy metaphysical theories to provide a theoretical and practical orientation in the world. These have a justified claim to truth, and make possible a good and valuable life.

(2) The existence and essence of the world is neither self-evident nor self-explanatory. An adequate metaphysics therefore has to entail a single ultimate ground that accounts for the existence and essence of the world, its history, and our place in it.

(3) By recourse to the existence and essence of the ultimate ground and its relation to the world, the existence and essence of the world and its history is ultimately explained.

(4) The existence and essence of the world, although not identical to the existence and essence of the ultimate ground, is not an external counterpart to the ultimate ground. The existence and essence of the world is part of and interwoven with the existence and essence of the ultimate ground and therefore is 'in' the existence and essence of the ultimate ground.[10]

48, no. 2 (2013) and Benedikt P. Göcke, *The Panentheism of Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832): From Transcendental Philosophy to Metaphysics* (Peter Lang, 2018).

9   For more on the difficulties in demarcating panentheism from other systems of philosophy, cf. Benedikt P. Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism", *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013) and Benedikt P. Göcke, "There is no Panentheistic Paradigm", *The Heythrop Journal* 32, no. 1 (2015).

10   Cf. Atmanspacher and Sass, "The Many Faces of Panentheism", 1031: 'Here is a list of possible and actually defended versions [of different interpretations of the world's being 'in' God]: *spatial* or *local*: panentheism entails a localization of literally everything, insofar as everything is in God and God serves as something like a container. *Mereological*: the duality of parts and wholes helps to clarify God's relation to His creation; everything is part of Him, and all parts together either constitute God […] or God transcends the creational entirety that is itself part of the divine whole. […] *metaphysical*: the 'en' in panentheism might also mean that God is the essence or the nucleus of everything. This can lead to vitalist versions: God as the movens of and in everything. It can also amount to a causal version: God as the cause of everything. And it may signify a transcendental version: God as the condition of the possibility of everything'.

(5) Because the existence and essence of the world is part of and interwoven with the ultimate ground, the ultimate ground itself permeates the existence and essence of the world and therefore is present 'in' the world.

(6) The ultimate ground of the existence and essence of the world is adequately referred to as 'God' or 'the Absolute' or 'the divine Being'.

(7) The purpose and meaning of the existence of the world and of rational agents is to enjoy the beauty and goodness of the world and to realize it where- and whenever possible.

Although different systems of philosophy are consistent with some, but not necessarily all, of these principles and assumptions, any system of philosophy that does agree at least on these axioms, from a systematic point of view, belongs to the research tradition of panentheism, irrespective of whether the system is called "panentheism". Anyone who agrees that the world is 'in' God, while God is 'in' the world, though not identical to the world, whoever agrees that we should enjoy and realize beauty and goodness, and whoever agrees that we can use this thought to develop metaphysical theories conducive to worldviews to live by, is working within the panentheistic research tradition.[11]

II.1 The Attractiveness of Panentheism

Panentheism is a scientifically, philosophically and theologically more adequate all-encompassing metaphysics than any alternative because it better corresponds to the normative criteria for evaluating the plausibility of any philosophy.[12]

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11   Cf., for instance, Atmanspacher and Sass, "The Many Faces of Panentheism", 1030: 'Panentheism oscillates between the idea that God is nature itself (pantheism) and the idea that God is ontologically different from nature (theism), that is, between an identification of God with His creation and an 'ontological difference' where God is a real counterpart to His creation.' Cf. also Roderick Main, "Panentheism and the Undoing of Disenchantment", *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1105: 'Unlike atheism and agnosticism, panentheism affirms the existence of the divine. Unlike theism and deism, panentheism considers the divine not to be separated from the world and even to be affected by the world (immanent and possible as well as transcendent). And unlike pantheism, panentheism considers the divine to be more than the world (transcendent as well as immanent).' For different classifications of panentheistic theories, cf. Philip Clayton, "How Radically Can God Be Reconceived before Ceasing to Be God? The Four Faces of Panentheism", *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017).

12   As Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God. World, Divine Action* (Fortress Press, 2008), 121 argues: 'Perhaps the best case for panentheism, then, would be a cumulative one.

First, based on the concepts of substance and the infinity of the divine being, the existence and essence of the world cannot be a direct counterpart to the divine being, but is part of the divine being itself.[13] Second, panentheistic theories avoid major problems of other metaphysics: for instance, panentheism avoids the difficulty of explaining what it means for the world to be created *ex nihilo* because panentheism is not committed to the assumption that the world is created *ex nihilo*.[14] Panentheism is not committed to this assumption precisely because on panentheism the existence of the world is part of the eternal divine being, which is to say that on panentheism the world is not created at all.[15] Third, recent developments in the sciences, philosophy, and

It goes something like this: because there are so many difficulties and dissatisfactions with [alternative systems of philosophy] today, and because panentheism offers a more attractive response to various (theological, philosophical, ethical, socio-political) difficulties, it provides the more compelling overall model of the God-world-relation'.

13   For instance, based on the assumption that a substance is 'that which is in itself and is conceived through itself' (Baruch Spinoza, *Complete Works, with Translations by Samuel Shirley* (Hackett publishing Company, 2002), 217 [Def. 3]) Spinoza argued that 'there can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God' (Spinoza, *Complete Works, with Translations by Samuel Shirley*, 224 [Proposition 14]). This led Spinoza to the panentheistic conclusion that 'whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God' (Spinoza, *Complete Works, with Translations by Samuel Shirley*, 224 [Proposition 15]). As a consequence, given a particular interpretation of the principle of sufficient reason, the universe had to 'unfold' or proceed necessarily from the nature of God, and so eventually become part of God; that is, God could not be 'God' without producing the universe. As Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for our Time* (Open Court, 1967), 64 argues: 'God requires a world, but not the world.' For a further justification of panentheism, cf. Benedikt P. Göcke, Yujin Nagasawa, and Erik Wielenberg, *A Theory of the Absolute* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), Benedikt P. Göcke, "The Paraconsistent God'", in *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God: Classical Theism, Personal Theism, and Alternative Concepts of God*, ed. Christian Tapp, Veronika Wegener and Thomas Schärtl (Aschendorff Verlag, 2016), Benedikt P. Göcke, "Concepts of God and Models of the God-world relation", *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 2 (2017), and Benedikt P. Göcke and Christian Tapp, *The Infinity of God: New Perspectives in Theology and Philosophy* (Notre Dame Press, 2019).

14   Fichte famously argued that the concept of creation *ex nihilo* is the 'absolute basic error of each and every metaphysics and theology' (Johann G. Fichte, "Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben, oder auch die Religionslehre". In *Fichtes Werke: Bd. 5. Zur Religionsphilosophie*, ed. Immanuel H. Fichte (Berlin1971), 479) since 'we cannot conceive creation properly — that which is called "conceiving" adequately — and thus no human has ever conceived it properly.' (Fichte, "Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben, oder auch die Religionslehre" in *Fichtes Werke*, 479, translation BPG).

15   Philip Clayton, "Open Panentheism and Creatio ex Nihilo", *Process Studies* 37, no. 1 (2008) argues that panentheism is consistent with *creatio ex nihilo*. Whether panentheism is consistent with creation out of nothing depends on the precise understanding of this difficult

theology show the need for panentheistic theories of the relation between God and the world. Alternative theories, committed to a radically transcendent God, to whom the world is an unaffecting counterpart, are not able to integrate scientific and philosophical discoveries about the evolving history of a world in which everything is connected as good as panentheism.[16] The reason is that in contrast to alternative theories, panentheism entails that across different levels of ontological constitution everything in the world is essentially, metaphysically and epistemologically, connected not only with everything else in the world, but ultimately also with God: the divine being is an organic whole that of necessity is connected to its parts. On panentheism, it is only to be expected that philosophical and scientific discoveries mirror this unity of reality that grounds in the unity of the divine being.

II.2 The Monistic Implications of Panentheism

Although much speaks in favor of panentheism, and it has gained in popularity amongst philosophers, scientists, and theologians, its radical metaphysical implications remain largely implicit.[17] The panentheistic research tradition entails a monistic metaphysics on which there is one and only one all-including

concept and the overall metaphysical framework deployed. The only conception of creation *ex nihilo* that is consistent with panentheism, however, seems to be a conception on which creation out of nothing is conceptualized as a free self-transformation of the divine being itself, and not as the creation of a world ontologically separated from the divine being.

16   Cf. Arthur Peacocke and Philip Clayton, "Introduction: In Whom we Live and Move and Have our Being", in *In Whom We live and Move and Have our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (William B. Eerdmans, 2004), XIX: 'The factors which have together provoked the current revival of the term 'panentheism' are in fact extremely significant for our understanding of God's relation to the world, including humanity. Broadly they all point to the need to accentuate, in light of contemporary knowledge of the world and humanity, a much stronger sense than in the past of the immanence of God as in some sense 'in' the world — without, for most authors, demeaning from or qualifying God's ultimate transcendence, God's ontological ultimate "otherness"'.

17   Many philosophers, scientists, and theologians, in a first step, pledge allegiance to the panentheistic research tradition and affirm that the world is in God while God is more than the world. However, in a second step, they continue to speak of distinctions between God and the world, and partly even of relations of mutual causal influence between God and the world, as if, after all, God and the world were two entities that could be distinguished or could mutually influence each other. This is why, very often, there is a close proximity between what is called 'open-view theism' and panentheism. On open-view theism there is indeed causal interaction between God and the world because on open-view theism God and the world are thought of as two distinct entities between which causal interaction is possible.

and ultimate metaphysical substance — God. The existence and essence of the world, its history, and our place in it, are grounded in God. Panentheism therefore entails the need to radically change the way we understand and conceptualize the existence and essence of the world, its history, and our place in it.[18]

II.2.1 God-as-such and God-in-Himself

Since, ultimately, only God exists and since the world is not a counterpart to God, we have to introduce an epistemological distinction to differentiate between God as the one ultimate and infinite substance to which there is no external counterpart on the one hand, and God as the ultimate ground of the existence and essence of the world, but who is distinct from the world, on the other: after all, God and the world are not, according to panentheism, identical.

A useful distinction to achieve this is between God-as-such and God-in-Himself.[19] 'God-as-such' refers to the ultimate ground as both the one, ultimate, infinite, divine Being to which there is no external counterpart and which is considered without reference to the existence and essence of the world that in fact is part of the divine Being. In talk about God-as-such, any distinction between God and the world is bracketed, which is to say God is considered as a whole without recourse to its (metaphysical) parts.

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18   Two important discussions surrounding the evaluation of the panentheistic research tradition are on metaphysical grounding and monism, e.g. priority monism and existence monism. Panentheism entails both the doctrine of priority monism and the doctrine of existence monism, and entails that all that is not God is metaphysically grounded in God and, in this sense, is a metaphysical part of God. Cf. Jonathan Schaffer, "Monism", https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/monism/: 'Existence monism targets concrete objects and counts by tokens. This is the doctrine that exactly one concrete object token exists. Priority monism also targets concrete objects but counts by basic tokens. This is the doctrine that exactly one concrete object token is basic, and equivalent to the classical doctrine that the whole is prior to its (proper) parts.' Cf. Kit Fine, "Guide to Ground", in *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, ed. Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (CUP, 2012), 37: 'A number of philosophers have recently become receptive to the idea that, in addition to scientific or causal explanation, there may be a distinctive kind of metaphysical explanation, in which explanans and explanandum are connected, not through some sort of causal mechanism, but through some constitutive form of determination. I myself have long been sympathetic to this idea of constitutive determination or "ontological ground"'.
19   This distinction was introduced by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause. He used it to distinguish between the Absolute as such and the Absolute as constitutive of the existence of the world, cf. Göcke, *The Panentheism of Krause*.

In contrast, 'God-in-Himself' refers to God as the ultimate ground of the essence and existence of the world, distinct from but related to the world. The relation between God-in-Himself, as the ultimate ground of the existence and essence of the world, and the world, as that which is ultimately grounded in God, cannot be a causal relation, as this would entail a real distinction between God and the world. Rather, God-in-Himself metaphysically grounds the existence and essence of the world. Whenever we talk about God-in-Himself, we therefore consider God as a whole, distinct from but related to the parts that are metaphysically grounded in God.

The epistemological distinction between God-as-such and God-in-Himself entails that depending on how we approach the divine being, either as a whole without recourse to its parts or as a whole that is distinguished from but related to its parts as their metaphysical ground, different aspects of the existence and essence of God are recognized: God-in-Himself is distinct from the world as that which metaphysically grounds the world, while God-as-such is not distinct from the world, but is the one infinite substance that, as a whole, includes the existence and essence of the world as part of its own existence and essence. The world is 'in' God, as God-as-such, but the world is 'outside' God — God is 'more than' the world — as God-in-Himself.[20]

II.2.2 History and the Self-Awareness of God

Because God-as-such is the only entity that ultimately exists, anything that exists that is not identical to God-as-such exists only because it is a finite (metaphysical) part of God-as-such and therefore is metaphysically grounded in God-in-Himself. That is, anything that exists apart from God-as-such is part of the one infinite divine Being and can only be distinguished from God-as-such if it is considered to be grounded in God-in-Himself. If it is not considered to be grounded in God-in-Himself, but in God-as-such, it plainly belongs to the existence and essence of the divine Being itself.[21]

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20   Therefore, it is not true without qualification when Ted Peters, "Models of God", *Philosophia* 35, no. 3-4 (2007): 285 argues that 'according to panentheism, God loses aseity, loses independence. The world and God are mutually interdependent.' God-as-such possesses aseity and independence because God-as-such is the one infinite substance to which there is no external counterpart. God-in-Himself, however, considered as the ultimate ground of the existence and essence of the world is related to the world via metaphysical grounding.

21   As Michael Silberstein, "Panentheism, Neutral Monism, and Advaita Vedanta", *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1123 argues, 'panentheism also allows us to think differently about our relation-

Because only God-as-such ultimately exists and anything else exists only because it is a part of God-as-such, any existing subject of experience and any existing object of experience that is not identical to God-as-such exists only because it is part of the existence and essence of God-as-such and therefore, in its existence and essence, is itself divine. It follows that every experience by a finite subject of experience of a finite object of experience, on panentheistic premises, is one of the experiences of the infinite divine Being. In our experiencing the world, the divine Being experiences itself. Consequently, any item of knowledge, ultimately, is knowledge of God-as-such by God-as-such. Statements of the form 'A knows B' therefore should be read as 'God-as-A knows God-as-B': Anything we know, is knowledge of God-as-such. Anybody who knows, is God-as-such knowing.[22]

Based on this conclusion, scientific and metaphysical knowledge, and their growth, turn out to be growth in knowledge of the existence and essence of the one divine Being of itself.[23] Since the development of scientific and metaphysical theories itself is historical, the human development of scientific and metaphysical theories is a process in which the divine Being becomes aware of itself in and through the existence and history of rational agents, that is, in and through what belongs to its very own existence and essence.[24]

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ship to the universe as a whole'.

22   Cf. Main, "Panentheism", 1111: 'In general terms, panentheism undoes the metaphysical skepticism of disenchantment because the coinherence of the divine and the world allows for the possibility of knowing the divine through the empirically given — albeit not exclusively, because of the divine's also being more than the world'.

23   Cf. Jan-Olav Henriksen, "The Experience of God and the World: Christianity's Reasons for Considering Panentheism a Viable Option", *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1083: 'As humans we partake in different realms of experience. Science has taught us to distinguish these from each other, and we do so due to the differentiations of the different sciences. We speak about the physical world, the social and cultural world, the inner world of humans. All these realms of experience are researched by the sciences. Theology would say that God as a creator is the condition for all of these realms, and panentheism will say more: that God is present, and working in and through all these realms, and that it is by partaking in these realms that humans also participate in the life of God as it manifest itself in human experience'.

24   David R. Griffin, "Panentheism: A Postmodern Revelation", in *In Whom We live and Move and Have our Being*: *Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 36 argues for a similar thesis: 'My thesis is that panentheism is the content of a divine revelation that has been occurring in the cultural life of the West, primarily through religious, moral, scientific, and philosophical experience, roughly over the past two centuries'.

Finally, because the history of the world itself exists only because it is a part of the one infinite divine being, it is, on panentheistic premises, nothing over and above the history of the existence of God-as-such, and can be rightly considered as the one life of the infinite divine Being. That is, the history of the world is not 'over and against' the existence and essence of God-as-such but is a constitutive part of the one infinite divine Being itself.[25]

On the assumption that human beings are able to act freely in a libertarian way and therefore can influence the course of history, it follows that human beings are a constitutive part of the determination of the history of the life of the divine being. Therefore, because they are nothing 'over and against' the divine being, they are responsible for the future development of the one life of the divine being they constitute.[26]

III. TRANSHUMANISM AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE WORLD

Transhumanism is both a metaphysical thesis about the place of rational agents in the world and a normative thesis about the future development of humanity. As a metaphysical thesis, transhumanism entails that man is an autonomous and free being whose current biological embodiment, classified as *homo sapiens*, is the contingent product of an evolutionary process extending

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25   This is how we should understand Drees, "Panentheism and Natural Science", 1065, when he argues that 'God must be envisaged as involved in creative processes in the world, the process through which life evolves and complex new realities emerge.' Cf. also Catherine. Keller, *The Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (Columbia Univ. Press, 2015), 35: 'And in this world-transforming entanglement, let us note that the ethic does not arise as *just do it*, but from a full fledged relational ontology of which there may be no more important wording than this: "all life is interrelated, and we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny".'

26   Cf. Keller, *The Cloud of the Impossible*, 33: 'God's own experience, God's open becoming, depends upon the becoming of creatures.' Cf. also Henriksen, "The Experience of God and the World", 1086: 'What do these considerations entail for a panentheist position? First and foremost, I would argue that it means that we need to see the relationship between God and the world as manifesting itself in all realms of human experience. Because all these realms are constituted as relational and thereby pointing beyond themselves, we could claim that the openness implied in this relational character […] means that all that is exists in a creative space that allows for a multitude of dimensions in human life to display themselves creatively. This "space" or "field" […] is God as the infinite ground of this field or "outside" of it. That does not mean that what manifests itself within this field *is the field*'.

over millions of years: if we could turn back time to the initial singularity of the universe, to the so-called Planck era, then we could not be sure that man would develop again. That *homo sapiens* exists in its present form is therefore the contingent product of the universe's cosmological and biological evolution from the beginning to the present state.

On this assumption, transhumanists argue that due to our natural and social environment, accidental mutations, genetic drift and adaptation, the biological nature of human beings will continue to change in the future. In fact, it is likely that our offspring will change so much in the course of natural evolution that they turn into a new species, with which *homo sapiens* can no longer produce reproductive offspring. Although human beings are currently free and autonomous beings with a particular biological embodiment, it cannot be ruled out that, over millions of years, *homo sapiens* will develop into one or more new species that could have completely different characteristics from today's man.[27]

Transhumanism takes up these considerations and concludes that there is no reason to assume that human beings should or must have a certain embodiment, i.e. a fixed genome: the current biological embodiment of human beings is the contingent product of an evolutionary process that will continue to change the biological nature of man in the future either way. Based on this, transhumanists, draw the following metaphysical conclusion: it is not the case that there is a biologically fixed, intrinsically valuable biological embodiment of man that could be used to justify the normative claim that the current biological condition of homo sapiens is worth protecting against accidental or intended changes of the human genome or the human body. From the point of view of transhumanist anthropology, we are therefore free to change the biological nature of man, at least if it can be excluded that moral principles are violated by the intended changes.[28]

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27   As Eric T. Juengst, "What's Taxonomy Got to Do with It? 'Species Integrity', Human Rights, and Science Policy", in *Human Enhancement*, ed. Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom (OUP, 2013), 50 argues, 'species are not static collections of organisms that can be "preserved" against change like a can of fruit; they way and wane with every birth and death and their genetic complexions shift across time and space'.

28   There is a difference between the 'metaphysical' and the 'biological' nature of human beings. The metaphysical nature of human beings is that which is conceptually independent of their biological nature, for instance, their autonomy and self-consciousness, that is, those properties that could be exemplified even if the biological nature of human beings were dif-

III.1 Transhumanism as a Normative Thesis

As a normative thesis about the future development of humanity, transhumanism entails that, for the first time in its history, humanity has reached, or soon will reach, a stage of scientific development enabling it to actively intervene in the course of its own biological evolution, in order to change its biological embodiment in a controlled manner. While cosmological evolution over many billions of years has not produced life according to our knowledge, transhumanism recognizes a contingent cosmological development from non-conscious, to conscious, to self-conscious, life, which can now change its own biological constitution.[29]

Although this stance on the scientific state of the development of humanity is the scientific consensus, the decisive characteristic of transhumanism as a normative thesis about the future course of the history of humanity is that it quite specifically *demands* the implementation of anything scientifically possible to change the biological nature of man. For normative transhumanism, man is not the crown of cosmological evolution in virtue of his present biological embodiment, but because he is a being that can, and indeed should, determine his own embodiment through the use of the technologies developed by him.[30] From the point of view of transhumanism, the history of humanity has reached a level of development at which it becomes a normative demand to exceed the contingent biological nature of man in order to become a self-determined designer of one's own biological constitution.

ferent from how it actually is. Being autonomous and self-conscious does not entail the possession of a particular biological nature. Transhumanism does not intend to change this metaphysical nature of human beings, but only to change the biological nature of human beings. Cf. Benedikt P. Göcke, "Christian Cyborgs: A Plea For a Moderate Transhumanism", *Faith and Philosophy* 34, no. 3 (2017) for a further analysis of transhumanism.

29   Cf. John F. Haught, *The New Cosmic Story: Inside our Awakening Universe* (Yale Univ. Press, 2017), 14: 'As the cosmos has developed over billions of years, entirely new kinds of being — most notably life and thought — have emerged. […] For all we know, more impressive developments, some of them enabled by human technology, lie ahead. The universe, no matter how you look at it these days, is more than a stage for the evolution of life and setting for human history. It is a continuing drama that keeps unlocking previously unpredicted possibilities.'

30   As Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Engaging Transhumanism", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011), 19 states, 'technology is transforming human life at a faster pace than ever before. The convergence of nanotechnology, biotechnology, robotics, information and communication technology, and applied cognate science poses a new situation in which the human has become a design object'.

III.2 The Motivation behind Transhumanism

From a transhumanist perspective, a good life, amongst other things, depends on the greatest possible well-being, and the ability to set and realize one's goals in the course of life. Both depend on the kind of embodiment human beings have.[31]

With regard to well-being: transhumanism is based on the meta-ethical assumption that there is an obligation to help people suffering from disease, or other impairments of well-being. Based on this assumption, it is argued that any modern medical therapy is an enhancement of human well-being by technical means. Since, according to the transhumanist, there is no normative upper limit to the enhancing of the well-being of human beings (because there is no clearly defined standard of normal well-being sufficient for a good life) transhumanists conclude that we should deploy the means of the applied sciences to enhance the well-being of human beings *to the highest degree possible* — if this is feasible, taking all factors into account, and does not contradict any other moral principles.[32] Since the products and possibilities of new technologies, in particular synthetic biology, can lead to a targeted and controlled enhancement of human well-being, the transhumanist concludes that it is morally required to maximally enhance human well-being with the help of these new technologies.[33]

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31   Cf. Patrick Hopkins, "A Moral Vision for Transhumanism", *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 19, no. 1 (2008): 4: „The first element of a transhumanist moral vision is that the effort to address the human condition requires that we change the physical facts that in part generate the human condition. Curing the human condition requires altering the 'human' part of the equation'.
32   For more on the means to enhance human nature, cf. Göcke, "Christian Cyborgs". As Nick Bostrom, "A History of Transhumanist Thought", *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14, no. 1 (2005): 1 argues: 'This vision, in broad strokes, is to create the opportunity to live much longer and healthier lives, to enhance our memory and other intellectual faculties, to refine our emotional experiences and increase our […] well-being, and generally to achieve a greater degree of control over our own lives'.
33   Nick Nick Bostrom, "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011), 55 describes the agenda of transhumanism as follows: 'Transhumanism is a loosely defined movement that has developed gradually over the past two decades and can be viewed as an outgrowth of secular humanism and the Enlightenment. It holds that current human nature is improvable through the use of applied science and other rational methods, which may make it possible to increase human health span, extend our intellectual and physical capacities, and give us increased control over our own mental states and moods'. According to Sky Marsen, "Playing by the Rules-or not?

With regard to setting and realizing goals in life: transhumanism is based on the idea that man, because of his individual embodiment, can only set goals within a framework restricted by the potential of his own body: not everyone, for example, has a musical or sporting talent, which means that some people, given their contingent embodiment, are only able to enjoy the values associated with these talents to a relatively low degree. Transhumanism entails that this setting of fate, which is nothing more than a consequence of contingent social, genetic, and epigenetic factors, does not have to be accepted: new technologies will enable man to lift the barriers set by the limits of his embodiment in order to expand his scope of action. As an autonomous and free being, he can then better realize the purposes which he wants to set himself.

Since the means of the applied sciences can also be used to enhance the surrounding world, and since human beings are part of and interwoven with their environment, transhumanism is not restricted to the enhancement of human embodiment, but naturally leads to the further demand to use the means of the applied sciences to enhance the world surrounding us.[34]

Because transhumanism is based on the assumption that there is a continuous growth of scientific knowledge, at least in enabling a continuous increase in our ability to control nature, transhumanists are optimistic that, in

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Constructions of Identity in a Posthuman Future", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011), 86, 'transhumanism […] a set of dynamic and diverse approaches to the relationship between technology, self, and society. Since transhumanism is not a crystallized and static doctrine, my use of the term requires definition. The working definition that informs the subsequent discussion is this: transhumanism is a general term designating a set of approaches that hold an optimistic view of technology as having the potential to assist humans in building more equitable and happier societies mainly by modifying individual physical characteristics'. Cf. Bostrom, "A History of Transhumanist Thought", Tirosh-Samuelson, "Engaging Transhumanism", Katherine Hayles, "Wrestling with Transhumanism", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011) and Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "Cybernetics is Antihumanism: Advanced Technologies and the Rebellion against the Human Condition", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011).

34   Cf. Mark Walker, "Ship of Fools: Why Transhumanism is the Best Bet to Prevent the Extinction of Civilization", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011), 101: 'It will be helpful to contrast world engineering and person engineering. Person engineering refers to remaking of the biology of persons, which, for our purposes here, we may think of as coextensive with the use of technology to remake human biology. World engineering refers to any nonperson engineering use of twenty-first-century technologies'.

the long run, the means provided by the applied sciences, if used responsibly, can contribute to an overall increase of well-being in the universe and to an increase in the number and diversity of goals rational agents can realize.[35]

IV. PANENTHEISM, TRANSHUMANISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Transhumanism is often discussed only because it entails an ethical demand regarding the use of the means provided by the applied sciences. However, because it entails a particular normative stance on the future development of the history of the world as a whole, it cannot be reduced to a purely ethical agenda, but has to be seen as embedded in a larger metaphysical context. In particular, there is a systematic relation between panentheism as an all-encompassing metaphysical theory about the existence and essence of the world, and our place in it, and transhumanism as the demand to enhance human beings and the world surrounding us. This systematic relation provides a cosmic solution to the problem of evil.

IV.1 Panentheism and Transhumanism

Transhumanism is not only consistent with panentheism as a system of philosophy, but in fact coheres well with panentheism as an all-encompassing metaphysical theory: on panentheism, the history of the world is nothing over and above the history of the life of the one divine being that is distinct from the world only if considered as God-in-Himself. Because of this, each and every existing entity is a (metaphysical) part of God-as-such, and belongs to the very essence and existence of the divine being. Because panentheism entails that the axiological value of the history of the world is to realize the good, and since the good is that which should be realized in the course of the history of the world, if it is possible to realize it, it follows that panentheism

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35   Cf. Ted Peters, "Transhumanism and the Posthuman Future: Will Technological Progress Get us There?", in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Metanexus-Institute, 2011), 147: 'What we find in transhumanist prognostications is reliance on the doctrine of progress. Transhumanists assume that progress, understood as betterment over time, is inherent in nature and inherent in culture. Evolution constitutes progress in biology. Technological advance constitutes progress in culture. Betterment is inevitable as the inexorable wheels of progress keep turning. The direction is set, and the task of transhumanist technology is to increase the speed forward'.

entails the transhumanist agenda of enhancing the world in order to increase the well-being of the cosmos insofar as it is sentient, and to increase the range of possible goals rational agents can set themselves in their lives simply because this is a good thing to do.

Panentheism goes beyond the transhumanist agenda because, on panentheistic premises, transhumanism should not be understood as a demand concerning the enhancement of an otherwise profane world but should be seen as a metaphysical demand to contribute to the overall life of the one divine being we are part of. Panentheism thus integrates the transhumanist agenda into its all-encompassing metaphysical context in a coherent way and agrees that we should use the means provided by the sciences to contribute to the overall well-being of the cosmos.

IV.2 A Cosmic Solution to the Problem of Evil

The problem of evil is often said to be the most decisive argument against the existence of God. The common ground of most arguments from evil is the apparent conflict between a particular philosophical concept of the divine being and our experience of a large variety of kinds of evil in a world created *ex nihilo*. In the discussion, this common ground is taken as a starting point for the formulation of many versions of the argument from evil that concern both animal and human suffering. The standard version of the problem of evil runs as follows: the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect being that creates the world out of nothing and is able to causally intervene with the world is inconsistent with, or at least highly improbable in the light of, the huge amounts of gratuitous evil in this world.[36]

Because panentheism does not entail that the world is created ex nihilo by an omniscient, omnipotent and morally perfect God who is able to caus-

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36   Cf. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence", *Mind* 64, no. 254 (1955): 200 for a classic formulation of the logical problem of evil. As David R. Griffin, *Panentheism and Scientific Naturalism: Rethinking Evil, Morality, Religious Experience, Religious Pluralism, and the Academic Study of Religion* (Process Century Press, 2014), 17 argues, that assumption that such a God created the world ex nihilo entails 'that any evil that has occurred — from the rape of a child to the Nazi Holocaust — could have been unilaterally prevented by God. This doctrine also implies that all the structural causes of evil in the world — such as the fact that birth defects, cancer, and nuclear weapons are possible — were freely created by God, even though God, by hypothesis, could have created a world having all the positive values of this one while being free of all these evils.' Cf. also Göcke, "The Existence of Evil in Christian and Naturalistic Worldviews".

ally act in the world, panentheism is immune to standard versions of the problem of evil. However, panentheism prima facie is confronted by another problem of evil: because history is nothing over and above the divine life itself, it seems that panentheism leads to the conclusion that the existence of the divine Being entails the existence of evil as part of the history of the existence of God-as-such.[37]

This alleged panentheistic version of the problem of evil, however, is not a problem, but a consequence of panentheism as an all-encompassing metaphysical theory. Panentheists are able to accept that the existence of evil de facto is part of the history of the existence of God, even if, considered counterfactually, this is not of necessity the case. The reason is that in and through the entities that exist in the course of the history of the world, the life of the one divine Being that is directed upon the realization of the good and the beautiful is determined: if there is ontological chance and freedom in this world, then it is only to be expected that evil states of affairs obtain as part of the history of the world — chance and freedom entail the possibility that evil states of affairs obtain. A divine Being could only prevent this possibility if it could annihilate chance and freedom altogether. Since chance and freedom, however, are fundamental parts of the essence of the divine Being itself, the panentheistic God cannot prevent the possibility that evil states of affairs obtain in this world and contribute to the history of the one divine life, even if the goodness of God does not want evil to be a determining factor of the one divine life. Because of this, it is only to be expected that the good and the beautiful, upon the realisation of which the cosmos and hence the divine life is directed, are not yet realized. Whether this state will ever be reached depends, from our perspective, on the further free development of the cosmos, to which we can contribute by realizing the good and the beautiful ourselves.[38]

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37   This is a weaker version of what Yujin Nagasawa, "Modal Panentheism", in *Alternative Concepts of God: Essays on the Metaphysics of the Divine*, ed. Andrei A. Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa (OUP, 2016), 101 refers to as the problem of evil for modal panentheism: 'Modal panentheism says that God is identical with the totality of all possible worlds. However, the totality of all possible worlds includes all possible instances of evil, including the worst possible instances of evil, and God is not an evil being. Therefore, modal panentheism is false'.

38   Framed within a Christian context, John Bishop and Ken Perszyk, "Concepts of God and the Problem of Evil", in *Alternative Concepts of God: Essays on the Metaphysics of the Divine*, ed. Andrei A. Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa (OUP, 2016), 121 argue that it is yet already eschato-

But: if the history of the world is part of the one infinite divine Being, and if the development of the history of the world, amongst other things, depends on the free decisions of free beings, then it follows that we should engage in the transhumanist agenda to enhance the well-being of human beings and the world surrounding them to contribute to the realization of the good and the beautiful. We should, in other words, live and act in such a way that the existence of evil will be overcome on a cosmic scale and will no longer be part of the divine being in whom we move and live and have our being. This panentheistic solution to the problem of evil is thus a practical one that directly calls on us to participate in the realisation of the purpose of the universe, and that shows how the metaphysics of panentheism leads to the ethical demands of transhumanism.[39]

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logically realized from the point of view of God-as-such: 'The divine may be identified, not just with Love as the supreme good which is the ultimate *telos* of all that exists, but, at the same time, with reality at its most profound or ultimate — that is to say, with reality as inherently directed upon the supreme good, and actually existing only because that end is fulfilled'.

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NOTHING ELSE

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Abstract. "Jewish Nothing-elsism" is the school of thought according to which there is nothing else besides God. This school is sometimes and erroneously interpreted as pantheistic or acosmic. In this paper I argue that Jewish Nothing-elsism is better interpreted as a form of "panentheistic priority holism", and still better interpreted as a form of "idealistic priority monism". On this final interpretation, Jewish Nothing-elsism is neither pantheist, panentheist, nor acosmic. Jewish Nothing-elsism is Hassidic idealism, and nothing else. Moreover, I argue that Jewish Nothing-elsism follows from some very basic assumptions common to almost every theist. All theists should be Nothing-elsers.

Moses commands the children of Israel to 'know this day, and lay it on thy heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath; there is nothing else' (Deuteronomy 4:39). In context, the final clause of this verse is most straightforwardly read as a declaration of monotheism: there are no other *gods*. Nevertheless, one can trace a central line of Kabbalistic thought taking this verse to be saying something more radical. It's not merely that there are no *gods* besides God; it's that there is nothing else *at all* besides God. Call this school *nothing-elsism*.

The declaration that 'there is nothing at all besides God' is open to multiple interpretations. This paper dismisses various interpretations of nothing-elsism. Nothing-elsism, as it appears in the Jewish tradition, I shall argue, should not be read as pantheism, panentheism, nor even as acosmism. Nothing-elsism, at least as it appears in the Jewish tradition, is merely *idealist*, and might even be a consequence of classical theism itself.

I. NOTHING-ELSISM IN THE JEWISH TRADITION

Rabbi Moses Cordovero (1522–1570) writes: 'The essence of God is in every-
thing, and nothing exists outside of God. Since God gives being to all, it isn't
fitting to say that there would be any created thing living by way of another.
Rather, he is their existence, their life, and his existence is found in all things.'[1]
R. Cordovero is a nothing-elser.

Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz (1555-1630) writes on our verse from Deuter-
onomy: 'Its interpretation isn't that there is no God other than him, for this
is obvious and [already] explained in [Deuteronomy 6:4]'. Deuteronomy 6:4
clearly informs us that 'the Lord our God, the Lord is one'. So as to avoid
superfluity, R. Horowitz reads *our* verse (Deuteronomy 4:39) as conveying
something else — namely, that:

> nothing exists without his existence. For he, may he be blessed, gives being
> to all, and life to all, and he is the existence of those that exist. And there is
> no existence other than his existence. It's just that this existence clings to him
> more, and from this existence, other existence cascades outwards, and all is
> in the first power, and this is the thing that is infinite.[2]

R. Horowitz is a nothing-elser.

The founder of Hassidic Judaism, Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (known as the
Besht, 1700-1760) goes further. He tells us that even when we recite Moses'
apparent declaration of *monotheism* (i.e. Deuteronomy 6:4), twice daily in the
Shema prayer, we should have in mind that:

> there is nothing else in the entire world, other than the Holy One, Blessed be
> He; that all the world is filled with his glory [alluding to Isaiah 6:3]. And the
> fundamental principle of this intention, is that the person should consider
> himself as empty and void, and [consider that] he has no fundamentality
> other than the soul that is within him, which is a portion of God above
> [alluding to Job 31:2]. Consequently, there is nothing in the world other that
> the one, Holy One, blessed be He.[3]

The Besht is a nothing-elser.

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1   My translation of *Shiur Komah*, Modena manuscript, 206b, quoted in Brakha Sack, "R. Moses
of Cordovero's Doctrine of Ẓimẓum", *Tarbiẓ*: 213–14. This quotation appears with a different transla-
tion in Jay Michaelson, *Everything is God: The radical path of nondual Judaism* (Trumpeter, 2009), 62.
2   My translation of Josef Horowitz, *Shnei Luchot HaBrit* (Machon Yad Ramah, 1997),
tractate Shevout, 160a.
3   My translation of Israel ben Elieser, *Sefer Baal Shem Tov* (1938), Parshat Vaetchanan 13.

Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (1730-1787), a disciple of the Besht, wrote that 'Divinity above, Israel, Torah, the world-to-come, and this world, are all one.' They seem to be many distinct things, but this is an illusion: 'By way of them all, Godliness is spread out, this in a more internal way, and this in a more external way, in the mode of clothing and a body.'[4] The things which look less holy, are not really distinct from the things which are more holy. It's just that the holy things appear to us through the illusory garb of the less holy. R. Manachem Nachum is a nothing-elser.

Perhaps the most systematic of all Hassidic thinkers was Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1813), the founder of Chabad, or Lubavitch, Hassidism. In one of the most famous passages of his magnum opus, the *Tanya*, he writes:

> [E]very intelligent person will understand clearly that each creature and being is actually considered naught and absolute nothingness in relation to the Activating Force … continuously calling it into existence and bringing it from absolute non-being into being. The reason that all things created and activated appear to us as existing and tangible, is that we do not comprehend nor see with our physical eyes the power of God... If, however, the eye were permitted to see and to comprehend the life-force and spirituality which is in every created thing, flowing into it … then the materiality, grossness and tangibility of the creature would not be seen by our eyes at all… Hence, there is truly nothing besides Him.[5]

The idea seems to be that, when compared to the existence of God, who gives being to all other things, the being of those other things is somehow nullified. A sun-beam illuminates things outside of the sun. But in the sun itself, a sun-beam is nothing; it is nullified. The sun-beam, even beyond the orb of the sun, is merely an *emanation* of the sun. Using this metaphor, R. Shnuer Zalman tells us: 'It is only in the space of the universe, under the heavens and on the earth, where the body of the sun-globe is not present, that this light and radiance appears to the eye to have actual existence.'[6] From the perspective of God, who is analogous, in this metaphor, to the sun, the world itself apparently doesn't exist; it is a mere emanation. There is 'truly nothing besides Him'. R. Shnuer Zalman is a nothing-elser.

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4   My translation of M. N. Twersky, Meor Enayim (Pe'er Mikdoshim, 2015), Parshat Vayeitze, s. v. 'v'ata'. Also cited, with slightly different translation, in Michaelson, Everything is God, 71.
5   S. Z. Baruchovitch, *Likkutei Amarim Tanya: Bilingual Edition* (Kehot Publ. Society, 1973), Shaar Hayichud Vehaemuna, Chapter 3.
6   Baruchovitch, *Likkutei Amarim Tanya*, Chapter 3.

We have traced a school that spans into five centuries of Kabbalistic writing. It is typified by declarations of God's being, in some sense or other, the only thing that exists. And yet, despite that unifying characteristic, all of the texts quoted are riddled with interpretative hurdles. Many are written in an impressionistic style. Metaphor abounds. This is not a literary tradition that lays out its arguments with numbered premises. How exactly are we to understand these texts, and the school that they constitute?

II. INTERPRETATION 1: NON-DUALIST PANTHEISM

One way to go — perhaps the most obvious — is to interpret these texts with a flat-footed literalism. Just read them. They're telling us that only one thing really exists — despite any appearance to the contrary. Accordingly, Jay Michaelson calls Jewish nothing-elsism the 'radical path of nondual Judaism', according to which everything is God. According to non-dualism:

> [S]uperficial perceptions of separation — of duality — are not ultimately correct … [I]n its deepest reality, all of being is one. The boundaries we see all around us, between you and the outside world, between tables and chairs, are not ultimately real — though they may be partially true, or true in some relative way.[7]

That is to say, non-dualism is what Jonathan Schaffer elsewhere calls *existence monism*. According to existence monism, 'there are no particles, pebbles, planets, or any other proper parts to the world. There is only a seamless Parmenidean whole'.[8] For a non-dualist, to say that everything is God is to say that there exists only one thing, and that that one thing — that Parmenidean whole — is God.

And yet, to attribute existence monism to the Jewish nothing-elsers is, to my mind, uncharitable for a number of reasons. The first set of reasons are philosophical. Bertrand Russell[9] and G. E. Moore[10] confronted, in the early days of their careers, adherents of existence monism. Their arguments against existence monism were devastating. I focus here on Russell.

7   Michaelson, *Everything is God*, 17.
8   Jonathan Schaffer, "The Internal Relatedness of All Things", *Mind* 119, no. 474 (2010): 341.
9   Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics* (Routledge, 1903/1992); Bertrand Russell, "On the Nature of Truth", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 7, no. 1 (1907).
10   G. E. Moore, "External and Internal Relations", *Proc. of the Aristotelian Society* 20, no. 1 (1920).

The existence monist thinks that there is only one object. An absurd consequence of this is that, in the final analysis, any proposition that seems to be about *two* things will have to be transformed into a proposition about *one* thing, since there only is one thing for propositions to be about: *i.e.*, the Parmenidean whole — which, in our case, is God. But this won't work, Russell argues, for any proposition that contains an asymmetrical relation:

> The proposition '*a* is greater than *b*', we are told, does not really say anything about either *a* or *b*, but about the two together. Denoting the whole which they compose (*ab*), it says we will suppose, '(*ab*) contains diversity of magnitude.' Now to this statement … there is a special objection in the case of asymmetry. (*ab*) is symmetrical with regard to *a* and *b* [since, if there's only one thing, there can't be two distinct fusions of *a* and *b*], and thus the property of the whole will be exactly the same in the case where *a* is greater than *b* as in the case where *b* is greater than *a*.[11]

The existence monist can't distinguish the proposition that '2 > 1' from the false proposition that '1 > 2'. This constitutes a serious blow to the hopes of reconciling existence monism with the truth of mathematics. Now, of course, nondualists tend to wave their hands around, around about now, in an attempt to save the *apparent* truth of mathematics. Remember, Michaelson has told us 'that perceptions of separation — of duality — are not ultimately correct', but he does allow that they may be 'partially true, or true in some relative way'.[12]

Fine. But the nondualist certainly seems to take the non-dual perspective on reality as somehow *truer* than any perspective that engages in separation. Michaelson makes much of the point that the world of separation, to which number theory would apply, is *actually* one, rather than many separate things, but that even this oneness is an illusion, because *true* reality transcends number altogether. He assures us that 'The Kabbalistic math of this reality is that 2 = 1 = 0. Fortunately', he confesses, 'I don't have to be good at math anymore'.[13]

To entertain any thought about the world, even the thought that 'all is one', is somehow to separate the world from this very thought *about* the world. Accordingly, no thought, for the non-dualist, can by *wholly* true, since the very act of thinking rends the unity of the Parmenidean whole asunder; yielding a thought,

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11   Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, § 217.
12   Cf. Michaelson, *Everything is God*, 17.
13   Michaelson, *Everything is God*, 9.

and the thing that the thought is about. Nevertheless, we can still say that the world of separation, signified by the number 2, is *less* true that the world of unity, signified by the number 1, and *less* true still than the unthinkable thought encompassing all, signified by the number 0. All levels represent one reality, which is why Michaelson's 'Kabbalistic math' tells us that $2 = 1 = 0$, but that each stage of this equation is truer than the one before it. Russell understood this well:

> The one final and complete truth [for a non-dualist] must consist of a proposition with one subject, namely the Whole, and one predicate. But since this involves distinguishing subject from predicate, as though they could be diverse, even this is not quite true… [but] it is as true as any truth can be.[14]

Our first complaint is easy to register: a low grade partial truth just doesn't seem fitting for an indubitable theorem of number theory, such as the claim that $2 > 1$. To treat such a claim as less true than the wild speculations of metaphysicians and theologians is to beggar belief. It's all very well for Michaelson to say that he doesn't have to be good at maths anymore. Some of us still care about arithmetic! Furthermore, the problems for the non-dualist don't end here.

If no proposition is entirely true, then the monistic theory itself cannot be entirely true. And if 'the partial truths which embody the monistic philosophy' are not entirely true, then 'any deductions we may make from them may depend upon their false aspect rather than their true one, and may therefore be erroneous'.[15] That is, by the lights of non-dualism, we shouldn't trust any non-dual conclusions: the non-dualist concedes that his own premises are merely partially true. How then do we know what conclusions he *would* have come to had he started with *totally* true premises?

To summarise: Russell's main argument is that existence monism cannot attribute complete truth to innocuous mathematical propositions, *and*, it gives rise to a completely untenable theory of truth. There have been some existence monists in the history of philosophy, but we should be very careful before labelling anyone as such, since it commits its adherents to a complete philosophical disaster.

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14   Russell, "On the Nature of Truth", 39.
15   Russell, "On the Nature of Truth", 36.

The second set of reasons not to attribute non-dualism to the Jewish noth-ing-elsers are theological and traditional. Theistic non-dualism is a form of pantheism: the universe is God because God is all that there is. The problem with pantheism is that it leans one in either of the following two directions, both problematic from the perspective of Orthodox Judaism. The first takes the identity between God and the universe, and bleeds divinity so thoroughly into the universe that there basically no longer remains what any objective bystander would take to be a universe at all. The denial of the existence of the universe is acosmism. But what of the Torah, and its creation narrative, and its description of a world below the heavens, and its injunction that we should serve the Lord our God? How does any of this make sense if there is no universe, and if there is nothing at all other than God?

The other direction pantheism pushes towards takes the identity between God and the universe, and bleeds the universe so thoroughly into divinity that there basically no longer remains what any objective bystander would take to be a deity at all. Indeed, Michaelson is keen to emphasise how little divides the non-dualist and the atheist. It's not that there's a personal God pulling the strings of the universe. It's merely that the universe *is* God — not a personal God, since all distinctions of personality and agency get washed away when one arrives at the Parmenidean whole that subsumes all distinc-tions. Thus, Michaelson can say:

> [N]onduality may be said to be the place where mysticism and atheism shake hands. The cosmology may be identical, as there are no puppet-masters pulling the strings of our reality. Yet the stage is now a cathedral.[16]

It sounds beautiful. But to place so thin a wedge between theism and athe-ism is to arrive at something wholly alien to the basic Jewish narrative of a personal God, commander, father, and king. The bastions of Jewish nothing-elsism are not drawn from some controversial backwater of the Jewish map. They were not post-modernist gurus of new-age, Jewish renewal. Despite their radicalism and their often antinomian rhetoric, they were eager to situ-ate themselves at the heart of the Jewish tradition, along with its narratives of a personal theology and its body of ritual law. Anything close to atheism, I would wager, cannot be close to them.

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16   Michaelson, *Everything is God*, 30.

Michaelson would probably resist this line of attack. Non-dualism, he might say, is the summit of theological piety since, in his words, 'It is the ultimate antidote to idolatry… not just any image of God, but even any experience that sets itself apart from others, is error'.[17] But the traditional Jewish response to polytheism is not to give up on theism altogether. And, given the monistic theory of truth underwriting non-dualism, this response is somewhat empty. *Everything* is error, on their account, including the claim that everything is error!

Russell commends Harold H. Joachim for having 'considered very carefully the whole question of error' from a monistic perspective.[18] Joachim concludes that: 'the erring subject's confident belief in the truth of his knowledge distinctively characterizes error, and converts a partial apprehension of the truth into falsity'.[19] On Joachim's account, error has nothing to do with truth or falsehood: *every* proposition with which mere mortals deal is somewhere *between* true and false; *error*, on the other hand, resides in the confident belief that a partial truth is wholly true. This conclusion seemed to Russell 'the only possible one for a monistic theory of truth'.

Russell goes on to conjure up the following scene. A jury has to decide whether a man has committed a crime. If the jury keeps in mind the monistic theory of truth, and thereby remembers that any verdict they come to can only ever amount to a partial truth, then their verdict will be right, whatever their verdict. If they forget the monistic theory, the same verdict will be erroneous!

We can respond to Michaelson: given the monistic theory of truth, the non-dualist can sacrifice goats to Baal, and libate wine to Hermes, providing that, when doing so, she remains humble in the knowledge that all truths are partial. This will not be *error*, nor idolatry. But if the Jewish non-dualist takes part in a traditional Jewish prayer service, *confident* in the belief that to do so is mandated by God, she falls into error and idolatry far worse than that of the less certain Baal and Hermes worshipper. While I am sympathetic to the notion that theological certainty is a form of idolatry, this goes too far!

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17   Michaelson, *Everything is God*, 56.
18   Russell, "On the Nature of Truth", 32.
19   Russell, "On the Nature of Truth", 32, quoting Harold H. Joachim, *The Nature of Truth* (OUP, 1906), 162.

The final set of reasons to resist a non-dual interpretation of nothing-elsism is textual. Return to the quotes with which we started. It's true that they abound with declarations of the following form: 'nothing exists outside of God'; 'there is no existence other than his existence'; 'there is nothing else in the entire world, other than the Holy One, Blessed be He'; 'there is truly nothing besides Him'. But the very same passages tell us: that things don't live by way of another — implying that they *do* exist but only *by way* of God; that from His 'existence, other existence cascades outwards' — implying that God gives being to others; that a person 'has no fundamentality other than the [Godly] soul that is within him' — implying that our being is grounded in God's. And even when these texts declare our existence to be nullified, they say it only *relative* to God's existence. And even then, the nullification doesn't seem complete. Non-divine beings are like sun-rays. They *do* exist, even *inside* the sun, but their existence is derivative, and — *inside* the sun itself — wholly irrelevant. Thus existence monism, which is philosophically disastrous and religiously heterodox, is also unsupported by these texts. These texts don't deny that we exist. They deny that our existence is independent of God. They deny that our existence is fundamental. When they do deny that we exist, they do so only from a certain *perspective*, and only in a certain limited *sense*.

Jewish nothing-elsism doesn't preach that nothing-else exists besides God. It preaches that nothing else exists in quite the way that God does, or that nothing else is as fundamental as God is.

III. INTERPRETATION 2: PRIORITY-MONISTIC PANENTHEISM

Jonathan Schaffer argues that when writers *could* be understood as existence monists, there is often a more charitable reading available: they are not existence monists, but *priority* monists. Priority monism *doesn't* deny that many things exist; it merely insists that they are *grounded* by, and that their existence is *explained* by, the existence of the whole cosmos. The whole cosmos is the one and only fundamental concrete entity that *grounds* all other concrete entities. Priority *pluralism*, by contrast, holds that certain *particles* or *atoms* are fundamental, and that metaphysical explanation snakes up from *them*.[20]

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20   Jonathan Schaffer, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole", *Philosophical Review* 119, no. 1 (2009): 31–32.

In order to provide a philosophical explanation of all that exists, we might start with fundamental atomic building blocks, and offer a bottom-up explanation. The priority monist, by contrast, starts from the *whole* that all things compose, and explains what's going on within, via a top-down explanation. When philosophers write that only one thing *exists*, they can sometimes be read to be saying that only one thing is *fundamental*, and that that one thing is the *whole* that all non-fundamental things compose.

Elsewhere I have argued that Schaffer is sometimes *too* charitable, and too eager to read priority monism into the words of genuine existence monists.[21] But we already have reason to deny that the Jewish nothing-elsers were existence monists. Can we then follow Schaffer's strategy, and interpret their words in terms of priority monism?

Let's try. Assume classical theism. Accordingly, God exists *a se*. At some point in time, he created a universe that is distinct from himself. Assume also priority monism. Accordingly, the most fundamental ontological substance is the whole that all things compose. Of course, God himself *and* the created universe would compose a *whole*: the fusion of God and the universe. On the assumption of priority monism, this fusion turns out to be more fundamental than God. This is heterodox. Worse: we would seem to have landed ourselves in a contradiction. If God exists *a se*, then he cannot be ontologically grounded by the fusion.

But the problem is easily avoided. Stop calling the thing that we *were* calling God, 'God'. Instead, call it *the soul of God*. Call the fusion 'God' instead. Given these new labels: the soul of God is, indeed, *the soul of God*. And the universe that that soul created, is the *body* of God. God is the fusion of body and soul, and is the only thing that is fundamental. Nothing else is. This is nothing-elsism, since nothing other than God is fundamental. This is panentheism, since the created universe is a proper part of God. And, this is priority monism, since the only fundamental being is the one whole that all other beings compose.

This interpretation of Jewish nothing-elsism fits much better with the texts than does non-dualism. Of course, nothing exists by way of beings other than God—since God is the fusion of all things, in which all things

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are grounded. Of course, the existence of all things 'cascades outwards' from God, since God is the ground of all being. Of course, a person 'has no fundamentality' other than that which is derived from God, since God is the only fundamental being. Of course, our existence is nullified *relative* to God's existence, since his existence is fundamental, and ours is derivative.

And yet, there are philosophical and theological reasons to resist this new interpretation of nothing-elsism, *despite* its *prima facie* fit with the texts. The philosophical reasons have to do with motivation. The theological reasons have to do with the heterodoxy of panentheism.

As for motivation, priority monism understood as the doctrine that the *whole* is prior to its parts might better be labelled 'priority holism' — since it's about putting the whole before the parts. It does so by arguing that nothing else can be ontologically fundamental. Why think that nothing other than the whole can be fundamental?

Let's examine two of Schaffer's arguments. The first argument contends that only if the whole is fundamental can the metaphysical possibility of gunk be explained. Gunk is infinitely divisible matter: *e.g.*, atoms that can be divided into sub-atomic particles that can be divided into strings that can be divided into twines, and so on and so forth, *ad infinitum.* If you're a priority pluralist, and the world is built upwards from simple *fundamentals*, then gunk shouldn't be so much as *possible*. How would we get going, building a gunky universe, bottom-up? For a priority pluralist, there would be nothing basic at gunky worlds: 'Being would be infinitely deferred, never achieved'.[22]

Schaffer's solution is to treat the whole as prior to the parts. Being snakes downward from the whole, not upwards from the parts. Thus being has a foundation, even in a gunky universe. Schaffer presents the pluralist with an infinite regress in any gunky world. We start with the gunk and descend down to its more and more fundamental parts, but we never reach a bottom. Being has no foundation in such a world. But what if the foundation of that infinite chain stands outside of the chain itself? In that case, you wouldn't need to reach a bottom in order for the whole to have a foundation.

For the theist, God is the ground of all being. This *is* priority monism, but it is not priority *holism*. Being neither snakes down from the whole, nor up from some basic *parts* of the whole. Rather being is conveyed upon the

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22   Schaffer, "Monism", 62.

whole, and upon its parts, from a transcendent God. Even the fusion of that whole and God derives its being from God. The gunk argument needn't move a theist.

A second argument: if a proposition p is true at a world w, then p's truth at w is grounded in the fundamental features of w. Next, Schaffer contends that the whole world is required to make negative-existential propositions true: that there are no unicorns is not made true by any particular corner of the world lacking a unicorn, but by the global lack of unicorns.[23] The whole world is a truth-maker to negative existentials. Thus, the whole world is *fundamental.*

Once again, theism bursts the bubble. If God is omnipotent, he merely has to will for p to be true in order to make it true. If God willed for there to be unicorns, then there would be. He may sometimes will for things to go differently from the way they actually go — but only in virtue of having bequeathed free will to his creatures, and of his continually reining himself in. According to classical theism: beings (other than God) can only have a free will subject to the veto of God. *God's* will, by contrast, is never subject to any veto. He has the power to will and to make true anything under the sun. Accordingly, that God doesn't will for there to be unicorns can certainly play a role as a truth-maker for there being no unicorns. Who needs a fundamental truth-making *whole*, when there is already a fundamental truth-making *God*? A pattern is emerging. Schaffer argues that we require the whole universe, rather than its constituent parts, to play a foundational role, and the theist meets the argument by saying that *God* can play that role equally well.[24]

Priority holism may or may not be well motivated in the absence of theism. For the record: I think it fares quite well. But theism undercuts the doctrine's appeal. So, why attribute this view to the Jewish nothing-elsers, given their theism?

Besides these philosophical qualms, panentheism has various heterodox consequences. If the material universe is a proper part of God, then God has material proper parts. One of the thirteen principles of the Jewish faith, as codified by Maimonides, stipulates that God is *incorporeal.* These principles were never universally accepted, in their entirety, by Jewish thinkers, even

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23   Jonathan Schaffer, "The Least Discerning and Most Promiscuous Truth-maker", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 60, no. 239 (2010).

24   This pattern can be developed further in response to Schaffer's other arguments for priority holism. I leave that work to the imagination of the reader.

among contemporary Orthodoxy.[25] But it's fair to say that they have a default position in popular Jewish thought. Attributing the wholesale rejection of God's incorporeality to the bastions of the Kabbalistic and Hassidic traditions would constitute quite a cost to their Orthodox credentials.[26]

The doctrine of divine simplicity also plays a role in Jewish orthodoxy. In high-medieval theology, divine simplicity was taken to extremes: God has no properties, and/or is identical to all of his properties, and/or is identical to his actions. Some of these interpretations of the doctrine are puzzling.[27] But one vestige of divine simplicity that is still central to the Jewish tradition is that the *Ein Sof* (i.e., God in his transcendence) is *mereologically* simple. Panentheism, with its divine proper-parts — God's body, and his soul — violates this last vestige of divine simplicity.

God is simple. He may be a proper-part of the mereological fusion of God and the world. But that fusion isn't fundamental. Only *he* is. Theism *does* entail a variety of priority monism, but not the priority holism of Schaffer. Theism doesn't entail panentheism.

Our second interpretation of Jewish nothing-elsism is much more charitable than our first. It fits much better with the texts, and is not guilty of glaring philosophical confusion or obfuscation. But, it commits the nothing-else tradition to a philosophical doctrine that lacks motivation for theists, and generates a panentheism at odds with the Jewish tradition. The question is: can we arrive at an interpretation of the nothing-else tradition that fits with the texts, but has more philosophical motivation, and is more consonant with religious tradition?

I believe that we can arrive at such an interpretation in Hassidic idealism. I have explored Hassidic Idealism in a number of places.[28] More recently,

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25 M. B. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004).

26 Moreover, we could note that even the fringe thinkers who did attribute some sort of body to God (as documented in chapter 3 of Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*), thought of God's corporeality in quite ethereal terms. Nobody in the Jewish tradition goes so far as to give God the sort of sundry physical parts that panentheism lumbers him with.

27 Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Marquette Univ. Press., 1980).

28 Samuel Lebens, "God and His maginary Friends: A Hassidic Metaphysics", *Religious Studies* 51, no. 2 (2015); Samuel Lebens, "Hassidic Idealism: Kurt Vonnegut and the Creator of the Universe", in *Idealism*: *New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth L. Pearce (OUP, 2017).

Tyron Goldschmidt and I have developed and defended Hassidic idealism at length, presenting it as a consequence of *theism*.[29] The following section summarizes some of the arguments that Goldschmidt and I have developed, and applies them to the problem at hand.

IV. INTERPRETATION 3 — HASSIDIC IDEALISM

To understand nothing-elsism, in the Jewish tradition, one first has to understand the considerations that gave rise to it. The roots of this tradition run deeper than a Biblical verse or two proclaiming God's unity and uniqueness. Jay Michaelson gives a standard sounding-account of the underlying motivation for nothing-elsism. He writes:

> Kabalists begin from the premise that there is a One, that which does not change, and deduce that because the one is infinite, it is all there really is… If [an] object has its own separate existence, then the Ein Sof exists everywhere but suddenly stops at the border of the object; it is thus not Ein Sof [i.e., it is not without end]. Therefore the object must be filled with God … [O]ne can't hold that there is something infinite and also that something else exists apart from it…[30]

Why think that a thing's being infinite requires that nothing exists apart from it? The natural numbers are an infinite sequence, but that doesn't mean that everything in existence belongs to it. The existence of tables and chairs doesn't threaten the number sequence with finitude. Why then would it threaten the creator of the heavens and the earth?[31] What Michaelson is undoubtedly al-

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29   Tyron Goldschmidt and Samuel Lebens, "Divine Contractions: Theism Gives Birth to Idealism", *Religious Studies* forthcoming.

30   Michaelson, *Everything is God*, 27 and 58.

31   In other words: Michaelson is committing Jewish nothing-elsism to the mistake that William L. Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves", in *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Cheology*, ed. James K. Beilby (Baker Academic, 2006) attributes to Philip Clayton. We can debate whether Craig's accusation was fair against Clayton (see William Rowe, "Does Panentheism Reduce to Pantheism? A Response to Craig", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 61, no. 2 (2007); for Clayton's origional argument, see chapter 3 of Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006)), but it does seem to be fair when levelled against Michaelson. Michaelson truly *does* commit Jewish nothing-elsism to the absurd conclusion that if a thing is infinite then 'it is all there really is'; that nothing else can exist besides *it*, merely because of its infinity.

luding to is the Kabbalastic tradition of *tzimtzum* (lit. *contraction*), as developed by Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572), with some earlier precedent.[32]

Rabbi Luria's most prominent disciple, Rabbi Hayyim Vital, provides the first explicit, written account of the doctrine of *tzimtzum*.[33] The beginning of God's creation involves *contraction*: first there was the infinite light of God uniformly extended, and leaving no space untouched; next, there was a contraction of the light away from a centre point, leaving a circular void surrounded by the light; finally, there was a line of light penetrating the circle, creating a channel for the light to move from the outside to the inside. Only after these three stages, could the creation begin:

> Within that [circular] empty place, He emanated, created, formed, and made all the worlds — every one of them. Th[e penetrating] line is like a single narrow conduit through which the "waters" of the supernal light of the Infinite spread and are drawn to the worlds that are in the empty space in that void.[34]

Goldschmidt and I (ms) tease out an argument from such and other descriptions, and present the doctrine of *tzimtzum* as a solution to a philosophical problem. But some ways of framing the problem are more promising than others. Some are full of holes, and Michaelson apparently stumbles into those holes. Thus a problematic way of framing the problem: If God is infinite, He (or His light) fills all space; if He (or His light) fills all space, then there is no space vacant in which creation can occur; so if God is infinite, creation cannot occur; but since creation does occur, either (a) God must have contracted his infinity, or (b) God must be identical to the creation. The very first step in this line of reasoning, especially as presented by Michaelson, seems to trade on an elementary confusion about infinity. To be infinite *isn*'t to fill all of space.

A more charitable reconstruction leaves *infinity* behind, and concentrates on *omnipresence* instead: If God is omnipresent, then he fills all space; if God fills all space, then there is no vacant space in which creation can occur; so if God is omnipresent, creation cannot occur; but since creation does occur, either (a) God must have contracted his omnipresence, or (b) God must be identical to the creation. But, again, the very first step is problematic. Om-

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32   See Sack, "R. Moses of Cordovero's Doctrine of Z̦imz̦um".

33   C. Vital, *The Tree of Life: Chayyim Vital's Introduction to the Kabbalah of Issac Luria. The Palace of Adam Kadmon* (Aronson, 1999).

34   Vital, *The Tree of Life*, 14.

nipresence can be understood, not in terms of God *actually* occupying all of space, but in terms of his power and knowledge extending throughout space. The other steps in the argument are problematic too .[35]

We do better to interpret R. Vital's talk of light filling all of space as a *metaphor*. We're not really talking about light or extension in space. Rather, the talk of God's light getting in the way of creation is a metaphorical way of conveying that some divine attribute or other, metaphorically rendered as 'light', makes creation impossible. It's not that God's nature leaves no room in physical space for creation, but that God's nature leaves no room in *logical* space for creation. A non-spatial construal of the problem runs as follows: If God has a certain perfection *P*, then there is no logical space for creation; if there is no logical space for creation, the creation cannot occur; but since creation *does* occur, God must have contracted his perfection.

How might one try to cash this argument out? What perfection could one substitute for *P* so as to arrive at something compelling? Goldschmidt and I argue that there are a number of compelling substitution instances for this argument.[36] Summarizing just one of the arguments here for the sake of illustration: Since God is omnipotent, He has a perfectly efficacious will. Since he has a perfectly efficacious will, any features of any object are wholly dependent upon the mind of God willing it to have those features. But if all of the features of an object are wholly dependent upon a mind willing it to have those features, then the object is an idea in that mind. So if God is omnipotent, all objects are ideas in His mind.

This is an argument from theism to idealism. It isn't often recognised that theism entails idealism. But the only assumed premise in this argument that doesn't fall out of a bog-standard variety of theism, is the claims that if all of the features of an object are wholly dependent upon a mind willing it to have those features, then that object is an idea in that mind. But this seems to be a very plausible candidate sufficient condition for being an idea.

You might object that having a perfectly efficacious will does *not* entail that every feature depends upon that will. God has an efficacious will, but if you are essentially a human being, then he can't will for you to be a *fish*. God's having an efficacious will doesn't entail that the properties you have are *wholly* de-

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35   for more details, see Goldschmidt and Lebens, "Divine Contractions".
36   Goldschmidt and Lebens, "Divine Contractions".

pendent upon his willing you to have them, since your essence also plays a role in governing what properties you can instantiate. This objection relies upon a controversial doctrine of essentialism. But even if we assume this doctrine, it remains the case that you owe even your *essence* to God's having made you the way he made you. It may be the case, that from deciding to make *x* a table, and onwards, God's choices are limited as to what he can do with *x*. But it was his choice to make it a table to begin with. At least, at that moment in time, *x* met the sufficient condition for being an idea of God's. If we simply add the premise that ideas are always ideas — that once an idea, always an idea — then the argument goes through even with the objection in hand. Theism entails idealism. If you're not happy with this argument, and there are certainly wrinkles to iron out, I refer you to a fuller defence, and to other arguments for the same conclusion, in Goldschmidt and Lebens (forthcoming).

If the argument is sound, then God's omnipotence entails that he can't create objects that aren't also ideas in his mind. He cannot create objects *beyond* his mind.

We can now fill in R. Vital's argument, replacing perfection *P*, with omnipotence: If God is omnipotent, then there is no logical space for the creation of anything beyond the divine mind; if there is no logical space for creation beyond the divine mind, then the creation cannot occur beyond the divine mind; so if God is omnipotent, then the creation of objects outside of the divine mind cannot occur. At this point, we have two options. Either, (a) God relinquishes or *contracts* his omnipotence, in order to make room for creation outside of his mind; or (b) the creation doesn't really take place outside of God's mind at all. The first option would be real *tzimtzum* — real *contraction*. But the nothing-elsers don't *believe* in real *tzimtzum*. God doesn't relinquish perfection. He is unchangingly perfect. Rather, they believed in *fake tzimtzum*; the *illusion* of *tzimtzum*. They chose the second option.

Accordingly, God didn't really *contract* his omnipotence in order to create a world outside of his mind. Instead, he created a world that *appears* to be outside of his mind, but which, in actual fact, has been in his mind all along. This is Hassidic Idealism. Every existent being, other than the mind of God, is an idea in the mind of God. To the extent that God has ideas of things which are *not* ideas of ideas, it's as if he's telling himself a story: *in* the story, there exist all sorts of things which are not ideas; but of course, *outside* of that story, they are *all* ideas (just as Sherlock Holmes is a person, and not a mere idea, in the

stories told by Conan Doyle; but Sherlock Holmes is nothing more than an idea *outside* of those stories). If God is a character in the story that he tells, and if, in the story, he is the creator of all that exists outside of his mind, then, in the story, it must be true that he contracted his omnipotence. But of course, this is all just a *story*. God is in actual fact immutable. He never changes. He never contracts. He just imagines that he does, and creates an imaginary world. That world exists, as do all imaginary things, as *ideas*. This is Hassidic Idealism.

Jewish nothing-elsers are idealists of just this variety. What does that make of their insistence that there is nothing else besides God? It means that nothing else *fundamental* exists besides God. This is priority monism, but not priority holism. Are the Jewish nothing-elsers pantheists? Not without further argument. Ideas are not identical to the minds that think them, and minds are unlikely to be mere aggregates of their ideas. Are they acosmists? No! Ideas *exist*. Accordingly, Jewish nothing-elsers are committed to the existence of the cosmos. The cosmos is a set of ideas in the mind of God. Does this make them panentheists? Not without further argument. Ideas are not obviously proper parts of the minds that think them. We talk about ideas being *inside* minds, but this is probably just a metaphor. Minds may well be simple substances that *ground* ideas, without *containing* them in any literal sense. Jewish nothing-elsism is neither panentheistic, nor pantheistic, nor acosmic. It is Hassidic idealism, and nothing else.

I have *contracted* much of what must eventually be said about Hassidic idealism, and its motivations. For further *expansion* and defence of the doctrine, see the extensive treatment in Goldschmidt and Lebens (forthcoming). In this essay, I have argued that Hassidic idealism is preferable, as an interpretation of Jewish nothing-elsism, to non-dualism and panentheism. But there are independent reasons for thinking that, in addition to being the best interpretation of Jewish nothing-elsism, Hassidic idealism is *ideal*.[37]

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INFINITY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

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Abstract. God seemingly had a duty to create minds each of infinite worth through possessing God-like knowledge. People might object that God's own infinite worth was all that was needed, or that no mind that God created could have truly infinite worth; however, such objections fail. Yet this does not generate an unsolvable Problem of Evil. We could exist inside an infinite mind that was one among endlessly many, perhaps all created by Platonic Necessity. "God" might be our name for this Necessity, or for the infinite mind inside which we existed, or for an infinite ocean of infinite minds.

I.

Defenses against the Problem of Evil run into a potentially great difficulty. God is typically described as an immaterial mind sufficient unto itself, a mind lacking nothing that is worth having. Without creating anything, God could have existed in eternal, immensely good self-contemplation, enjoyment of divine knowledge of everything worth knowing. God would have known all the beauties of geometry and other such fields of abstract truth. Presumably, too, all the glories of music and other things which can be known only through actually being experienced. God's knowledge would further have included knowledge of hugely many thoughts that were worth thinking, thoughts known through God's actually thinking them. And the immense worth of the divine mind, it is typically declared, would have been all the good that could possibly have been needed, so God had no duty to create anything: Keith Ward, for instance, writes that "God in the divine being is perfect anyway and it may be better to leave well alone".[1] Now, the last of those points might be hard to accept. God is fairly standardly described as omnipotent. Why,

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1   Keith Ward, *Christ and the Cosmos* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 189.

then, no duty to create infinitely many minds that were like God in knowing immensely much that was worth knowing? Why do we see a world which, besides having the plagues and earthquakes which are grist to the usual Problem of Evil mills, can seem severely unsatisfactory through not containing minds of that type?

True enough, a duty to create minds that would benefit from having been created might be appreciably weaker than the duty not to destroy such minds once they had in fact been created: it is a point often made in discussions of whether one ought to have children if the human race faced extinction through folk finding it a nuisance to have them. Some philosophers even say that since beings who were not yet in existence would have no identities there could be no obligation to create them: failure to create them would not be wronging anybody. It can also be argued that Simplicity often contributes to a situation's intrinsic value: now, the existence of God plus other minds would clearly be less simple than the existence of God alone. Again, it may be insisted that no situation except one consisting of God alone could have the supremely desirable quality of being maximally excellent throughout. Nevertheless it can well seem that God, if existing as an omnipotent, morally perfect mind, would have created infinitely many other minds each having an existence that was immensely worth having because its knowledge was like God's knowledge. So if God is not a fiction, why does the world contain plagues, earthquakes, and minds as inferior as ours? Why did not God create infinitely many God-like minds, and nothing more?

Reply A)

A first possible reply is that the worth of the divine mind would be more than just immense. Like the divine knowledge of infinitely many things worth knowing, it would of course be infinite. Suggesting that it would fail to be all the good that could be needed is therefore idiotic. Obviously creation of any further minds would never result in an amount of good greater than infinite! Hence there would have been nothing unsatisfactory in an eternity of solitary divine self-contemplation. Whether to create anything at all was a matter not of duty but of divine free choice of a kind not restricted by a need to make any created situation outstandingly good.

Ought we to accept such reasoning? Were the divine mind infinite in its worth, would it be idiotic to think that Mozart had increased the worth of the

cosmos, the totality of all existence of which God was a part? Would it have been pointless, a futile attempt to improve the totality whose value was infinite, to try to make Mozart happier? The good of God-plus-Mozart being unboundedly great despite all human miseries, would there have been nothing wrong in making Mozart miserable? Were a mind infinite in negative value, perhaps because it was filled with infinitely much agony, would we say that because its negative value *was already itself limitless* the coming into existence of ninety-nine more such minds would obviously make matters no more terrible, and that there was no duty to lessen the suffering of the ninety-nine? And if there were infinitely many minds in addition to God, each enjoying an existence infinitely worth having because it knew everything worth knowing, would it be no tragedy if those other minds all suddenly vanished? Thinking about questions like these can persuade us that even infinite value may fail to be maximal, unsurpassable value, and that good which was the greatest possible in the case of any one entity could be greatly surpassed by the good of a situation containing many entities, for instance through its featuring infinitely many minds, each knowing infinitely many things worth knowing.

Theologians typically describe God as the one and only mind that knows infinitely many things, but it is by no means clear that Christians, for example, should heed them. The Bible is no textbook of metaphysics. While forbidding worship of more than one deity it nowhere says that God could not tolerate the presence of God-like minds which, never interfering with the events of our universe, had an existence of just as much benefit to those minds as the existence of God was of benefit to God. Why, then, should Christians deny that infinitely many minds, each knowing infinitely many things, exist beyond our universe as entities that God created? Perhaps because such minds would have to endure endless boring repetition? Surely not, for how could the mere fact of there being infinitely many minds God-like in their knowledge mean boredom for each of them? We might equally well suppose that watching a sunset was boring whenever several people watched it.

Reply B)

A second possible reply is that a mind can know infinitely much only if it is an infinite thing, a thing perhaps not infinite in spatial extent but at least infinite in its complexity; now, there cannot be more than one infinite thing, as Spinoza understood. Being infinite means being without any limits, which

in turn means being all-inclusive. God plus a mountain is impossible since the mountain would limit God's existence by not being part of God. Mountains and mountaineers must be constituents of God's own being. Yet just why, we can ask, would one thing limit another, let alone limit it in an unfortunate fashion, simply by existing outside it? Cosmologists often talk of a multiverse in which many universes co-exist, each in a space of its own. The fact that a universe stretched continually onwards would not mean that no others could do this, so each universe is sometimes described as infinitely large. Each would not be absolutely everything, but why view not being absolutely everything as a disastrous defect, or any defect at all, in a universe or in anything else? When a mind had an existence in itself worth having, how on earth could such intrinsic worth be reduced by there existing another mind equally fortunate?

Reply C)

It might instead be argued that creation of infinitely many minds, each fully equal to God in its knowledge, would be impossible because violating Identity of Indiscernibles, the principle that no two things can have precisely the same qualities. Yet what if such an argument were correct? God might still create infinitely many minds, each almost identical to God in what it knew. Each might lack only an infinitesimal part of God's knowledge, a new infinitesimal part in each new instance. While not knowing absolutely all the infinitely many things worth knowing, each would then still know infinitely many of those things, just as a line of infinitely many apples would continue to be a line of infinitely many apples after you had eaten five of them. Although God was the sole entity with an existence unsurpassably worth having, the minds would each still have an existence infinitely worth having.

Likewise with the objection that minds which were God-created would lack God-like omnipotence. Omnipotence, it is argued, could not be had by several minds at once since one of them might want to do what another wanted to prevent. But, we can ask, why should lack of omnipotence be considered important? It is tempting to declare that genuine omnipotence, power to create not only all possible good worlds but also all possible bad ones, would add nothing to the intrinsic worth of a mind. Let us at least say that changing from being powerless to being omnipotent would not at all evidently produce any increase in that intrinsic worth, because only *the instrumental worth* of

power—the value, positive or negative, of how power is used, for instance when a deity actually employs it to create something instead of resting content with contemplating the mere fact of being powerful—can at all obviously grow when power grows. And similarly with lack of self-existence: existing, in other words, only thanks to God's power. Like failure to be omnipotent, failure to be self-existent could well be considered no threat to intrinsic worth. Yet suppose that lack of omnipotence or of self-existence did lessen a mind's intrinsic worth. This could not make that worth *finite* when the mind in question knew infinitely many things worth knowing. We might almost as well think that it could somehow manage to be a finite mind despite knowing those infinitely many things.

What if a philosopher wanted to distinguish between worth "merely infinite", which could be had simply by knowing infinitely many of the things that were worth knowing, and the greater worth, "Absolutely Infinite worth", of a mind which knew every last one of those things, which had created everything apart from itself so that it was unique in possessing self-existence, and which was omnipotent, too? Well, there might be nothing too very wrong in all this so long as it was clear that the all-creating mind whose worth was called Absolutely Infinite possessed worth superior only to the worth *of every other single entity* so that it might be surpassed when a situation contained more than one entity: the all-creating mind *and also* Mozart, for example. It could be worth greatly surpassed when the all-creating mind was joined by infinitely many other minds, each of which knew infinitely much.

II.

Nothing in what I have said strikes me as making belief in God unreasonable. All the same, I may have identified limits to how God can reasonably be conceived.

Of one matter we might be fairly confident. As a first step towards explaining why we know so few of the things worth knowing, believers in God should accept that it is inside an infinite mind, a mind knowing infinitely many things worth knowing, that we live and move and have our being, as is maintained by Christian pantheists and by Islamic writers who hold that, wherever we look, Allah is what we see. We and all other ingredients of our universe would be patterns carried by a mind unlimited in its complexity. Here it could be useful to think of how, in the speculations of some physi-

cists, our universe is a pattern of activity inside a gigantic computer built by a very advanced civilization. But the mind in which we lived and moved and had our being would be unified in its existence in a way in which no digital computer is unified. Its parts, for instance humans with their severely limited knowledge and their lives of severely limited worth, could no more exist independently of this infinite mind than the grin on a face could exist without the face. Moreover, this unimaginably complex mind would presumably carry the patterns of events not only in our universe but in countless other universes as well, the other universes perhaps often obeying physical laws very different from those that our universe obeys. [Ours could be far from the best of the universes, but this would be no good reason for wishing it destroyed.] Again, the thoughts of the mind would presumably include thoughts about infinitely many things which were not parts of universes.

Additionally we could well say this. Unless there already existed minds whose knowledge was equal or almost equal to God's knowledge, God would have created such minds instead of resting content with solitary self-contemplation. What is more, God would have created infinitely many of them instead of only a few score or a few trillion, for the existence possessed by each mind would be just as much worth possessing, no matter how many others existed. And apart from such minds, God would have created nothing.

The cosmos may, however, be composed of infinitely many minds, each knowing infinitely much that is worth knowing, without one of them having created the others. Dissatisfied both with thinking that God just happens to exist and with the idea that God's existence is logically required, we could accept Plato's theory about why there exists anything at all. In Book Six of his *Republic* Plato suggests that The Good, while itself beyond existence, gives existence to all known things. Today we could present the suggestion as follows. Even if there existed nothing at all, the existence of good things would be ethically required (or, as Nicholas Rescher prefers to say, required "axiologically"); now, if some things were sufficiently good then their requiredness could be *creative* ethical requiredness, itself responsible for their coming into existence or for their always having existed. Our theory, we could say, is that the cosmos exists through Platonic Necessity: this is the theme of Rescher's

Axiogenesis[2] and of my *Value and Existence*.[3] If offered as a speculation, not as something provable from the very meaning of the words "ethically required", the theme could be non-absurd because, for a start, we may have no evidence making it silly to think that the cosmos consists solely of infinitely many infinite minds knowing all or almost all that is worth knowing, one of them a mind in which we live and move and have our being. My *Infinite Minds*[4] tries to describe those minds and suggests that we have immortality allowing us to share more and more of the things that they know, an idea to which I return in *Immortality Defended*.[5]

If agreeing with Plato we might still use the word "God". We might use it as the name of an infinite mind inside which we existed. Alternatively, we might use it to mean an infinite ocean whose waters were infinitely many infinite minds. Or, imitating Plato's talk of The Good as explaining the world's existence, we might make "God" our word for the creative ethical required-ness of that ocean.

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2   Nicholas Rescher, *Axiogenesis: An Essay in Metaphysical Optimalism* (Lexington Books, 2010).
3   John Leslie, *Value and Existence* (Blackwell, 1979). Chapter thirteen of J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (OUP, 1982) is largely devoted to a discussion of it, calling its Platonic creation theory "a formidable rival to the traditional theism which treats God as a person."
4   John Leslie, *Infinite Minds* (OUP, 2001).
5   John Leslie, *Immortality Defended* (Blackwell, 2007).

PERSONALISTIC THEISM, DIVINE EMBODIMENT, AND A PROBLEM OF EVIL

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Abstract. One version of the problem of evil concludes that personalistic forms of theism should be rejected since the acts that one would expect a God with person-like qualities to perform, notably acts that would prevent egregious evils, do not occur. Given the evils that exist in the world, it is argued, if God exists as a person or like a person, God's record of action is akin to that of a negligent parent. One way of responding to this "argument from neglect" is to maintain that there is a good reason for the *apparent* neglect — namely, that God could not intervene even once with respect to suffering (the "not-even-once principle") without thereby incurring the responsibility of doing so on every occasion, which would be deleterious. So God never responds to evil. It is argued in this paper that a profoundly integrated, personalistic model of God and the God-world relation — one that is reflected in a soul-body analogy — provides a way of addressing the argument from neglect without affirming the not-even-once principle.

I. PERSONALISTIC THEISM AND DIVINE EMBODIMENT

The problem of evil provides perhaps the most serious challenge to the reasonableness of the belief that God exists. The problem focuses on the fact that there are states of affairs in the world that are bad, harmful, or in some way undesirable and that their existence disproves or provides evidence against the existence of a perfectly beneficent, all-knowing, and exceedingly powerful deity. The problem can be formulated in a number of ways, and the version of the problem that will be addressed in this paper has been dubbed "the argument from neglect."

In addressing this argument, or any of the various problems raised by the reality of evil, there is an additional difficulty; namely, there is no uncontroversial account of the meaning of the term "God." Thus, when it is argued

that, given evil, it is unlikely or impossible that God exists, it is not immediately obvious what is at issue. Indeed, some versions of the problem of evil may not provide much, if any, evidence against some versions of theism, such as those in which God is understood not to be a person or person-like.[1] Before examining the argument from neglect, then, clarification will be offered of the meaning of the word "God" as it will be used in this paper.

In Anglophone philosophy of religion, the term "God" is commonly taken to mean the God of the monotheistic religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But within this form of monotheism, one can distinguish two different approaches: classical theism and personalistic theism.[2] A standard list of descriptions of God within the confines of classical theism includes that God is simple, non-temporal, immutable, impassible, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent. Personalistic theists, on the other hand, generally deny that God is simple, non-temporal, immutable, and impassible. They do generally affirm that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, though they often use these terms in ways that are different from those used by classical theists. One reason that personalistic theists deny that God is simple, non-temporal, immutable, and impassible is that in affirming them God appears not to be anything like a person, certainly nothing like human persons. Consider impassibility. According to the classical doctrine of divine impassibility, God cannot be modified or affected in any way by any external agent. God is not altered or affected by our prayers or pleas, for example. This, argue personalistic theists, is a lesser view of God

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1   See, for example, Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (Continuum, 2006).

2   Classical theism has a much longer history than personalistic theism. Classical theism was endorsed by virtually all of the leading thinkers of the medieval monotheistic traditions, including Augustine (354-430), Avicenna (980-1037), Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). The basic tenets of classical theism are also included in the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Personalistic theism, on the other hand, is a post-Enlightenment development, and within the last century or so, it has become popular among theistic philosophers and theologians. Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (OUP, 2004), 1–19 provides a concise delineation of classical theism and personalistic theism (or what he calls "theistic personalism"). For another description of classical theism, see the entry on the subject by Brian Leftow, "God, concepts of: Classical theism", https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/god-concepts-of/v-1/sections/classical-theism.

than is warranted.[3] Persons are affected by what they encounter. If they were not so affected, they would be lifeless — more akin to a statue or a column than to a person.[4] Personalistic theists maintain that God is a person insofar as personhood is taken to entail rational agency, including having feelings and desires (or something like feelings and desires) and having the ability to perform intentional actions that generate states of affairs; making choices and acting over time; and being affected by encounters with others. Of course, God's knowledge, power, goodness, and so on are vastly greater than those of human persons. Nevertheless, for personalistic theism, God is a person, or at least God is not less than a person in the senses just described.

Both classical theists and personalistic theists also generally affirm that God is omnipresent. There is an ongoing debate in the philosophy of religion and analytic theology literature about the meaning of "omnipresence," debate about what classical theists such as Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas actually meant by the concept, and about what is the most plausible way to construe the concept today.[5] In recent decades some philosophers of religion have taken the notion of personhood to be basic for God, and, given what we know about human persons, it is suggested that God is a person in a way that is similar to human persons in that God is fully present in the world ("omnipresent") in a manner akin to the way our souls are fully present in our bodies. Our only experience as a person is as an embodied one. Thus, given our deepest understanding of personhood as entailing embodiment, it may be beneficial in thinking about the relation of God and the world to be one of embodiment, or something like embodiment.

There are four primary models of embodiment in western classical philosophical literature: (a) *physicalism*, in which it is held that the mind and the

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3   There are different reasons that can be given for this claim. One reason is that many scriptural depictions of God are person-like descriptions, so arguably the personalistic view of God more accurately portrays God as revealed in the scriptures. Another reason that can be given is that to be a person, or person-like, is simply greater than not being a person. For a sustained argument that God is a non-physical person or person-like reality, see Charles Taliaferro, *Consciousness and the Mind of God* (CUP, 1994).

4   Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (State Univ. of New York, 1984). In Question 13 of Part I in the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas uses the analogy of a column in reference to God.

5   See, for example, Hud Hudson, "Omnipresence", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (OUP, 2009).

brain (or some aspect of the body) are identical; (b) *epiphenomenalism*, in which it is held that mental events are caused by the brain, but that mental events have no causal powers; (c) *mind-body parallelism*, in which it is held that, while mental events may appear to cause physical events given their temporal conjunction, and vice versa, mental and physical events are causally unrelated; and (d) *mind-body interactionism*, in which it is held that mind and body (or mental events and physical events) are ontologically discrete but causally influence one another. None of the four, argues William Wainwright, provides a model of the God-world relation that is satisfactory for classical theism.[6] The first view implies that God is contingent and spatially and temporally divisible; the second and third imply that God does not act on the world; and the fourth disallows the radical dependence of the world on God, a dependence relation which is inherent in most forms of historic theism. Wainwright suggests a more plausible model for classical theism that can be traced back to Neoplatonism and Vishishtadvaita Vedantin thought. While these views will not be assayed here, a key feature of this fifth model of the mind-body relation is that just as "the body depends upon but does not affect the soul, so the world depends upon but does not affect God. God's absolute sovereignty and complete causal dependence is preserved."[7] This model avoids the relevant defects of the other four, he maintains, for God is not identical to the world, or contingent or divisible, or causally dependent on the world, and God remains unaffected by the world. Thus while the world is fully dependent on God, and he[8] is sovereign over the world, God can remain perfect in himself despite the defects or deficiencies of the world.

While this Neoplatonist, Vishishtadvaita Vedantin view of embodiment may work as a model for classical theism, it is insufficient for personalistic theism.[9] For while on the Neoplatonist, Vishishtadvaita Vedantin view, God

6   See William Wainwright, "Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence", in *The Cambridge Companion to Contemporary Philosophical Theology*, ed. Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister (CUP, 2010). See also William Wainwright, "God's Body", in *The Concept of God*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (OUP, 1987).

7   Wainwright, "Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence", 55.

8   While the male personal pronoun will be used of God in this paper, as is common practice, this is not intended to imply that God is male.

9   I say "may work," though contrary to Wainwright's view I think it does not actually work as a model for classical theism, for Neoplatonism and Vishishtadvaita Vedantin thought entail forms of panentheism that are in conflict with classical theism in various respects. Also, the

cannot be altered by anything in the world and is thus unstained by its evils, personalistic theists maintain that such a God would not be suitably affected by the goods and evils which occur in the world. Consequently, a personalistic theist would reject that model of embodiment. But let us consider another model that resembles the interactionist one in crucial respects (i.e., there is a causal interaction of soul and body) and that also utilizes a soul-body analogy, but which affirms a deeper unity of soul and body than some versions of the interactionist model.

Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) offered a notable response to the classical concept of God.[10] Replacing an Aristotelian metaphysics with a Whiteheadian one, he formulated a process-based conception of God and the world that he dubbed "neo-classical theism." On his view, God is a participant in cosmic evolution, a supreme *becoming* rather than a static, unchanging *being*. God is in the world, for Hartshorne, and the world is also in God. In utilizing the "in" metaphor, Hartshorne developed a view of God and the God-world relation in which, as he put it, "The world consists of individuals, but the totality of individuals as a physical or spatial whole is God's body, the Soul of which is God."[11] Hartshorne's concept of God is a panentheistic one in that, while God is not identical to the world, he is identified with the world and is also beyond the world.[12] As the soul-body analogy intimates, and as he argues at length, God is also a person. In particular, God is affected by other entities; he experiences joy, for example, when we thrive, and he suffers when we experience pain.

One need not affirm the panentheism of Hartshorne, however, to utilize a soul-body analogy of God and the world. For example, while they disagree with his panentheistic concept of God, Richard Swinburne and Charles Taliaferro agree with Hartshorne that while God can act on the world, the world can also affect God. Swinburne notes that, with respect to human embodiment, persons perform types of "basic action," such as raising one's

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view raises other concerns with regard to the reality of evil, but that discussion lies outside the purview of this paper.

10   See Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes and The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (Yale Univ. Press, 1976).

11   Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes and The Divine Relativity*, 94.

12   A historical overview of various expressions of panentheism, including that of Charles Hartshorne, is provided in John W. Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Baker Academic, 2006).

arm, in which no additional action is required. And they can acquire "direct knowledge," such as knowing that one is seeing a pink image, which is neither inferred nor dependent on some causal chain. Analogously, God's having un-mediated control over any object, and his knowledge of all qualities manifest in any region at any time, entails a "limited" form of embodiment.[13] It is lim-ited, on Swinburne's view, in that God exists as an immaterial spirit and is not ontologically identified with the universe.

Charles Taliaferro affirms a form of divine embodiment that is on the whole in agreement with Swinburne's account but advances beyond the latter with respect to personalistic theism. Taliaferro develops what he calls "inte-grative theism," a profoundly integrated view of God and the world in which God is deeply affected by the world in ways similar to how human persons are deeply affected by their bodies.[14] This view of divine embodiment insists that God experiences the pains, sufferings, goods, and joys of the world. It is thus integrative in that the unity of God and the world is akin to the unity of soul and body, not God's body insofar as he is not *sensorially* affected by cosmic processes (an exploding star does not give God pain), nor in a way that his power of agency rests upon cosmic laws the way we depend on our bodies. Neither is the world God's body in the ontological sense that, say, Lacantius argued against in his *Divine Institutes* when he rhetorically asked: "Is plowing possible without tearing the divine body?"[15] This view resists an ontology in which God is strictly identical to the world. Yet the world is the focal point of divine agency, so the world is akin to the body of God in a causal sense.

There is also a sense in which the moral well-being of the universe does affect God, so the world is also akin to God's body in a moral sense.[16] Consid-er the analogy that when someone harms her body it does harm to her. The analogy is imperfect because in the case of harm to the human individual the effect on her is directly causal, whereas in the case of God the effect is by way of his affective concern for the creation. Nevertheless, God's affective love of

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13   Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (OUP, 2016).

14   Taliaferro, *Consciousness and the Mind of God*. Taliaferro and I develop the view further and respond to several objections to it. See Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister, *Contemporary Philosophical Theology* (Routledge, 2016), especially chapters 1, 6, and 9.

15   Lacantius, *Apocalyptic Spirituality* (Paulist Press, 1979), 31; as quoted in Taliaferro, *Con-sciousness and the Mind of God*, 334.

16   See Taliaferro and Meister, *Contemporary Philosophical Theology*, chapter 9.

the world does support a sense in which it functions as his body. For example, when the innocent are treated with cruelty and injustice, this may be seen as an act that violates God's will and purpose; it is a source of divine sorrow (and perhaps rage). When we come to realize the profound harms we are inflicting on ourselves, other life forms, future generations, the planet itself, and other cosmic entities, these actions may also be seen as ways in which ecological upheaval counts as harm to God. Thus, this view rejects the classical notion of divine impassability and insists that God is passable insofar as he is affectively and ceaselessly responsive to the goods and ills of the world. What it means for God to be present to the world, then, is for him to be causally connected to it and to be affectively responsive to it, experiencing the pleasures and the joys of others, and feeling sorrow for its woes. God is thus subject to passions; his pleasure and sorrow are elements of what is involved in his loving and experiencing the creation, and of the very life of God.

With this view of the integration of the life of God and the life of the world, one is able to explicitly renounce the charges of distance and remoteness that some have launched against theism.[17] One can affirm the urgency and importance of care for all living things, and indeed ecological concerns more broadly. The view also avoids certain challenges facing pantheistic models of the divine, for while God's life permeates creation, it is not identical to it. God is infinite, and the world is finite; God sustains the world, and the world is sustained by God; God influences the world, and the world affects God.

The above examples are possible ways of construing divine embodiment that utilize a body-soul analogy of God and the world. The views of Hartshorne, Swinburne, and Taliaferro and I each take the personhood of God to be fundamental and assume that the way in which a person relates to his body offers a useful analogy for the way that God is related to the world. For the model to be beneficial, it is not necessary that God be related to the world in precisely the way our minds are related to our bodies. But what are important for our purposes are the personalistic aspects of God and God's relation to the world that can be drawn from these embodiment models. How this is relevant to the argument from neglect will be clarified in section III.

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17   See, for example, Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993).

II. THE ARGUMENT FROM NEGLECT

One reason for the disinclination by some to embrace a personalistic view of theism is the apparent absence of divine action in the world with regard to pain and suffering. If God is omnibenevolent, omniscient, exceedingly powerful, and akin to a person in having intentions, feelings, purposes, goals and desires, then why does God permit the ongoing, widespread suffering in the world? The actions that one would expect to occur if there were such a God are those that would eradicate the most appalling cases of evil--evil, for example, whose effect is dysteleological and widely destructive. It is the reality of these sorts of evils that are particularly perplexing for those who embrace personalistic forms of God.

Wesley Wildman has argued that, with regard to the problem of evil, the concern is not so much *that* evil exists as that God, if there is a God, seemingly *does nothing about it*. For Wildman, it is the idea of a *personal* God that creates the difficulty, for, on the view that there exists such a divine reality, he is evidently indifferent to, or ineffective in responding to, situations about which a loving, caring God should be so engaged. The apparent lack of divine response is one reason why some have rejected theism altogether and why others, such as Wildman himself, are theists of a *nonpersonalistic* sort.[18]

Wildman summarizes the problematic:

> Of course, it is not actually the existence of suffering that is the problem for personal ideas of God. That is a shared challenge for all religions and all theologies. It is what a supposedly personal active God doesn't do about it that is the problem. Consider the following analogy. When my children endanger themselves through their ignorance or willfulness, I do not hesitate as one trying to be a good father to intervene, to protect them from themselves, to teach them what they don't know, and thereby to help them become responsible people. I needed to do that a lot more when they were little than I do now but I believe that my love for those children can be measured as much by my interventions as by my allowing them space to experience making their own decisions independently. They do need to experience the effects of their choices, whether good or bad, but I would rightly be a negligent parent if I allowed them such freedom that they hurt themselves or others out of ignorance or misplaced curiosity or wickedness.

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18   For more on non-personal conceptions of God, see John Bishop, "The Divine Attributes and Non-Personal Conceptions of God", *Topoi* 36, no. 4 (2017).

To the extent that we think of God as a personal active being, we inevitably apply these standards. Frankly, and I say this with the utmost reverence, the personal God does not pass the test of parental moral responsibility. If God really is personal in this way, then we must conclude that God has a morally abysmal record of inaction or ineffective action. This I shall call the *argument from neglect*, and I take it to be the strongest moral argument against most forms of personal theism. It applies most obviously to versions of personal theism in which God is omnipotent. But the argument from neglect also applies to views of personal theism that deny omnipotence, such as process theology, because the argument establishes that God's ability to influence the world is so sorely limited as to make God virtually irrelevant when it comes to the practical moral struggles of our deeply unjust world.[19]

One response to this argument has been developed by Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp.[20] They maintain that to meet the objection, the defender of personalistic theism is obligated to respond to two charges:

(1) to demonstrate that there may be a good reason why God is either unable to act in the manner that one would expect a benevolent God to act, or that God chooses not to carry out such acts; and

(2) to avoid constraining divine action to the extent that it is no longer relevant.

They attempt to meet the objection by moving beyond offering the mere *logical possibility* that there is a good reason (or set of reasons) for what appears to be divine neglect while also claiming not to *know* what reason or reasons God actually has for it. Rather, they seek to provide an account of divine motive and action that constitutes a plausible and consistent *explanation* for what seems to be divine neglect — plausible, at least, to the relevant community of inquiry that is open to a personalistic view of God. Their hypothesis, to which we can refer simply as the Clayton-Knapp hypothesis, is summarized as follows:

Suppose the purpose, or at least one purpose, of God's creating our universe was to bring about the existence of finite rational agents capable of entering

19   Wesley Wildman, "A Review and Critique of the 'Divine Action Project': A Dialogue Among Scientists and Theologians, Sponsored by Pope John Paul II," unpublished manuscript, page 3, as quoted in Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief: Science, Philosophy, and Faith* (OUP, 2011), 45. For Wildman's developed views on the subject, see Wesley Wildman, *Science and Religious Anthropology: A Spiritually Evocative Naturalist Interpretation of Human Life* (Ashgate, 2009).

20   Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*.

into communion with God. Suppose the way God achieved that purpose was by creating a universe in which events would be consistently governed by regularities of the kind described by the laws of physics or, more broadly, the laws of nature. Because the universe operates according to its own regularities, beings who evolved through the operation of those regularities are not simply the direct expression of the divine will (as would be the case if they were directly created by divine fiat) but partake of the (relative) autonomy with which God has endowed the universe as a whole.[21]

As stated, the Clayton-Knapp hypothesis leaves a central question unanswered: Why could God not *occasionally* intervene to override physical regularities where such interventions would prevent tremendous suffering? Intervening in order to prevent a minor mishap may well be unwarranted, but surely acting to prevent a catastrophic event, such as the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 that brought about the deaths of approximately 250,000 Indonesians, would be. The reply offered by Clayton and Knapp is that in creating and sustaining a universe with free creatures, "A benevolent God could not intervene *even once* without incurring the responsibility to intervene in every case where doing so would prevent an instance of innocent suffering."[22] They call this the "not-even-once" principle.

Why is God so constrained by the not-even-once principle? What sort of necessity would compel the consistent inaction of a benevolent, personal deity with regard to pain and suffering? For Clayton and Knapp, it is not a *forensic* necessity whereby God would have to explain to others why he did not act in a particular situation, for God is not accountable to anything less than God. Instead, they suggest a combination of ethical and metaphysical responses. With regard to the former, they are not suggesting an ethic whereby God would need to obey a policy of proportionate intervention as human agents do, for he ostensibly does not have the limitations of resources or compassion that humans do. For most theists, personalistic or otherwise, God's resources are unlimited, and God experiences compassion in a far more intense manner, and sees the immediate need of amelioration of the human condition far more clearly, than humans do. Human beings can act to ameliorate suffering without thereby being obligated to act in every instance because humans are so limited by their finitude. God ostensibly has no such

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21   Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*, 46–47.
22   Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*, 49 (italics in original).

limitations. For God, then, responding one time to suffering would obligate God to act on all or virtually all occasions of suffering. But doing that would preclude preserving a universe in which conscious moral beings such as us could develop morally and rationally.

Furthermore, the evolution of rational and moral agency would likely not be possible in a world which does not follow natural laws — one in which, for example, bullets turned to flower petals and bombs turned to bursts of perfume. Science as a discipline would likely not evolve in a world in which there was no basis for developing the appreciation of the natural regularities requisite for knowledge acquisition. Why is the development of science so important? Because "science is merely one institutional expression of the more general human project of individual and collective self-definition and self-determination, which proceeds by our interacting with a reality that we can understand, in no small measure because it is *not* subject to arbitrary alteration by human — or more than human — fiat."[23]

Metaphysically, could not God have created human beings de novo in possession of all of the desired moral and intellectual virtues rather than having to acquire them over the arduous struggle of life on earth? Not if the following principle holds: "[V]irtues that have been formed within an agent as a hard-won deposit of right decisions in situations of challenge and temptation are intrinsically more valuable than ready-made virtues created within her without any effort on her on part." This principle, proffered by John Hick, indicates a value judgment that cannot be proven yet that seems as plausible and compelling to me (and, it appears, to Clayton, Knapp, and many others) as it did to Hick: "[A] moral goodness that exists as the agent's initial given nature, without ever having been chosen in the face of temptations to the contrary, is intrinsically less valuable than a moral goodness that has been built up over time through the agent's own responsible choices in the face of alternative possibilities."[24]

In their attempt to provide a plausible and consistent explanation for what appears to be divine neglect, it may seem that Clayton and Knapp have shown that God is unable to act at all in the universe, and thus that the *per-*

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23   Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*, 49, (italics in original).

24   John Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy", in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 43.

sonal dimension of God is irrelevant to human life and experience. This is not the case, they maintain, for God *is* able to perform actions that bring about events in the universe that would not have occurred otherwise. How so? They argue that within an emergentist framework, divine influence at the non-nomological mental level is possible and does not demand an exception to any natural laws, avoiding undermining the conditions necessary to make scientific explanations possible, and thus avoiding the negation of finite rational agency.[25] God can and does act, on their view, to lure conscious creatures into conformity with the divine nature and will, and God does so without incurring a moral obligation to prevent any evil whatsoever.

III. DIVINE EMBODIMENT AND THE CONSTRAINTS OF CREATION

In their response to charges (1) and (2), Clayton and Knapp's explanation for why God does not perform the actions that one would expect of God does provide a rigorous and consistent account for why, though it may seem that God is like a neglectful parent with respect to pain and suffering in the world, yet he is not. Yet it seems to have constrained divine action to the point that it is no longer relevant with respect to evil, a concern they were attempting to avoid. For on their account, God does not respond *at all* to the egregious maladies and horrors in the world. How, then, is divine action relevant to evil? If a parent were constrained in such a way that she were unable to respond at all to the pain and suffering of her child, one would surely claim that her parental actions are no longer relevant with respect to her child's suffering. If Clayton and Knapp are correct with regard to the ethical and metaphysical constraints noted above, then it would provide a good explanation for why God never responds to evil, though divine action would seem to have lost much of its relevance to the human condition. Perhaps there is another explanation that avoids this conclusion. Let us, then, further examine their argument.

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25   Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*, 53–66. Clayton also assesses the case for emergent phenomenon in *Philip Clayton, Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness (OUP, 2006)*. See also Philip Clayton and Paul Davies, eds., *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion* (OUP, 2008).

As noted, according to the not-even-once principle, if a benevolent God intervened on any occasion in response to pain and suffering, he would incur the responsibility of doing so on every occasion. Why would God incur such responsibility? Because he does not have the limitations that humans do, limitations that require a policy of proportionate intervention. Since God has no such limitations, he would be morally obligated to intervene in most if not all cases of suffering, but this would preclude the regularities requisite for creating moral and rational beings, argue Clayton and Knapp.

While it is surely true that when it comes to human agents, given our finitude and limitations, a policy of proportionate intervention is needed based on scarce resources, compassion fatigue, inaccessibility, and so on. But perhaps something like a policy of proportionate intervention is also necessary for God. Such a policy would not be due to insufficient physical resources or limitations on divine attributes such as love and compassion. Rather, it would be due to the limitations of the nature of those with whom God is working to bring into spiritual and moral maturity. This nature is one of finitude, free and creative agency, and moral capacity and culpability. If God is to permit and promote the existence and flourishing of such free and autonomous creatures, then the actions of these creatures will likely not always be in agreement with the divine will. There may be universes in which God's nature and purposes are expressed in different ways, and they may well reflect different goods and goals than God has for our universe. But whatever the universe, given the parameters and possibilities of that universe, and the nature of the divine reality as manifest in that universe, there will be limitations on divine action which are rooted in that particular expression and the natures and purposes therein. God need not therefore be bound by the not-even-once principle in order to be morally consistent. To the contrary, as the embodied, affective, compassionate, loving divine presence, God would be ceaselessly responding, as far as divinely possible, to the ills and evils of this world.

But we are still left with the problem of neglect. Wildman, Clayton, and Knapp have aptly demonstrated that the constraints on divine action must be profound on a personalistic account of theism, for if God exists he does not act in the world in ways that a personalistic theist would prima facie suppose that such a God should act. Yet, it will be argued, the personalistic theist need not conclude that God is so constrained as not to be able to respond even once to evil. Let us consider, then, constraints on divine action given an em-

bodied personalistic form of theism that may provide an explanation for why it seems that God is behaving like a neglectful parent.[26]

One type of divine constraint is rooted in the overall purposes God has for the universe, as Clayton and Knapp point out. Though such purposes may not be easily discernable, the structure of the universe, including its laws and regularities, would be established by a personal and benevolent God in order to have the best chance of achieving the goals and goods that he desires for that universe. God could modify the structure, but if he desires to achieve the goals and goods he has in mind in establishing the structure, he will be constrained by it unless he changes the goals or goods he had in mind in creating it.

With regard to the specific purposes God might have for this universe, one could also agree with the Clayton-Knapp hypothesis that the purpose, or a purpose, of the universe was to "bring about finite rational agents capable of entering into communion with God."[27] If this is the case, then it may be that those agents will likely experience a certain amount of suffering given the structure of this universe. This would be so if God could not bring about his overall purpose or specific purposes without persons experiencing suffering in some manner. God would thus be limited in his actions with regard to suffering. Consider the following example. Suppose that someone, call her Aaiza, was in an automobile accident in which her left leg was completely crushed and had to be amputated. Suppose further that Aaiza belongs to a religiously devout family who prays regularly and believes in miracles. Would it be reasonable for Aaiza and her family to ask in prayer for God to grow her a new leg? Such a request seems wildly unreasonable, even to those who believe that God can and does act in the world. But why is it wildly unreasonable to pray for the growing of a new leg and not wildly unreasonable to pray that, say, one's lung cancer goes into remission? After all, there are many alleged cases of healing in response to prayer.[28]

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26 For extensive treatments of divine action that have influenced my own thinking on the matter, Keith Ward, *Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emergent Universe* (Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science, and Understanding* (Yale Univ. Press, 2000), John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (Yale Univ. Press, 2003) and John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* (Yale Univ. Press, 2008).

27 Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*, 46. The major monotheistic religions all have in mind something like this as a primary purpose of the creation.

28 As Craig Keener demonstrates in his extensive two-volume study on miracles, Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Baker Academic, 2011), hun-

The answer will partly have to do with how we understand the universe to be structured. If it is a tightly closed and mechanistic system, then any act of God would be an intervention, a breaking into the natural order and a violation of its laws and regularities. But if instead the universe is a system of open potentiality, one which follows probability laws rather than strictly deterministic ones, then God would not be violating those laws if he did bring about certain events in the natural world that occurred within the physical limitations allowable by the overall structure.

Clayton and Knapp argue against this idea. Metaphysically, they maintain, God's acting in the world in this way would undermine the regularities of the natural order. But could not God perform "hidden interventions" in which his actions are not "humanly distinguishable" such that the world continues to operate on the regularities demanded by the regularity point raised earlier? No, they maintain, for doing so would raise two further difficulties. First, God would be acting in ways that are inconsistent, for he would be ameliorating pain and suffering in some cases and not in others. Second, it would seem to sabotage the natural regularities in question, for God would be frequently impinging on those regularities in a manner that is humanly undetectable. To sabotage the regularities would undermine science and rational agency.

In reply to the first point, it simply does not follow that if God does not act in the same way on every occasion, he is being inconsistent. There are likely numerous good reasons for acting or not acting in any particular situation relevant to suffering. We may not be privy to many or perhaps any of the actual reasons God has for acting or not acting in any individual instance, yet it does not follow that there are no good reasons. The soul-making theodicy proposed by John Hick, for example, would provide one kind of reason for God's allowing suffering in some cases, at least.[29]

In reply to the second point, it is not clear that it would *sabotage* the regularities of the natural world if God acted in ways that are humanly undetectable. Clayton and Knapp claim that to believe that God acts in this manner is "to believe that the natural order is in fact laden with irregularities, however lawlike it may appear to us in practice."[30] But why refer to them as "irregu-

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dreds of millions of people today claim to have experienced miracles.

29   See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

30   Clayton and Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief*, 52.

larities," and why refer to divine acts as "sabotages" in such cases? Suppose the physical laws of the universe operate within a probabilistic structure, as most physicists maintain, and that God works within that structure to choose a particular trajectory that would not have followed without his so acting (though the *possibility* of such a trajectory would exist without God so acting). It would certainly follow that the physical laws themselves would not provide an *exhaustive* explanation of the occurrences in the universe, though we could still maintain that they provide a *complete* explanation.[31] As such, the natural order would still be nomological in structure, and calling events that occur within this structure (however they are brought about) "irregularities" and "sabotages" seems to utilize misplaced dysphemisms.

If God does act in this way, his actions in most cases would be restricted by the limits of the probabilistic laws that are set by the stochastic patterns of quantum mechanics.[32] While quantum theory can be interpreted deterministically or indeterministically, the majority of quantum physicists take quantum probability to be an intrinsic property, and this allows for there to be ontological openness that permits the function of additional causal principles at work in the natural world. This interpretation of quantum theory thus allows for the purposive direction and guidance of God to be in play.[33] We need not know *how* God works in this causal junction to accomplish his desired ends, only that it is metaphysically possible for him to do so within the laws and regularities as we currently understand them.[34]

Consider the example of the probability of someone surviving five years after being diagnosed with stage IV-B non-small cell lung cancer. At the time of the writing of this paper, the probability is less than one percent. While the

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31   On whether physical laws are exceptionless regularities, see Nancy Cartwright, "Do the Laws of Physics state the Facts", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 61, no. 1-2 (1980).

32   For a concise account of quantum ideas, see John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2002). Polkinghorne expounds on the relevance of quantum theory to theology in a number of works, including Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science, and Understanding* and *Polkinghorne, Quantum Physics and Theology*.

33   This causal input could be, for example, in the form of new information included in the "causal joint" between divine providence and the created world. See Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science, and Understanding*.

34   In John Polkinghorne, *Theology in the Context of Science* (SPCK, 2008), 79, Polkinghorne notes that though we are not in a place where we can "identify uniquely and exhaustively the causal joints by which agency might be exercised," that does not rule out the possibility or plausibility of their being an open space in which providential agency might be exercised.

chances of surviving five years are extremely low, some people do survive this amount of time and more. If someone were diagnosed with this form of lung cancer, it seems that God could work within that small probability range of survival to bring it about that the cancer cells in this particular individual go into remission. Again, one could never be sure that God had in fact acted, nor could one be sure of the reasons he had for acting in this particular case and not in another. But it does not follow that God could not or would not do so.

But would not such divine action be an intervention into and violation of the natural world? Not necessarily. On the limited embodiment views of Swinburne and Taliaferro, one could maintain that God works within those open spaces as noted above, and that doing so is no *violation* of the natural laws. It is just what it means for the universe to be open to the purposes and plans of providence. If one affirms the pantheistic embodiment views of Hartshorne, Clayton, and Knapp, then the criticism of external divine intervention or interference into the natural world loses it force completely. For on their views the world is not ontologically external to God such that the actions of God are "outside" interventions into its order and functioning. Instead, its very laws and operations are mere expressions of divine agency, will, and purpose. The natural regularities of the world are thus in a sense divine regularities. Interruptions of the regularities would not then be external violations, but internal (and sometimes focally intentional) actions. They would be the actions of the divine mind exemplified in the divine body, just as the actions of a human mind on a human body are not interventions or violations of natural law.

The autonomic system of the human body, which regulates bodily functions in a largely unconscious manner, provides an (imperfect) analogy. My breathing rates are regulated by my autonomic nervous system. Yet I can increase or decrease that rate at will if I so choose (for purposes of meditation, for example). On the view of embodiment affirmed by Hartshorne, Clayton, and Knapp, the regularities of the natural world are an ongoing feature of the created order in which the acts of God occur in the natural processes themselves, though in a non-focal manner.[35] As Clayton puts it:

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35   In the words of Arthur Peacocke, who also affirms this form of divine embodiment: "the inorganic, biological, and human worlds are not just the stage of God's action — they *are* in themselves a mode of God in action." Arthur Peacocke, "Chance and Law", in *Chaos and Com-*

> [T]he actions of God can be much more coherently conceived if the world bears a relationship to God analogous to the body's relationship to the mind or soul….As an opening hypothesis, [this panentheistic soul-body analogy] appears to suggest that there is no *qualitative* or ontological difference between the regularity of natural law and the intentionality of special divine actions.[36]

Returning to the example of someone growing a new leg after amputation, in this case the probability is virtually zero (at least, that is, given current scientific capabilities).[37] For God to cause a new leg to grow, it would likely involve an event or set of events beyond the strictures of physical nomological explanation, even granting possibilities allowable within quantum laws.[38] It would involve, that is to say, a miracle.[39] It is not that it would be metaphysically impossible for God to grow the leg, but the regularities and patterns of the natural world would likely preclude such action by God, unless perhaps there was an overriding reason for God to do so. An event of this sort, a miracle, would need to be a very rare anomaly, otherwise it would destroy the functional integrity of the overall physical system that God had established. And it would be scientifically inexplicable. From a theological perspective, natural laws would thus be seen as reports of regular and predictable patterns of divine activity and creativity, but that could, with certain limitations, be further influenced by divine will.

Whichever model of divine embodiment one employs, only God could fully know the parameters, possibilities, and purposes of any given universe and the limits of the functional integrity of the system he created. And we cannot always infer from the *general* constraints of creation what *specific*

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plexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action, eds. Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur R. Peacocke (The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1995), 139.

36   Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1997), 100–101.

37   However, regenerative medicine has in recent years made significant strides toward the growth of new organs.

38   It may be, however, that one day in the future advances in regenerative medicine will bring about growing new limbs. In that case, God could work through scientists and surgeons to bring about the growth of a new leg without engaging in *miraculous* activity.

39   By "miracle" I mean an extraordinary and astonishing event that points toward the presence or purpose of God. A relevant example to consider is the Christian belief about the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This is an event which, if true, involves an act of God that goes beyond the regular operations of natural laws. On the Christian view, bringing about the resurrection of Jesus pointed to the presence and purpose of God in salvation history.

limitations might apply in any *particular* situation. Yet it seems reasonable to affirm at least this much about the moral and metaphysical constraints on divine action with respect to our universe given the existence of the God of personalistic theism. God can respond to evil on this account, working with the open spaces allowable by natural laws, and (very rarely) working even beyond those spaces.

IV. CODA

While the constraints of creation are many on an embodied, personalistic model of God, and thus the limitations of God's actions with respect to suffering are profound, the not-even-once principle seems an unnecessary posit. If God has a good reason or set of reasons for responding to evil and does respond in a particular instance, it does not follow that he is then morally compelled to do so in every case. We may not be privy to many or perhaps any of the reasons God has for acting or not acting in any given situation, yet it seems that there are general metaphysical, moral, and scientific reasons why God does not act more in the world than he does with respect to evil. Thus, one can reasonably believe that God is acting to ameliorate pain and suffering, perhaps even in response to prayer, though praying for the growth of a new limb would likely be, at least at this point in history, ineffective and silly.

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NEOPLATONIC PANTHEISM TODAY

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Abstract. Neoplatonism is alive and well today. It expresses itself in New Thought and the mind-cure movements derived from it. However, to avoid many ancient errors, Neoplatonism needs to be modernized. The One is just the simple origin from which all complex things evolve. The Good, which is not the One, is the best of all possible propositions. A cosmological argument is given for the One and an ontological argument for the Good. The presence of the Good in every thing is Spirit. Spirit sits in the logical center of every body; it is surrounded by the regulatory forms of that body. Striving for the Good, Spirit seeks to correct the errors in its surrounding forms. To correct the errors in biological texts, modern Neoplatonists turn to the experimental method. This Neoplatonism is pantheistic not because of some theoretical definition of God but rather because of its practical focus on the shaping of Spirit.

I. INTRODUCTION

Plotinus says "all men instinctively affirm the god in each of us to be one, the same in all" (*Enneads*, 6.5.1). On this point, and many others, Plotinian Neoplatonism is alive and well in much current Western religious thought and practice. During the 1800s, Neoplatonism was highly influential in America (Bregman, 1990). By way of the New England Transcendentalists, it entered the American religious movement known as *New Thought*. New Thought turned esoteric Plotinian metaphysics into popular theological psychotherapy. It inspired many small sects, such as *Christian Science* (Eddy, 1875); the *Unity Churches* (Cady, 1895); and *Religious Science* (Holmes, 1936). Among these original sects, the Unity Churches still flourish today.

From these sects, Plotinian ideas spread out into the wider culture. Taking inspiration from New Thought, Napoleon Hill wrote the bestseller *Think and Grow Rich* (1938). Norman Vincent Peale studied with Hill, and the ide-

as of New Thought were central to his own bestseller, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952). Peale's work helped shape the positive psychology movement and the human potential movement. Ideas from New Thought entered Pentecostal theology, including the Word of Faith movement and the Prosperity Gospel. Neoplatonic and New Thought ideas drive much of the New Age movement. New Thought inspired movements based on the idea that our minds create our realities. These include superstitious movements based on sympathetic magic like the law of attraction (Byrne, 2006). Other popular mind-power movements argue that the purification of consciousness is the key to flourishing. These movements include Western Buddhisms (Harris, 2014) and the new Stoicisms (Robertson, 2015).

Neoplatonism is also alive and well among those who take psychedelic drugs for spiritual purposes. Shanon says the worldview inspired by taking the psychedelic brew *ayahuasca* closely resembles the metaphysics of Plotinus. He writes that ideas and feelings inspired by taking ayahuasca "usually converge upon a coherent metaphysical outlook, one which is monistic, idealistic, pantheistic, imbued with religiosity and tainted with optimism, joy, and love" (2010: 269). Neoplatonic ideas are expressed by *ravers*, who enter ecstatic trances by dancing to electronic music, often under the influence of psychedelics. During their ecstatic trances, ravers often experience a profound energy flowing through their bodies; they see that all things are connected and unified; they feel that this same energy flows through all things (Sylvan, 2005: ch. 3).

Neoplatonism was closely associated with magic. One type of Neoplatonic magic was known as *theurgy*. Theurgy begins with the thesis that the deep being of the body contains a divine energy (see Sallustius, 363, chs. 14 & 15). This energy strives to express itself, through the materiality of the flesh, into powerfully good actions. However, the flesh is corrupt, and its corruption blocks this energy. Theurgy aims to purify the structure of the body so that it can become a clear channel for the manifestation of this divine energy (Shaw, 1985, 2015). The goal of life, for the theurgist, is the purification of the body (Shaw 2014). Johnston (2008: 452) reports that theurgy was described by the Greek phrase *hê telestikê technê*, meaning the craft of self-perfection. Shaw (1999) argues that the theurgists made extensive use of mathematical symbols in their rituals. Since they thought of the soul as an embodied mathematical pattern, they were concerned with the numbers of the body. Dillon

(2007; 2016) says theurgy involved an early technical approach to matter. It is arguable that a long chain of links runs from theurgy to modern *self-hacking*. Modern self-hackers include body-hackers, neuro-hackers, consciousness-hackers, and so on. Self-hackers are concerned with the numbers of their bodies. They apply the experimental method to their own bodies in order to improve their physiological numbers. They pursue the *hê telestikê technê*. Like the old theurgists, they aim to divinize the flesh. But they use modern science and technology to transform human bodies into transhuman bodies.

II. NEOPLATONIC IDEAS IN NEW THOUGHT

Many Plotinian ideas can be found in one of the most important New Thought texts, namely, H. Emilie Cady's *Lessons in Truth* (1895). Where Plotinus talked about the One, Cady talks about God. But her God resembles the One. For Plotinus, the One is not a person (*Enneads*, 3.9.3, 6.9.6). Likewise Cady denies that God is a person (4, 8). For Plotinus, the One is not a being; rather, the One is the *ground* or *source* of being (*Enneads*, 3.8.10, 5.2.1, 5.3.15, 5.6.3). And Cady denies that God is a being among beings; she affirms that God is the ground or source of being (4, 6, 9). God is not a thing which has power or intelligence or goodness; rather, God just is power, intelligence, and goodness (5-6). God is an abstract essence, in the sense that God and the divine attributes are identical. Her name for this essence is *Spirit*. She writes that "God is Spirit, or the Creative Energy which is the cause of all visible things" (4). And she explicitly declares that God is not "*a* spirit" (3). That is, God is not a particular thing.

For Plotinus, every particular thing is a manifestation of the One and in some sense wholly contains the One; that is, the One is integrally omnipresent (*Enneads*, 6.4-5). Likewise for Cady, every thing is a manifestation of God and wholly contains God (6). She says "God IS" while beings exist in the sense of standing out (*ex-sistare*) from God (7). To illustrate this manifestation, Plotinus often metaphorically identifies the One with the Sun. Cady also makes use of solar metaphors (21). But Plotinus also says that the One is like the spring from which all rivers flow (*Enneads*, 3.8.10). Cady appeals to this liquid metaphor: God resembles a primal ocean of being while we are drops of water from that ocean (6, 9). God is the primal reservoir of spiritual energy; this energy flows out from God through many channels into many

fountains; each fountain is a particular thing like a human being (20). Thus "Divine Energy" (7) flows out from the original reservoir into humans. Cady also uses the metaphor of the fire and spark: God is the fire from which we are all sparks (52, 109). Thus while God is Spirit and Self (capital *S*), every human is a spirit and an individual self (lower case *s*).

For Cady, God is both immanent and transcendent. When she talks about divine transcendence, she describes God as an abstract essence or universal. When she talks about divine immanence, she portrays God as being present in things like a universal is present in things. The distinction between divine immanence and transcendence can be expressed in terms of *in re* and *ante rem* universals. An *ante rem* universal is an abstract essence which transcends all concrete things. An *in re* universal is an abstract essence which is immanent in some particular concrete things. An *in re* universal is an expression or manifestation of an *ante rem* universal. The treeness immanent in every tree is a manifestation of the treeness which transcends all trees. You might think of an *in re* universal as a pair (U, L) where U is an *ante rem* universal and L is a location (see Gilmore, 2003). But Cady thinks of universals as energies. Likewise Tillich writes that every concrete tree "exists only because it participates in that power of being which is treehood, that power which makes every tree a tree" (1957: 21). He says the form of a thing is "its *essentia*, its definite power of being" (1951: 178). Thus both transcendent and immanent universals are energetic powers of being.

Universals arrange themselves into a genus-species tree. The leaves of this tree are the forms of individuals. The form of an individual is an essence immanent in exactly one thing. The form of Socrates has only Socrates as its instance. Plotinus recognized such forms (Rist, 1963; Mamo, 1969). But the root of this tree is the maximally abstract universal being-itself. It is the essence immanent in every existing thing. Tillich famously identifies being-itself with God (1951: 235-7). For Tillich, *theism* affirms that God is both immanent and transcendent. Being-itself is both the immanent energy of being in every thing and the energy of being which transcends every thing. But Tillich says that *pantheism* denies this transcendence (1957: 7). For the pantheist, being-itself is entirely immanent. It is an immanent natural energy. Thus Tillich says that pantheism identifies God with "the creative power and unity of nature, the absolute substance which is present in everything" (1951: 233). He says pantheism identifies God with "the *natura naturans*, the creative nature, the

creative ground of all natural objects" (1957: 6). If this is right, then Cady is a theist. For Cady, *Spirit* is the transcendent energy of being while *spirits* are immanent energies of being. Every spirit is a manifestation of Spirit.

Every human being is a manifestation of Spirit. A human being has three layers: spirit, soul, and body. These are organized like the shells of an onion. The core part is spirit; the next part is the soul; the outermost part is the body. Continuing with her liquid metaphors, Cady identifies the spirit with the heat of steam; the soul with water; and the body with the cold of ice (12). Every human has a hot energetic core; its spirit-core is surrounded by a cooler soul; its soul is surrounded by a frozen body-shell. On this metaphor, temperature corresponds to plasticity. Spirit is pure plasticity; it can shape itself into anything; soul is less plastic; body is frozen rigidity. The spirit in us is the presence in us of the Spirit which is God. God lives in us all the time (18) and is at the center of our being (19). Of course, while Spirit is both immanent and transcendent, spirit is merely immanent in us. Yet Spirit is our true self, the authentic self: "Spirit is the central unchanging I" (12, see 9). Thus Spirit is "the real innermost Self of each of us – the Self spelled with a capital S" (25). Since the Capital-S Self is God, or participates directly in God, it is always powerful, intelligent, and good (26). The Self always seeks to make you flourish; it strives to bless you with health and wealth and all the other good things of life; it strives to right all wrongs and cure all afflictions.

Sadly, the Self, which is Spirit, is surrounded by the soul. Your soul is your mind. Of course, it is not your *true* mind, but it is your mortal or carnal mind (12-13). Your mortal mind is free and, through its freedom, it fell. When it fell, it became a *self* (lowercase *s*), which is corrupt. Thus Cady says each human self stands to the divine Self as a spark to its original fire (52, 109). The corrupt self thinks bad thoughts. By thinking these bad thoughts, it blocks the power shining out of the true Self. This blockage affects the outermost layer of your existence, namely, your body. Because your mind thinks bad thoughts, your body suffers from afflictions such as disease, poverty, old age, and death (26). Through techniques of self-purification, you can get rid of the bad thought-patterns in your self to reveal the Self. Thus "we can by a persistent effort of the will change our beliefs, and by this means alone, entirely change our troublesome circumstances and bodily conditions" (26). This is the *mind-cure:* if you purify your thoughts, you will no longer suffer from illness or poverty. You will be healthy and wealthy.

According to New Thought, your thoughts create your reality. You change your thoughts by means of spiritual exercises like affirmations, denials, and meditation. On the one hand, the mind-cure finds superstitious expression in books like *The Secret* (Byrne, 2006). On the other hand, the mind-cure can purify itself by science. More scientific versions of the mind-cure include Westernized Buddhism. According to Sam Harris (2014), if you want to flourish, you must rid your mind of the pernicious illusion of the ego. If you want to be happy, you must rid your *Self* of your *self*. Another more scientific version of the mind-cure appears in the Stoic revival (Robertson, 2015). Stoicism tells you that your misery and happiness both arise only from your mind. Through practices like negative visualization, you can learn to control your mind so that it produces only serenity, tranquility, and peace. While Westernized Buddhism and recent Stoicism are both more scientific than old versions of the mind-cure, they still take inspiration from New Thought, and thus from Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism can be modernized. To modernize it, we need to look at some arguments.

III. THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Plotinus argued for an original unit (*Enneads*, 5.4.1). This original unit is simple and self-sufficient. It is the necessary first cause of all the things in the world. This original unit is *the One*. The Plotinian argument for the One is a kind of cosmological argument (Gerson, 1994: ch. 1). It goes something like this: (1) The world is a complex multiplicity. (2) Much like a plant depends on its seed (*Enneads*, 3.2.2, 3.7.11, 4.8.6, 4.9.3, 5.9.6), so every complex multiplicity depends on some simple unit. Dependency implies that the unit is prior to and so not a member of its many. (3) So, the world depends on some simple unit not in the world. (4) If there were many such units, they would be indistinguishable; hence they would resolve into one. (5) Therefore, the world depends on exactly one simple unit not in the world. This unit is the One. Plotinus says mentality requires complexity (*Enneads*, 3.9.1, 5.3.10-11). Since the One is simple, it has no mentality (*Enneads*, 3.8.10, 3.9.3, 5.6.6, 6.7.41).

A similar Cosmological Argument was given by Leibniz (1697: 84-6). His argument can be modernized by appealing to the difference between contingency and necessity. To say that a thing is *contingent* means that it depends on something else either for the way that it is or for the fact that it is. To say

that a thing is *necessary* means that it does not depend on anything else – it is totally independent. (1) Every contingent thing has an explanation. (2) The explanation for any contingent thing lies in some other thing. (3) Every class of contingent things is a contingent thing. (4) The world is the class of all contingent things. (5) So the world is a contingent thing. (6) Hence the world has an explanation. (7) The explanation for any class is not a member of the class. (8) So the explanation for the world is not a member of the world. (9) If any thing is not a member of the world, then it is not contingent. (10) So the explanation for the world is not contingent. (11) If something is not contingent, then it is necessary. (12) Therefore, the explanation for the world is some Necessary Being (the NB), which is not in the world. Every thing in the world ultimately depends on the NB. Hence it is independent. Since any whole depends on its parts, the NB has none – it is simple. It thus seems plausible to refer to the NB as the One. Since the One explains the world, it contains the *ultimate sufficient reason* for the world. However, it is mindless.

The One is sometimes thought of as existing at the top of some *great chain of being*. The major natural ranks in the great chain are: minerals, plants, animals, humans. These natural ranks are ordered by complexity: the things on higher ranks are more complex than things on lower ranks. The great chain is usually thought to be continuously ordered. From which it follows that the One, if it is simple, and even if it is not natural, is on the bottom rank of the great chain. But the ranks in the great chain are also often thought of as degrees of perfection: things on higher ranks are more perfect than things on lower ranks. So, if the ranks are degrees of perfection, then the One is not the maximally perfect being. On the contrary, since the One is the simplest thing, it must be *minimally* perfect. And while Plotinus typically puts the One at the top of his great chain, he sometimes does put it at the bottom. He describes it as a root or spring (*Enneads*, 3.3.7, 3.8.10). And, as the root of all things, Plotinus says the One is empty (*Enneads*, 2.9.1, 5.2.1). This conception of the One as the simple empty object at the bottom of a hierarchy of increasingly complex things is reflected in the metaphysics of set theory (Boolos, 1971). Set theory says that the empty set is the root of an infinite hierarchy of increasingly complex sets. All other sets are made by compounding the empty set. Like the One, the empty set is original, simple, and empty.

The One is independent, necessary, ultimate, original, and simple. Since the One is the first cause, it contains the ultimate sufficient reason for all the

dependent things in the world. Since the One *causes* other things to exist, it is concrete rather than abstract. The One is the cause of all natural things; but the cause of any natural thing is itself a natural thing. The One is the concrete instantiation of the empty set. The One is the *arche*; it is the Alpha. Since the One is independent and original, it is whole and complete. Since the One has all these features, it is plausible to say that the One is *divine*. However, it is also plausible to say that the One is a *universe*. After all, a universe is a complete concrete whole. It is certainly consistent with pantheism to say that universes can be divine. And a universe can be simple. So the One is just the simple original universe. Since it is simple, it has no parts. It has no space, no time, no matter, no energy, no things, no internal structure, no complexity. It is a partless dot.

IV. THE AGATHONIC ARGUMENT

Although the One exists, it is obvious that there are many other things. Neoplatonists need some argument to go from the One to these others. If the One is impotent, then the others will not exist; hence Neoplatonists seek an argument that the One has some generative power. Plato says the Good is a generative power (*Republic*, 507b-508c). Thus any generative power of the One comes from the Good. But we need some argument for the existence of the Good. Taking a term from Plato, the argument for the Good can be referred to as the *Agathonic Argument*. It has six premises. It runs to the conclusion that every thing surpasses itself in every possible way.

The first premise of the Agathonic Argument states that propositions exist. Propositions are abstract objects. Of course, Neoplatonists will not object to abstract objects. The existence of propositions can be defended by well-known indispensability arguments. The laws of nature are propositions. The axioms of mathematical systems are propositions. Because of their roles in the sciences, it is plausible to say that propositions are natural. The second premise of the Agathonic Argument states that propositions are ranked by value. Some propositions are better than others. Better propositions entail more surpassing. They entail that more things surpass themselves in more ways. The third premise states that there exists a unique best proposition. It is that proposition than which no better is possible. By definition, this best of all possible propositions asserts that every thing surpasses itself in every way.

The fourth premise asserts that propositions are either true or false. The fifth premise asserts that some propositions are true. The sixth premise is the *principle of the superiority of truth*. Truth is a *value* and true propositions are more valuable than false propositions. Any attempt to refute the superiority of truth must rely on valid inference from true premises. Hence any such attempt assumes the very principle which it aims to refute, and thereby contradicts itself. The superiority of truth is analytically true. And a false proposition does not entail that any thing surpasses itself in any way. It entails no self-surpassing at all. Hence any false proposition has no value. Once more, it turns out that the superiority of truth is analytic. It is logically necessary.

The Agathonic Argument now proceeds as follows: (1) There are some propositions. (2) These propositions are ordered by value. More valuable propositions asserts more self-surpassing. (3) There exists some unique best proposition. It asserts that every thing surpasses itself in every possible way. (4) Propositions are either true or false. (5) Some propositions are true. (6) Any true proposition is better than any false proposition. (7) Assume for *reductio* that the best proposition is false. (8) If the best proposition is false, then any true proposition is better than it. (9) But then the best proposition is not the best proposition. (10) Since this is a contradiction, the best proposition must be true. (11) Therefore, every thing surpasses itself in every possible way. Since the best proposition asserts universal self-surpassing, and since self-surpassing is good, the best proposition is *the Good*. Here modern Neoplatonism differs from Plotinus. Although Plato did not identify the One with the Good, Plotinus did. However, that identification is obscure (Jackson, 1967: 322; Mortley, 1975: 49; Gerson, 1994: 19-20). Modern Neoplatonists say they are distinct. The One is concrete while the Good is abstract. And since the Good involves absolutely universal quantifiers, it is arguably maximally complex. So the One is simple while the Good is complex. The One is the root or seed in the earth at the bottom of the great chain while the Good is the sun at the top.

On the conception of the Good presented here, goodness is self-surpassing. Since every possible state of affairs is surpassable by some better state of affairs, no state of affairs is best. An Aristotelian might challenge this by arguing that there does exist some best state of affairs, namely, the state in which every thing achieves its perfection. Each thing has a perfect *telos* at which it aims. If it reaches its *telos*, it cannot surpass itself. Against this finality, Neo-

platonists can argue that the realization of any degree of perfection always reveals higher degrees (see Hick, 1976: 422). Many who have argued against the Anselmian God have argued that perfection has no maximality. Hartshorne in particular argued that every degree of divine perfection is surpassed by a greater degree (1967: 19-20; 1984: 7-10, 31). And set theory shows how every infinity is surpassed by greater infinities. If degrees of perfection are indexed by ordinals, then the Good asserts that all things on every ordinal degree are surpassed by things on greater ordinal degrees. Since this quantifies over the proper class of ordinals, the Good has the indefinite extensibility of a proper class. The Good can still be a *telos*; it can be the Omega. But it will not be a closed finality; it will be an open horizon.

It is even arguable that the Good brings the One into being. Suppose the totality of abstract objects (including the Good) exists with logical necessity. Yet even if the One exists necessarily with respect to other concrete things (as the cosmological argument aims to show), it still does not exist with logical necessity. It is logically possible that no concrete things exist at all. The *empty situation* is that situation in which the class of concrete things is empty. The empty situation can surpass itself by containing the simplest concrete thing. And, if the Good is true, then it does surpass itself in exactly this way. Hence the Good is logically (but not causally) responsible for the One. If this is right, then the *telos* logically produces the *arche*; the Omega calls the Alpha into being. Here an abstract *telos* generates *ex nihilo* a concrete *arche*. Since this generation is logical rather than causal, it may be called *emanation*. Bishop (2018) has defended a similar view. Oppy (2018: ch. 4.4) has criticized Bishop as incoherent. The present reasoning indicates that Bishop makes sense. The Good has many features that point to its divinity. Modern Neoplatonists affirm that the Good is divine.

The Good is a proposition that is true at the One. Since the Good asserts that every thing surpasses itself in every way, the One surpasses itself in every way. This truth of the Good is present in the One as its *power of self-surpassing*. The presence of the Good in the One is the power of self-surpassing in the One. While the Good is an *ante rem* proposition, its presence in the One is an *in re* power. The goodness in the One is its power of self-surpassing. For the Neoplatonist, the goodness immanent in the One is a specific presence of the Goodness which transcends all things. Of course, the goodness immanent in the One is not a part of the One; the One is simple; hence the One is partless.

The goodness in the One is the essence of the One. However, since the One is simple, it has no other essence besides its own unity. So the goodness of the One is the unity of the One. This goodness goes wherever unity goes.

Following Cady, the power of self-surpassing in the One is the *Energy* of the One. The Energy of the One is the goodness in the One. The presence of the divine Good in the divine One is divine Energy. Since Cady also refers to this Energy as Spirit, the term *Spirit* will also be used here. But here Spirit is natural: it is *natura naturans*. Many old traditions posit something like Spirit. They say an ultimate power animates all things. The Stoics talked about *pneuma*; the Hindus posited *prana*; the Daoists posited *qi*; the Melanesians posited *mana*; the Aztecs talked about *teotle*. However, Spirit differs from those older energies in that it has no mentality. Spirit is an original power that drives the evolution of complexity; but minds appear only after long evolution (Dawkins, 2008: 52); hence Spirit has no mentality. Moreover, modern Neoplatonism demands consistency with modern science. So, if it exists at all, Spirit does not violate modern science. Spirit is an entirely natural power of self-surpassing (Steinhart, 2018c).

V. THE LAWS FOR UNIVERSES

Since the One is the initial universe, the *initial law for universes* simply affirms that the One exists. The One is the simplest of all possible universes. Since the One contains Spirit, the One surpasses itself in every possible way. It might be thought that the One surpasses itself by growing in complexity. But then the One would cease to be the One. And both set theory and biology teach that things gain complexity through *replication with variation*. They evolve through *descent with modification*. So the One surpasses itself through replication with variation. As Plotinus says, the One became pregnant and gave birth (*Enneads*, 3.8.8). It begets different versions of itself. These are its offspring. Since the One is simple, its offspring are more complex. And since the One is minimally valuable, its offspring are more valuable. At first, increases in complexity and value go together; later they are likely to come apart.

Since the One is a universe, its offspring are also universes. But each offspring of the One is also a unified whole. Since Spirit goes with unity, each offspring inherits Spirit from the One. Spirit flows from the One into its offspring. Each offspring inherits the power of self-surpassing. Its energetic es-

sence is its immanent goodness. It is a spark of the Good. Since each offspring is better than its parent, each offspring burns more brightly with goodness. As descendents of the One, these offspring are *counterparts*. They are ontological siblings joined by a counterpart relation. But now self-surpassing iterates: the offspring beget offspring. The grandchildren of the One are all ontological cousins. And so it goes. Since the One is surpassed by its offspring, which are surpassed again and again, the One is the seed or root of an endlessly ramified tree of universes; but the branches in this tree rise ever higher towards the Good itself.

The iteration of self-surpassing motivates the *successor law for universes*. This law states that every universe creates at least one better version of itself. It surpasses itself by begetting its better versions. The successor law is justified by the maximality of the Good. If the Good were to fail to drive every universe to create every possible better version of itself, then some better proposition would be possible; but then the Good would not be the best; so, the Good drives every thing to surpass itself in every way. For the sake of continuity, it is plausible to say that succession involves only minimal increases in value. Yet through iteration these minimal increments add up. Greater value (that is, greater goodness) implies greater intensity of the Energy of the Good. So Spirit acts more intensely at every successor. Still, all this surpassing makes only finite values. The successor law cannot pass from the finite to the infinite.

To pass from the finite to the infinite, it is necessary to run through limits. There must be some *limit law for universes*. The limit law generates infinitely great universes. The limit law acts on progressions of universes. A progression is any infinitely long series of improvements. Every progression starts with the initial universe and continues at least through all of its successors. It contains an endless chain of successors. Since every successor is better than its predecessor, every progression is a series of increasingly good universes. Just as universes have successors, so progressions have limits. The limit of any progression is minimally better than every universe in the progression of which it is the limit. Every progression is surpassed by its limits. The limit law now states that every progression produces at least one limit universe. This means that every universe in the progression contributes to the production of every limit universe. Since every limit surpasses an infinitely long sequence, the limit itself is infinite.

The limit law for universes is justified by the maximality of the Good. If the Good were to fail to drive every progression to produce all its limits, then some better proposition would be possible; but then the Good would not be the best; so, the Good drives every progression to produce all its limits. It entails that every progression generates a non-empty set of limits. The limits of a progression are like its offspring. Spirit flows through every progression and into its limits. Each limit contains the Energy of the Good. At any limit universe, Spirit acts with infinitely intensity. The Good entails that surpassing runs from the finite into the infinite. Surpassing is restricted only by logic: every universe surpasses itself in every consistently definable way. This gets cashed out using set theory. The limit law acts at every consistently definable ordinal. The tree of universes is a proper class of universes.

VI. WHOLES AND PARTS

The logic of self-surpassing produces an endlessly ramified tree of better universes. As universes gain value, they also gain complexity. They evolve into more complex wholes with more complex parts (here all parts are proper unless otherwise noted). They contain increasingly deeply nested part-whole structures. For Plotinus, every whole rests on some ultimate simples. Plotinus says every whole has some unity (*Enneads*, 3.8.10, 5.6.3, 6.6.13, 6.9.1). For if some multiplicity has no unity, then it is merely an aggregate rather than a whole. If simples fuse into some first-level wholes, those wholes can fuse into higher-level wholes. They can be unified parts of higher-level unities. At every level, parts are unified. Since Spirit goes with unity, it follows that every part of every whole in every universe is animated by Spirit. The Energy of the Good is present in every part of every whole in every universe. This is the integral omnipresence of the Good (*Enneads*, 5.1.11, 6.4-5). The integral omnipresence of the Good is justified by its maximality. For if the Good were not present in every part of every whole, then some better proposition would be possible; but then the Good would not be the best; hence the Good is present in every part of every whole. Yet wherever the Energy of the Good appears, it is regulated by form. All the Spirit in any universe, including ours, is entirely regulated by the natural laws of that universe (Steinhart, 2018c).

The maximality of the Good entails that, as new wholes surpass old wholes, no value is lost. This means that improvement is *Pareto optimal*:

when any whole is improved, at least one part gets better while none gets worse. Pareto optimality can be defined more precisely by *four constraints* on improvement. These four constraints apply to the ways that lesser wholes are surpassed by greater wholes. (1) The first constraint is that every part in the old whole must have at least one new version of itself in the new whole. Hence no value is lost by absence. The new version of the old part is a *counterpart* of the old part. (2) The second constraint says that distinct parts in the old whole must have distinct counterparts in the new whole. Hence no value is lost by erasure of uniqueness. (3) The third constraint says that no part in the old whole can have a less valuable counterpart in the new whole. The values of the parts are never decreased. (4) The fourth constraint says that at least one part in the old whole must have a more valuable counterpart in the new whole. At least one part must get better.

The four Pareto constraints ensure that the values of wholes are not increased merely by increasing the sums or averages of the values of their parts. Hence improvement based on these constraints avoids utilitarian paradoxes (Parfit, 1985: chs. 17-19). Concepts of improvement based on sums and averages cannot pass through limits into the infinite. But concepts based on counterparts can pass through limits into the infinite. So the Pareto constraints can pass into the infinite. These four constraints allow one part of the old whole to have many counterparts in the new whole. And they allow new simple things to be added to any new whole. The maximality of the Good entails a *principle of harmony:* for every part of every universe, for every way to improve that part, there exists some Pareto optimal improvement of the universe which contains that improvement of that part. Consequently, since every universe is improved in every way, it follows that every part of every universe is improved in every way. Suppose a universe contains an animal composed of a head (H) and tail (T). The improved versions of H are H1 and H2 while those of T are T1 and T2. Hence the better versions of the universe include the better animals {H, T1}, {H, T2}, {H1, T}, {H1, T1}, {H1, T2}, {H2, T}, {H2, T1}, {H2, T2}. Analogous remarks apply to progressions and limits.

As universes surpass universes, they become more complex. A complex universe contains many interacting things. The laws for cosmic self-surpassing permit the things in universes to come into conflict (*Enneads*, 4.4.32). Conflict can drive things to evolve to greater heights of value (*Enneads*, 2.3.16-18). This drive expresses itself in evolution by natural selection. Every

organism strives for its own goods. Some of those strivings cooperate while others compete. But competition ensures the survival of the fittest. It produces arms races: through conflict, the cheetah and the gazelle are both driven to ever greater heights of biological excellence (Dawkins, 2003: ch. 5.4). If there were no conflicts among organisms, life would never evolve to sufficient complexity to manifest all the goods we associate with animality, sociality, rationality, and so on. Conflict is necessary for the production of all but the lowest degrees of value (*Enneads*, 1.8.12). Of course, conflict often manifests itself as suffering. But Neoplatonists are not utilitarians. The power of self-surpassing does not strive to increase happiness. On the contrary, it strives to increase the virtue that manifests itself through competitive struggle. It strives to increase the *arete* that emerges in the *agon*. This virtue appears to our senses as dramatic beauty (*Enneads*, 2.3.18, 3.2.15-18, 3.6.2). And conflict sometimes also manifests itself as evil. For Plotinus, all evil is local. The evils in the parts do not refute the goodness of the whole (*Enneads*, 3.2.3, 3.2.11, 3.2.17, 4.4.32).

The laws of self-surpassing apply to all things in all universes. Any thing can be taken as initial. Every thing is the root of an infinitely ramified tree of ever better versions of itself. Hence the surpassing relation is an order relation on all things. Since every successor is a better version of its predecessor, it carries information about its predecessor. And since every limit is a better version of its progression, it carries information about its progression. Thus information flows through every lineage in every tree. It flows through any lineage like it flows through some causal chain. So it plausible to say that any lineage is a timelike process. The things in any lineage are *temporal counterparts*. Things at greater positions are *later than* things at lesser positions; things at lesser positions are *earlier than* things at greater positions. Earlier things *will be* their later counterparts and later things *were* their earlier counterparts.

Your current earthly life is one of the things in our universe. Your life is spatially and temporally extended; it is a four-dimensional process. Your life can be surpassed in many ways. Your life is surpassed by better versions of your life; those better versions of your life are the improvements of your life; they are your successor lives. Your successor lives inhabit successor universes. Since your successor lives are later than your life, they are the future counterparts of your current life. You will be your successor lives. After you die, you will live again. You will be reborn. Plotinus endorsed reincarnation (*Enneads*,

3.2.13, 3.4.2, 4.3.23, 6.7.6). His version of reincarnation is not naturalistic. But it is easy to naturalize. Plotinus endorsed the forms of individuals. So the soul of Socrates is just the form of the body of Socrates. If the soul is the form of the body, then reincarnation is just the reinstantiation of that form by a new body. This is a naturalistic conception of life after death. It resembles conceptions of life after death found in multiverse versions of Buddhism, in Hick (1976: chs. 15, 20), and in Steinhart (2014). The limit laws of self-surpassing carry your future lives into the transfinite. More generally, the logic of self-surpassing applies to your current earthly life. Hence your current earthly life is the root of an infinitely ramified tree of ever better lives.

VII. THE LOGICAL ANATOMY OF THE BODY

After a long evolutionary process, human animals appear on earth. For New Thought writers like Cady, human animals have a metaphysical anatomy. We are composed, like onions, of concentrically nested shells. For Cady, the body is the outermost shell; the mind is the middle shell; spirit is the inner core. For modern Neoplatonists, metaphysical anatomy studies the *immanence* of the body. The immanence of any thing is its logical interiority. The logical interiority of any thing can be thought of as a series of nested shells. But these shells are formal rather than material. These shells are concentrically nested essences. For bodies, they are layers of biological code.

Any body is a unified living whole. It inherits the unity of the One; but the unity of the One is the goodness of the One; so the unity of the body is the goodness of the body. The goodness of the body is the presence of the Good in the body; but this presence of the Good in the body is Energy. This Energy is Spirit. Spirit flows from the One through an enormously long chain of evolutionary links into the unity of every human body. Since unity is the most general essence, it dwells in the center of the logical anatomy of the body. It is the *first logical layer* of the body. Here modern Neoplatonists agree with both Cady and Tillich. The logical core of the body is the unity of its being; which is the goodness of its being; which is the power of its being; which is Spirit. Spirit burns like a fire in the logical core of the body. This logical core is surrounded by more complex immanent universals. These are the more specific forms of the body. These forms are layered by functional priority: the functions in outer layers specialize those of inner layers. After Spirit, the

second logical layer of the body contains its most basic form. If the body is a biocomputer, then its most basic form is its operating system. Modern biology identifies this most basic form with the genetic code.

The second logical layer of the body is its genetic code. Of course, for the sake of logical anatomy, the genetic code is not identical with DNA. On the contrary, it is a system of functional devices realized by DNA. It is a biological algorithm, composed of machines like codons, genes, promoters, operons, and so on. The genetic code, realized by DNA, runs in every cell in the body. But the genetic code is logically surrounded by algorithms realized by other molecules (like RNA, proteins, and so on). The *third layer* of the logical onion contains all the cellular algorithms of the body which are realized by DNA and these other molecules. The *fourth logical layer* of organization contains the algorithms running on networks of cells. Networks of cells run algorithms which regulate their functions. One of the most complex cellular networks is the neural network of the brain. The *fifth layer* of body-code contains the algorithm that binds all the functions of the cellular networks together into a single organism. It is an extremely complex algorithm which is the form of the body as a unified whole.

All the layers of biological code make up the form of the body. Aristotle said that the form of the body is its *soul* (*De Anima*, 412a5-414a33). Modern Neoplatonists agree. The form of the body defines its set of possible states. The interaction between the goodness in the body and the form of the body entails that the possible states of the body are ranked from best to worst. And since the goodness in the body is its power of self-surpassing, this ranking begets a *striving* in the body. Driven by the goodness in its core, the body strives to some of its possible states and away from others. The states to which it strives are good for it while the states from which it strives are bad for it. The body strives from states of illness and dysfunctionality; it strives to states of health and eufunctionality. Hence the interaction between goodness and form *manifests itself* as a directed power. Here modern Neoplatonists follow Cady. Cady distinguished between Spirit (S) and spirit (s). Modern Neoplatonists say that Spirit is the goodness at the core of the body; but spirit is the directed power that emerges from the interaction between that goodness and the specific form of the body. The spirit of the body drives it from dysfunctional states defined by its form and to eufunctional states defined by its form. Thus spirit is Spirit specialized by form. It is the Energy of the Good shaped by the form of the body. But the

form of the body is its soul. Consequently, modern Neoplatonists agree with New Thought writers like Cady that the body contains both soul and spirit. But they define those two entities very differently.

The unity at the logical center of the body shines with luminous power. This spiritual light shines out *from* the logical core of the cell and *through* its logical periphery. But the unity at the core of the body is just its immanent goodness. So this goodness shines out through its layers of form. These forms are equivalent to abstract texts written in biological programming languages (Kull et al., 2009). These biotexts are more or less coherent. On the one hand, if a biotext is more coherent, then the functions of its parts are mutually consistent; they work more cooperatively. Coherent biotexts are more transparent to the spiritual light of goodness. The light of goodness shines out through them with little distortion; hence bodies with coherent biotexts radiate health. On the other hand, if some biotext is less coherent, then the functions of its parts have some inconsistencies and conflicts. Incoherence is opacity. So if some biotext is more opaque, then goodness shines out through it in a distorted or perverted way; bodies with incoherent biotexts radiate illness. For both ancient and modern Neoplatonists, evil has no positivity of its own; it is merely perverted goodness.

VIII. REWRITING THE FORM OF THE BODY

According to New Thought, the task of spiritual practice is to correct the errors in the soul. But New Thought regards the soul as the mind, so that the task of spiritual practice is to correct bad thought-patterns. When those bad though-patterns are fixed, goodness will shine out through the body, so that it solves its problems. As goodness shines out through the body, it becomes healthy and wealthy. The advocates of New Thought believed that the errors in the soul could be corrected through the mind-cure. The mind-cure consists of ritual practices, such as mentally saying words to yourself, or using meditation to quiet the chattering monkey-mind. Techniques from the mind-cure are currently advocated by Westernized Buddhists and the new Stoics.

Modern Neoplatonists agree that the task of spiritual practice is to correct the errors in the soul. They affirm that spirit drives the soul to correct its errors. However, they do not regard the soul as the mind. The soul is the form of the body. The soul is the system of biological algorithms running on the body. To

correct the errors in the soul is to correct the errors in these algorithms. It is to reprogram the body by rewriting its codes. The codes of the body are written into texts whose words are molecules. These texts are generally not affected in any way by purely mental exercises. If you suffer from cystic fibrosis, thinking will not change your broken CFTR gene. And even if you suffer from a neurological illness like depression, mentally talking to yourself will not help very much. Thus modern Neoplatonists have little use for the mind-cure.

Modern Neoplatonists, like their ancient counterparts, want the divine Energy to manifest itself through their bodies. Like the ancient theurgists, they too pursue the *hê telestikê technê*, the craft of self-perfection. They seek to become healthier and more virtuous. They seek to optimize all the positive qualities of their bodies. But they use modern science and technology. All the qualities of the body are quantities measurable by scientific instruments. Hence modern Neoplatonists, much like the ancient theurgists, pursue self-knowledge through numbers (Neff & Nafus, 2016). They use digital sensors and smart phones to do self-tracking and self-quantification. By studying the numbers of their bodies, they learn about the errors in their biological algorithms.

Modern Neoplatonic theurgists are interested in scientific techniques for correcting the codes of the body. They use scientific techniques to rewrite their bodily biotexts. These are technologies for changing your soul. Thinking will not change your broken CFTR gene; but genetic technologies like CRISPR-Cas9 might change it. Self-talk will not change your depressed neural networks very much; but drugs like SSRIs might change them greatly. Thus modern theurgists apply the experimental method to their bodies (Roberts, 2004). This method has several steps: (1) you measure your body; (2) you formulate scientific hypotheses about the errors in your body-codes; (3) you apply technologies to your body to try to correct those errors; (4) repeat. This experimental method is also known as *hacking*. Thus modern theurgists *hack* their bodies. They are life-hackers, body-hackers, neuro-hackers, and consciousness-hackers.

XI. CONCLUSION

According to Tillich, pantheism means that God is a divine natural power which animates all things. Tillich thus makes two claims: (1) all things are animated by a divine natural power; (2) it is appropriate to use the name "God" to refer

to this power. These claims are independent. It is arguable that the first claim is pantheistic while the second is monotheistic. If *paganism* denotes the family of Western alternatives to monotheism, then *pagan pantheism* affirms that (1) all things are animated by a divine natural power; and (2) it is wrong to identify it with God. The Neoplatonism developed here is a kind of pagan pantheism. All things are animated by a divine natural power, namely, Spirit; however, Spirit is not God. Although Spirit is divine, the Good and the One are equally divine. As pagans, modern Neoplatonists resist the urge to identify exactly one of these divine entities with God or to fuse them into some trinitarian deity.

Modern Neoplatonists say all things are animated by Spirit; but the forms of different things shape the manifestations of Spirit in those things. Thus Spirit expresses itself through the form of your body (your soul) as a spirit which orients itself towards the goods of your body. Since you are a rational social animal, the spirit active in your body orients you towards the goods of rational social animality. Since spirit aims your body at its goods, it obligates you to move towards those goods. It is your duty to cultivate the spiritual power in your body through proper ways of living. You are obligated to live a spiritual life. Hence pagan pantheists strive to arrange their ways of living so that their bodies apply the *hê telestikê technê* to themselves. They seek to make their own bodies both the agent and object of the craft of self-perfection. Thus pagan pantheists engage in a wide variety of spiritual practices (Steinhart, 2018a, 2018b). They make their bodies into shrines from which the fire of goodness blazes into the world.

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BY WHOSE AUTHORITY? A POLITICAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

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Abstract. In *The Problem of Political Authority*, Michael Huemer argues that the contractarian and consequentialist groundings of political authority are unsuccessful, and, in fact, that there are no adequate contemporary accounts of political authority. As such, the modern state is illegitimate and we have reasons to affirm political anarchism. We disagree with Huemer's conclusion. But we consider Huemer's critiques of contractarianism and consequentialism to be compelling. Here we will juxtapose, alongside Huemer's critiques, a theistic account of political authority from Nicholas Wolterstorff's book The Mighty and the Almighty. We think that Wolterstorff's model does better than contractarianism and consequentialism at answering Huemer's critiques. We also think that an abductive basis for God's existence emerges from the inadequate authority accounts that Huemer surveys.

I. THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In *The Problem of Political Authority*, Michael Huemer argues that the contractarian and consequentialist groundings of political authority are unsuccessful, and, in fact, that there are no adequate contemporary accounts of political authority.[1] As such, the modern state is illegitimate and we have reasons to affirm political anarchism. We disagree with Huemer's conclusion. But we consider Huemer's critiques of contractarianism and consequentialism to be compelling. We believe also that Huemer's criticisms are a good proxy for a lengthy line of criticisms that other philosophers have raised against the most prominent contractual and consequentialist accounts of political authority.

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1   Michael Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

So we will here use Huemer's work as a catalyst for proposing a theistic account of political authority.

We will juxtapose, alongside Huemer's critiques, a theistic account of political authority from Nicholas Wolterstorff's book *The Mighty and the Almighty*.[2] We think that Wolterstorff's model does better than contractarianism and consequentialism at answering Huemer's critiques. We will also suggest that an abductive basis for God's existence emerges from the inadequate authority accounts that Huemer surveys. In section one we summarize Huemer's arguments against traditional social contract theory, hypothetical social contract theory, and consequentialism; in section two we develop the Wolterstorffian account of political authority; section three sketches an abductive argument for God's existence; and section four responds to two objections—about theism's doxastic costs, and our own abductive evidence base.

II. TRADITIONAL SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

For Huemer, contractarianism and consequentialism are the best contemporary accounts of political authority. We agree, with one qualification:

> (A) Contractarianism (C1) and consequentialism (C2) are the best *secular* accounts of political authority.[3]

Contractarianism, according to Huemer, asserts that individuals are obligated to obey their government because they have entered an agreement, either explicit or implicit, with the state.[4] But such a grounding of political authority suffers from fundamental flaws, all relating to the conditions for valid agreements. Huemer highlights four such conditions.[5]

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2   Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The Mighty and the Almighty: an Essay in Political Theology* (CUP, 2012).

3   We think that most persons agree with this first premise, and our article is not really intended to be addressed to persons who do not. Our reason for listing this qualification will emerge in section two. Other monikers that philosophers have used in discussing contractarian authority ideas have included 'consent' and 'agreement.' 'Instrumentalism' is one of the frequent names for consequentialism.

4   Huemer's rendering of the nature of the contract is not universally shared. Locke and others have characterized the contract as an agreement among persons, and not between individuals and the state: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (CUP, 1988). Similar problems are raised in Onora O'Neill, "Constructivism vs. Contractualism", *Ratio* 16, no. 4 (2003).

5   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 25.

(1) Valid consent requires a reasonable way of opting out.

(2) Explicit dissent trumps alleged implicit consent.

(3) An action can be taken as indicating agreement to some scheme, only
     if one can assume to believe that, if one did not take that action, the
     scheme would not be imposed upon one.

(4) Contractual obligation is mutual and conditional.[6]

Regarding (1), Huemer notes that, 'All parties to any agreement must have
the option to reject the agreement without sacrificing anything to which
they have a right.'[7] Huemer's example is of a chairman who proposes a future
meeting time to his boardroom. He then asks objectors to publicly dissent by
cutting off their left arms. Suppose no one does so. It still seems wrong to say
that a valid agreement has been reached to meet at the suggested time, given
that there was no reasonable opt-out offer.

Regarding (2), Huemer states that 'valid implicit agreement does not ex-
ist if one explicitly states that one does not agree.'[8] He imagines a customer
who orders food at a restaurant. The customer, implicitly, has agreed to pay for
the food. But then if she were explicitly to state that she would not be paying
for the food, Huemer thinks that her explicit dissent ought to trump her ini-
tial, implicit agreement. Similarly, in discussing (3), Huemer imagines a board
chairman who announces first that the next meeting will be at a specific time
and, then second, that it doesn't matter what anyone says, but that the meeting's
time will not be changed. Those who do not speak out against the meeting time,
Huemer thinks, are not implicitly agreeing with the chairman.[9] They know, af-
ter all, that their dissent does not matter. Finally, regarding (4) Huemer states,
'A contract normally places both parties under an obligation to each other, and
one's party rejection of his contractual obligation releases the other party from
her obligation.'[10] You might implicitly consent to pay for your food by virtue of
placing an order. But if the waitress does not then deliver your food, you are no
longer obligated to pay as she has not held up her end of the deal.

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6   *Ibid.*, 25–27.
7   *Ibid.*, 25.
8   *Ibid.*, 26.
9   *Ibid.*, 26.
10 *Ibid.*, 27.

On the basis of these four conditions, Huemer concludes that traditional social contract theory is inadequate as a grounding of political authority. Modern states do not allow reasonable opt-outs from their coercive and jurisdictional directives:

> To leave one's country, one must generally secure the permission of some other state to enter its territory, and most states impose restrictions on immigration. In addition, some individuals lack the financial resources to move to the country of their choice. Those who can move may fail to do so due to attachments to family, friends, and home. Finally, if one moves to another country, one will merely become subject to another government.[11]

Moreover, modern states also do not make provisions for those who explicitly disagree with them. For example, within the United States, there are various people (e.g. anarchists) who deny that the government is their authority. They object to the state, and yet the state still taxes and coerces them.[12]

III. HYPOTHETICAL CONTRACT THEORY

We agree with Huemer and, in our opinion, his conditionals argument undermines traditional contract theory. But might hypothetical contract theory be able to do better? Hypothetical contract theorists assert that political authority is justified because if you were, hypothetically, to be offered a social contract, you would consent to it. Huemer imagines an emergency room doctor who decides to operate on an endangered and unconscious patient. It seems morally permissible for the doctor to work on the unconscious patient, given that, if she were conscious, she would likely give her consent. The core idea in the hypothetical contract is that individuals who are under the state's sovereign jurisdiction would similarly consent if they were to encounter a formal contract. For Huemer, defenders of this view have two tasks. '[F]irst, they must show that people would accept the social contract in their hypothetical scenario; second they must show that this hypothetical consent is morally efficacious, in the sense that it generates obligations and ethical entitlements similar to those generated by valid actual consent.'[13]

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11   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 29–30.
12   *Ibid.*, 30.
13   *Ibid.*, 36.

But, as Huemer points out, the unconscious patient scenario is not enough to justify the hypothetical position. After all, our own circumstances are not analogous to those of an unconscious patient. We are, quite obviously, not unconscious. We are alive and we are moving about in the world in a conscious way. Many of us, to be sure, would consent to the state — just as many of us would consent to the surgery. But some of us would not consent to the state. Most moral philosophers would reject the practice of doctors overriding, say, a fully conscious patient's refusal of a surgery. And that is exactly what Huemer thinks our sensibilities are when it comes to those fully-conscious persons who would not, per the hypothetical, consent to the contract.[14] After all, it is not unfeasible for the state to ask, explicitly, for consent from fully-conscious persons. But hypothetical contract theorists tend to think speculatively, and too often they neglect real-world values and philosophical beliefs. Most hypothetical theorists, in fact, never get around to an investigation of our actual, real-world consent patterns.

Some hypothetical contract theorists argue that there does not have to be universal consent, but rather that it would be acceptable, as an approximation, for the contract only to be such that, hypothetically, it would be 'unreasonable' to reject it.[15] Unreasonable persons, being unreasonable, may legitimately be coerced. Such a move avoids certain criticisms. But Huemer thinks it still fails. After all, we have a deep sensibility that we ought not to coerce another adult to do something in circumstances in which we consider it to be unreasonable for her not to do that something. Most moral philosophers would say that doctors ought not to override a conscious, adult patient's refusal of surgery even when the patient seems unreasonable. For Huemer,

> This principle stands in stark conflict with common sense morality. Imagine that an employer approaches a prospective employee with an entirely fair, reasonable, and attractive job offer, including generous pay, reasonable hours, pleasant working conditions, and so on. If the worker were fully informed, rational, and reasonable, he would accept the employment offer. Nevertheless, the employer is not ethically entitled to coerce the employee into working for him in the event that the employee, however, unreasonably,

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14   *Ibid.*, 38–39.
15   Other 'amendments' to the hypothetical contract that Huemer considers include that 'hypothetical agreement might be thought to show that a social arrangement is fair', and also that 'hypothetical agreement might be thought to show that a set of moral principles reflects certain reasonable constraints on moral reasoning.' *Ibid.*, 57–58.

declines the offer. The reasonableness of the offer, together with the hypothetical consent, would bear very little ethical weight…[16]

For Huemer, the conceptual tools that hypothetical contract theorists deploy in their efforts to compensate for their speculations are artificial and feeble. Huemer focuses especially on the paucity of evidence that he thinks that thinkers like Rawls and Nagel have offered in support of their claim that any particular real-world political system might 'be agreed upon by all reasonable persons,' and thus would be legitimate.[17] As such, per Huemer, the hypothetical contract is no better at justifying political authority than the traditional contract. It is time to turn to consequentialist justifications.

IV. CONSEQUENTIALISM

Suppose you are on a leaky lifeboat. The boat will sink unless the passengers bail the incoming water. Perhaps you have tried to get the others to bail. But no one is listening to your arguments. The situation is dire. So it seems morally permissible for you to take out your gun and coerce the others to start bailing.[18] Huemer considers this example compelling. It suggests to him that it is sometimes permissible to coerce others and/or to violate others' property rights. Doing so is sometimes necessary to prevent something 'much worse' from happening, so long as one's efforts do not 'coerce others to induce harmful or useless behaviors or behaviors designed to serve ulterior purposes unrelated to the emergency.'[19] The state is morally permitted and perhaps even obligated to coerce people if doing so prevents, say, society's collapse. But it cannot then use such a situation to advance any further claim to some comprehensive and content-independent coercion mandate.

For Huemer, even the stark grounding of political authority that this compelling, consequentialist scenario offers would only, at most, legitimize the most basic of governmental functions: in particular, laws that protect innocent lives, the environment, and laws that secure the state's monopo-

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16   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 44.
17   John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (OUP, 2005); Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (OUP, 1991).
18   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 94.
19   *Ibid.*

ly.[20] It would not, however, legitimize laws which pertain to marriage, space exploration, government schools, welfare programs, minimum wage laws, laws which prohibit immoral behavior, and laws which prohibit people from harming themselves.[21] So at best, consequentialism justifies a minimal state. It is a state that is desired by only a fraction of modern humans.

More importantly, the idea that there can only legitimately be a minimal state seems contrary to common sense. Most people, when they look around at the world's governments, have a seeming that states should be able to pass laws which go beyond the minimal mandate. We agree then with Huemer when he says that consequentialism is an inadequate justification for the state. It certainly seems to be inadequate as a justification for our multi-faceted, post-Enlightenment nation-states. More generally, when coupled with the above criticisms of contractarianism, we think that Huemer has, at the very least, demonstrated that there are problems with the most prominent contemporary justifications of political authority:

> (B) Huemer's criticisms render C1 and C2 models questionable as justifications of political authority.

And thus, from (A),

> (C) The most important contemporary accounts of political authority are questionable.

There are two directions in which Huemer's arguments could be taken. One is Huemer's own principled anarchism: modern forms of political authority are unjustifiable since they fail to meet common-sense contractual and consequentialist legitimation requirements. But we think that most persons of good will

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20   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 96. Huemer similarly considers the 'fairness theory of political obligation,' on which 'one must obey the law because to disobey is *unfair* to other members of one's society, who generally obey.' (Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 86) He questions, however, whether in fact it is typical for one's obedience to the law to causally contribute to the provision of the benefits of the cooperative scheme, given that the obedience of others is usually enough to ensure the sustenance of the society, and given also that so many laws are passed by governments that are of no importance in bringing about the cooperative scheme's essential goods. Moreover, for Huemer, the fairness theory also does not generate content-independent obedience obligations because many of the laws that governments pass are laws which reflective individuals would not have wanted to be passed in the first place.

21   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 95–96.

think that there ought at least to be some kind of justification for the modern state's dictates. So for most persons, it would be more morally and intellectually satisfying to continue to look for better, more convincing justificatory accounts. In this section, our contention will be that there are certain such accounts — in particular, structurally theistic ones — that are better than contractarianism and consequentialism at answering Huemer's criticisms. We will be using Nicholas Wolterstorff's *The Mighty and the Almighty*, which, we acknowledge, is more of a sketch than a systematic defense.[22] As such, we will be reconstructing more of a 'Wolterstorffian' account than 'Wolterstorff's account,' because we will be facilitating a dialogue between Wolterstorff and Huemer that goes a short ways beyond Wolterstorff's stated views.[23] A caveat that we want to underscore, how-

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22   Our engagement with Huemer is developed from within the Christian tradition. But much of our argument is traceable to other theistic traditions as well, many of which make assumptions about political authority that are similar to those of Wolterstorff.

23   Wolterstorff elsewhere has expressed his belief in an overdetermined grounding of political authority: in his view, there are accounts of political authority from above (i.e. God) and below (secular accounts) that are successful. In service of this dual-purpose vision, he has, while affirming that all previous accounts of political authority have failed, proposed his own unique and secular account of political authority. In particular, humans have a right to the following: 'when possible, some institutionalized arrangement for protecting us against being seriously wronged by our fellows' (Wolterstorff, *The Mighty and the Almighty*, 102–3). For Wolterstorff, all persons have a right to a higher institution to protect our fundamental rights from serious violation. And he thinks that this institution can carry out its duty to establish justice via the coercion of its citizens. This unique approach to political authority, in our view, has faults. For instance, Wolterstoff's account 'from below' does not ground a 'robust' authority conception. It is an account which attempts to ground the government's right to coerce only insofar as pertains to protecting fundamental natural rights. Thus, the government would not have coercive authority in say, funding the arts, space exploration, highways, or infrastructure. If a subject shares our seeming that (viz. even if the subject thinks the government shouldn't be involved in such things) the government has the de jure authority to do what is listed above, then Wolterstoff's account, like the consequentialist account before it, becomes incomplete. Wolterstorff seems to concede as much in his *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. There he states, 'The sketch just presented, of an account from below of the political authority of the state, says nothing about the status of those legislative enactments that are aimed not at protecting citizens against serious violations of their rights by other citizens but at bringing about some common good—for example, a bill for the construction of highways and for the imposition of taxes to support that construction. Either such legislation does not generate obligations in citizens or, if it does, accounting for why it does will have to take a quite different form from the account of political obligation that I have just given.' See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Accounting for Political Authority of the State", in *Understanding Liberal Democracy*, ed. Nicholas Wolterstorff and Terence Cueno (OUP, 2012), 275.

ever, is that while we think Wolterstorff's account is a superior justification in the areas we explore, we do not think that it necessarily follows that it is superior as such to contractarian and consequentialist accounts. We realize that, although the Wolterstorffian account might be better than other accounts at explaining, say, the features and phenomena that a thinker like Huemer highlights, it might nevertheless, on the whole, be less compelling than they are because of other, different explanatory failures, idiosyncratic issues, or because of its inability to pass some independent threshold of plausibility. A thorough investigation of all such weaknesses is beyond the scope of this paper. We will, however, near the end of our article make a gesture in this direction by engaging two objections that suggest that the model, on the whole, lacks plausibility, and by suggesting that a Wolterstorffian account does at least in the areas that we are here exploring fare better than its secular counterparts. And if this is the case, then, for persons for whom these areas are important, there is an argument for God's existence from political authority.

V. WOLTERSTORFF'S THEISTIC JUSTIFICATION OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

For Wolterstorff, God does not need our permission in order to have authority over us. He has that authority just by virtue of being the world's creator.[24] God chooses, however, to delegate his authority to particular political entities. Above all, it is God's love for justice, and his desire that injustice be curbed, that leads him to authorize the state: 'to exercise governance over the public so as to curb wrongdoing.' Justice, usually, is best promoted via rights protection. The state is God's delegated authority, erected for the sake of rights protection. It is also, at the same time, limited by rights protection. It does not have license to violate the rights of persons.

Part and parcel of Wolterstorff's delegation model are his ideas about God's moral governance of humankind. Such governance includes directives on how we ought to treat God, how we ought to treat others and ourselves, and how

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24 We are not aware of anyone who would argue that a creator God would not possess authority over His creation. We have a strong seeming that a creator has authority over his creation. For those without this seeming, we recommend the long tradition of natural law arguments for the notion that a creator possesses his creation. For instance, chapter 5 of John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* (Hackett Publishing, 1980).

we ought to treat the natural world. Our sensibilities by virtue of being subject to God's moral governance equip us to discern right from wrong, to protest wayward governments, and, when we are ourselves the governors, to oppose wrongdoing. For Wolterstorff, we ought usually to obey the state, in recognition that the state is God's chosen instrument for curbing injustice: 'When the state acts for the purpose of curbing injustice in society, its directives are binding; they generate in the public the obligation to obey.'[25] Wolterstorff does not think that Romans 13, the main Christian governance passage, authorizes the state to go beyond the 'curbing injustice' mandate. But nothing that the first seven verses of Romans 13 say is inconsistent with a state that does go beyond that mandate, and even that seeks to act for the sake of the common good.

There are other parts of the Christian Scriptures, however, that go beyond Romans 13 and that do suggest a governance form beyond the mere 'curbing injustice' mandate. Wolterstorff highlights especially the wide-ranging Biblical idea of 'shalom,' the 'flourishing of the people,' and he links it to a broader mandate: 'In the modern world, states serve this desire of God for shalom by…building infrastructure, securing coordination of activities, founding and maintaining institutions and landscapes that are of public benefit.'[26] The shalom concept suggests for Wolterstorff that God has authorized governments to act for the common good, so long as they are not wronging individuals, institutions or the people as a whole. His examples of the common good include coordinating citizen activity, building infrastructure, and establishing public parks.

Finally, Wolterstorff distinguishes between 'positional authority' and 'performance authority.' The latter, he thinks, is the better interpretation of the many Scriptural passages that instruct Christians to obey the government. The assumption of classical Biblical interpreters like John Calvin was that the first seven verses of Romans 13 suggested the former, a 'positional authority' concept: 'the authority to issue directives by virtue of legitimately occupying some institutional position of authority.'[27] For them, 'whoever legitimately occupies some position of authority in the government has been placed in that position by God.'[28] As such, governments may justifiably issue

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25   Wolterstorff, *The Mighty and the Almighty*, 113.
26   *Ibid.*, 114.
27   *Ibid.*, 115.
28   *Ibid.*.

directives. The rest of us, on the classical Calvinist view, are then obligated to obey such directives — even to the point of doing the morally reprehensible.[29]

But Wolterstorff thinks that Romans 13 is actually proposing a performance-authority concept, and not a positional-authority one. Performance-authority is an idea that justifies resistance, whenever the directives of the government are morally reprehensible: 'a directive generates in [persons] a moral obligation to obey only if it was morally permissible for the official to issue that directive.'[30] So while the citizens of a morally rogue state might in one sense be *legally* obligated to obey their government's directives, nevertheless because their government has 'performance authority' and not 'position authority,' Wolterstorff thinks that theirs would not be a *moral* obligation. Theirs, rather, is a right of resistance whenever the state violates their moral sensibilities. However, and this is important, Wolterstorff thinks that their disobedience is only legitimate if it passes the tests of prudence and consequentialism. Would disobeying a state's directives bring about needed reforms? Or would it impair or cause the collapse of the state's justice system, and thus promote greater evils?

So described, our contention is that the Wolterstorffian's authority justification model more adequately responds to Huemer's concerns than do contractarianism and consequentialism. Consider first Huemer's criticisms of the traditional social contract. In one sense the Wolterstorffian bypasses such criticisms altogether because he does not seek to justify the state via a contract at all. Instead, for the Wolterstorffian it is God who justifies the state because it is God, the world's creator, who delegates his authority to the state. And it is God who instructs the citizens then to obey the state's dictates, unless and until their moral sensibilities are violated. Since the Wolterstorffian employs no contract, and supposes no consent, he faces no opt-out problem and does not have to worry about the state violating our contractual sensibilities. The Wolterstorffian has a way of legitimizing political authority that the contractarian does not.

Huemer's problem with contractarianism, however, is not just with the notion of consent. Rather, he worries that the contract idea is unrealistic be-

29   Calvin's view, rather a hard-line one, was that if 'someone is functioning as God's deputy in issuing a directive, then, by his commanding that so-and-so be done, God commands that that be done.' Wolterstorff, *The Mighty and the Almighty*, 78.
30   *Ibid.*, 117.

cause it is biased toward the state and treats dissenters unfairly. Recall that Huemer first criticizes the contract for offering inadequate opt-out provisions — such as valid consent requires. Second, he thinks that explicit dissent ought to trump alleged implicit consent, and the contract idea does not allow for this. Third, an action should indicate agreement only if one can assume to believe that, if one did not take that action, a scheme would not be imposed upon one. And fourth, contractual obligation ought to be mutual and conditional, and since real-world governments do not act as though they are mutually and conditionally bound in the way that their citizens are, legitimate contracts do not obtain.[31] The common thread in all of these conditionals arguments is a non-realism critique.

The Wolterstorffian's theistic assumptions equip him to approach the political authority topic in a way that is more morally and intellectually realistic than contractarianism, and, as such, a better response to Huemer's core concerns. In ascribing realism advantages to the Wolterstorffian model, what we mean, first, is that it maps more accurately onto the actual world than does contractarianism and, second, that its operational provisions are a more practicable way of navigating real-world cooperation breakdowns. We think that our claim that the Wolterstorffian model is more realistic is illustrated particularly vividly by an inspection of the most likely of the circumstances in which citizens would want to opt out of a real-world contract: circumstances in which the state's dictates are violating their moral sensibilities. A lack of real-world recourse, vis-à-vis moral sensibilities violations, appears to be Huemer's core worry when, in his first, second, and third criticisms he highlights the traditional contract's absence of opt-out provisions.

In short, the 'performance authority' idea is the key reason why we think that the Wolterstorffian model is more realistic than contractarianism about moral sensibilities violations. What the Wolterstorffian means by 'performance-authority' is not just that God has ultimate moral governance and that he delegates his authority to human officials, for the sake of curbing injustice.[32] It also means that the dictates of governments are worthy of our obedience only insofar as they are fulfilling that mandate and are consistent with God's ultimate, background moral governance. To say that when government

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31   Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, 25–27.
32   The model is something like that of a benevolent landlord, or the director of a charity project.

officials are failing to curb injustice, God's delegation conditions are violated and our disobedience is legitimate, is to make robust provisions for citizen dissent. Such provisions are greater than anything that is offered by the contractarianism that Huemer surveys, and they suggest a greater awareness on the part of the Wolterstorffian of real-world contingencies. Further evidence of the Wolterstorffian's real-world awareness is discernible in the simplicity with which it is possible to implement such dissent provisions, without upsetting the moral order itself: whenever particular government officials are violating God's moral governance, the performance-authority mandate is undermined and the dissent of the citizens becomes justified — without underlying moral governance ever being called into question.

We think that the Wolterstorffian model is more realistic than contractarianism in its acknowledgment of the failures of human governance and its attempt to incorporate its awareness of such failures into its model of citizen decision-making. We also think that it is more realistic for the Wolterstorffian to employ the 'performance authority' idea to hold governments to tangible behavioral standards, and, as such, to respond constructively to the feasibility concern that is present in Huemer's fourth criticism — that the contract is not mutually and conditionally binding upon governments in the way that it is for citizens. Finally, we think that it is more realistic too for the Wolterstorffian to model citizen decision-making in a way that does not sanction unreflective forms of dissent. In stipulating that the dissents of the citizens must first pass the tests of prudence and consequentialism, the Wolterstorffian is offering a practicable, sober disobedience model.

In sum, our view is that the Wolterstorffian model is more realistic than contractarianism in its assumption that governmental misbehavior is commonplace, and also, at the same time, in its provision of robust dissent opportunities — so long as things do not get out of hand. The feasible opt-out provisions that the Wolterstorffian model offers, amid moral sensibility violations, make it a more realistic understanding of actual human politics, and also a more realistic understanding of the justification of political authority vis-à-vis contingencies and breakdowns.[33]

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33   We want to underscore that Locke's contract is a hybrid view that allows robust space for resistance against badly behaving states, in a manner that is similar to that of Wolterstorff. But, it is important to note, the reason why Locke is able to do this is because he subscribes to the view that there is a law of nature, set up by God, apart from the state and against which

Huemer raises similarly vigorous criticisms against the hypothetical contract idea. His core worry here seems to be that the idea violates the sovereignty that humans ought to have over their own lives and community involvement. For Huemer, even 'unreasonable' persons ought still to be sovereign over their social interactions. After all, they are fully conscious and their personal sovereignty is something that we would, under any other circumstances, accord greater ethical weight than what we would accord to a 'reasonableness' criterion.[34] We agree here with Huemer's assertion that a hypothetical contract is an illegitimate authority arrangement. An imagined agreement of reasonable persons is a fragile basis for state authority because, even if 'reasonable' persons were to agree to a particular hypothetical contract, nevertheless that contract, at the end of the day, would still be a mere fiction.

We also think, however, that the Wolterstorffian can interact more constructively than contractarianism with Huemer's core concern about the hypothetical contract. In one sense the Wolterstorffian again bypasses the hypothetical contract's problems altogether, since, as mentioned, he offers realistic provisions for dissent, and since, in rejecting the contractual idea in the first place, he does not have to demonstrate the real-world legitimacy of a philosophical fiction. Because God has given authority to the government, the Wolterstorffian can legitimize the government's authority over all of its subjects, with or without their consent. There is, however, a third resource which the Wolterstorffian has and which we think is similarly attractive. Not only is it consistent with Huemer's choice sovereignty idea, but it also softens the rougher edges of Huemer's assertion that unreasonable persons ought to be able to opt out of a hypothetical contract.

Suppose, prima facie, that one agrees with Huemer that it would be illegitimate to coerce persons — even unreasonable ones — to abide by a hypothetical contract. The main worry we think one should then have is that such a view could lead to chaotic circumstances, if and when large numbers of unreasonable persons were to reject the state's dictates.[35] One way that the Wolterstorffian

the dictates of the state ought to be measured: Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (CUP, 2002).

34   Huemer's account, we think, seems to be supposing a sort of natural right to freedom, which ought, by default, to take trumping precedence over justifications of the coercive state.

35   The fact that such persons do exist in large, real-world numbers is an empirical point that we think is underscored by the social turmoil that so quickly follows whenever wars or natural

might respond to such a worry is via an appeal to providence. Wolterstorffians will likely think that God is omnipotent and benevolent, and that his creation of humans was providential. Qua providential, it stands to reason that God would endow humans with cognitive capacities that are truth-aimed and properly functional — and that humans could consult with confidence when they find themselves in uncertain circumstances.[36] Cognitive capacities are truth-aimed if they exhibit reliability. The presence of such reliability, were the Wolterstorffian to invoke such an idea here in a political context, would suggest that there are boundaries against wayward citizen dissents — boundaries to prevent such dissents from going off the rails, as it were. So, via an appeal to divine providence, a Wolterstorffian could claim that the natural orientations of human cognitive capacities are toward truth, and that as such God's providentiality is a dependable foundation. Then, if one were to accept the Wolterstorffian's initial theistic assumptions, one would have resources for assuaging chaos concerns that are better than those of a contractarian (or even of Huemer himself).[37] To be sure, in saying this we do not mean to suggest that divine providence is a guarantee against chaos. Wolterstorff, in his non-political writings, affirms the existence of free will. Beings with free will can deploy their faculties poorly. But at the same time, if one thinks that human cognition is pre-packaged in providential ways as it were, then one can be more confident than one would otherwise be about the decisions of dissenters.

By contrast, it is not similarly possible for contractarians — or even for reflective anarchists, like Huemer — who lack divine providence commitments to be confident about exercises of citizen dissent.[38] The greater confidence that

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disasters have destroyed the levers of governance.

36   For a case for why naturalists could not turn in confidence to such sensibilities, see James K. Beilby, *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism* (Cornell Univ. Press, 2002).

37   Interestingly, Martin Luther King Jr. appears to have endorsed a view akin to this 'providentiality' view when, in his 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail,' he sets up the moral law of God as an independent standard. The standard, for King, is a measurement tool for acts of citizen dissent, as well as a basis to keep dissent from going off the rails, so to speak: "A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law.…" Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", in *Liberating faith*: *Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and ecological Wisdom*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

38   Note that a theistic contractarian, such as John Locke, could in fact have such confidence. Locke's major architectural concepts — the criteria of judgment for existential human

the Wolterstorffian can have about such exercises is something that we think equips him to respond to the chaos threat more effectively than non-providential views. It gives him, qua justifier of political authority, advantages over non-theistic contractarians (and also over reflective anarchists) vis-à-vis real-world feasibility questions. In other words, the Wolterstorffian can answer Huemer's core worries about the hypothetical contract while also assuaging the chaos concerns that might arise from Huemer's own alternative, reflective anarchism.

Finally, the Wolterstorffian can interact similarly constructively with Huemer's criticisms of consequentialism. More particularly, in a way that is foreign to consequentialism, we think that the Wolterstorffian's authority justification efforts are a natural fit for the dictates of the modern state. Consider the differences in the respective authority mandates that the two models justify. For starters, we agree with Huemer and we think, at most, that consequentialism justifies a minimal state — a system of crime protection, social rules, and military defense, and not a system of expansive political authority. Huemer reasons that the 'much worse' outcome that the minimal state prevents is a justification that ceases to exist once the state begins to do other things — such as, say, promote its citizens' flourishing. The minimal state is, as much as possible, neutral about such flourishing. Its job is to keep the peace, and not to promote citizen welfare.

The authority mandate that is available to the Wolterstorffian is more expansive than this. Central to the Wolterstorffian justification, as mentioned, is God's desire for 'shalom,' or, the 'flourishing of the people'. Qua benevolent, God desires the flourishing of his creation, and qua omniscient, God knows what is best for his creation. The 'shalom' concept does not then just mean that God wants our flourishing. It also suggests that God knows how, via governance delegations, actually to bring that flourishing about. So described, the 'shalom' concept fits a 'common-good' state better than a 'minimal' state. A governance model that proactively promotes citizen welfare is, more than a minimal state, an authority mandate that is appropriate for a God who seeks actively to facilitate human flourishing. School systems, civic infrastructure, and other public goods all are worthwhile undertakings for the Wolterstorffian so long as they promote the 'shalom' concept and do not trample the

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agents — all include moral staples like law, right, God, and equality. See Kirstie McClure, *Judging Rights:: Lockean Politics and the Limits of Consent* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1996).

rights of persons. As such, we think that to accept the Wolterstorffian's explanation of the post-Enlightenment state is to have reasons also for accepting that state's promotion of the common good — in a way that is difficult for consequentialism to do. So the Wolterstorffian's justification of modern authority structures is more conceptually and morally satisfying than that of consequentialism. Thus,

I.   The responses of the Wolterstorffian's justification of political authority to Huemer's criticisms have conceptual and moral advantages over the responses of C1 and C2 models.

It is, above all, the Wolterstorffian's theistic assumptions which equip him to answer Huemer's criticisms. Assumptions like 'God exists,' 'God is the creator,' and 'God delegates authority to governments' all suggest God's independent moral status, apart from the state. God is the authorizer and delegator of the 'performance authority' concept which equips the Wolterstorffian both to legitimize the government's authority and to treat governments realistically. And God's providential guidance is a basis for confidence that the citizens' dissents will not go off the rails. Finally, God's desire for 'shalom,' per Wolterstorff, is a basis for the 'common good' mandate of modern governance — and thus it synchs better than consequentialism with the ideals of the post-Enlightenment state and also the common-sense view that governments should have the authority to advance the common good. It might be thought that one could obtain benefits like performance authority or a robust common good just by subscribing to a non-theistic moral standards notion, apart from the state. States that fail by such standards — perhaps flunking the performance-authority test — lose their moral authority. This is a worthy point and of course we are open to further discussion of its merits as a well-known 'folk' intuition. But so far we are unconvinced because, like Aquinas and Locke, we think that the most philosophically rigorous version of such a view, natural law, requires a world laced with real moral valence. As such, it needs theistic backing in order to constitute a muscular authority conception (see our Aristotelianism reference in the section below). So, we think that

II. The Wolterstorffian's theistic commitments are what equip him to answer Huemer's criticisms.

More generally, (5) suggests that any theistic account which makes similar assumptions or is similarly structured would likewise be so equipped. So, from (3), (4), and (5):

> Lemma 1: models with the Wolterstorffian's theistic commitments and structure have conceptual and moral advantages over the most important contemporary justifications of political authority.

VI. AN ARGUMENT FROM POLITICAL AUTHORITY FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

We want to end this article, perhaps surprisingly, with a more general conclusion about God's existence. In particular, our contention will be that Lemma 1 is abductive evidence for a theistic worldview. Our argument here will be just a sketch and a proposal for further studies — a full-length treatment, of course, would require a book.

Suppose the following:

> III. There ought to be an adequate justification for political authority.

An epistemic seeming grounds this premise. We think most persons of good will will have this seeming. Huemer certainly does, and much of his *Problem of Political Authority* is a search for such a justification. Moreover, a seemings appeal is appropriate here given the centrality of seemings in Huemer's own phenomenal conservatism. For Huemer, if S has no compelling defeater for p, then, as long as it appears to S that p, S is justified in believing that p.[39] In such a circumstance, if one has a seeming then, all things considered, one ought to consider that seeming as leading to a true belief. As such, per our argument, we assert that:

> IV. Persons of good will who justifiably believe (6) have reasons to endorse authority justifications that have advantages over other such justifications.

In other words, we think that the ideals of phenomenal conservatism give persons who agree with Huemer's criticisms a foundation for acknowledging

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39   Michael Huemer, "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Internalist Intuition", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (2006).

the explanatory capacity of theism. But, more generally, we think also that in justifying its reasoning via an appeal to explanatory ability, our argument manifests an abductive structure. Abductive reasoning suggests that the explanatory success of a theory Y in accounting for a phenomenon X is a probable cause for believing Y to be correct. Given a body of evidence and a set of models explaining such evidence, the most probable of the available models is the one which best accounts for the evidence, provided that it is sufficiently good otherwise, qua explanation. Abductive conclusions, thus understood, do not follow logically from their premises. Instead, they are reached, first, through a duly-diligent assembly of evidential support, and, second, through a probability-based conclusion derived from that support. The duly-diligent philosopher who has found no better alternative explanation has probabilistic grounds for favoring the comparatively superior theory. In practice, in the abductive literature what this means is measuring the theoretical virtues of different explanations. Such virtues include the following:

(a) Explanatory Scope: a theory's ability to explain a broad cross-section of the data.

(b) Explanatory Power: a theory's ability to explain the data well.

(c) Plausibility: a theory's plausibility, as determined via its coherence vis-à-vis other fields of inquiry.

(d) Minimal Ad Hocness: a theory which is not ad hoc is preferable to theories which are.

(e) Simplicity: all things considered, the simplest theory is preferable.[40]

The theory which most deeply and extensively embodies these virtues is generally preferable, being a more coherent explanation of the evidence and, presumably, closer to the truth.[41]

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40 This is the criteria that is used in William L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (InterVarsity Press, 2017).

41 Note also that in order to assemble one's abductive evidence base, one must usually assume that the particular models that one is investigating are, compared to their peers, the best explanations of the evidence vis-à-vis the other available hypotheses. In our own case, in order to assemble our evidence base (i.e. C1 and C2), we are explicitly assuming in premise 1 that these particular models are, compared to their peers, the most relevant explanations of the evidence vis-à-vis the other available hypotheses.

The key abductive evidences of our own article have been (6), the wide-spread conviction that political authority ought to be justified, and also (3), the inadequacy of secular explanations in the areas we have highlighted. From this, we have noted that the reflective anarchist concludes, probabilistically, that no such explanation is available, and that modern forms of political authority are unjustifiable. Our own response to the evidence set, however, is to assert (4), probabilistically, that a theistic explanation has advantages over its competitors — including over reflective anarchism. A theory that asserts that 'God exists,' 'God is an independent moral authority,' 'God is providential,' and 'God is omniscient,' has justificatory advantages over both contractarianism and consequentialism, the most plausible of the contemporary secular foundations for political authority, and also moral advantages over reflective anarchism — at least on the subject of asocial side-effects. To be sure, it does not follow that, because of the explanatory superiority of the Wolterstorffian model on these particular matters, it ought to be preferred all things considered over its rival, secular accounts. Yet, upon inspection, we think there are few areas where such rival, secular accounts possess explanatory advantages over the Wolterstorffian model. For many readers, the most glaring area in which they might is probably the Wolterstorffian's assumptions about theism's plausibility — an objection which we will briefly engage in this article's conclusion.

On the basis of the issues we have covered we think that the Wolterstorffian account better embodies theoretical virtues (a) and (b), having superior explanatory scope and also superior explanatory power, vis-à-vis the phenomenon at hand. This is especially noticeable with respect to legitimizing the robust authority of the state. The contractarian still lacks a way to legitimize the state's power over all of its citizens, and, the consequentialist cannot explain how the state possesses robust authority. Moreover, the Wolterstorffian account makes greater space for exercises of dissent, via an appeal to providence, and thus that it does better vis-à-vis virtue (c), in synching harmoniously with the widespread real-world seeming that there ought to be room for citizen dissent. And again, the model's 'shalom' idea is naturally more harmonious with the aims and intentions of real-world states, and thus its connections to real-world authority structures manifest virtue (d), minimal adhocness. The only theoretical virtue which we think does not give the model any advantages is (e), simplicity. But ontological parsimony ought only

to be a trumping value in circumstances in which the more complex account is not a better explanation on other grounds.[42] It is typical abductive practice, when different models have differing levels of explanatory plausibility, sometimes to favor the more complex hypothesis so long as it embodies a superior mix of the other theoretical virtues.

All in all, theism is the hypothesis that does the best vis-à-vis the virtues of abductive reasoning and certain key aspects of the political authority topic — political realism, exercises of citizen dissent, and suitability vis-à-vis the characteristic services of states. Its superiority as a justification in these key areas is a reason for taking it to be true. If one subscribes to (6), the seeming that political authority ought to be adequately justified, and also (3), that no other (secular) theory is capable of doing this, then, we think, one ought to assert a probable basis for theism. Theism is a probable truth, reached via abductive reasoning, that is better than the alternatives at explaining the given phenomena, while also accounting for (4), the widespread seeming about the necessity of political authority justifications.

Thus, given Lemma 1 (i.e. Wolterstorffian-style models have advantages as political authority justifications over C1 and C2 models), we conclude:

Persons of good will who justifiably believe (6) have reasons, from Lemma 1, for endorsing theism.

To be sure there are other justifications of political authority that we (and Huemer) have not here considered: Socrates's gratitude criterion in the Crito, Ronald Dworkin's associative obligations in *Law's Empire*, and Waldron's duty of equal respect for the opinions of others in *Law and Disagreement*, all come immediately to mind.[43] Perhaps deserving of special mention is the Aristotelian-Thomistic account. Roughly, the idea here is that teleology is essential to politics: human persons and their faculties possess ends, and a political state is necessary to facilitate their achievement of such ends.[44] Humans are political animals who require the state in order to flourish as the sort of creatures

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42   Note that certain alternative justificatory theories — Rawls's hypothetical contractarianism, for example — are highly complex as well, albeit in other ways than ontological parsimony.

43   Ronald M. Dworkin, *Law's empire* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1986) Jeremy Waldron, *Law and Disagreement* (OUP, 1999).

44   Fred Miller, "Presuppositions of Aristotle's Politics", https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/supplement2.html.

that they are. They therefore ought to obey the state.[45] While time constraints prevent us from engaging this view to the extent that it deserves, we do not see this view as being in conflict with our own. Aquinas shows convincingly via his 5th Way that one cannot make sense of persons or their faculties possessing ends or design plans without invoking God.[46] On the Aristotelian-Thomistic account, God's impartation to humans of the kind of nature that they have might in fact be part of the way God that grants authority to the political state.

Again, though, this paper is not really addressed to theism's sympathizers. It rather ought to be read as an attempt at an argument for God's existence within the parameters of contemporary analytic political philosophy. Most analytic philosophers do consider contractarianism and consequentialism to be the most plausible accounts of political authority.[47] Our assertion that the Wolterstorffian model offers more robust justificatory capacities ought thus to be seen as being an inference to the best explanation, based on a survey of the best (or at least the *most prominent*) of the available justifications. The model's plausibility überhaupt of course is something that must elsewhere be settled more comprehensively, and not just by an investigation of its solutions to the problems of other views. However, in the key areas that we have here highlighted — authority, realism, dissent, and common good suitability — the model does have advantages. Those persons for whom these areas of inquiry are important will, we think, find our argument intriguing.

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45   Miller, "Presuppositions of Aristotle's Politics".

46   See both Aquinas' 5th Way and a contemporary defense of it in, Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (Oneworld Publications, 2013), 110–20. For an engagement of a more naturalistic or Footian Aristotelianism, see Erik Baldwin and Tyler Dalton McNabb, *Plantingian Religious Epistemology and World Religions: Prospects and Problems* (Lexington Books, 2018).

47   For further political authority views, see Leslie Green, *The Authority of the State* (OUP, 1989); Christopher Morris, *An Essay on the Modern State* (CUP, 2002); Allen Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination* (OUP, 2003); Thomas Christiano, "The Authority of Democracy", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2004); Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*; David Estlund, *Democratic Authority* (CUP, 2007); Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, 2013); also, of course, Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (OUP, 2008).

VII. CONCLUSION: TWO OBJECTIONS

One objection that we want here briefly to address is that, far from being realistic, an appeal to a divine figure is in fact an unrealistic justification of political authority. Many moderns have doubted the existence and/or the goodness of such a figure. To ascribe realism advantages to the Wolterstorffian authority model might in one sense seem plausible when one is operating from inside the model, as it were. But in another sense, from outside the model, its assumptions might be implausible on other, independent grounds. The greater explanatory power of the theistic hypothesis is perhaps undermined by the improbability of the hypothesis itself.

We want to stress, in response, that we have not here been asserting that theism does not incur doxastic costs.[48] Innumerable books and articles have been devoted to that topic, and our own view is that theism does in fact incur such costs. But at the same time we also think that theism has been defended in increasingly responsible ways in recent decades via arguments from the origins of the universe, the existence of morality, the existence of consciousness, the contingency of the universe, and so on.[49] While this is not the time or place to inspect such defenses, we do here want to acknowledge, in response to the objection, that our argument assumes that these defenses are plausible, or, at the very least, that they suggest that theism should be taken seriously, as a peer model, alongside other models of governance.

In fact our argument, being probabilistic, is not a standalone demonstration of God's existence. Qua explanation, it assumes theism to be plausible on other grounds as well — or at least that the extra-political evidence is not so tilted against theism as to make an abductive argument impossible. Useful, as a conceptualization of this assumption, might be a short illustration of our inference of theism's probability relative to non-theism, vis-à-vis the justification of political authority.[50] Let G be the hypothesis that 'God exists' and ~G, that 'God does not exist.' Let AJPA stand for the seeming 'there ought to be

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48   Think of the problem of evil or the deliverances of evolutionary biology, for example: Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (Clarendon, 2008); Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (OUP, 2011); Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* (Clarendon, 2010).

49   See William L. Craig and James P. Moreland, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Clarendon, 2004).

50   Adapted from William Lane Craig, Public Correspondence listed on Reasonablefaith.org.

an adequate justification for political authority,' and imagine the following probability calculus:

1	2	3
Pr (G‖AJPA)	Pr (G)	Pr (AJPA‖G)
---------------	= --------	x ---------------
Pr (~G‖AJPA)	Pr (~G)	Pr (AJPA‖~G)

Our article's implication has been that ratio one is some real number greater than one because it suggests that God's existence is more probable than his non-existence, relative to the seeming that there ought to be an adequate justification of political authority. Ratio three is constituted by this article's abductive argument, that the probability calculus favors God's existence, ceteris paribus and given the seeming that political authority ought to be adequately justified. In response, then, to this objection about the improbability of the theistic hypothesis, we certainly are willing to admit that the correctness of ratio one is dependent upon a favorable outcome of ratio two — namely, that the prior probability of God's existence is not prohibitively less than the prior probability of his non-existence. The point of the diagram is just to illustrate our assumption, predicated upon the defenses listed above, that the world's sum total of non-political background information, as represented by ratio two, does not render theism prohibitively less probable than non-theism. Nevertheless, we also acknowledge that, on independent doxastic grounds, there are persons of good will who will disagree with this. Our hope, on the basis of Lemma 1, is that such persons could at least agree that the increasing moral and intellectual rigor of theistic viewpoints is deserving of attention in today's political authority conversation.

A second objection, aimed at our abductive inference, is that it is hasty to predicate an abductive argument for God's existence on the limited evidence base that we have listed here. Our argument might not seem to be duly-diligent because it has referenced only a single body of criticisms, and only a handful of authority justification theories. Our first response to this objection is to emphasize again that our suggestion of an abductive argument for God's existence is intended to be just that and nothing more. Although we think that an inspection of further evidences would yield similar results, all that we have attempted here is a sketch of a model and some proposals for further inquiry. But, as a second and more general response, we do think also that Huemer's

criticisms are recognizable as 'types' which are similar to numerous other, long-standing criticisms of modern authority models. Since one cannot, in making an abductive suggestion, inspect every possible evidence piece, our choice here has been only to inspect the particular 'types' which best represent the rest. We consider the explanatory capacities of theistic accounts of political authority — such as the Wolterstorffian's — to be robust, and we think that if one were to compare theistic accounts to the other justificatory hypotheses that time has kept us from investigating, such accounts would likewise have advantages. So Wolterstorffian theism is not just the best of a bad lot of justifications.[51] To accept Wolterstorff's approach is not only to resolve some longstanding concerns about authority justification, but also, at the same time, to avail oneself of explanatory resources that suggest theism's correctness.

Finally, theism is not a worldview that stands or falls on a single argument. It is, rather, like a spider's web, and its various argumentative supports are imaginable as each being nodes of that web. Our abductive argument here is intended to be one such node. When placed alongside numerous other such arguments, we think that it constitutes an intriguing case for theism — at least for those persons who think that political authority ought to be justified in the key areas of realism, dissent, and common good suitability, but who are unimpressed by the resources of contractarianism and consequentialism.

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51   See Bas C. van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry* (OUP, 1989).

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GOD, ELVISH, AND SECONDARY CREATION

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Abstract. According to the theological worldview of J. R. R. Tolkien, the principal work of a Christian is to know, love, and serve God. Why, then, did he devote so much time to creating an entire family of imaginary languages for imaginary peoples in an imaginary world? This paper argues that the stories of these peoples, with their 'eucatastrophes,' have consoling value amid the incomplete stories of our own lives. But more fundamentally, secondary creation is proper to the adopted children of God and can be a way of drawing closer to God. Such work also witnesses to the freedom of the children of God, not only to receive salvation from God, but to contribute to the enrichment of creation and eternal life.

I. THE PUZZLE OF USELESS CREATION

Consider the following passage:

> Ai! Laurië lantar lassi súrinen / Yéni únótimë ve rámar aldaron! Yéni ve lintë yuldar avánier / Mi oromardi lissë-miruvóreva / Andúnë pella, Vardo tellumar / Nu luini yassen tintilar i eleni / Ómaryo airetári-lírinen.

> Ah! Like gold fall the leaves in the wind, / long years numberless as the wings of trees! / The years have passed like swift draughts / of the sweet mead in lofty halls beyond the West, / beneath the blue vaults of Varda / wherein the stars tremble in the song of her voice, holy and queenly.[1]

The text above is an example of *Quenya*, the language of the High Elves in Tolkien's *legendarium*, that is, the entirety of Tolkien's mythopoetic writings that form the background of his novels. The creation of Elvish, or rather several kinds of Elvish, contributed to the genesis of *The Lord of the Rings*, a story set in an imaginary world that become an unexpected *tour de force* of the

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1   J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (London: HarperCollins, 2011), 377–78.

twentieth century. The author, John Ronald Reuel (J. R. R.) Tolkien, Professor of English Language and Literature at Merton College, Oxford, until his retirement in 1959, enjoyed creating languages. Thomas Nagel asked, "What is it like to be a bat?" Tolkien worked harder than most in trying to answer that question, inventing languages to fit the experiences, thought processes and cultures of extremely diverse, personal, corporal, non-human beings, from vicious monsters to talking trees.[2]

This tremendous creative labour raises some extremely puzzling questions from a theological perspective. Tolkien was a man of deep Christian faith and the aim of the life of faith is summed up in the succinct formula of *The Penny Catechism* of Tolkien's youth, "to know, love, and serve God, and to be happy with Him forever in Heaven."[3] Since life is short, it would therefore seem prudent to devote a large part of one's leisure time, that is, time that is not allocated to the practical necessities of life, to these explicitly theological goals. But creating Elvish is painstaking, difficult, time-consuming, and useless. What, then, is the theological justification for spending so much time creating Elvish and an entire family of imaginary languages for imaginary peoples in an imaginary world? And if there is some positive good, from a theological perspective, in a human person creating a secondary world, what is that good and what does it tell us about God and the nature of God's action in the primary world?

These questions have implications that reach far beyond Tolkien's marvellous, idiosyncratic creation. The invention of Elvish seems an epitome of uselessness: it seemingly serves no goal beyond the satisfaction of its own creation. It is therefore a test case for useless arts generally and a way of addressing the following extremely important question. Is there a justification, within a theological worldview, of at least some creative but radically useless activities? And if there is no apologia for uselessness within theology, which at least defends the value of a wide diversity of goods, including immaterial goods, what justification is there for spending time on such matters in a world of pragmatic

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2   Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (1974). Some of Tolkien's most delightful creations come from consideration of such questions. Trees, for example, have a slow, upright, very long life, rooted in soil; hence the favourite motto of Tolkien's talking trees in *The Lord of the Rings* is, "Do not be hasty!" And their language is impossible for any other beings to learn in Tolkien's world, because it takes too long to say anything.

3   See, for example, Catholic Treasury, *From the "Penny Catechism"*, accessed May 1, 2018, http://www.catholictreasury.info/catechism/cat1.php.

materialism? Given that non-pragmatic activities are under pressure generally in many advanced societies today, the implications of any answers may also impact on the long-term survival of the humanities, the purely exploratory sciences, and arguably the university itself as noble, useless institution.

II. KNOWING GOD AND EUCATASTROPHES

In order to assess the goodness or otherwise of Tolkien's project, a prerequisite is to have some standard by which goodness can be assessed in the Christian life in general. Within Tolkien's worldview, as noted above, what is good may be described in formal terms as knowing, loving, and serving God; and a life of this kind has an end, namely being happy with God forever. But what does it mean to know, love, and serve God, and how might the creation of Elvish stand in relation to these goals?

At first, it might seem that the good, if there is any good, brought about by the development of Elvish and its associated *legendarium* must fall under the category of service, conveniently summarised in theology under the headings of the works of mercy. Works of mercy can be corporal, like the story of Martha serving lunch when Jesus visits her home (Luke 10:38–42), or spiritual, such as forming moral character or communicating theological ideas: an example is Jesus talking to Martha's sister Mary, who listens to him while Martha serves the lunch (Luke 10:39–40). On this basis, one might claim that, although Elvish itself is useless, it is part of a larger project of story-writing that has spiritual benefits. These stories contribute to forming moral character and communicating theological ideas, and hence contribute to instruction, one of the spiritual works of mercy. One might add that heroic stories tend to appeal to most people more readily than analytic presentations of ethics or systematic theology.

But this response raises a number of problems. Although Tolkien's work does edify and has even been claimed to have a sanctifying effect,[4] Tolkien denied that he was writing allegories about our world, the primary world. Tolkien's work is one of *secondary creation*: a different world, a different history, different kinds of creatures, different languages, and dramas of salvation

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4   Bradley J. Birzer and Joseph Pearce, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle Earth* (ISI Books, 2003).

that differ in many details from our own. As one example, the elves, or some of them at least, have their own fall and salvation history. But this history is bound up wholly within the created order of nature and lacks any equivalent to the life of grace.[5] As another example, revealed religion is more or less absent from Tolkien's world and most of the few references to worship involve worship of demonic beings.[6] Tolkien's world is not simply our world in disguise, but a creation for its own sake, and much of the labour, especially the linguistic labour, has no obvious, or obviously apparent benefit for the works of mercy. And since Elvish seems to support neither the corporal nor the spiritual works of mercy, it can seem that time spent on Elvish can only be time diverted away from serving God and hence a waste. On this account, not only does the creation of Elvish fail to serve theological goals, but it actually detracts from such goals.

There are clearly imaginable situations in which a criticism of this kind carries some weight. If a person is called by God to some particular service, like Jonah being called to preach to Nineveh (Book of Jonah 1:2), then it is disobediently sinful to go and do something else, like taking a ship to some other, distant location (Jonah 1:3). Similarly, one could conceive of specific callings in which creating Elvish might a way to evade an activity willed explicitly by God, such as learning Chinese to preach the Gospel in China.

On the other hand, it is not easy to make a general case that any time that is not spent on works of mercy detracts from that service in the manner of a zero-sum game. The principal reason is that there is no straightforward relationship between time spent in God's service and the quality and fruits of that service. There are all kinds of interesting characters who are acknowledged as saints who spent very little of their time on works of mercy. An example is the 'good thief' crucified beside Jesus who did no more than acknowledge him and ask to be remembered by him "when you come into your kingdom," for which he was promised paradise that day and is still remembered today in this world as well (Luke 23:39–43). And the life of Jesus himself exhibits a curious pattern with respect to time, insofar as he did no overt and recorded

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5   Drawing from the theological writings of Karl Rahner, who spoke of the anonymous Christian, elves might be described as an idealised, fictional Rahnerian species.
6   An example is the Temple built by Sauron during his time in Númenor and used for human sacrifice to the dark lord Morgoth, described in *The Silmarillion*: *Akallabêth* (The Downfall of Númenor).

public work for thirty years. Presumably he worked much of that time as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), constructing things that served some immediate use but have long since rotted away. The key activity of his world-changing public ministry of less than three years took place over the last three days, with its climax over the last few hours. Hence, although time that is not spent on works of mercy might be wasted by some persons in some circumstances, it does not follow that all such time is wasted.

If the development of Elvish and its associated *legendarium* does not fall directly under the category of service, conveniently summarised under the headings of the works of mercy, what about the good of knowing and loving God? The general sense of Scripture, given iconic expression in the account of Martha and Mary noted previously, is that knowing and loving God is the primary good of the Christian life (Luke 10:41–42), upon which any fruitful works of mercy depend. But the prospects of Elvish contributing to this good do not seem promising for the reasons noted previously, namely that salvation history and revealed theology in a secondary world in general, and Tolkien's world in particular, differ in many respects from those of the primary world.

To make further progress, it is helpful to begin with the question of what is means to know God. In the Christian tradition, God is personal, and the challenge of knowing God can be regarded as a special case of the challenge of knowing a person. But *knowing* a person is a distinct achievement from *knowing about* a person. For example, one can collate vast numbers of facts about a person without having met that person. By contrast, knowing someone implies what Bertrand Russell called 'knowing by acquaintance,' in other words, first-person experience of a second person.[7] And there are many other ways in which knowing and knowing about someone differ. For instance, we claim to know persons, but not facts about persons, by degree, qualifying claims to know someone by terms like 'well,' 'badly,' 'slightly,' 'not at all,' and so on. As another example to illustrate the difference, one can get to know a person quite well without necessarily knowing much about them or being able to express such knowledge. A prime example of the latter situation is that of pre-linguistic infants, who begin to interact with other persons from a surpris-

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7   The phrase "knowledge by acquaintance," distinguished from "knowledge by description," comes from Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Williams & Norgate, 1912) See, for example, Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, 109.

ingly early age, and can be said to know particular persons, such as parents and caregivers, long before they can express that knowledge in propositions.

But first-person experience of a second person also needs to be finessed into two kinds of knowing by acquaintance. First, there is acquaintance with a person's presence as experienced by the senses, with the face and (to a lesser but still important extent) the voice playing a key role. Second, there is experience of a person's actions over extended time or, better still, interactions with that person over time. Given that the second kind of acquaintance involves experience with a person's characteristic ways of acting, it furnishes the best means to know character and the potential to form friendship.

In interactions of human persons, these modes of acquaintance are interwoven. A well-known example from infancy is the way that babies imitate facial expressions[8] within *minutes* of being born, which manifests both a recognition of, and interest in, the human face coupled to the early desire to engage in imitative behaviour. Within their first year, infants are capable of engaging in gaze following,[9] face-to-face interactions around patterns of attention contact[10] and using gestures to engage in pre-verbal referential communication.[11] These patterns of early pre-linguistic behaviour are presently classed and studied under the general category of '*joint attention*,' namely shared awareness of shared focus on some object of attention, gaining a shared stance towards that object. The relative lack of joint attention (sometimes called shared attention) is now recognized as one of the early signs of autistic spectrum disorder.[12]

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8   Andrew N. Meltzoff and M. K. Moore, "Imitation of Facial and Manual Gestures by Human Neonates", *Science* 198, no. 4312 (1977): 75–78.

9   G. Butterworth, "The Ontogeny and Phylogeny of Joint Visual Attention", in *Natural Theories of Mind*: *Evolution, Development and Simulation of Everyday Mindreading*, ed. Andrew Whiten (Blackwell, 1991), 223–32.

10   Colwyn Trevarthen, "Communication and Cooperation in Early Infancy: A Description of Primary Intersubjectivity'", in *Before Speech*: *The Beginning of Interpersonal Communication*, ed. Margaret Bullowa (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979).

11   Elizabeth Bates, Luigia Camaioni, and Virginia Volterra, "The Acquisition of Performatives Prior to Speech", *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development* 21, no. 3 (1975) See also Jerome Bruner and Rita Watson, *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1983) and Jerome Bruner, Carolyn Roy, and Nancy Ratner, "The Beginnings of Request", in *Children's Language,*, ed. Keith E. Nelson (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978).

12   For a representative compilation of articles covering philosophical and psychological research in this area, see Naomi Eilan et al., *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds* (Clarendon Press, 2005).

As children grow up and learn language, joint attention continues into complex play and the interweaving of life stories, leading in some cases to friendship. As Aristotle remarks:

> Such (perfect) friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, men cannot know each other till they have 'eaten salt together'; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not (*EN* 8.4.156b26–32).[13]

Although Aristotle does not use the language of persons, which developed subsequently in a Christian context, it is notable that he underlines the necessity of time and familiarity to *know* someone and not merely to know about them. And this is common sense: we cannot know persons, certainly not to the point of trusting them, without experiencing how they act, which requires time and familiarity.

In the special case of God, the first kind of acquaintance (with a person's presence as experienced by the senses) does not happen in this life. But this absence does not preclude knowing God in the sense of becoming acquainted with God's extended actions over time. Indeed, a benefit of so much of Scripture being in the form of narratives is that one can come to know, at least at second hand, God, who is the principal personal agent depicted in Scripture. One can also come to know some of the persons closely associated with God who are described in Scripture. Peter, for example, is described in more detail than anyone else in the New Testament except Jesus Christ himself, and the careful reader can acquire a sense of what Peter would be like if one met him in the flesh. In other words, by means of these narratives, we can share, albeit at second hand, the experience of knowing these persons and their characters.

Moreover, the Christian life is also meant to involve coming to know God through interacting with God directly. Indeed, many claims about the Christian life can be understood in the light of growing into friendship with God in the life of grace, beginning in Baptism. For example, the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as Aquinas describes them, could be described as 'joint

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13 Aristotle and Jonathan Barnes, *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2014), 1828.

attention with God.'[14] Although the focus of a Christian's attention should, at least part of the time, be on God and the things of God in prayer, a Christian should ideally be in a state of joint attention with God all the time, whether in prayer or attending to some other matter. In other words, in the ideal Christian life, all such attention should be aligned with God with a tacit awareness of the presence of God, at least at the edge of one's consciousness.

This joint attention with God is meant to have a twofold effect. First, a participation in God's stance that gives a new and specifically theological form to the virtues. With this attitude, for example, other human beings are not simply other rational animals, but potential or actual children of God. Second, this joint attention should draw us closer to God, if one permits oneself to be moved by God and hence aligned with God through the diversity of experiences that make up one's life. Most importantly, permitting oneself to be aligned with God over a long time can also lead to the harmonisation with God called divine friendship (*caritas*). Such friendship, at least in Scripture, is typically the fruit of a series of trials: Abraham is described as having become a friend of God after many trials (James 2:23); and Jesus describes his disciples as friends, but only at the Last Supper after they have spent years in his company and he has disclosed to them all that he has heard from the Father (John 15:15).

This joint attention with God can take anything, in principle, as its object. But holy stories are particularly potent because they are also one of the clearest ways of perceiving providential action. A paragon of this situation in Scripture is the account of the risen Jesus walking unrecognised beside two disciples and explaining how the Scriptures refer to himself (Luke 24:13–35). The disciples in this situation are coming to a deeper knowledge of God in two ways. First, they are becoming aligned with God incarnate walking beside them, though not yet recognised by them; second, they are also gaining a deeper understanding of God's providential action from new perspectives on ancient texts.

In principle, even one's own life story, as it is lived moment by moment, and viewed retrospectively can be a means of knowing God and God's providential action. But there is a challenge, namely that the stories of our lives are always incomplete in this world, a point to which Aristotle alludes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

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14   This account is described in great detail in *Summa Theologiae* (ST) I-II, qq.55–70 and II-II, qq.1–170 and has been interpreted in terms of joint attention in Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (Routledge, 2012), no. 2.

> For there is required, as we said, not only complete excellence but also a complete life, since many changes occur in life, and all manner of chances, and the most prosperous may fall into great misfortunes in old age, as is told of Priam in the Trojan Cycle; and one who has experienced such chances and has ended wretchedly no one calls happy (*EN* 1.9.1100a3-9).

In other words, we cannot assess happiness, or blessedness, until the story of a person's life is complete, which, in Christian theology, ends either in catastrophe, that is damnation, or what Tolkien calls 'eucatastrophe,' namely sudden salvation from a terrible, impending, and probable doom.

And this eucatastrophe is what Tolkien calls the essence of fairy-stories,

> The peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality of truth … in the 'eucatastrophe' we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater – it may be a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world.[15]

In this passage, Tolkien refers, in effect, to eucatastrophe as a point of commonality or consonance between successful fantasy and a theological perspective in this life. Moreover, he adds later that such stories have been hallowed by the Gospel, with the Birth of Christ as "the eucatastrophe of Man's history," and the Resurrection as "the eucatastrophe of the Incarnation."

Here there may be a first tentative answer to the value of Tolkien's work. Our own life stories are incomplete and will always stop short of the hoped-for eucatastrophe. In successful fantasy, although the salvation histories may differ in many details for those of the primary world, they do share in common the hoped-for eucatastrophe. Unlike our own lives, however, successful fantasy can take us up to the eucatastrophe, and even show a glimpse of what is beyond. And this glimpse of an end to the journey of life may at least serve as some encouragement to continue to walk a good path in this life. So one possible answer to the mystery of Tolkien's work that it is 'useful' after all, an encouragement to those of us who are still in a wayfarer state in this world and hence a spiritual work of mercy.

Without disputing this answer, however, it still fails to address the heart of the issue, namely whether there is an intrinsic value of secondary creation and how this creation stands in relation to a Christian life, beyond being a

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15 J. R. R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, ed. Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (HarperCollins, 2014), 77.

means of encouragement. Some detailed questions may help to unpack the issue. If an ideal Christian life consists in harmonised joint attention with God with respect to the primary world, can one be in a state of joint attention with God with respect to a secondary world? What is the value of eucatastrophic stories in a secondary world, when there are already plenty of true stories that can be told about fruitful dramas in the primary world? And what is the value of so much labour expended on the details of the secondary world, especially, in Tolkien's case, a family of Elvish languages?

III. IMPLICATIONS OF DIVINE FILIATION

Much of the theological discussion of issues of providence and salvation tends to be conducted in rather formal, technical, and sombre terms, along the lines of how to reach a destination on a map, or a zero-sum game that attempts to attribute correctly the contributions of human and divine action. Hence it is worth thinking about aspects of the larger picture that can be obscured by this focus. One of these aspects is the teaching that Christians become adopted children of God in the life of grace.

Sin overshadows the innocence that is proper to the vocation to be divine children, but one catches a glimpse of what sinless human beings could be like very early on in the Book of Genesis, namely 2:19-20:

> So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field (Revised Standard Version).

In this passage, the LORD God wants to see what the man will call the beasts (which, it should be noted, is a rather remarkable statement if everything is foreknown by God). The central activity is that the man attends to the beasts, and God attends to the man and to the beasts with the man. And in this context of this joint attention with God, man creates language.

There is something deeply innocent and playful about this situation. In the life of nature, children play and learn from play, but they also draw closer to one another and to their parents though play, often an intense form of joint attention. Why shouldn't there be a parallel for the life of grace? On this account, the creation of a secondary world may be taken as grandiose form of

play, and if parents can draw closer to their children through play, why should God not draw closer to human beings through play, including the creation of secondary worlds and their languages? And if the LORD God drew close to Adam as he was creating language to describe mysterious new creatures in the primary world, it is plausible that one can be in a state of joint attention to God even when creating a language for elves.

But why bother with an intricate secondary world at all when there are so many edifying dramas to choose from in the primary world, and plenty of linguistic work to do as well? On this point, Tolkien has something to say on his own behalf:

> I have claimed that Escape is one of the main functions of fairy-stories … Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls?[16]

In other words, as he elaborates further, Tolkien defends at least part of the value of fairy-stories as escape and recovery, a way of refreshing the spirit. And he goes on to suggest that good stories will change our mode of attention to the primary world as well:

> Fantasy is made out of the Primary World, but a good craftsman loves his material, and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone and wood which only the art of making can give. By the forging of Gram cold iron was revealed; by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled; in the Trees of the Sun and Moon root and stock, flower and fruit are manifested in glory.[17]

In other words, creative fantasy, using the primary world as its raw materials, can help to start attending to those materials in the world with a fresh and, perhaps, re-enchanted perspective. Even 'mere' materials like clay, stone, and wood, along with plants and animals, are not mere matter in motion but ennobled. Given, for example, God's description of interaction with the natural world in Job 38–41, this renewed perspective is plausibly closer to that of God than a trite and familiar gaze devoid of any sense of wonder. On this account, fantasy can help enhance the quality of our attention in the primary world in ways that may help us align more closely with God, refreshing jaded representations that distance us from reality.

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16   Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, 69.
17   Ibid., 68.

And in response to the third question, especially about the detail devoted to the secondary world, it is plausible that a genuine child of God does God-like things, and the first exterior act of God is creation. And if detailed creation is what the Father does (though the Son, in union with the Spirit), surely we should expect the adopted children of God to do, and enjoy doing, likewise? Of course, in terms of power, human beings do not have the ability to create our own *cosmoi* and indeed, if we had that kind of power, it would almost certainly become destructive through human sinfulness. But the imaginative creation of secondary worlds in stories and associated languages is one way, and perhaps the only way, in which that kind of creativity can be exercised by human beings in the present reality.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN FREEDOM

The argument has often been made by philosophers and theologians in a modern age shaped by Cartesian science that there is no free will. But then what are we? Are we like parts of a machine, even if we are regarded like thinking tools, like slaves in the ancient world, or, more subtly, are our actions at least compatible with those of a deterministic cosmos? To the best of my belief and knowledge, there is no foolproof way of deciding these issues and people's opinions depend a great deal on the kinds of thought experiments that they choose to play in their imaginations. Our imaginations have been shaped by the useful but limited representations of Cartesian science, particularly mechanistic, two-body systems. Hence when simple, Libet-like experiments involving pushing buttons and so on are chosen for thought experiments, a story can be told that human beings are not free. In other words, when human beings are asked to perform mechanistic tasks, a machine-like story of human action can be told.

Consider, by contrast, Tolkien's far richer world of Elvish, along with his ents, dwarves, balrogs, and so on. Where do such creations come from? Are they the products of atoms interacting in Tolkien's brain? Or thoughts in the mind of God that Tolkien, without free will, was directed to transcribe? Or did Tolkien freely create such wild and wonderful beings, and does God delight in His children playing and rejoices in what they create? Cogs in machines do as they are made to do; they don't create. Only free children play games of creation, conjuring up secondary worlds that possess a consistency of reality.

Hence the existence and creative depth of secondary worlds can serve as counterexamples to the cold depiction of unfree human wills like wheels set in tramlines. On this account, Tolkien's world can have a salutary effect in breaking the spells of some deadly illusions of certain philosophies, whose work, like that of the Ruling Ring in his great story, can trap us in a narrow and closed circle of ideas.

And besides their spell-breaking powers, Tolkien speculates that such secondary creations may add to the primary creation and its future glorification as well:

> In God's kingdom, the presence of the greatest [story] does not depress the small. Redeemed Man is still man. Story, fantasy, still go on, and should go on. The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the 'happy ending.' The Christian has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope, and die; but he may now perceive that all his bents and faculties have a purpose, which can be redeemed. So great is the bounty with which he has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation.[18]

In this passage, encouragement in the wayfarer state, in this world, is highlighted as a benefit of fantasy. But such work also witnesses to the freedom of the children of God, not only to receive salvation passively, but to contribute to the enrichment of creation and eternal life. If this perspective is correct, then secondary creations like Elvish and their associated stories are not mere instrumental means to refresh and encourage wayfarers but contribute to the form and quality of their final flourishing.

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18 Ibid., 78–79.

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ASSESSING THE RESURRECTION HYPOTHESIS: PROBLEMS WITH CRAIG'S INFERENCE TO THE BEST EXPLANATION

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Abstract. The hypothesis that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead is argued by William Lane Craig to be the best explanation for the empty tomb and postmortem appearances of Jesus because it satisfies seven criteria of adequacy better than rival naturalistic hypotheses. We identify problems with Craig's criteria-based approach and show, most significantly, that the Resurrection hypothesis fails to fulfill any but the first of his criteria — especially explanatory scope and plausibility.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the foundational doctrine of Christianity. The orthodox creed that Christ died, was buried, and was raised on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) is universally acknowledged as of "first importance." While most Christians believe this simply on faith, a growing number accept a liberal interpretation according to which the Resurrection is unhistorical but profoundly symbolic. In response to such doubt, modern apologists since as far back as Thomas Sherlock (1729) have sought to establish the hypothesis of the Resurrection (henceforth, *R*) on the basis of historical evidence. The most prominent of the contemporary arguments for *R* is that given by William Lane Craig, and so we evaluate it here.[1]

Craig defines *R* as "Jesus rose supernaturally from the dead" and as "God raised Jesus from the dead" (274) — formulations he treats as equivalent.[2] To avoid confusion, we state *R* fully as "God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead." Craig argues that *R* is probable on the grounds that it is the best explana-

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1   William L. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989); William L. Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Crossway Books, 2008) — all references are to 2008 unless otherwise indicated.

2   Yet these are not equivalent since the former does not entail the latter.

tion of the historical evidence consisting of the empty tomb, the postmortem appearances of Jesus, and the origin of the Christian faith (henceforth, *E*). Although *E* is contested by several prominent New Testament scholars, we accept it here for the sake of argument.[3] Craig maintains that *R* is the best explanation of *E* since it alone fully satisfies certain criteria for assessing the virtues of competing historical hypotheses, *e.g.*, explanatory scope and plausibility. We refer to the pattern of reasoning based on such criteria as the *Inference to the Best Explanation* (henceforth, IBE) approach. Our critique of Craig will proceed as follows. First, we provide a summary of his method and argument. Second, we identify a fundamental problem that arises regarding the logical structure of his argument. Third, we discuss problems concerning the meaning and justification of his proposed criteria. Finally, we show that *R* fails to fulfill any but the first of his criteria — especially explanatory scope and plausibility.

I. CRAIG'S METHOD AND ARGUMENT

Craig's IBE approach makes use of criteria derived from philosopher of history C. Behan McCullagh for identifying the best explanation of a body of historical evidence from a range of viable alternatives. Rephrasing McCullagh's original criteria, Craig formulates his own set:[4]

(1) The hypothesis, together with other true statements, must imply further statements describing present, observable data.

(2) The hypothesis must have greater *explanatory scope* (that is, imply a greater variety of observable data) than rival hypotheses.

(3) The hypothesis must have greater *explanatory power* (that is, make the observable data more probable) than rival hypotheses.

(4) The hypothesis must be *more plausible* (that is, be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths, and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths) than rival hypotheses.

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3   Craig's full statement of this evidence is in Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence* chapters 9-11; Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 360–89.
4   Page 233; the original formulations are in C. B. McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984).

(5) The hypothesis must be *less ad hoc* (that is, include fewer new suppositions about the past not already implied by existing knowledge) than rival hypotheses.

(6) The hypothesis must be *disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs* (that is, when conjoined with accepted truths, imply fewer false statements) than rival hypotheses.

(7) The hypothesis must so *exceed its rivals* in fulfilling conditions (2)-(6) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis, after further investigation, exceeding it in meeting these conditions.

Craig employs these criteria to show that *R* is the hypothesis that best explains the evidence *E* consisting of the discovery of the empty tomb, the postmortem appearances of Jesus, and the origin of the Christian faith. As explanations for the empty tomb, he considers and rejects four hypotheses: *Conspiracy* by the disciples, *Apparent Death*, *Wrong Tomb*, and *Displaced Body*. As an explanation for the postmortem appearances — to individuals and groups on numerous occasions and in different places — Craig considers and rejects the *Hallucination* hypothesis. Finally, as an explanation for the origin of the Christian faith, Craig considers and rejects the hypothesis of *Christian, Pagan, or Jewish Influences*. He acknowledges that some of these naturalistic hypotheses satisfy certain criteria but says that they are "especially weak when it comes to explanatory scope and power and are often highly implausible" (396). *R*, he maintains, fares significantly better. He thus concludes on the basis of the historical evidence and his seven criteria that it is probable that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead.

II. PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF CRAIG'S ARGUMENT

It is customary for philosophers of religion to state their arguments in standard logical form. Unfortunately, Craig fails to do this in the case of his argument for *R*, thus placing the burden on the critic. Nonetheless, his appeal to the above criteria seems to support the following interpretation:

> Hypothesis H_1 of the set $H_1,\ldots,H_n$ is the best explanation of the evidence E in being superior to its rivals $H_2,\ldots,H_n$ in satisfying the seven criteria for justifying historical explanations.

Therefore, H_1 is probably true.

Indeed, this schema is consistent with Craig's statement: "The historian should accept the hypothesis that best explains all the evidence" (234) — which is to be understood in terms of his criteria. And it is consistent with McCullagh's statement, which Craig simply repeats: "if the scope and strength of an explanation are very great, so that it explains a large number and variety of facts, many more than any competing explanation, then it is likely to be true" (1984, 26).[5] Accordingly, the above schema seems to be an accurate representation of Craig's understanding of the logical structure of IBE arguments.

Craig fills in the IBE schema with the premise that R is the best explanation of the adduced historical evidence in being superior to certain naturalistic rivals, *e.g.*, the *Conspiracy* and *Hallucination* hypotheses, in satisfying his criteria and the conclusion that R is "more likely than not" (360). However, this raises a problem: Craig offers no justification to show that his IBE schema — and thus his argument for R employing it — is probabilistically correct, *i.e.*, that the premises of this kind of argument make the conclusion probable. Consequently, even if Craig shows that R is the best explanation of those rivals he considers, he provides no justification for holding that R is to any degree probable. Nor can he. For, as even certain proponents of R — those who employ Bayes' theorem — would agree, Craig's argument schema is a *non sequitur* because it violates the laws of probability. To achieve the conclusion that H_1 is probably true, Craig's schema requires the additional premise that the set of rival hypotheses being considered is jointly exhaustive of all possible alternatives. For otherwise there might be some further hypothesis (H_{n+1}) being overlooked that is actually the one made probable by the evidence — perhaps some version of the *Legend* hypothesis. Yet nowhere does Craig state this crucial premise. Nor is the set of hypotheses he considers as rivals to R jointly exhaustive. It might be objected that one cannot consider all the alternatives because they are so numerous. But this overlooks the possibility that these can be grouped and considered collectively rather than individually.

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5   Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 233.

Thus, the most Craig is entitled to conclude is that H_1 is more probable on E than those few alternatives he considers. Without the additional premise, R might be probable on E, but the opposite might just as well be true. It remains to be seen below whether Craig can establish the more modest thesis that R is superior to each of the alternatives he considers.

III. PROBLEMS CONCERNING CRAIG'S PROPOSED CRITERIA

Even apart from problems regarding the logical structure of Craig's IBE argument, serious problems also arise regarding the meaning, justification, and ranking of his proposed criteria. We begin with four problems regarding the *meaning* of the individual criteria.

First, what does Craig mean by "implies" in the five criteria in which this term occurs? There seem to be only two possible ways in which Craig might be interpreting this — to mean either "entails" or "makes probable." The first possibility seems wrong because neither R nor its naturalistic rivals entail E — even with the addition of other statements known to be true. And so the second interpretation as "makes probable" seems correct. But this raises a further question: Does Craig mean that the hypothesis of interest, H_1, makes E more probable than does each of $H_2, …, H_n$ *individually* or more probable than do all of $H_2, …, H_n$ *combined*? Craig is unclear.

Second, Craig is unclear regarding how the criteria of explanatory scope and explanatory power (henceforth, scope and power) are to be interpreted and how these differ. Are they independent? If not, then how are they related? Craig does not say. Despite this, it is at least clear that Craig interprets scope and power as being roughly quantitative for he speaks, in the first case, of the "large number and variety" of facts accounted for by a hypothesis and, in the second case, of "probability" (233). But, given that this is so, then, to be clear, Craig needs to explain whether and, if so, how power thus interpreted differs from power as this is understood by other leading proponents of R such as the McGrews[6] — *viz.*, as the Bayesian likelihoods of R and its rivals. Craig's insufficiently clear IBE approach fails to show how scope and power

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6   Timothy and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth", in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. J. P. Moreland and William L. Craig (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

are interrelated — a deficiency that can be rectified by the Bayesian approach. Thus, on the Bayesian approach, the scope and power of any hypothesis H_i are most naturally interpreted as correlative aspects of the Bayesian likelihood $P(E|B\&H_i)$, *i.e.*, the degree to which it is rational to believe evidence E on the basis of H_i in conjunction with background information B. On this interpretation, the scope of H_i is the range of facts contained in E in the term $P(E|B\&H_i)$ — the greater the range of facts, the greater the scope. Correlatively, the power of H_i is the magnitude of the term $P(E|B\&H_i)$ itself — the degree of likelihood that H_i confers on E — the greater the magnitude, the greater the power. The Bayesian approach shows why these are not independent criteria, contrary to how Craig seems to treat them. For, in general, the greater/lesser the scope, the lesser/greater the power, *i.e.*, the greater/fewer the number of facts stated in E, the lower/higher the value of $P(E|B\&H_i)$. This is not to deny that H_i may be so strong that it can attain relatively great scope and power simultaneously. But, nonetheless, if the scope is increased, then the power must decrease, and vice versa — if only minutely.

Third, Craig's IBE approach requires that hypotheses be compared on the basis of what he calls "plausibility." But what is plausibility and how is it to be assessed? Craig does not explain. Given his use of such terms as "likely," "degree," and "background knowledge," one might wonder whether Craig considers plausibility to be some kind of probability, namely, the conditional probability of a hypothesis with respect to our background information B, *i.e.*, what Bayesians call "prior probability." However, Craig avoids the use of prior probabilities for assessing historical explanations. He claims that it is difficult, if not impossible, to assign prior probabilities to historical hypotheses — specifically that "the values assigned to some of the probabilities involved are little more than conjectures" and that the probability of R on B, *i.e.*, $P(R|B)$, depends on the probability that God would raise Jesus, *i.e.*, $P(R|G)$, which he says is "speculative" (359). This, Craig thinks, should lead us to reject prior probability in favor of plausibility. Yet this is surely a mistake because the very problems Craig urges against prior probability arise equally for plausibility itself — these having nothing to do with the symbolic formalization of the former in Bayes' theorem. For, to the degree that prior probability is speculative, so is plausibility for precisely the same reason. After all, the plausibility of a hypothesis is surely a function of what the hypothesis states and of the background information relevant to it; but this is precisely

the same for prior probability. Furthermore, both are matters of degree. Indeed, apart from there being a formalism for one and not the other, they seem indistinguishable. It thus seems entirely natural to identify the plausibility of any hypothesis H_i (*e.g.*, R) with its prior probability $P(H_i|B)$, *i.e.*, the degree to which it is rational to believe H_i solely on the basis of B. Identifying plausibility with prior probability provides a clear interpretation of this notion. Thus, for example, the plausibility of the hypothesis that Galileo would be charged with heresy is simply its prior probability and is thus determined in precisely the same way — using the same background information. Moreover, prior probability has the advantage of occurring within a Bayesian framework that gives it a more precise function in determining the probability of a hypothesis on the total evidence for it. Despite his protestations, what Craig means by plausibility seems indistinguishable from prior probability.

Fourth, Craig presents an idiosyncratic and unjustified interpretation of the criterion regarding *ad hoc* explanations. Logicians call an explanatory hypothesis *"ad hoc"* (meaning "for this special purpose") if it satisfies two conditions: it is introduced just for the special purpose of accommodating some particular observation that otherwise would constitute counterevidence (*e.g.*, failed predictions) to the hypothesis of interest, and there is no independent evidence for it. But Craig's formulation deviates from this standard definition. Thus, for Craig, a hypothesis is "*ad hoc*" when it includes new suppositions "not already implied by existing knowledge." Notice that his focus is not on the number of new assumptions *per se*, but (following McCullagh) on whether or not these are already implied by existing knowledge. However, Craig never justifies his interpretation.

We turn next to the deeper problem of justifying the correct set of criteria. This problem becomes obvious when one sees how Craig differs from another proponent of the IBE approach, Michael Licona, in selecting criteria.[7] It is odd that Craig and Licona both appeal to the authority of McCullagh, and yet end up with distinct (albeit overlapping) sets — Craig has seven, whereas Licona has five.[8] Clearly, each is presupposing some other unstated factor to select and justify his individual set. But what is this factor? The problem is

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7   Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (InterVarsity Press, 2010).
8   Licona's criteria are scope, power, plausibility, less *ad hoc*, and illumination.

how any particular set is to be selected and justified. This problem arises, not just because Craig and Licona arrive at different sets, but because they each omit one or more widely accepted criteria — *e.g.*, non-*ad hoc*-ness, simplicity, modesty, testability, and fruitfulness. They do so by either ignoring certain criteria altogether, *e.g.*, simplicity and fruitfulness in the case of Craig, and testability and modesty in the case of Licona, or distorting the criterion beyond recognition, *i.e.*, retaining it in name only. Craig, as we have seen, omits non-*ad hoc*-ness in this latter way: he retains the term "*ad hoc*" but so redefines it that it no longer corresponds to its standard meaning. These differences, omissions, and distortions raise the question of which set of criteria is correct and how this is to be justified.

Finally, we note the more fundamental problem of whether and how the various criteria are to be ranked, *i.e.*, weighted or prioritized. Here again Craig differs markedly from Licona, and, like him, provides no justification for his approach. Craig does not rank the criteria, whereas Licona does (ranking plausibility first, followed by scope and power) but offering no justification. Thus it remains unclear how to deal with inevitable cases in which rival theories satisfy different subsets of the criteria to varying degrees — *e.g.*, high plausibility and low power versus low plausibility and high power.

IV. ASSESSING CRAIG'S ARGUMENT AND THE RESURRECTION HYPOTHESIS

We turn now to our criticism of Craig's application of his criteria to *R* and, more fundamentally, our assessment of *R* itself. We attempt to show, contrary to Craig's argument, that *R* fails to fulfill any but the first of his criteria — especially scope and plausibility. We take up each of his seven criteria in turn.

1. The hypothesis, together with other true statements, must imply further statements describing present, observable data.

Craig claims that this criterion is easily fulfilled by virtually any hypothesis, including naturalistic theories as well as *R* itself. And this is surely correct. For *R*, together with the statement that Jesus was given a tomb burial, entails the empty tomb — one of the most important items of evidence in *E* that needs to be explained. While we assume that this statement is true for the sake of argument, *R* still satisfies this criterion even if, as more skeptical New

Testament scholars (*e.g.*, Crossan) maintain, the body of Jesus was buried in a grave or simply left on the cross to decompose. Wherever it was left, *R* implies that it was no longer there. Since it is thus clear that *R* satisfies Craig's first criterion, we shall move on to his second and the matter of the appearances of the risen Jesus.

> 2. *The hypothesis must have greater explanatory scope (that is, imply a greater variety of observable data) than rival hypotheses.*

Craig's criterion of *scope* overlaps with his first in adding the requirement that *R* must "imply a greater variety of observable data" in comparison to its rival hypotheses (where "implies" means "makes probable"). We just saw in our discussion of Craig's first criterion that *R* entails the empty tomb. Consequently, it has this item within its scope. The main problem with *R*, as we shall see, lies in its failure to explain the experiences of the risen Jesus had by the various witnesses as stated in *E*. But there are two preliminary problems that first require discussion.

The first of these problems is that the argument Craig gives to show that *R* satisfies his second criterion fails. The problem is that the conclusion Craig defends — that the scope of *R* in explaining *E* is superior to that of its rivals — is *comparative*, and yet the reasons he presents for it are entirely *non-comparative*. Indeed, Craig focuses his lengthy discussion of scope exclusively on the deficiencies of certain naturalistic competitors to *R* (*e.g.*, the *Conspiracy*, *Apparent Death*, and *Hallucination* hypotheses) while saying nothing at all about the scope of *R* itself. However, from the fact that hypotheses $H_2, \ldots, H_n$ each have weak scope, it does not follow that the scope of the remaining hypothesis H_1 is greater. It might actually be weaker — perhaps even the weakest of them all. To show that H_1 exceeds $H_2, \ldots, H_n$ in scope, Craig must actually determine the scope of H_1 itself and compare this with the scope of each of H_2 through H_n.

Since he fails to do this, his argument that *R* has superior scope is a *non-sequitur*. Remarkably, in his entire discussion of this matter (2008), Craig offers only one sentence on the superior scope of *R*:

> The resurrection hypothesis, we have seen, exceeds counter-explanations like hallucinations or the Wrong Tomb Hypothesis precisely by explaining all three of the great facts at issue, whereas these rival hypotheses only explain one or two. (397)

He apparently thinks that, if all of the naturalistic alternatives to R have low scope, then the scope of R itself must be quite high. But, as the following diagram illustrates, this is clearly mistaken.
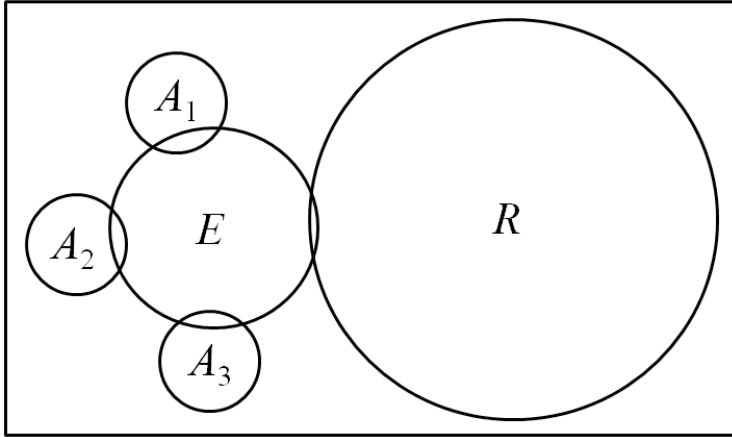
Even if the explanatory scope of each of the naturalistic alternatives to R is low, the explanatory scope of R may itself be even lower. Here the explanatory scope of a hypothesis is depicted as the ratio of the area of the portion of the evidence E it encompasses to the total area it covers. R is depicted here (for the sake of argument) as having a high plausibility, but this is inessential. (Only three alternatives to R are shown.)

What Craig needs is a genuinely *comparative* argument to show that R has superior scope. Yet he fails to provide one. It is clear, accordingly, that Craig is merely assuming that R has superior scope.

While Craig gives no comparative argument to show that R has superior scope, it might be thought that he easily could. Yet, given his definition of R, he faces a second preliminary problem to his doing so: the disparity in content between R and E. This problem arises because the content of R is not the only factor that determines its scope. The content of E itself is also crucial, and, in contrast to that of R, this is highly specific and detailed. Indeed, R is actually inferior in scope to certain rival hypotheses because what they postulate pertains far more closely item-by-item to the content of E than does what is postulated by R. For what R postulates — that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead — pertains only to what happened to Jesus at the moment of his resurrection, whereas what E states is very detailed accounts of a number of complex events that happened in Jerusalem, Emmaus, Galilee, and Damascus after

this — *e.g.*, the event of the eleven having sensory (visual, auditory, and tactile) impressions of Jesus appearing in the Upper Room, interacting with them, eating fish, and giving an extended discourse. Thus, on the grounds of disparity of content alone, the probability of *E* on *R* cannot be high. And this will still hold even if *R* is revised to include a clause explicitly stating that God's purpose for raising Jesus from the dead requires the discovery of the empty tomb and the risen Jesus appearing to the women, the disciples, and Paul — for this still lacks sufficient detail. This gives those naturalistic alternatives to *R* that correspond in content to *E* a much greater edge in scope.

Because of this problem, *R* has far less scope, ironically, than do the two most infamous of its naturalistic rivals: the *Apparent Death* and *Hallucination* hypotheses (henceforth, *A* and *H*). Thus, consider the former. As formulated by its proponents, *e.g.*, Venturini and Cheek, and understood by Craig in his critique, *A* specifically postulates that Jesus only seemed to die on cross and, then, having sufficiently recovered from his crucifixion wounds, left the tomb and appeared to the women and the disciples as stated in the gospels.[9] *R*, in contrast, merely postulates that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead — thereby accounting for the empty tomb but omitting that content essential to explaining other key events recounted in *E*, *e.g.*, the women and disciples having sensory experiences of the risen Jesus appearing to them on Earth. Craig might protest that *A* is highly implausible, but this has nothing to do with the scope of *A* — which, given what *A* postulates and *R* omits, is far greater in the case of *A*. Of course, *A* does not include the appearance to Paul within its scope. But neither does *R* as Craig defines this. Thus, despite its other notable defects, *A* is superior in scope to *R*. Now consider *H*. Unlike *R*, this hypothesis possesses content that bears directly upon *E*. For, as formulated by its proponents, *e.g.*, Strauss and Lüdemann, and so understood in his critique by Craig, *H* postulates that the women, the disciples, and Paul satisfied those psychological conditions that would produce in them hallucinations of the risen Jesus at those times and places specified in the New Testament Easter accounts. *R*, however, states only what happened at the moment of the Resurrection. Because what *H* postulates corresponds far more closely in content to *E*, it escapes this problem. Of course, *H* is fantastically improb-

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9   See, *e.g.*, John L. Cheek, "The Historicity of the Markan Resurrection Narrative", *The Journal of Bible and Religion* XXVI, no. 3 (1959).

able, but the issue here, again, is not plausibility but scope. Craig will object that the scope of *H* in contrast to that of *R* does not include the empty tomb, and this is correct. Nonetheless, *H* has overall greater scope since the number of facts to be explained in *E* regarding the experiences of the risen Jesus had by the women, the disciples, and Paul far outnumber and exceed in considerable detail the number of facts to be explained in *E* regarding the empty tomb and its discovery.[10] We conclude that, since *R* states nothing about the post-resurrection activities of the risen Jesus, its two historically chief naturalistic rivals surpass it in scope. Our point, of course, is not to extol the virtues of *A* and *H* but only to highlight the very weak scope of *R* as defined by Craig.

We have now identified two serious preliminary problems for Craig's claim that *R* possesses superior scope: he gives no comparative argument to support this and the content of *R* fails to correspond sufficiently to that of *E*. To this Craig would surely respond that he need only provide what he has not — an argument to show that the scope of *R* is superior to that of its naturalistic rivals *when it is supplemented by auxiliary hypotheses regarding post-resurrection activities of Jesus, viz.*, those that correspond in content to the discovery of the empty tomb and the experiences of the risen Jesus had by the various witnesses as stated in *E*. As we will now see, however, Craig's definition of *R* makes it impossible for him to do this since *R*, so defined, is *incompatible* with these supplementary hypotheses. The scope of *R* is, thus, necessarily limited to the discovery of the empty tomb (or cross or grave) and thus must exclude, ironically, the experiences of the risen Jesus had by the witnesses. This results from a deeper and more fundamental problem overlooked by Craig that severely limits the scope of *R*.

The problem is that, in accordance with his understanding of the conception of the resurrection body of Jesus given in Paul and the gospels, Craig formulates *R* to imply that the body of the risen Jesus remained physical and yet acquired supernatural powers that no pre-resurrection human body possesses — in particular, the ability to materialize into and dematerialize out of the physical universe at will. Regarding the physicality of the body of the risen Jesus, Craig argues in detail that "[Paul] conceives of the resurrection body as

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10   Craig might object that, to explain the discovery of the empty tomb, *H* requires the auxiliary hypothesis that the corpse of Jesus was stolen or the witnesses went to the wrong tomb. But this is unnecessary since *R* is already so weak in scope compared to *H*.

physical" (382) and that the gospels of Luke (24:36-42) and John (20:19-20) "demonstrate both *corporeality* and *continuity* of the resurrection body" (378) through their depictions of the risen Jesus showing the disciples his wounds and eating before them. Regarding the supernatural powers of the body of the risen Jesus, Craig observes that Paul conceives of this as immortal and glorious (382) and that the gospels of Luke (24:36) and John (20:19&26) depict the risen Jesus as having the power "to appear and vanish at will, without regard to spatial distances."[11] Craig thus concludes:

> On the one hand, Jesus has a body — he is not a disembodied soul.[…] On the other hand, Jesus's body is a supernatural body.[…] Jesus rises glorified from the grave. In his resurrection body Jesus can materialize and dematerialize in and out of the physical universe. The gospels and Paul agree that the appearances of Jesus ceased and that physically he has left this universe for an indeterminate time.[12]

Thus, as Craig understands "raised from the dead" in the case of Jesus in *R*, this implies that the body of the risen Jesus was *physical* and yet had *the ability to materialize into and dematerialize out of the physical universe at will*. What Craig fails to see, however, is that this implication is incompatible with the physicality of the body of the risen Jesus as the term "physical" is understood in contemporary physics and, because of this, limits the scope of *R* to the empty tomb and its discovery alone.

An essential part of what Craig means to affirm by taking "raised from the dead" in *R* to imply that the body of the risen Jesus is *physical* is that it possesses the ability to interact with its surroundings and, in particular, to be seen, heard, and touched through the use of the eyes, ears, and hands — for this is how he envisions *R* serving as an explanation for the sensory experiences the women and disciples had of the risen Jesus as stated in *E*. Conversely, a crucial part of what Craig means to affirm by taking "raised from the dead" in *R* to imply that the body of the risen Jesus has supernatural powers is that it possesses the ability to materialize into and dematerialize out of the physical universe. However, these two implications of *R* together with the quantum field theory consisting of the Standard Model of particle physics (henceforth, *SM*) create a severe limitation in its scope. For, as Craig

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11   Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, 342–43.
12   Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, 346.

himself must concede, none of the particles of *SM* (*e.g.*, quarks and electrons) or the bodies composed of them — especially human bodies — can do this. It thus immediately follows that the body of the risen Jesus as conceived in *R* cannot be physical in the sense in which "physical" is used in *SM*. Call this "physical$_{SM}$." Because of this, furthermore, it follows that the body of Jesus after its resurrection lacks all of the physical$_{SM}$ properties it had before that — most fundamentally, existence in the physical$_{SM}$ universe. It thus exists in its own non-physical$_{SM}$ universe and can have absolutely no contact with our physical$_{SM}$ universe. As a result, it cannot appear in the Upper Room; walk across the floor; be seen, heard, or touched by the women and disciples; pick up and eat a piece of fish; appear to Paul in heavenly glory; etc. For, on *SM*, only those things that are themselves physical$_{SM}$ can interact with things that are physical$_{SM}$.[13] Because of this, ironically, *R* cannot explain *any* of the appearances of the risen Jesus given in *E* — except as a series of extremely realistic hallucinations indistinguishable from sensory experiences or (in the case of Paul) heavenly visions of the risen Jesus. But, as Craig himself observes in his critique of *H*, this would be totally preposterous, if self-induced, and a moral impossibility for God.[14] What we can thus see is that *R* utterly fails as an explanation of the post-resurrection experiences of the risen Jesus. These lie beyond its scope. As previously observed, however, *R* can explain the empty tomb — but in a convoluted way. At the very moment of the Resurrection — the moment on *R* at which, according to Craig, the risen Jesus receives the power to materialize into and dematerialize out of the physical universe — his body would cease to be physical$_{SM}$ and *for that reason alone* would cease to exist in our physical$_{SM}$ universe. He would "dematerialize" out of this universe, paradoxically, not by using this power, but simply because he

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13   Where "interact" means broadly "act upon and/or be acted upon." On *SM*, all interaction involving physical$_{SM}$ bodies reduces to interaction between (*e.g.*, the exchange of) such subatomic particles as electrons, quarks, gluons, and photons — *e.g.*, physical$_{SM}$ bodies have mass that curves spacetime in accordance with the General Theory of Relativity only by interaction with the Higgs boson.

14   It would be massive deception for God to create hallucinations of the risen Jesus appearing bodily, *e.g.*, at the tomb, in the Upper Room, from Heaven, and telling the disciples that he had flesh and bone (Lk. 24:39), beckoning Thomas to place his hand in his side (Jn. 20:27), *etc*. More importantly, this would involve interaction between physical$_{SM}$ and non-physical$_{SM}$ entities disallowed by *SM*.

acquired it. What we can thus see is that the scope of R is limited to the empty tomb and its discovery alone.[15]

Craig will surely protest that our appeal to SM is irrelevant on the grounds that, being a theory of the *physical*$_{SM}$, it cannot apply to the *supernatural* and, thus, to the body of the risen Jesus. But this is confused. For, given what Craig postulates in R, the body of the risen Jesus is not physical$_{SM}$, and yet, according to SM, only those things that are physical$_{SM}$ can interact with things that are physical$_{SM}$.[16] Thus, SM is *directly* relevant to the supernatural *and* assessing the scope of R — indeed, no less relevant than is, *e.g.*, the abnormal psychology of hallucinations to assessing the scope of H. Furthermore, as Craig must concede, SM is one of the two most strongly confirmed items of our scientific background knowledge (the other being the General Theory of Relativity) and, in fact, far more strongly confirmed than any of the theories he uses to assess the scope of the naturalistic rivals to R, *e.g.*, those of physiology and abnormal psychology. Finally, Craig cannot reject our appeal to SM on the grounds of incompleteness — that it fails to encompass the interactions of all domains, *e.g.*, the gravitational interaction, and, thus, must be replaced by a more fundamental theory that does. For, as theoretical physicist Sean Carroll observes, although SM is insufficient to cover such exotic phenomena as dark matter, quantum gravity, and matter/antimatter asymmetry, it is a perfectly valid and complete theory for the phenomena of the everyday realm — including, of course, corpses:

> In every single case, the basic underlying story […] would involve the particles of the Standard Model, interacting through electromagnetism, gravity, and the nuclear forces, according to the principles of quantum mechanics and general relativity.[17]

Indeed, so strong is the evidence for SM that Carroll states without reservation:

> The view of electrons and protons and neutrons interacting through the Standard Model and gravity will stay with us forever — added to and better understood, but never replaced or drastically modified.[18]

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15   Adding the Religio-Historical Context to SM would not increase the scope of R because $R\&SM$ entails $\sim E$ and thus so does $R\&SM$ in conjunction with this.

16   We shall return to this important implication of SM when we discuss the plausibility of R below.

17   Sean Carroll, *One last stab* (2010).

18   Carroll, *One last stab*.

We conclude, accordingly, that our use of *SM* in assessing the scope of *R* is fully justified and, on that basis, that Craig's claims on behalf of the scope of *R* are highly exaggerated. When supplemented with the background information of the tomb burial, its scope is limited to the empty tomb and its discovery. It is ironic that *A* and *H*, despite their extremely low plausibilities, have far greater scope than *R*.

> 3. *The hypothesis must have greater explanatory power (that is, make the observable data more probable) than rival hypotheses.*

Our criticism regarding the previous criterion of scope applies to power as well and thus suffices to refute Craig's claim that *R* fulfills the third criterion. Here is the entirety of what Craig says on the power of *R*:

> This is perhaps the greatest strength of the resurrection hypothesis. The Conspiracy Hypothesis or the Apparent Death Hypothesis just do not convincingly account for the empty tomb, resurrection appearances, or origin of the Christian faith: on these theories the data (for example, the transformation in the disciples, the historical credibility of the narratives) become very improbable. By contrast, on the hypothesis of the resurrection it seems extremely probable that the observable data with respect to the empty tomb, the appearances, and the disciples' coming to believe in Jesus' resurrection should be just as it is. (397)

It is clear that Craig has nothing to say here regarding the power of *R* beyond what he has already said about scope. All he does, again, is focus exclusively on the vices of the naturalistic alternatives. Thus, Craig fails to justify his claim that *R* makes the historical data of *E* so much as probable—let alone extremely so. Again, Craig believes that he has justified his claim, but, as in the case of scope (see above diagram), he has failed to give a genuine comparative analysis of the power of *R vis-à-vis* its naturalistic alternatives. We argued in detail above that the two historically chief naturalistic rivals to *R* (*A* and *H*) far surpass it in scope. It is clear for the same reasons that this conclusion also holds for power. We now turn to Craig's fourth criterion, plausibility.

> 4. *The hypothesis must be more plausible (that is, be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths, and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths) than rival hypotheses.*

Craig makes his case for the plausibility of *R* on the basis of two considerations—a distinction between *natural* and *supernatural* resurrection and an alleged context for *R* consisting of religio-historical background information,

e.g., Jesus' unparalleled life and radical personal claims, together with the arguments of natural theology. Accordingly, he claims that, while a *natural* resurrection is outrageously improbable, the *supernatural* resurrection of Jesus is not at all implausible in view of its religio-historical context. However, these considerations lead to two corresponding problems. First, Craig overlooks key background information that makes supernatural resurrection highly implausible. Second, his religio-historical context is not genuine evidence.

Regarding the first problem, Craig draws a distinction between natural and supernatural resurrection:

> The hypothesis "Jesus rose from the dead" is ambiguous, comprising two radically different hypotheses. One is that "Jesus rose naturally from the dead"; the other is that "Jesus rose supernaturally from the dead," or that "God raised Jesus from the dead." The former is agreed on all hands to be outrageously improbable. Given what we know of cell necrosis, the hypothesis "Jesus rose naturally from the dead" is fantastically, even unimaginably, improbable. Conspiracy theories, apparent death theories, hallucination theories, twin brother theories — almost any hypothesis, however unlikely, seems more probable than the hypothesis that all the cells in Jesus' corpse spontaneously came back to life again. Accordingly, that improbability will lower greatly the probability that "Jesus rose from the dead," since that probability will be a function of its two component hypotheses, the one natural and the other supernatural. But the evidence for the laws of nature which renders improbable the hypothesis that Jesus rose naturally from the grave is simply irrelevant to the probability of the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead. Since our interest is in whether Jesus rose supernaturally from the dead, we can assess this hypothesis on its own. (274-275)

Contrary to what Craig claims here, the distinction he draws between natural and supernatural resurrection fails to support his claim that R has about zero implausibility with respect to our background information and, in particular, the laws of nature. Indeed, R is highly implausible on our background information since this includes, as observed above, one of the two most successful theories of physics to date: SM. As a quantum field theory, SM allows natural resurrection, but only as an astronomically improbable statistical fluctuation (apart from the possible triumph of future medical technology). In contrast, it forbids distinctively supernatural resurrection by immaterial beings, *e.g.*, God, because it entails that only those things that are physical$_{SM}$ can interact with things that are physical$_{SM}$, thus making the subsequent state of any physical$_{SM}$ thing a sole function of its previous physical$_{SM}$ state and/or those of

its physical$_{SM}$ surroundings. According to *SM*, consequently, the state of the body of Jesus at the moment of its alleged supernatural resurrection by God was a sole function of its previous physical$_{SM}$ state — that of a corpse in some particular stage of postmortem decomposition — and those of its physical$_{SM}$ surroundings. Since God is necessarily immaterial, *SM* thus entails that the state of the remains of Jesus at each point in time after its death had *nothing to do* with God. *SM*, it should be emphasized, denies neither theism nor the omnipotence of God. What it does deny, rather, is that *anything* acts *supernaturally* in the world.[19] But now, *SM* is the most comprehensive theory of physics ever formulated — encompassing all subdivisions of the latter except *GTR* — and, as a result, is highly confirmed by the massive amount of experimental data from these. Because it is inconsistent with *SM*, *R* thus has a very high degree of implausibility.

Craig cannot dismiss this critique on the grounds that we assume the mere statistical generalization that "dead men do not rise," because we do not. Indeed, our only appeal is to *SM*. Nor can he reject it for proceeding on "naturalistic presuppositions," for *SM* is not naturalistic metaphysics but, as we saw in Carroll's observation above, an exceptionally well-confirmed item of our scientific background information *that is here to stay*. Furthermore, Craig cannot dismiss our critique on the grounds that the formulas comprising *SM* are, not categorical assertions, *i.e.*, unqualified equations, but actually conditionals that have the supernatural closure proviso "if no agent supernaturally intervenes" as the antecedent.[20] This claim is simply false, and one finds no mention of supernatural intervention in connection with the equations of *SM* (and of physics more generally) in the reference works, research journals, and textbooks of physics. More importantly, prefixing this proviso to the equations of *SM* renders the resultant "laws" untestable, since any failed prediction can always be "explained away" by the *ad hoc* expedient of claim-

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19   For Theism, *SM* is part of the *Via Negativa*, telling us what God does *not* do — not what He *does*. Thus, where *p* is any proposition, *p* entails (trivially) that God does not intervene to make it the case that ~*p*. But then, most significantly, where *p*, like *SM*, is exceptionally well-confirmed, it is also exceptionally well-confirmed that God does not intervene to make it the case that ~*p*. (This follows from the Logical Consequence principle according to which, if Ψ is a logical consequence of Φ, then $P(\Psi) \geq P(\Phi)$.)

20   This supernaturalist proviso is not to be confused with "in a *physically* isolated system," which occurs in the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the conditional form of the Law of Conservation of Energy.

ing that some undetected agent must have been supernaturally intervening after all. Indeed, apart from the equations of *SM* alone, *i.e.*, unqualified by this proviso, there is no way to determine that no agents supernaturally intervene in any given situation to which they apply since (with the possible exception of God) we know nothing at all about such agents (their number, the extent of their supernatural power, their motives, etc.) and, most importantly, whether they are detectable by our senses or best scientific instruments when they are supernaturally intervening. Here absence of evidence is *not* evidence of absence. Craig cannot circumvent this problem by restricting the supernatural closure proviso to God alone since this problem arises equally from the supernatural intervention of *any* agent. Life would grind to a screeching halt if the supernatural closure proviso were prefixed to the equations of *SM*. A cop couldn't know that his gun would fire, a mother that juice would not poison her child, a student that his book would not burst into flames, etc. The supernatural closure proviso is a myth of Positive Natural Theology[21] and appeal to it constitutes a case of special pleading — attempting to exempt *R* from objections based on its conflict with the exceptionally well-confirmed physical laws of *SM* while at the same time urging that its naturalistic rivals be subjected to the most trenchant criticism by less fundamental and less strongly confirmed scientific generalizations.

For the above reasons, it is difficult to understand how Craig can claim that a distinctly *supernatural* resurrection of Jesus by God has about zero implausibility with respect to our background knowledge — unless he is including in this items that do not really count as knowledge at all. This brings us to the second problem.

Craig maintains that the plausibility of *R* "grows exponentially as we consider it in its religio-historical context of Jesus' unparalleled life and radical personal claims and in its philosophical context of the arguments of natural theology" (397). However, Craig's appeal to this religio-historical context (henceforth, *RHC*) as background information is undermined by two problems. First, even if *RHC* taken alone were to increase the plausibility of *R*, the problem remains that the other part of our background information,

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21 On the distinction between Positive and Negative Natural Theology, see R. G. Cavin and C. A. Colombetti, "Negative Natural Theology and the Sinlessness, Incarnation, and Resurrection of Jesus: A Reply to Swinburne", *Philosophia Christi* 16, no. 2 (2014).

SM, entails ~*R* and, thus, so does the combined background information, *SM&RHC*. Second, any appeal to *RHC* is undermined by the sharp division among leading New Testament scholars (*e.g.*, Brown, Crossan, Ehrman, Jeremias, Meier, Sanders, and Wright) regarding the historical reliability of the Gospels. Because of this, *RHC* itself lacks adequate justification. While the general considerations Craig adduces for its reliability seem reasonable, *e.g.*, that there would be insufficient time for the New Testament Easter traditions to arise as legends, so also do the more specific counterarguments of opposing scholars (even some who are conservative), *e.g.*, that the command of the risen Jesus to baptize in the Trinitarian name in Mt. 28:19 is unhistorical since Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; and 19:5 only mention early church baptisms performed in the name of Jesus alone.[22] Likewise, Craig cannot appeal to the exalted claims, *e.g.*, "Son of Man" and "Son of God," made by Jesus (or by others of him) in the Gospels because, again, New Testament scholars are sharply divided over Jesus' self-understanding, *e.g.*, as a mere prophet, Messiah, or God. Craig gives a credible argument for a high Christology, but it is inconclusive given the absence of scholarly consensus.[23] Consequently, his appeal to *RHC* fails on pain of begging the question.

This problem would only be exacerbated were Craig to add to *RHC* the purported miracles of Jesus, his sinlessness, and his fulfillment of prophesies. Indeed, the miracles of Jesus are no less in dispute than is *R* itself — and, moreover, there is vastly more evidence for *SM* than there is for these. There are problems, similarly, with including the sinlessness of Jesus in *RHC* since the disposition of humans to sin is so particularly strong and the meager New Testament evidence for the moral perfection of Jesus (as opposed to his general goodness) is hardly representative, being limited to certain childhood incidents and the last few years of his life (*e.g.*, Jn. 8:46).[24] The same goes for fulfillment of prophecies since it remains an open question among New Tes-

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22   R. T. France, "The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus", in *History, Criticism, & Faith*, ed. Colin Brown (InterVarsity Press, 1976) concludes: "The formula of Matthew 28:19b looks much more like the end-product of this [legendary] doctrinal process than its starting-point."
23   Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Was Jesus Mad, Bad, or God?…Or Merely Mistaken?", *Faith and Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (2004), though himself a Christian, shows in his critique of C.S. Lewis' famous Trilemma argument that, even if we knew that Jesus claimed to be divine, this would not establish that he was God.
24   On the problem of the sinlessness of Jesus see Cavin and Colombetti, "Negative Natural Theology".

tament scholars whether these are historical or evolved for apologetic reasons in the early church. Craig has not adequately dealt with these problems. For the reasons given in this and the previous paragraph, Craig's appeal to *RHC* to increase the plausibility of *R* fails.

> 5. *The hypothesis must be less ad hoc (that is, include fewer new suppositions about the past not already implied by existing knowledge) than rival hypotheses.*

We saw above that Craig's definition of *ad hoc* is idiosyncratic. Now let us consider whether or not *R* fulfills this criterion by including fewer new suppositions. Craig argues that *R* is not *ad hoc* or contrived since it readily fits within the *religio-historical context* (*RHC*) of the unparalleled life, ministry, and personal claims of Jesus. However, we have already seen that Craig's appeal to *RHC* fails, and thus have implicitly shown that *R* on Craig's definition is *ad hoc.* Moreover, while rival theories do, as Craig observes, require many new suppositions, these are trivial in comparison to the *supernaturalist* suppositions implicit in *R* resulting from how Craig defines the term "raised" therein. For, on Craig's understanding of the Resurrection in *R*, God does not merely return Jesus to life but changes his corpse into a glorious body that is immortal and imperishable and has the ability to materialize and dematerialize. And these suppositions are surely fantastic. Moreover, to explain the specific details of *E*, Craig must also add the suppositions that Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus, in the Upper Room, on a mountain in Galilee, etc., since these are not included in *R* itself. Lastly, Craig must add a final supposition that enables *R* to explain the surprising post-Easter disappearance of the risen Jesus from Earth and his appearance to Paul from Heaven — a role performed by the *ad hoc* miracle of the Ascension. Given all these suppositions, it would seem that *R* is significantly more *ad hoc* than its naturalistic rivals.

> 6. *The hypothesis must be disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs (that is, when conjoined with accepted truths, imply fewer false statements) than rival hypotheses.*

Craig states that he can't think of any accepted beliefs that disconfirm *R*. But, as we have already seen, this is clearly mistaken. There are, to be sure, accepted beliefs that tend to disconfirm the naturalistic rivals of *R* to various degrees — *e.g.*, the probability of death resulting from crucifixion. However, these pale in comparison to the fact that *SM* entails ~*R* and thereby discon-

firms R to the maximal degree. First, *SM* disconfirms R in its appeal to a supernatural agent, *viz.*, God, as the cause of the Resurrection. Quite apart from this, *SM* disconfirms R in a second way. It is an accepted belief that, in order for a body to be *seen*, it must be made of atoms that enable it to interact with and emit photons. But, as previously explained, the resurrection body in R is not physical$_{SM}$ and, thus, cannot be made of atoms and be perceived through *any* sensory modality. Finally, the resurrection body in R is a *soma pneumatikon* and, thus, immortal and imperishable. However, *SM* entails that all physical bodies are physical$_{SM}$ bodies and thus neither immortal nor imperishable — thereby disconfirming R in a third way. Craig may object to our appeal to *SM*. Yet, as already observed, it is far more strongly confirmed than any of the accepted beliefs he uses to disconfirm the naturalistic alternatives to R. His failure to appreciate this explains why he believes that R fulfills criterion six.

> 7. *The hypothesis must so exceed its rivals in fulfilling conditions (2)-(6) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis, after further investigation, exceeding it in meeting these conditions.*

Craig concludes that "There is certainly little chance of any of the rival hypotheses suggested to date ever exceeding the Resurrection Hypothesis in fulfilling the above conditions" (399). He offers no additional argument of any kind for this claim, only reminding us of the "stupefaction" of scholars when confronted with the facts of the empty tomb, the appearances, and the origin of the Christian way. Only prejudice against miracles, he suggests, stands in the way of accepting his conclusion. Yet, in light of our evaluation of Craig's argument, this conclusion should be dismissed as mere apologetic *bravado*.

In summary, we have tried to show that Craig's defense of R fails. His IBE approach suffers from deep conceptual problems in his definitions of the criteria. Moreover, he fails to show that R fulfills *any* but the first of his criteria — most notably, scope and plausibility (and even power as well) — whereas it is clear that certain naturalistic rivals to R fulfill more. Regarding scope and power, we have seen, most significantly, that, as a consequence of *SM*, R can only explain the facts regarding the empty tomb but not the appearances. Regarding plausibility, we have seen that *SM*, again, renders R far more implausible than its naturalistic rivals and that serious doubts arise regarding the existence of *RHC*. In light of our critique, it would seem that almost any

naturalistic hypothesis is superior to the hypothesis that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead.[25]

The reader might conclude that, in rejecting *R*, we are forced to accept one of its implausible naturalistic rivals, *e.g.*, the *Conspiracy* hypothesis. But this does not follow since the evidence statement *E* may well be false. The argument Craig presents for *E* is fallacious if for no other reason than it begs the question against equally qualified experts who reject its key supposition, *viz.*, that legend could not arise due to refutation by eyewitnesses. Nor can *E* explain the similarities and differences found within New Testament Easter traditions. A logically correct argument to determine what actually happened must begin with a detailed explanation of these. The way forward, we propose, is a rigorous Bayesian argument to determine whether the alleged facts of *E* are legends that escaped eyewitness refutation.[26]

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25   It should be clear that our critique of Craig's criteriological argument for *R* applies no less to its Bayesian counterpart.

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