

Ludwig Neidhart:

God and Time. A defense of God's timelessness

Contribution to the International Conference *God, Time and Infinity* in Warszawa (September 22–24, 2015), published in Szatkowski, Mirosław (Ed.), *God, Time and Infinity* (Philosophical Analysis Vol. 15), Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018, pp. 115–129

Abstract: I want to demonstrate how the traditional doctrine of Divine timelessness can be inferred from classical theistic principles. My main argument focuses on the concept of God provided by the so-called Perfect Being Theology. I also reflect upon three other lines of argumentation for God's timelessness and finally I take into consideration how to deal with the main counter-arguments.

1. Introduction

Concerning the relation between God and time there are two main views, for which I use the names “eternalism” and “temporalism”.

Eternalism, as the term is used here, refers to the classical doctrine that God is timeless and outside the timeline in which we live. Eternalism in this strict theological sense has to be distinguished from Eternalism in the philosophy of time, where it is opposed to Presentism.

Temporalism has two main branches: The most radical kind of Temporalism is *Process Theology*, holding that God is not only moving through time horizontally, but so to speak also vertically: God permanently increases His perfection. *Open Theism* is less radical, saying that God remains at all times at the highest level of perfection, moving only horizontally through time. The main tenet of Open Theism is that God lacks complete foreknowledge of the future, so in order to know the outcome of free future decisions He has to wait, and therefore, He is in time just like us. Still more moderate than Open Theism is William Craig's so-called Middle position between Eternalism and Temporalism, which asserts that God was timeless prior to creation but since creation He is in time. Contrary to Open Theism Craig also believes that God has complete foreknowledge of the future, but in spite of this He is in time, because He knows at every moment which events are present, and thereby experiences different states of consciousness successively.

One could perhaps argue that the ability to undergo change is a typical feature of a temporal being, and so God should be called simply temporal in Craig's concept. If this is right, Craig should be counted as a temporalist, albeit as one of the most moderate members of that group. We can illustrate Temporalism by a straight line that symbolizes the timeline, and a point moving along the timeline that represents the current position of God in time. In the corresponding illustration of Eternalism we have to put the point that represents God besides the line that represents time, and instead of a straight line we should use the line of a half circle, whose midpoint is the position of the point representing God. Then the point representing God has the same distance to every point on the timeline, which symbolizes aptly the fact that if God lives in timeless eternity He can access with equal ease each point on the timeline by His perceptions and actions.

2. The concept of God

In order to settle the question whether God is inside or outside time, we need as a starting point an appropriate concept of God. A suitable concept seems to be the concept of God in so-called Perfect Being Theology,¹ according to which God is the most perfect being conceivable. This conception is accepted by most theists, including many temporalists. The patron saint of this view is St. Anselm

¹ Cf. Rogers (2000).

of Canterbury, whose famous definition of God reads: *God is a being than which nothing greater can be conceived*.² It seems that this concept can also be connected with the biblical revelation of the name of God, *Yahweh*,³ which means “he is” in the simplest rendering of the word. This might be an indication that God is pure and unrestricted being, the greatest and most perfect of all beings. Greatness in this definition means of course ontological greatness, which can be illustrated by something’s height in the hierarchy of the *levels of being or ranks of reality*. The lowest rank is occupied by the so-called *impossible entities* that can’t exist in the proper sense, such as square circles or a piece of wooden iron. The subsequent rank is that of *mere possible entities* such as flying horses or golden mountains, that do not exist in actuality but could have been actualized. Above this level follows the rank of *contingent actual entities*, that do actually exist but could also have failed to have actual existence. These entities can be ordered by increasing independence, beginning with the accidents, after which follows the well-known series of minerals, plants, animals and humans, over which the theologians pose the angels. On the highest conceivable rank of this hierarchy one has to put God as a *necessary entity*, for necessity is the extreme contrary of impossibility, which is the characteristic mark of the lowest rank. Now, it seems difficult to reconcile necessity with temporality, because all clear examples of necessary beings known to us (such as Platonic ideas or eternal truths) are timeless. Therefore, the necessity of God, which follows from the definition, could be a first hint that He probably is outside of time.

The just considered levels of reality invite us to take a short look on the so-called ontological argument for God’s existence, which I want to present in a most compelling form essentially based on ideas of Leibniz.⁴ For every entity, or rather for every idea of an entity, there seem to be only three possibilities or options:

1. the idea is *necessary*, which means that the entity exists in every possible world (where the term “world” refers to the whole reality including all spaces and times),
2. or the idea is *contingent*, that means: the entity exists in some but not in all possible worlds,
3. or finally the idea is *impossible*, which means that the entity exists in no possible world.

Now, for the classical conception of God, given that God is necessary, the second option must be discarded by definition. So only the first option (according to which God is necessary just as the definition says He is) or the third option (which would be the right one if it turns out that the definition is contradictory) remain. Leibniz has expressed this insight by his famous assertion: “if God is possible”, that is: if the third option is also wrong, “then He actually exists”, because then the first option must be the right one.⁵ Moreover according to Leibniz we have a reason to discard the third option, too: impossible ideas always involve some contradiction, but in the idea of God, being absolutely perfect, there are only perfections, which can be described as pure positive and absolute simple qualities, and which, therefore, cannot contradict each other.⁶ Thus, in Leibniz’s view, the concept of God seems to be an example of a non-contradictory idea, or even the most outstanding example of a consistent idea. If this view is correct, then only the first option remains: God is in fact necessary and so has to exist.

Of course, one can make several objections to this proof, and the same holds true for the other so-called proofs of God’s existence: they do not convince everyone. It is not my aim here to discuss at length the pros and cons of the ontological argument and of the other arguments for God’s

² Anselm, *Proslogion* 2: “quo maius cogitari nequit”.

³ Cf. *Exodus* 3,13-15.

⁴ Cf. Leibniz(1840), and also Neidhart (2008), pp. 763–766.

⁵ Cf. Leibniz (1840), p. 177: “si l’être nécessaire est possible, il existe”.

⁶ Leibniz argues this way in Leibniz (1981/2006). See especially Leibniz’s argumentation on the last page (p. 577), following the subtitle *Quod ens perfectissimum existit*.

existence. In any case, it seems that all classical arguments for God's existence are very interesting ways of thought, and they might at least fortify the conviction that our belief in God's existence is a reasonable one. What I want to point out is that almost all famous proponents of the classical proofs for God's existence have been deeply convinced eternalists.⁷ This, I think, is no coincidence, because the Divine properties needed in far-reaching arguments for God's existence (such as necessity and simplicity) cannot easily be adopted into a consistent temporalist philosophy, or so it seems to me. So, my point is this: if it would turn out that the existence of a temporal God cannot be rationally defended with equal strength and plausibility as it seems possible to defend the existence of an eternal God, this would be bad news for the temporalists.

However, let us resume the analysis of the concept of God. In order to prove that God has a certain attribute, one only has to show that this attribute expresses absolute perfection. Here I must address the objection that individual judgments concerning perfection are arbitrary. In reply, there seems to be at least some undisputed ontological intuitions about perfection. Consider, for example, the following sequences of adjectives:

- impossible – contingent – necessary,
- perishable – imperishable,
- lifeless – alive,
- unconscious – conscious – self-conscious (which in some systems of philosophy amounts to personality).

I think most would agree that in each row the last adjective describes unrestricted perfection, which we have therefore to predicate of God. Consider three further examples:

- ignorant (stupid/blind) – knowing (wise/sighted) – omniscient,
- impotent (incompetent, unable) – potent (competent, able) – omnipotent
- malevolent (bad, perfection-restraining) – benevolent (good, perfection-promoting) – omnibenevolent.

Here also, it seems that we have to predicate of God in each case the last property, and so we get the so-called main properties of God: omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence. It is important to note that Divine omnipotence seems to imply that there is at most one God. For if we suppose that there are two independent acting Gods, both omnipotent, then we obviously get a contradiction because each God should be able to overpower the other. So, this is impossible, unless we say that the two Gods are not acting independently, but are in some mysterious way naturally united, disposing over one and the same supreme power source. But then it seems to be more appropriate to speak about one and the same God occurring in different persons, similar to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

⁷ For example, Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz and Gödel, the most famous proponents of the ontological argument, have all been staunch eternalists. The same holds for Thomas Aquinas, being the most famous Christian proponent of the cosmological argument. Of course, there are some exceptions: most notably, Charles Hartshorne and William Craig, two famous temporalists, have also defended the ontological and cosmological argument, respectively. But it seems that the arguments proposed by temporalists are not as strong, ambitious and far-reaching as the classical arguments. For example, Craig's version of the cosmological argument leads only to the result that the universe has a cause at its beginning and that this cause was a personal creator, but Craig admits that the proof leaves it open, "whether this creator is omniscient, good, perfect, and so forth" (Craig (1979), p. 152). Likewise, Hartshorne's version of the ontological argument is somewhat deficient in comparison to classical versions, for it accepts only the first step of the Leibnizian version of the argument without reservation, namely that God is either necessary or impossible. But the postulate that God is logically possible, Hartshorne holds, is "the hardest to justify" (Hartshorne (1962), p. 52), he explicitly states that the argument "does not suffice" to exclude impossibility (ibid., 58) and then he adds: "here the other theistic arguments may help" (ibid.). Thus, Hartshorne's ontological proof seems to be incomplete.

Next we need to reflect upon the so-called simplicity of God. There are some notions of simplicity in classical theology in which all properties of God are identical with the essence of God and with each other. Such a radical notion of simplicity might be too strong, and anyway, for our purpose we don't need simplicity in this sense. What we need is the statement that there might be a variety (probably even an infinity) of different perfections that come together in God and concentrate themselves in a point-like, non-extended Divine essence.

To see that simplicity in this sense is a perfection, suppose that you have a perfectly equipped office, where you can do whatever you might want to do in an office, but for each task you want to do, you have a different device: for writing, a typewriter; for calculation, a pocket calculator; for knowing the time, a clock; and so on. But wouldn't it be more perfect if you had only one single device with which you can do everything? Of course it would, and the reason seems to be that although the office with all these different devices might be perfect considered as a whole, it is not perfect considering its parts: each part, that is each device, isn't most perfect because it is limited in its abilities. So, if an entity has parts, then in order to be most perfect the parts must also be most perfect. But then a multitude of parts seems to be superfluous, for each part would already have all conceivable perfections. Therefore, the most perfect entity should be a simple, unextended entity.

Another consideration leading to the same result is the following. In order to increase a perfection in technology we proceed in two directions. In the first place we try to extend the power and abilities of the device, but secondly there is also the well-known process of miniaturization. We try to concentrate the highest power in a space as small as possible. The reason for this seems to be that an entity being small and having great power is not only more practical, but also more admirable than an entity being big and having equal great power. Therefore, again, the most perfect thing conceivable seems to be a *point-like entity having infinitely great power*. A corollary of this result is, by the way, that *God cannot be a corporal body*, because a corporal body cannot be unextended.

On the other hand, it seems that to be *omnipresent everywhere in space and time* is also obviously a perfection. How can this be reconciled with the property of being unextended? To this one can reply that for a non-corporal (and hence spiritual) entity presence can be suitably defined in terms of cognition and action. A spiritual entity is *cognitively present* at some point of spacetime, if it can immediately perceive this point; and it is *causally present* at the same point if it can immediately act there. Therefore, the statement that God is omnipresent means simply that He can perceive and act upon everything, and this can be inferred straightforwardly from His omniscience and omnipotence. The overall picture of God we should now have in mind is that God resembles a point, from which different rays come out and connect God with all points in the universe, symbolizing God's perceptions and actions at all locations. This applies of course not only to space but to time as well. Although this picture might suggest already that God is outside space and time, this is not yet made clear by the preceding considerations, because one could suggest that God might be a point within spacetime. However, we shall see in the following section why this in fact is not possible.

3. God's timeless eternity

What exactly is eternity? The classical definition from Boethius reads: Eternity is a "simultaneous and perfect possession of illimitable life"⁸ It contains three marks, expressed by three adjectives. The first adjective *illimitable* postulates that God's existence extends through every point of time. The second one, *simultaneous*, indicates that all expressions of "life", that is all acting and peceiving, is performed all at once without change and succession. The third adjective is *perfect*. As it stands here, it refers to "possession", and this does not make great sense to me. Therefore, I

⁸ Boethius (524/1984), 5, 6, 4: "interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio".

propose a small change to the classical definition: I would like to shift the adjective such that it refers to the word “life”. My definition of eternity then is this: Eternity is a “simultaneous possession of illimitable and perfect life”. We shall see in a moment why this alteration of the word “perfect” makes an important difference.

First, note that God matches this definition. *Illimitability* is just the temporal aspect of (and therefore is entailed by) Divine omnipresence. *Simultaneity* of the Divine life means that God acts without interruption in the same manner. This follows from God’s immutability, which seems to be just the temporal aspect of Divine simplicity. Finally, the requirement that the life of an eternal entity should be *perfect* means that its ability to act and to perceive should be perfect, ranging over all entities; this of course has to be attributed to God in virtue of His omnipotence and omniscience.

Now we can ask which of the three parts of the definition of eternity (if any) urges us to push God out of the timeline. First, being illimitable is clearly possible for a temporal being; just consider the possibility that a stone lays around for eternity. But also, it seems possible to add the concept of simultaneity to illimitability. The previously mentioned stone, whose “life” consists in lying around, doesn’t ever alter its operations and thus “lives its life all at once”. To be more precise, we should attribute the property of “simultaneous living its life at once” to every entity that doesn’t undergo a succession of different internal states. This does not exclude a temporal succession of relations between the entity and the outside world, if this succession is *caused by changes of the outer world alone*. Consider a sun that does not move and shines always in the same way from throughout eternity, while a planet rotates around it. Then any change of relation between the sun and the planet is caused by the movements of the planet alone, and one could say, therefore, despite the changing external relations the sun lives its life simultaneously all at once.

So, if an entity could be temporal despite having an illimitable, simultaneous life, it could only be the addition of the attribute of perfection that pushes the entity outside the timeline. Indeed, one can argue that this is the case. If a temporal entity has an illimitable simultaneous life, which is also perfect to the highest possible degree, the entity must be simultaneously able (a) to act upon and (b) to perceive every event in time. But for a temporal being it seems to be possible only to affect the future and to perceive the past. Therefore, the entity would have to be at the beginning of time in order to be able to act upon the whole timeline exerting influence on every event, while it would have to be at the end of time in order to be able to perceive all temporal events. So, it seems that nowhere on the timeline is it possible to act upon and simultaneously to perceive everything. If this is right, the only possibility seems to be that an entity satisfying the definition of eternity must be outside of time.

But one could ask: How is it even conceivable for an entity to be outside time and in spite of this to be able to act upon and to perceive the world? This question concerns the relation between God and the world. Concerning this relation in general, there seem to be only three general proposals. The first is that God is a physical part of the universe. The second is that the universe is a physical part of God. Apparently, neither the first nor the second proposal seems to be an acceptable option, because in both cases, God and the universe would be parts of one and the same greater spatio-temporal frame of reference. The only remaining third proposal known to me is that *the world is an idea in the Divine mind*. This would mean: the world is not a physical or substantial part, but a mental part, of God.

But then the relation between God and the world is a special kind of a *parallel-universe-relation*. By this I mean a kind of separation which is neither spatial nor temporal: one cannot travel from one universe to another parallel universe by moving through space or time. Examples for such

universes are two dream worlds, two emulated realities in a computer or two real universes as proposed by some interpretations of quantum mechanics.

One can probably explain this suitably by using the idea of emulated (computer-generated) realities. This idea is illustrated by such films as *Matrix* or *The thirteenth floor*, where computer programmers have created an emulated world, and the people in this programmed world think that their world is the real one; they develop a kind of self-consciousness and act independently of the program, guided by their own free will. Moreover, the programmer, by putting some device on his head can enter the computer program and act immediately with the people therein. I don't think that in fact humans are able to create such realities, but it seems to me that God can and has done something like that.

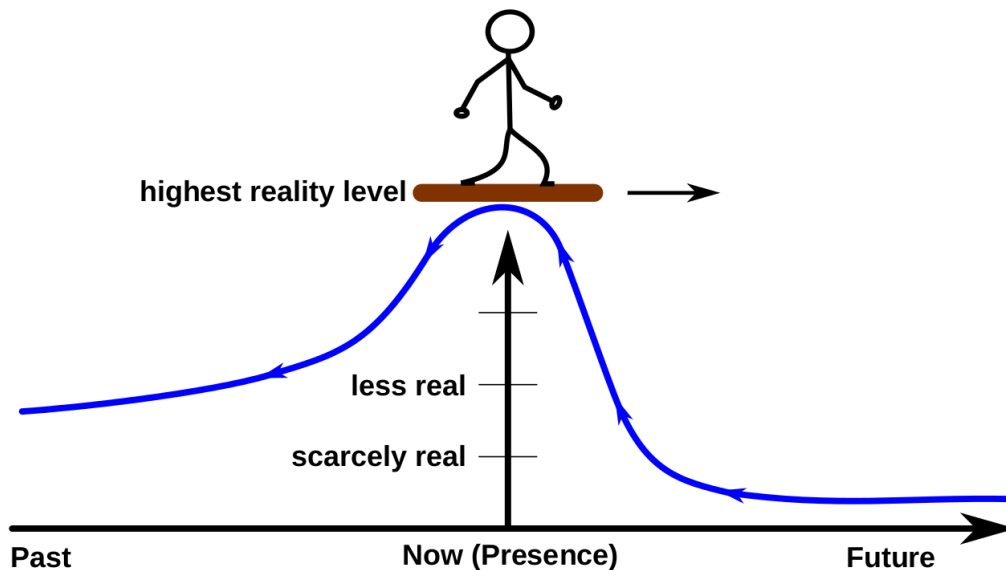
Now the relation between two emulated universes is the relation of parallel universes; and (what is more important) also the relation between one emulated universe and the real world of the computer programmer is again a relation of parallel universes, although these two universes are not on the same footing as the universe of the programmer has the privileged mode of reality. In an analogous way I see the relation between God and the universe He has created. But if this is the correct description, then of course God is outside of our spacetime and yet He is its creator and supervisor. Possibly He can also somehow enter somehow our universe as the theological doctrine of Incarnation claims.

So here my main argument ends. Before I proceed to the additional arguments, I would like to remark that one should not confound the notion of parallel universes with the notion of possible worlds mentioned before. The difference is that two parallel universes are supposed to coexist both in a fully actualized state within one and the same possible world, while two possible worlds cannot coexist in a fully actualized state. Here I disagree with David Lewis, who somehow seems to identify the two concepts.⁹

⁹ Cf. Lewis (1986).

4. Additional Arguments

Up to now we have discussed God and His absolute perfection and argued that this seems to force us to put Him outside of time. Now we will look in the opposite direction, that is, down to time, and will discover the imperfection of temporality; thereby, we will get a second argument to put God outside of time again. I want to show this in a kind of ontological meditation, by explaining a symbolic picture I personally have for the flow of time.



I compare the temporal entity with a surfer on a surfboard surfing on the waves of an ocean, which symbolizes reality. The waters in front of the surfer symbolize the future and the waters behind him stand for the past, while the point of contact with the ocean stands for the present. The height of the water-level symbolizes the intensity or grade of reality, as it appears to the surfer. The level of the distant future is very low, but I emphasize that it is not equal to zero, that is, the future is not totally unreal to us. This is because the future is *doing* something, namely it approaches us, and if it is doing something, it must *be* something real. Then if the future is very near to us (say it is now the tomorrow), it suddenly increases its level of reality, for it throws already its shadow upon us and urges us to prepare for its coming. And if it finally reaches us at the peak of full reality, at the same moment it leaves us and begins to fade down, but it remains forever at a higher level than the distant future, because it remains to us in its effects and also remains visible and explorable to us; that's the historian's job, and history is of course not about nothing but about something real. In short, we have full contact only with the present, less with the past, and even less with the future. And now the question rises: can God be described as such a surfer, with such a restricted contact to reality? Of course not. God must be either the whole ocean of reality, or, if this sounds too pantheistic, He must be the *ground* of the whole ocean, having all the waters of reality completely in His hand.

While the preceding two arguments have been very strong ones in my opinion, the following two kinds of arguments are not so convincing, yet they are important, because there has been widespread discussions about them in the contemporary debate.

The *third argument* focuses on metaphysical or even physical features of time. The most compelling argument of this sort seems to be the following: Time must or at least does or at the very least could have a beginning, whereas God cannot have a beginning. Thus, God cannot be bound to time essentially. This is a valid argument, but it is weak because a modest temporalist such as Craig can accept it and even say that God can be in time by His own will.

There are other similar arguments that are based on features of time as revealed by the Theory of Relativity. Some of my fellow eternalists (Brian Leftow for example) use these arguments,¹⁰ while I think they should be avoided. After having spent a lot of time examining the Theory of Relativity and its philosophical implications, I am convinced that the Theory of Relativity only applies to the actual physical universe, and not to spiritual entities and therefore not to God.¹¹ If for example one argues that according to the Theory of Relativity time and space are inseparably bound together, and hence if God is outside of space (which almost everyone concedes), then by the same token He has to also be outside of time; then one could object that for a spiritual entity this does not apply, for it is perfectly conceivable that a spiritual entity isn't in space although it is in time, because it experiences successive inner states of consciousness. Another argument of this type is that according to the Theory of Relativity there is no universal time, but each of the infinitely many inertial frames has its own time. Then the eternalist could argue that God as creator of the whole universe cannot belong to a particular inertial frame and so cannot be in time. But William Craig has pointed out that there is a possible interpretation of the Theory of Relativity (the so-called Neo-Lorentzian interpretation) according to which there is after all a universal time.¹² I concede that Craig might be right here, but even if he isn't, the Theory of Relativity does not apply to God in any event.

My *fourth and final argument* is the following. If God is outside of time, this would be the best explanation for His foreknowledge described by the Bible. For Biblical evidence consider for example the famous prediction of Jesus, that Peter the next morning will deny him three times before the rooster crows twice.¹³ At first glance this seems to be a good argument. But I have to concede that the debate about Biblical arguments is complicated. If one takes the Bible literally there are also Bible verses that seem to support temporalism (for example the so-called repentance of God), so the exegetes have much work to do to reconcile different aspects of the Scriptures, and the same holds for the philosophers, having to deal here with the old question of how to reconcile divine foreknowledge and human freedom. After having spent a lot of time with these questions, too,¹⁴ in the end I think the score here is nearly even, and there is only a slight advantage to eternalism. So, there is much work to be done for only a little reward. On the other hand, after evaluating the remaining arguments, it seems that eternalism is the clear winner. To conclude, I briefly examine the counter-arguments to eternalism, that is, the arguments for God's temporality.

5. Arguments for God's temporality

There seem to be the following major arguments for God's temporality:

1. Biblical arguments,
2. arguments based on features of time, and
3. arguments based on properties of God.

As for the *Biblical arguments*, pointing out that the Bible speaks of God as if He is in time, one could reply: The Bible talks anthropomorphically not only as if God is in time, but also as if He has

¹⁰ Cf. Leftow (2005), p. 67.

¹¹ Cf. chapter 6 of my habilitation thesis *Gott und Zeit* (to appear 2016).

¹² Cf. the following writings of Craig: Craig (2010), pp. 163–246; Craig (2001a), pp. 32–66; Craig (2000), pp. 3–126; and Craig (2008, 2001b). For a more detailed treatment of Neo-Lorentzian theory including the physical and philosophical side, see Brandes (2010).

¹³ Cf. Marc 14: 30 and 14: 72.

¹⁴ Cf. chapter 7 of my habilitation thesis *Gott und Zeit* (to appear 2016).

a corporal body and is in space as well, and it's the consensus of almost all theologians that this should not be taken literally. Consider for example Genesis chapter 3, verses 8-9, where it is said that Adam and Eve "heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *are* thou?" Following a literal understanding of this passage God not only doesn't know the future, but furthermore doesn't have complete knowledge of the present either, and moreover He walks around, which implies that He moves through space and has a body.

For the second type of argument, comprising *arguments relying on the nature of time*, I have two short examples.

The first is from Wolterstorff: *The eternalist must deny that God exists in any time, but then eternalism seems to be just atheism.*¹⁵

The second is from Swinburne: A timeless God would exist simultaneously at each point in time, so for example it is one and the same instant at which He knows what I did yesterday, what I am doing today and what I will do tomorrow, and from this it would follow, that all points in time exist simultaneously, which is absurd.¹⁶

A short reply to Wolterstoff's argument is that it presupposes that "to exist" means "to exist in time", a premise which the eternalist can and will simply deny. Regarding Swinburne's argument, one could reply that Swinburne here invokes the law of transitivity that holds for *temporal simultaneity*, but the simultaneity relation that holds between God and every event of the timeline is of a totally different kind: it resembles (as we saw) the relation that two parallel universes have to each other, although they are not temporally connected. So, Swinburne's argument also fails.

Finally, we arrive at the *most serious arguments for Temporalism*, namely those based on properties of God. One invokes here God's *personality*, His *interaction* with temporal creatures and His *omniscience*, and claims that these Divine properties require that He is a temporal being.¹⁷

Concerning *personality*, it seems that while human personality (which involves memory, anticipation and decision and so on) indeed presupposes temporality, God meets the requirements for personality in a higher, analogous sense: memory and anticipation for example can be replaced in God by His omniscience, which is just a more perfect way of knowing past and future.

Regarding the *interaction* between God and temporal creatures (which seem to presuppose time, especially if God reacts to prayers) one can say in reply that God simultaneously perceives and acts (as we have seen) to the whole of human and cosmic history. Due to His complete knowledge of all free acts in the future, an eternal God also seems to be able to "react" to prayers, which means in some sense that He is able to act "after" having noticed them, provided that the word "after" is used in the non-temporal, mere logical sense, according to which the effect is "after" its cause (or the execution of an action takes place "after" the reason one has for acting), while both can be simultaneous in the temporal sense.

At this point some temporalists make a very interesting move. They assume that God is temporal in the sense that He doesn't know in advance the contingent acts that His free creatures will perform in

¹⁵ Cf. Wolterstorff (2001), p. 74: After having stated that the eternalist is committed to assert: "for any time whatsoever, it's not the case that God exists at that time", Wolterstorff comments: "Why isn't that just atheism? ... So I conclude that eternalism is incoherent."

¹⁶ Cf. Swinburne (1977), p. 228: "So if the instant at which God knows these things were simultaneous with both yesterday, today and tomorrow, then these days would be simultaneous with each other [...] which is clearly nonsense".

¹⁷ For a detailed exposition of these arguments, cf. Craig (2010), pp. 43–55 and 112 (personality), pp. 56–111 (interaction), and pp. 112–133 (omniscience). Craig himself rejects the argument from personality, but embraces the other two.

the future, and they emphasize that this has the advantage that:

1. *it is easier to understand how human freedom can be preserved, and*
2. *it is easier to solve the problem of theodicy, how it is possible that there is evil in the world in spite of God's omnibenevolence, omniscience and omnipotence.*¹⁸

I agree with the first point. However, the easiest explanation is not always the correct one, and I completely disagree with the second point. Consider a temporal God who doesn't know the future but has comprehensive knowledge of the present, as most temporalists concede. Then suppose God has seen in the 1940s that the Auschwitz concentration camp has been built and that yesterday and the day before hundreds of people have been gassed in the gas chambers. Suppose further that now God sees again a train full of Jewish captives approaching the camp. In this case He must not be omniscient in order to know what is going to happen now, if nothing interferes. So, the temporalist has no less problem here than the eternalist, and I would even say that in fact the temporalist has a much greater problem. The God of eternalism knows in advance the whole extent of evil to come, so He knows also that the evil will not surpass a certain boundary and that at the end the evil will not prevail. Therefore, He can "calm down" knowing that everything will be all right at the end. On the other hand, the temporal God, precisely because He doesn't know all this, has to fear that perhaps all will be totally corrupted and evil may not be compensated. Therefore, He would have a very strong reason to interfere. In short: the more God resembles ourselves, being in time just like us, the more He must also act like we would, and we of course would have interfered in the Auschwitz case. So, it seems that the only promising way to solve the problem of theodicy is the option that God is *not* as we are, that He transcends our temporally restricted point of view, having other insights from an exalted standpoint and, therefore, might see things and have reasons beyond our comprehension. So in the end it turns out that a deeper reflection on the problem of theodicy provides much more support for eternalism than for temporalism.

The last temporalist argument is to invoke God's *omniscience* and to say that God in order to be omniscient has to know how late it is now, and this He can only know if He is in time. To illustrate this argument: A timeless God is like a writer of a theater play, who is absent from the performance. So, while he knows perfectly the sequence of events to come, he doesn't know which act is being played right now, and this seems to be a severe kind of ignorance.

My reply is the following. Temporal (and likewise spatial and personal) indexical words such as *now*, *here* and *I* refer to the spatio-temporal location and to the personal identification of the speaker. Therefore, questions related to these indexicals like *how late is it*, *where are you*, *who are you* and so on have to be answered from the perspective of the speaker, anyway. The eternal God could answer: *It is now every time* or *it is now eternity*. God's Omniscience refers to His complete knowledge of only *universally accessible facts*. In addition to the knowledge of all or some such facts, every observer has also some knowledge of "indexical facts" that refer essentially to his own perspective: facts that differ for every observer. Therefore, by putting God in time, one would not really increase but only alter His knowledge of indexical facts. So, it seems inappropriate to claim that God must be in time to be omniscient.

Yet, the core of the problem is that *God in His divine nature doesn't share with us the same temporal perspective*. This, I think, is not a theoretical problem about God, since it is consistent with our notion of God and His omniscience. But it may be a practical problem for us, because a God that could manage somehow to share with us the same perspective seems to be more attractive for the worshipper than a distant God who is not able to do so.

¹⁸ To the first point, cf. Swinburne (1977), pp. 172–183; for the second, cf. Hasker (2008).

The solution for this problem in Christian theology is the doctrine of Incarnation. According to this doctrine, God, in addition to His eternal divine nature which remains unchanged, assumes a second created nature and thus comes into time.

This is of course a paradox (although not in the sense of a plain logical contradiction, but in the sense of an unexpected assertion, seemingly difficult to believe or even to comprehend), a paradox that the philosopher and much more the theologian should not try to weaken or trivialize. Such a weakening of the paradox is done a little, I fear, by the temporalists saying that God even in His divine nature is already in time. So, I conclude that eternalism is much better founded in philosophical reasoning and at the end also fits better into Christian theology.

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