

School of Philosophy, Religion,  
and History of Science



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

# **God's (and your) Extraordinary Life in an Instant**

*A Modest Positive Case for an Incarnate Timeless Christian God*

by

**Martin Rushton**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**OCTOBER 2024**

I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

© 2024 The University of Leeds and Martin Rushton.

The right of Martin Rushton to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Timeless thanks to my Leeds University supervisors Professor Robin Le Poidevin (main supervisor, first year), Dr Simon Hewitt (main supervisor, second and third years) and Professor Scott A. Shalkowski (second supervisor, second and third years) for their invaluable insights and support.

I also spent six months as a Visiting PGR at Durham University under the gracious supervision of Professor Anna Marmodoro. Many thanks to her for the stimulating and incisive conversations.

My white light principally derives from the rainbow of Doris (mother), Ronald (father), Seow Lan (wife), Cassandra (daughter), Samantha (daughter) and Daisy (pet rabbit).

Finally, a nod to the Christian God, or I AM WHO I AM, who has become a familiar stranger. Right to the end, in all possible worlds, and immutably true to form, God remained mysteriously unavailable for consultation; perhaps He simply did not know what the time was.

## ABSTRACT

If the Christian God creates time along with his creation of the universe, then God appears to be timeless 'prior' to creation. What implications does creation have for his relation to time? In particular, does it imply a *change* in that relation: Was God drawn into time with creation? Furthermore, the central Christian claim is that God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, became incarnate in human history and interacted with people around him; these latter acts appear incontrovertibly temporal. Thus, the Incarnation seems to involve a timeless God becoming infected with temporality.

Whether a being is timeless or temporal is usually thought to be not merely one of its attributes but its very mode of existence and is something that is often thought to be held necessarily rather than contingently. Timelessness and temporality are considered to be logically complementary properties, so propositions asserting them of the same entity in the same way at the same instant are held to be contradictories and mutually exclusive.

I argue for a Bimodal God who paradoxically has the two modes of existence without contradiction. As Timeless God, he lives in the eternal present from which he is aware of all physical time at once; as Incarnate God, he is incarnate in the created universe. The reconciliation of the two modes lies in an examination of what eternity means, the personal ontology and personal identity of God, and a stage theory view of humans. In respect of his humanity, Incarnate God has the persistence conditions of humans with the result that what ostensibly look like diachronic or successive thoughts are in fact atomistic thoughts at an instant that can be accessed by Timeless God *in toto* at once, so that a timeless God can be incarnate without becoming infected with temporality.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
List of Figures .....	iv
Chapter 1 – The Research Question .....	1-18
Chapter 2 – Methodology .....	19-40
Chapter 3 – The Nature of Time .....	41-79
Chapter 4 – The Nature of God .....	80-109
Chapter 5 – The Incoherence Charge .....	110-143
Chapter 6 – Models of the Incarnation (Non-Psychological) .....	144-173
Chapter 7 – Models of the Incarnation (Psychological) .....	174-205
Chapter 8 – Persistence .....	206-231
Chapter 9 – The Reconciliation .....	232-268
Bibliography .....	269-277

## LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter.Figure Number:

3.1: Presentism .....	56
3.2: Growing Block Theory .....	57
3.3: Moving Spotlight Theory .....	58
3.4: Eternalism .....	59
3.5: Block universe .....	61
3.6: The relation of super-time and physical time .....	64
3.7: Discrete time series .....	75
3.8: The perspective of TIME-1 .....	76
3.9: TIME-1 is but an instant .....	76
5.1: Qua-move .....	126
6.1: Model T .....	150
6.2: Model A .....	152
6.3: Leftow's qua-move case-by-case .....	161
6.4: Leftow's 'Habitus' model .....	163
6.5: Leftow's spinning JC .....	167
7.1: Morris's two-minds model .....	181
7.2: Swinburne's divided-mind model .....	190
7.3: Bayne's Restricted Inclusionism .....	191
7.4: Bayne's consecutive containment .....	192
7.5: Craig's subliminal model .....	197
7.6: Loke's Divine Preconscious Model .....	200
8.1: Endurantism .....	210
8.2: Perdurantism .....	213
8.3: Stage Theory .....	215
9.1: The Incarnation(s) .....	251
9.2: Block universe, Timeless God and Incarnate God .....	253

# CHAPTER 1

## THE RESEARCH QUESTION

'Those who lack the courage will always find a philosophy to justify it.'

- Albert Camus

### Chapter Contents:

Overview

Research Question

§1. The Issue

§2. Presuppositions

§3. The Incoherence Charge

§4. Answering the Research Question

4.1. Methodology

4.2. Categorising the contradictory properties

4.3. Modes of existence

4.4. Concept of God

4.5. How Timeless God and Incarnate God share a unity of consciousness

4.5.1. The issue

4.5.2. Proposed solution (The Three Lynchpins)

§5. Insights

### OVERVIEW

This chapter states the Research Question. It then outlines the problems involved in an eternal or timeless God acting in the world. Next, it states the presuppositions for the dissertation. Then, the Incoherence Charge is presented, *viz.* that the divine and human natures involved in the Christian Incarnation have contradictory properties. Penultimately, a model of God is proposed which combines the two modes of existence of timelessness and temporality. Finally, a formal argument is offered as to how the model reconciles timelessness and temporality.

## RESEARCH QUESTION:

**How is a timeless Christian God incarnate without being infected with temporality?**

### SECTION 1. THE ISSUE

God is timeless may be understood as the claim that God exists without beginning, without end, without succession or moments, without temporal extension or location,<sup>1</sup> and without intrinsic (and possibly extrinsic)<sup>2</sup> change (Mullins, 2016, pp. 44ff; Pike, 1970, Ch. 1). If God is timeless and timelessness entails strong immutability,<sup>3</sup> that is, no change in his intrinsic properties, and God created a temporal universe, it is a challenge to explain how that act of creation does not represent an intrinsic change in God; at first blush, such a change would imply that God is temporal because God made a decision and acted thereon. Furthermore, arguably we do not have a plausible model of atemporal, or timeless, causation; in the absence of a workable model of atemporal causation, it would seem that an agent needs to be temporal in order to produce temporal effects (Pike, 1970, pp. 104-105; Stump and Kretzmann, 1981, p. 448; Davis, 1983, p. 21). It is a greater challenge to explain how a timeless God, having created a temporal universe, brings about effects in that universe; again, there needs to be a satisfactory account of atemporal causation. A still greater challenge is to offer an account of how God 'responds' to creatures' petitionary prayers without acting in real time; this problem is even more acute if we do think of a timeless God as somehow interacting dynamically in that universe in answering those petitionary prayers (Stump and Kretzmann, 1981, p. 450); such interactions would imply that God intrinsically changes and hence is temporal. Most tellingly, a difficult challenge is to account for how a timeless God remains timeless despite actually entering embodied

---

<sup>1</sup> *Contra* Leftow (1991a, p. 31) who considers a being intrinsically timeless if it does not endure through time even if it has temporal location.

<sup>2</sup> The criterion of extrinsic change is particularly contentious. It depends upon whether extrinsic change is considered to be real change. If it is real change, then a God that undergoes extrinsic change would be temporal. However, if it is not considered to be real change, then a God could undergo extrinsic change while remaining timeless. See §1.3. and §4.4. of Chapter 3, §1. of Chapter 4, and §2.3. of Chapter 6 for discussion.

<sup>3</sup> Weak immutability would be where God does not change in terms of his character. This is a modest thesis and innocuous for our purposes.



into creation's history (*ibid.*, p. 451; Senor, 2002): such an incarnation seems *ipso facto* indicative of temporality.

A concomitant of such embodiment presents what I would argue is the greatest challenge facing the timeless God: how can a timeless mind with synchronic thoughts co-experience the diachronic thoughts of a temporal mind? Whilst we might, for instance, be able to adopt models by which a timeless entity is related to its temporal entity extrinsically, so as to insulate the timeless entity from the charge of changing intrinsically, this does not account for how a timeless God and its temporal entity are to enjoy unity of consciousness. This difficulty of reconciling synchronic and diachronic thoughts, together with pessimism over the prospects of successfully doing so, is noted by, *inter alia*, Swinburne (2011, p. 160, fn 18), Mullins (2016, p. 171 fn 52) and Bayne (2001, p. 127).

## SECTION 2. PRESUPPOSITION(S)

The first presupposition is that God is timeless 'prior' to creation.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation does not argue for God's timelessness,<sup>5</sup> nor, for that matter, his temporality. I accept the dichotomy of pure timelessness and pure temporality; that is, there are no intermediate positions. Leftow (2002c, pp. 22-23) disagrees. He argues that there is a continuum of possible views of God's relation to time depending upon how many, if any, 'typically temporal properties' (TTPs) are ascribed to God. On Leftow's view, God can have some TTPs without becoming temporal and the 'eternal present', for example, is one such TTP for it is some kind of present. I, however, would take talk of the eternal present to be metaphorical, not literal. The term 'present' is quintessentially a temporal one and so cannot be applied in the same sense to the timeless. I would understand timelessness to mean time-free (Helm, 2010<sup>6</sup>).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> By 'prior' is meant logical or metaphysical priority, rather than temporal, priority. See §4.4.

<sup>5</sup> One justification for timelessness would be to draw a proper distinction between the creator and the creature. This notion informs many aspects of the dissertation.

<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, I would dispute Leftow's (2002c, p. 25) interpretation that Helm's talk of an eternal present means that Helm ascribes a TTP to God.

<sup>7</sup> It would perhaps make my reconciliation easier if I allowed that God has some TTPs. I prefer to make my case harder.

The second presupposition is that the created universe is temporal. Accordingly, the Research Question cannot be dissolved by anti-realist claims that time is an illusion.

The third presupposition is that a proper incarnation occurs. At a minimum, this means that God becomes embodied in a human body and that such embodiment is a genuine unity of the divine and the human in one person.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Research Question cannot be dissolved by anti-realist claims that there is only the appearance of incarnation.<sup>9</sup>

### SECTION 3. THE INCOHERENCE CHARGE

According to orthodox Christian belief,<sup>10</sup> God the Son is of the same divine substance as God the Father (and God the Holy Spirit). Furthermore, GS incarnated into history as the human Jesus Christ and in so doing became of the same substance as normal humans. This Incarnation includes the unity of the divine and human natures in the one person without confusion, without change and without separation whilst respecting the distinctiveness of the respective two natures (Pawl, 2016, Ch. 1; Holland, 2012, Ch. 2).

---

<sup>8</sup> This is in the neighbourhood of Christian orthodoxy. More will be said in the course of the dissertation to align incarnation more closely with the Incarnation, that is with the Christian understanding of what it means to say that God the Son became human. For an outline of Christian orthodoxy, see footnote 10.

<sup>9</sup> In the manner perhaps of Docetism, which was the doctrine that God the Son as Jesus Christ did not have a true physical body but merely a bodily appearance.

<sup>10</sup> The declarations and clarifications of the Chalcedon Council 451 CE and the Constantinople Council 681 CE are often taken as orthodoxy (Pawl, 2016; Moreland and Craig, 2003, pp. 13-24). Chalcedonian orthodoxy, *inter alia*, affirms (i) the first Council of Nicaea 315 CE that Jesus Christ is God, consubstantial with the Father (*contra* the heresy of Arianism that JC was a creature; as ‘God alone can save us’), (ii) the first Council of Constantinople 381 CE that JC is human, consubstantial with us (*contra* the heresy of Apollinarianism that the human nature of JC was only a human body with no rational soul; as ‘what is not assumed is not healed’), (iii) the Council of Ephesus 431 CE that the divine and the human natures do not diverge (*contra* the heresy of Nestorianism that the two natures separate into two persons), and (iv) the Chalcedon Council 451 CE itself that the divine and the human natures do not merge (*contra* the heresy of Eutychianism that the two natures mix and this results in the human nature being overwhelmed by the divine nature). This is not to assert, however, that the Chalcedonian orthodoxy comprehensively settles metaphysical issues regarding the Incarnation, and some argue that it might be thought of as setting the boundaries within which orthodox thinking can take place, that is ruling out certain views, or regulating the rules of predication (DeWeese, 2007, pp. 118-125; Coakley, 2002, pp. 148-149).

By Leibniz's Law,<sup>11</sup> if GS is of the same substance as God the Father then GS is timeless given that God the Father is timeless; likewise, if GS as JC is also the same substance as humans then GS is temporal given that humans are temporal. The incoherence charge of the Incarnation (Morris, 1986, Ch. 1) is that the divine and human natures of JC contain contradictory properties: the divine GS is omniscient, omnipotent and timeless *etc*, but the human JC has the logical complements of these, that is, is limited in knowledge, limited in power and temporal. Consequently, the divine and human natures cannot be compossibly exemplified in the same person.

The incoherence charge is explored in detail in Chapter 5, but it is always in the background and usually in the foreground of most of the discussion throughout the dissertation. Indeed, the Research Question is framed to invite a reconciliation between the contradictory properties of timelessness and temporality.

## **SECTION 4. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

### **4.1. Methodology**

See Chapter 2 'Methodology'.

### **4.2. Categorising the contradictory properties**

In modelling the Incarnation, various strategies which involve categorising the contradictory properties can be tried in an attempt to resolve the incoherence charge.

One strategy is a mereological account employing the *qua* move whereby the contradictory properties are segregated into the different constituents of the whole and attributed to the whole derivatively. However, I would argue that a distinction between timelessness/temporality and other properties, such as omniscience, should be made with regard to the contradictory properties of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ such that whilst manoeuvres such as the *qua* move might be available for other

---

<sup>11</sup> Leibniz's Law or the Indiscernibility of Identicals states that if x is identical to y then any property had by x is also had by y; that is, if objects are identical then there are no properties in which they differ. See §1.3 of Chapter 5.

properties it is not available for timelessness and temporality. Timelessness and temporality are not mere properties but modes of existence. That is to say, for anything to exist, timelessness or temporality is a condition an entity has to satisfy.<sup>12</sup> As properties, they should be thought of as modal properties: an entity is temporal if and only if it is the kind of thing which *can* be located in a series of earlier and later events or states whilst a timeless entity *cannot* be so located (Leftow, 1991a, p. 236). Also, a mode of existence is something that is often considered to be held necessarily rather than contingently; this entails that it always retains its modal properties: in no possible world can an entity change from being timeless to temporal or *vice versa* (*ibid.*, p. 43).<sup>13</sup> For these various reasons, it does not seem adequate, therefore, to segregate these properties to the respective natures as one does not wholly account, for instance, for the temporality of JC if one says that he is temporal only derivatively *via* a human nature which is temporal: if JC is temporal then this is as a condition of existence.

Another approach to attempt to avoid the charge of contradiction is to employ the notion of the *communicatio idiomatum*, or communication of idioms [attributes/properties]. This a doctrine comprising a set of rules about which attributes are apt of which things (Pawl, 2016, pp. 24-27). Here the respective divine and human natures retain their attributes but also communicate their attributes to the one person JC. We can say that JC has a certain attribute according to his human nature and has another attribute according to his divine nature. The attributes are not communicated from the person to the natures, nor from one nature to the other; otherwise, for instance, the divine nature would be omnipotent [from itself] and limited in power if it received the communication of the latter attribute [from the person or the human nature]. However, it is acceptable to use a term that refers to JC by means of the human nature to say something true of JC even if that something is true in virtue of the divine nature; for example, 'The God of glory was crucified' (*ibid.*, p. 25). That is to say, a term predicable of JC in respect of one nature can be said of him appropriately

---

<sup>12</sup> One corollary of this is that if God is the creator of time then he must be timeless, for if God were temporal then he would be creating the condition of his existence.

<sup>13</sup> Leftow (1991a, pp. 222ff) makes the claim that temporal entities exist both in time and in eternity. The retention of modal properties has the entailments that even if a temporal entity is located in eternity it remains fully temporal and even if a timeless entity is located in time it remains fully timeless.

when using a subject term drawn from the other nature. The *communicatio idiomatum* is, therefore, a linguistic manoeuvre: It still seems that one can predicate two apparently incompatible terms of the same one person JC; for example, that he could suffer because of his human nature and that he could not suffer because of his divine nature. Indeed, Pawl interprets the conciliar pronouncements as ‘owning’ or embracing incompatible properties (*ibid.*, p. 25). This dissertation, though, seeks a metaphysical explanation, not a mere linguistic manoeuvre.

This dissertation focuses on the properties of timelessness and temporality, for these provide, I would suggest, the acid test of the incoherence charge. However, it is desirable that the proposed model has the resources to reconcile the other properties, although in terms of addressing the Research Question it is not necessary that the proposed model can do this. If the other properties are best resolved using other approaches, then the minimum requirement is that these other approaches are not inconsistent with the proposed model.

Several different strategies to resolve the incoherence charge are discussed in Chapter 5. Detailed proposals for the implementation of some of those strategies in terms of modelling the Christian Incarnation are explored in Chapter 6 ‘Models of the Incarnation (Non-Psychological)’ and Chapter 7 ‘Models of the Incarnation (Psychological)’.

### **4.3. Modes of existence**

As earlier stated, timelessness and temporality are modes of existence. Propositions asserting timelessness and temporality of the same entity in the same way at the same instant are held to be contradictories and mutually exclusive; there is usually thought to be no third or hybrid way (Mullins, 2016, p. xvi). Given that a mode of existence is something that is often considered to be held necessarily rather than contingently, God must be essentially timeless or temporal.

I would formalise this as the following valid argument:

P1: If a timeless being becomes temporal or a temporal being becomes timeless, then there is change.

P2: Timelessness entails there is no change.

C1: A timeless being cannot become temporal nor a temporal being become timeless.

P3: If a timeless being cannot become temporal nor a temporal being become timeless, then God is either timeless or temporal but not both.

C2: God is either timeless or temporal but not both.

P4: If timelessness and temporality are the only two modes of existence, then God is necessarily timeless or temporal.

C3: God is necessarily timeless or temporal.

If we presuppose that God is timeless, then from the above argument it seems impossible that God can become temporal. A review of the literature reveals that several commentators agree with the argument and consider it to be strictly incoherent to change from timelessness to temporality or *vice versa*, for that implies temporal relations of 'before' preceding the state of temporality and of 'after' following the state of temporality. Other commentators dispute this and employ manoeuvres such as logical 'before' and 'after'. The more prominent commentators will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

#### **4.4. Concept of God**

Notwithstanding the argument of §4.3, we do need a third or hybrid way, *viz.* a concept of God that allows for the two seemingly contradictory modes of existence to be had by the same God: God exists timelessly outside creation in what can be considered his main or default mode of existence; and God also exists temporally within creation in what we may consider to be his secondary mode of existence, that is incarnate. This other mode of existence is secondary in that it is contingent upon whether he chooses to create. The devil, of course, is in the details. The notion that God can be both timeless and temporal preferably should not be had by dialectic manoeuvres (Priest, 2006; Beall, 2019 and 2021) which disregard the law of non-contradiction; this dissertation follows classical logic, and so an appeal that Jesus Christ is an impossible being but no less the worse for it does not carry traction here (see §3.7 of Chapter 5).

We also do not want an unsatisfactory appeal to mystery, such as the black box of the hypostatic union.<sup>14</sup>

My proposal is that there are two entities of the same God: Timeless God and Incarnate God. God, as a *sui generis* being, can, I suggest, paradoxically have both modes of existence.<sup>15</sup> It is not the case that God changes from existing timelessly to temporally; rather, God always exists in his two entities from eternity. This implies that the incarnation occurs from eternity and ‘lasts’ for eternity. Using the parallel of the Christian Incarnation, when we say, for instance, that God the Son exists timelessly in his pre-incarnate state and temporally in his incarnate state, we are taking ‘pre-’ to indicate logical, rather than temporal, priority. The idea of incarnation occurring from eternity might be initially surprising, but the surprise is perhaps mainly a function of one’s philosophy of time. Conversely, the idea of GS forever retaining his human nature after the Incarnation is a traditional Christian belief and should be unsurprising.

The entities are in some sense distinct; that is, they are not mere modes,<sup>16</sup> manifestations or forms of activity. The term ‘entity’ is given greater determinate form as pertaining matters are explored throughout the dissertation, culminating in the adoption of a hybrid model in Chapter 9 ‘The Reconciliation’. This hybrid model combines two perspectives. According to one perspective, we think in terms of distinct entities in order for the model to be a proper incarnation, for the divine has really taken on flesh: It is not the case that God has wholly moved from the ‘eternal realm’ to the created world undergoing a transformation; this would be in conflict with his immutability. The distinct entities of God are qualitatively different but are numerically the same individual: They are qualitatively different in that, *inter alia*, one entity is operating in eternity whilst the other operates in the temporal universe but

---

<sup>14</sup> The hypostatic union is the union of Jesus Christ's divinity and humanity in one hypostasis, or individual existence. It is not a unity of natures but rather a unity in person; and it is said to be ineffable. It is discussed in §5 of Chapter 4.

<sup>15</sup> At least from a theological perspective, this might be quite fitting. God as the supreme being and creator of all plausibly should exist in a way no other beings do as the very notion of ‘being’ and ‘existence’ have their source in God and so he delimits the possibilities.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Modes’ in the sense of Modalism, *viz.* the heretical view that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are mere manifestations, modes, or roles played by the one and only God. By analogy, think of water presenting itself in the three states of liquid, solid and gas: all three modes or manifestations of water are still H<sub>2</sub>O.

paradoxically they are one God, not two. On the other hand, a second perspective favouring in some sense phases or aspects of the one God is desirable in order to downplay ontological discreteness and so support ‘two-in-oneness’.

The two entities of God share a unity of consciousness, and this sharing of consciousness is sufficient, I would argue, for judging the two entities to be one individual. That is to say, the two are one because there is a single subject of consciousness. To secure this single subject of consciousness, it is necessary that the mental states of the two entities of God are unified in the right way. What is meant by ‘the right way’ will need to be spelt out and this will be done in Chapters 7 and 9; in particular, I will attempt to meet the challenge of how a timeless mind with synchronic thoughts can co-experience the diachronic thoughts of a temporal mind.

I call this one individual the Bimodal God. By ‘bimodal’, I am referring to the two *modes* of existence: timelessness and temporality;<sup>17</sup> I do not mean a binitarian God.

In keeping with the parallel of the Christian Trinity, ‘entities’ may be read as divine ‘Persons’. The main reason I use the terms ‘Timeless God’ and ‘Incarnate God’ rather than a more explicitly Christian nomenclature of ‘God the Father’ and ‘God the Son’ *etc* is because I want to home in on the timelessness versus temporality issue rather than other philosophical or theological matters. With regard to the three Persons of the Trinity, we can readily map the Timeless God entity to God the Father and the Incarnate God entity to God the Son [strictly speaking to Jesus Christ], and the Holy Spirit to a further extension of Timeless God’s consciousness into another entity. It will be necessary to analyse what is meant by ‘person’, for what is meant by personhood when talking of a divine person and of a human person might not be the same. Moreover, what is meant by ‘person’ in a standard modern psychological usage, *viz.* an autonomous person with an independent mind and will *etc*, might not be what the early church fathers meant by their use of ‘person’ in their conciliar pronouncements

---

<sup>17</sup> I am not referring to modal concepts of possibility, necessity *etc*; nor am I making any allusions to the modes associated with the heresy of Modalism.



(Pawl, 2016, pp. 30-34).<sup>18</sup> Under my model, the multiple instantiations of God's consciousness constitute one single subject of experience. These issues of personhood are principally explored in §4.2 of Chapter 4.

God the Son took on a human nature in hypostatic union in the Incarnation. An analysis will need to be made of what constitutes a nature. If we take a view that treats a nature as a person, this would for instance imply that Jesus Christ consisted of two persons for he had two natures – the divine and the human. These issues are principally examined in §2.1 and §2.2 of Chapter 5.

#### **4.5. How Timeless God and Incarnate God share a unity of consciousness**

##### **4.5.1. The issue**

Timelessness entails no change whereas temporality implies succession and hence change. With Incarnate God experiencing succession, it would appear that if Timeless God shares a unity of consciousness with Incarnate God then Timeless God must be undergoing change, that is, Timeless God is infected by temporality, and we have a contradiction.

##### **4.5.2. Proposed solution (The Three Lynchpins)**

Timelessness is the default mode of existence for God in that if God did not create a universe then he would be entirely timeless. However, with creation he incarnates an entity of himself into creation and that entity is temporal. Given that creation is contingent, God did not have to take on a temporal mode of existence. Having created the universe, God in his main timeless mode of existence has asymmetric access to a second temporal mode of existence without *ipso facto* the main timeless mode of existence getting drawn into temporality. This asymmetric access approach is analogous to 'two-minds' views (Morris, 1986; Swinburne, 1994). The key to achieving the reconciliation lies in an examination of three factors: firstly, the extraordinariness

---

<sup>18</sup> And maybe not just 'person'. A recurring theme in Pawl's 2016 is his claim that, at least some, modern writers do not use several terms in the way the church fathers used them. Furthermore, Pawl suggests that what we currently think of as incompatible predicates, such as mutable and immutable, may not be so if we use what he considers to be the understanding of the church fathers.

of God's life in the eternal present; secondly, the personal ontology and personal identity<sup>19</sup> of God, particularly his ability to extend his consciousness into multiple entities, including entities in time, whilst maintaining his unity of consciousness; and thirdly, the personal ontology and personal identity of humans, with a view to making their thoughts compatible with a timeless God's mind.

Under the proposed solution, the created world has temporality in the sense of a tenseless block universe; the motivation for the block universe will be explored in Chapter 3. Timeless God exists timelessly outside the block universe in his main mode of existence; he also exists temporally within the block universe in his secondary mode of existence as Incarnate God. Within the block universe, Incarnate God and humans interact and these interactions subjectively appear to be tensed; however, ontologically the interactions are tenseless. Timeless God knows the interactions in a time-free perspective from the eternal present and so sees all of the interactions made in his creation; Incarnate God only knows the interactions at the time they are made within his embodied worldline.

The first lynchpin of the reconciliation lies in the extraordinariness of living in the eternal present. Timeless God lives his whole life at once in the eternal present. The block universe is created from eternity. All the physical time of creation is experienced by Timeless God at once by a single supreme act of awareness in the eternal present, whilst Incarnate God is subjectively experiencing succession in the tenseless block universe. Timeless God's life consists of only one supreme act; this one act, however, has potentially infinite ramifications (Helm, 2010, p. 28; Stump, 2003, p. 99). Consequently, no change occurs in Timeless God.

This is reflected in why the Research Question is phrased:-

‘How is a timeless Christian God incarnate ...’

---

<sup>19</sup> Personal ontology would be what sort of thing God is, e.g. an immaterial substance. Personal identity would be, for instance, what it is for God to be a person. A key question in personal identity is persistence over time; however, this is a category error concerning a timeless god.

not

‘How does a timeless Christian God become incarnate ...’

The latter phrasing implies temporal becoming which potentially prejudices the matter in favour of an already temporal God undergoing change.

The second lynchpin of the reconciliation lies in the extraordinariness of God’s personal ontology and personal identity, especially in his ability to share his consciousness in a plurality of entities. From the perspective of eternity and given his omniscience, Timeless God is aware of all the happenings of the block universe; this includes all the happenings in the lives of all humans as from a third-person perspective. Moreover, Timeless God even knows all the secrets of humans’ hearts, that is, humans’ innermost thoughts; whilst this is intimate and possibly vicarious, this is still from a third-person perspective. For Timeless God to identify with Incarnate God as having the same experiences from a first-person perspective and so living the same life, it is necessary that they share the same consciousness. A useful distinction might be made between access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness (Block, 1997; Bayne, 2001). If Timeless God only had access consciousness, or access to the contents of the consciousness of Incarnate God, then arguably Timeless God would be incarnate in everyone for he has access to the contents of their minds too. What is needed to be consistent with a true and unique incarnation is phenomenal consciousness or the lived experiences of Incarnate God.

God’s ability to share his consciousness in a plurality of entities is a key assumption of my conceptualisation of God’s personal ontology and personal identity. As will be explicated in Chapter 2, I prefer to inform metaphysical speculation by looking for plausible analogues in nature. There do not appear, however, to be any close analogues in nature of this sharing ability. I would appear to have five options:-

- i) Take a looser analogue from nature. What is it like to be an octopus?<sup>20</sup>  
Octopuses have nine brains. It is plausible that the central brain and the

---

<sup>20</sup> *Pace* Nagel, bats are so yesterday.

- eight mini-brains have a unity of consciousness (Carls-Diamante, 2022);
- ii) Treat the sharing ability as primitive, that is, this ability cannot be reduced or explained by something else. All things must have some primitive properties, for a thing cannot have every property it has by virtue of it having some other property;
  - iii) Treat it as some aspect of God's omniscience. Some traditions hold that God acquires his knowledge through direct awareness; that is, God does not infer or have beliefs.<sup>21</sup> Whatever this mechanism involves, it is plausible that God's direct awareness of another entity's thoughts could be so complete as to form a sharing of consciousness;<sup>22</sup>
  - iv) Make a science fictional analogy based on current trends. It is possible that developments in Artificial General Intelligence will result in sentient robots that are perfect clones and share consciousness through instantaneous quantum communication;
  - v) Make a fantastical science fictional analogy. Imagine a Parfittian scenario (Parfit, 1984, p. 200) whereby someone is supposedly teleported to Mars but in fact it is merely the information of that person which is transmitted. On Mars the information is used to create a perfect replica of the original person; the original person on Earth is supposed to be destroyed in the process of teleportation. However, due to a malfunction in the teleporter, the original person is not destroyed. To depart from the usual Parfittian scenarios, let us further imagine that the original person is a virtuoso telepath. If we assume that the original person on Earth and the replica on Mars can perfectly read each other's minds in real time instantaneously, then it is plausible that they share consciousness.

It would be easy to opt for (ii), but it is desirable in our philosophical models to minimise primitives. My intuitions lean towards (iv), for this seems something that plausibly will be actually testable and so aligns with my methodological naturalism.

---

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Alston (2008).

<sup>22</sup> Granted, human beings do have beliefs, so an account will have to be given of why God's direct awareness of our beliefs and sharing of consciousness do not translate into God himself thereby forming beliefs.

Timeless God sharing phenomenal consciousness with Incarnate God presents a problem, however. In his timeless state with its immutability, Timeless God undergoes no succession in his thoughts. On the other hand, Incarnate God experiences successive thoughts. If Timeless God and Incarnate God share the same phenomenal consciousness, this implies that Timeless God would experience successive thoughts too, resulting in contradiction (Holland, 2012, p. 79 & p. 172). In addition, it might be judged that if Timeless God's mind consists of a timeless collection of mental states whilst Incarnate God's mind consists of a temporal series of mental states then we have two independent minds and hence two persons. As mentioned in §1, the reconciling of synchronic and diachronic thoughts is noted by Swinburne (2011, p. 160, fn 18), Mullins (2016, p. 171 fn 52) and Bayne (2001, p. 127) as presenting a particularly thorny challenge.

To address the latter, the reconciliation is facilitated *via* the third lynchpin which is the stage view of human ontology and personal identity. In respect of his humanity, Incarnate God has the persistence conditions of humans, who are momentary beings on the stage view. Thus, what ostensibly look like diachronic or successive thoughts are in fact atomistic thoughts at an instant that can be readily accessed by Timeless God *in toto* at once.

Summing up, I would set out the proposed solution as the following valid argument:

- P1: God at timeless eternity is a being who has the ability to exist in multiple entities whilst retaining a unity of consciousness.
- P2: If God creates a temporal universe, then God incarnates an entity of himself, Incarnate God, into that creation whilst retaining the unity of consciousness.
- P3: God creates a temporal universe.
- C1: God incarnates an entity of himself, Incarnate God, into that creation whilst retaining a unity of consciousness.
- P4: If God lives his life all at once at timeless eternity, then he performs only one supreme act.
- P5: The default mode of existence of God is to live his life all at once at timeless eternity.

- C2: The decisions to create a temporal universe and to incarnate into a temporal universe are parts of one supreme act from eternity.
- P6: If God's decisions are made as parts of one supreme act from eternity, then God does not change.
- P7: If there is ontological temporal becoming in the created temporal universe, then God at timeless eternity will not be aware all at once of all happenings in that universe.
- P8: God at timeless eternity is aware all at once of all happenings in the universe.
- C3: God creates a tenseless block universe; that is, a universe without temporal becoming.
- P9: The mode of existence of Incarnate God is temporality.
- C4: Incarnate God does not undergo ontological temporal becoming.
- P10: Although Incarnate God does not undergo ontological temporal becoming, he subjectively experiences temporal passage.
- P11: If each thought of Incarnate God is had at one distinct moment of time and if God at eternity is aware at once of all the distinct moments of time, then the subjective experience of temporal passage by the incarnate entity of God does not result in disunity of consciousness between God at eternity and Incarnate God and does not impugn God's timelessness at eternity.
- P12: Each thought of Incarnate God is had at one distinct moment of time.
- C5: The subjective experience of temporal passage by Incarnate God does not result in disunity of consciousness between God at eternity and Incarnate God and does not impugn God's timelessness at eternity.
- C6: God retains his timelessness at eternity despite also being incarnate.

The focus of the Research Question is on timelessness versus temporality. However, as mentioned in §4.2, it is desirable that the proposed model has the resources to reconcile the other properties such as omniscience, omnipotence *etc.* Let me address omniscience to illustrate the suggested reconciliation.

Premise 10 does not address omniscience. Still, if Incarnate God subjectively experiences temporal passage, then plausibly from that perspective there are no future facts to be known and this implies that Incarnate God is not omniscient for there

are actually ‘future’ facts to be known in a tenseless block universe. But, of course, Incarnate God has a divine nature which includes omniscience, so it is also plausible that whilst Incarnate God subjectively experiences temporal passage along his given worldline in the block universe, he knows that in reality there are future facts. A feature of human nature is non-omniscience. Such non-omniscience is supportive of the notion that the Incarnate God is a responsive person who is respectful of human beings’ libertarian free will: sharing in their suffering; being tempted; performing miracles in front of witnesses and eliciting responses; delightfully being surprised by those who accept salvation; being disappointed perhaps by those who remain obstinate. It follows that the reconciliation needs to involve a downplaying of the divine omniscience and an emphasis on the human non-omniscience.

One possibility is that in extending his consciousness, Timeless God could constrain how that extended consciousness will be used. An analogy would be a computer program with various subroutines: which subroutines are activated depends upon the main routine. Timeless God could similarly specify that for Incarnate God conjoined with human nature, the divine properties lie dormant or restricted for that human nature; Incarnate God in his human perspective temporarily would not know for instance that he was in fact omniscient; this would be a form of divine *krypsis*, or divine self-concealment (Loke, 2014). Timeless God in his supreme act of awareness in the eternal present has access to the lived experiences of Incarnate God, whilst Incarnate God has awareness only of his lived embodied life. When Incarnate God ceases to be incarnate, the relevant restrictions would be lifted. Similar considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the other non-modes of existence properties. There are other possibilities, such as divine kenosis or self-emptying, and these too will be examined in subsequent chapters.

## **SECTION 5. INSIGHTS**

Most of the premises for the proposed solution to reconcile timelessness and temporality are not self-evident truths; that is, they will have to be argued for. In so arguing, I may need to make particular choices (perhaps even *courageous* ones) among various options possibly resulting in metaphysical surprises. The formal

argument offered in §4 may be viewed as a road map for the dissertation – a road with perhaps occasional bumps and interesting yet relevant detours. The destination reached will be a metaphysically defensible model.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

‘The first principle is that you must not fool yourself;  
and you are the easiest person to fool.’

- Richard Feynman

#### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

§1. Athens, not Jerusalem

§2. Controlling Beliefs

§3. God-Talk and Cognitive Limitation

§4. Incarnation-Talk

§5. Person-Talk

§6. Extraordinary Claims and Confusing the Logical for the Physical

§7. Conceivability and Metaphysical Possibility

§8. Biblical Data and Christian Tradition

8.1. Biblical data

8.2. Concept of God

8.3. Concept of the Incarnation

§9. Theories of Time

§10. Nomenclature

10.1. Traditional language

10.2. Christian theological terms

10.3. Miscellany

## OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses my chosen methodology, particularly on what constraints are operative in addressing the Research Question. The two broad underlying themes are firstly, that the Research Question is treated primarily as a philosophical problem rather than a theological one, notwithstanding its subject matter; and secondly, that the preferred approach of investigation is methodological naturalism, *viz.* the presumption that the investigation of reality is best achieved through the natural laws and empirical evidence we discover and gather using science. The methodological pointers are not, however, set rigidly in stone;<sup>1</sup> rather, they are optimistically crafted in reasonably stable sand.

## SECTION 1. ATHENS, NOT JERUSALEM

This dissertation is one of Philosophy [Athens], not Theology<sup>2</sup> [Jerusalem]. It does not necessarily accept that its alluring object of study, *viz.* ‘God’, is a referring expression, that is, expressions that purport to refer to something if there is anything out there to be referred to. When I talk of God, Jesus Christ, Incarnation *etc.*, these terms should be read as ‘Assume these referents for the sake of argument’, rather than reflecting any ontological commitments to supernatural entities or real events.

One could say that the god examined here is the God of the Philosophers (Kenny, 1979), not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that is, my concern is with the conceptual plausibility of God, not with the object of religious worship. My main aim is to conceptualise God - in the limited context of his relation to time – in a way that is philosophically defensible, not necessarily theologically satisfying (*pace* Davis, 1983).

In using the term ‘referents’, a distinction can be made between *de re* [meaning ‘about the thing’] and *de dicto* [about what is said]. *De re* modal properties are the modal

---

<sup>1</sup> One wants to avoid dogma.

<sup>2</sup> Relatedly, it is not a work of philosophical theology, that is conducted within assumptions that are prescribed by a faith.

properties that an object has in virtue of itself whereas *de dicto* modal properties are modal properties that are said of an object:

*De re*: Some x is such that it is necessarily F

*De dicto*: Necessarily, some x is such that it is F

The essence of an entity is commonly regarded as being constituted by the entity's *de re* modal properties.

In the case of God, *de dicto* properties are those which are kind-essential to divinity and *de re* properties are those which are individual-essential. The word 'God' in its *de re* meaning is taken to refer to Yahweh; that is, the entity in the Hebrew Bible whose essence is divine. The *de dicto* meaning of God, on the other hand, is a title and has descriptive content of the holder of the office of God such as 'is creator of the universe', 'has all the omni-properties', and 'is transcendent'; this descriptive content of the office of God will come from the traditional understanding of God as enunciated by for example conciliar pronouncements and classical theism. On the *de dicto* meaning, any entity meeting the descriptive content would be the divine being God, not simply Yahweh. Davis (*ibid.*, p. 120) illustrates the distinction with the succinct 'God alone is God'; the first use of God is *de re*, the second *de dicto*. In this dissertation I will use the *de dicto* meaning for the more general philosophical issues, such as what is the relation of a timeless being to the created universe with its temporality. However, given the unique claims of the Christian Trinity and the Incarnation, I will occasionally move to the *de re* meaning; and will signal this if context does not make it clear.

## SECTION 2. CONTROLLING BELIEFS

Many writers on the subject matter of God's relation to time assert that it is terribly important that they conform to Christian orthodoxy.<sup>3</sup> This is usually interpreted to mean

---

<sup>3</sup> Setting aside just what is orthodox. For interesting but short commentary, see Plantinga (1999). Moreover, Christendom has undergone several schisms over the centuries, so what is orthodox to one group may not be orthodox to another; and what is counted as orthodox within one group may change over time.

that the Incarnation is the central controlling belief or doctrine of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The Incarnation is the doctrine that God the Son incarnated into human history to save mankind. As the central controlling belief, the Incarnation is then chosen to be the lens through which other considerations have to be examined (Leftow, 2002a, p. 273; Holland, 2012, pp 5-9); if ultimately one has to choose between timelessness and the Incarnation revealing God's temporality then it is timelessness which should be dropped (Mullins, 2016, p. 157). In other words, the key aspect of the chosen methodology is to use the Incarnation to investigate God's relation to time. Such conformity to orthodoxy and adherence to the Incarnation is explicitly theological, not philosophical, and is often acknowledged and embraced as such by Christian philosophers, who feel that it is not simply a case of following the rules of the game but of spiritual satisfaction (Senor, 2011, p 90).

Whilst not necessarily denying the central importance of the Incarnation for Christian belief, this dissertation will not hesitate to challenge sacred cows.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Incarnation, as well as orthodox understandings thereof, is not going to be a constraint on my investigation or conclusion. This dissertation's methodology is to use the nature of God's life in the eternal present to investigate God's relation to time.

Given that this dissertation does not consider it terribly important to conform to Christian orthodoxy, logical space is created to be what Christians might interpret as theologically heretical.<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that this dissertation aims for heresy; it is desirable, *ceteris paribus*, to resonate with the mainstream, at least if one is trying to present a persuasive argument to the faithful. However, if philosophical argument inexorably leads to heresy, then so be it. I am favourably disposed to the view that we should take an ahistorical approach and use twenty-first century metaphysics in examining the coherence of the Incarnation even at the risk of distorting the content of, say, the declarations of the Chalcedon Council (451 CE) which were made against

---

<sup>4</sup> Crisp (2007, p. xii) compares removal of the Incarnation to removal of the heart from a living human being.

<sup>5</sup> The Incarnation itself has been challenged from within the Christian community. See, for instance, the seminal 'The Myth of God Incarnate' (Hick, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> We should be mindful that orthodoxy is often history (or doctrine) written by the winners, and that what became classified as heresy by later generations might have been orthodoxy before those winners imposed their interpretations.

a backdrop of fifth century metaphysics; although I readily grant that Chalcedon was not, at least not primarily, an exercise in metaphysics and, moreover, that we should perhaps not be too quick in dismissing fifth century metaphysics (Le Poidevin, 2009, p. 706).

One takes on board van Inwagen's observation that anyone attempting to give an account of, for example, the Trinity will find it difficult to avoid some heresy (1988, p. 246), in which case it appears that whatever one says will offend the sensibilities of some Christians. Nevertheless, it would be imprudent to rule out initially the possibility that there can be a coherent account of God's relation to time which coheres with Christological orthodoxy. At the very least, one can proceed on the basis of examining which heresy is the least philosophically objectionable. The church fathers and various councils had their reasons for classifying certain beliefs as heretical, and these reasons would have been, for example, from theological, political or even personal motivations. The purpose of this dissertation is not to support Christian orthodox belief; rather, it is to evaluate the philosophical rigour of certain claims about the nature of God. It may be the case that Christian orthodox belief is simply *wrong*.<sup>7</sup> More charitably, there may be unforeseen or downplayed trade-offs, or underdeveloped analyses, which need to be made explicit in adopting various perspectives on the Incarnation.

Importantly, this dissertation presupposes that God is timeless [in his default or main mode of existence] – see §2 of Chapter 1. This is not a controlling belief. The Research Question is focused on examining how a timeless God incarnates without being infected with temporality.

---

<sup>7</sup> Leftow (2002a, p. 275) asserts that the bishops of the Chalcedon Council in their deliberations simply could not have overlooked a contradictory element such as timelessness. Couldn't they? Swinburne (2011, p.158) states regarding the soul for instance that the only conclusion to draw is that those selfsame bishops had not thought things through properly. In any case, this does not speak to the conflicting priorities and motivations which the bishops faced. The wording and repetitiveness of claims in the Creed suggest defensiveness, a desire to paper over contradictions and a determination to impose orthodoxy. The latter is especially important: Historically if one went against Church dogma one risked more than being shown to be philosophically untutored. Orthodoxy is not necessarily the result of the winning of the better argument which most approximates to the truth or even reflects a desire to seek the truth; rather, it can be the triumphing of the more powerful parties for their own, often political, ends.

### SECTION 3. GOD-TALK AND COGNITIVE LIMITATION

Sometimes language trips us up, especially given that we and our languages have evolved in the context of our being spatio-temporal entities. Our languages are infused through and through with temporal notions. In considering the concept of timelessness, for instance, we cannot step outside the spatio-temporal universe and observe what timelessness is like. Conversely, perhaps one has to experience temporality in order to understand timelessness, rather in the manner of the person born sighted but later in life becomes blind has a better understanding of sightedness than the person born blind.

If God-talk is analogical, equivocal or stipulative, then, I would suggest, these are potential red flags that we might be about to encounter obfuscation. We should be wary of analogy for there are presumably no creaturely equivalents to divine entities such as the Trinity or the dual natures of Jesus Christ; moreover, analogies are never perfect, often invite disanalogies and potentially show disrespect to the audience in presuming that they cannot understand the described entity *simpliciter*. Our wariness though should not necessarily result in rejecting out of hand all use of analogy. Whilst there may be no creaturely equivalents to something like the Trinity, there may be a role for analogical predication in at least pointing us in the direction of some relatedness, so long as the relatedness is made explicit and limitations exposed: for example, when we say that God is good and Mother Teresa is good, we should clarify the equivocation that in the former we are referring to the source of all goodness and in the second to a moral evaluation. It is useful, however, if we can assume univocity, *viz.* that predicates such as ‘good’ are said of God and creatures in the same sense: when we consider God sending two bears to maul children to death, we might reasonably form a moral evaluation that God is not good.<sup>8</sup> Stipulative definitions, *viz.* declaring a meaning that usually does not already have an established use in the sense intended, can be suspiciously *ad hoc* and overly convenient to a given agenda; they can easily be used to make something true by mere definition.

---

<sup>8</sup> NRSV: 4 Kings 2:23-24

It is frequently asserted that God is mysterious. If an appeal has to be made to mystery in accounting for, say, the Incarnation, before a careful investigation has been conducted then it is likely that we have inadvertently allowed the theological horse to pull us and it has pulled too hard and we have fallen off the philosophical cart. This is not to preclude that it may turn out to be the case that God is so extraordinary that we have difficulty conceiving of him<sup>9</sup> or that our conceptions are radically counter-intuitive, paradoxical or even contradictory;<sup>10</sup> this does not mean, however, that one should be charitably sympathetic to the notion that something, such as the Incarnation, needs to retain a little mystery<sup>11</sup> lest it loses its emotive force (*contra* Senor, 2011, pp. 89-90), for we can fully understand a phenomenon and still feel awe-inspired, as in the case of a rainbow. Nevertheless, when the card of divine mystery is played – or at least is overplayed if we are being charitably sympathetic - it is philosophically unsatisfactory and is suggestive of a failure to engage with unwelcome metaphysical issues. The latter is starkly true when mystery is appealed to in order to avoid the force of a valid argument regarding the falsity of a theistic claim (Pawl, 2016, pp. 88-91).

Nevertheless, having exhausted the capabilities of our languages and conceptual schema and found them wanting, an appeal, whilst philosophically unsatisfactory, to mysterianism might be warranted; that is to say, the position that there is a hard problem which is unsolvable by us, even in principle, is a philosophical conclusion reached by careful consideration of the issue, not a presupposition. Short of this pessimistic conclusion, we should assume a default position that presently we simply do not know but might in the future. In reaching this default position, the philosophical itch should be to remind ourselves where the burden of proof lies: if someone makes extraordinary claims, then we should insist upon extraordinary evidence, not extraordinary excuses.

---

<sup>9</sup> Anselm, for instance, in defining God as that than which no greater being can be conceived does not explicitly describe God to us. It is commonly assumed that this perfect being thesis entails the omni-God thesis, *viz.* God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent [assuming we can clearly conceive these], but this entailment is rejected as undemonstrated by Nagasawa (2017, pp. 92-93), who substitutes a more modest maximal-God thesis that God is the being that has the maximal consistent set of power, knowledge and benevolence.

<sup>10</sup> Crisp (2007, p. 167) usefully reminds us of the distinction between divine mystery as paradox, meaning certain notions that are unexpected or peculiar, and divine mystery as outright contradiction.

<sup>11</sup> Maybe not a little: for some, obscurity is a mark of profundity.

An apophatic, or negative, approach, whereby it is claimed that we can talk about what God is not but not what God is given God's absolute transcendence, is, I would suggest, unsatisfactory. Firstly, in order to be able to assert something about what God is not, one must already have some idea about what God is, for example when we assert that God is not evil we are presupposing that God is either good or neutral. Even if we do not have the presupposition, we can assert that God is not something if that something contradicts another attribute; we know that God cannot be both. It could be argued that we do not have an idea about what God is but we can consider God in the light of functional roles. For instance, if we consider God to have the function of creator of the contingent universe, then we might wish to assert that God is not contingent. Secondly, there are an infinite number of negative assertions one could make. One could say, for instance, that God is neither a piece of toast on Tuesdays nor a grain of sand on Thursdays. There must be some underlying principle governing what is appropriate to the domain of discussing God.

Notwithstanding our linguistic limitations,<sup>12</sup> the notion that our cognitive limitations constrain our ability to understand God should, in the first instance, be rejected as overly pessimistic lest we inadvertently handicap ourselves in our investigative endeavours. We have strong inductive support through for example the success of science that we can gain at least some grasp of the nature of reality. Often, when we gain some insight into an initially baffling aspect of the universe, further avenues of exploration open up. It may be that some aspects of God become amenable to us; after all, whilst God is said to be transcendent he is also said to be immanent in the universe. Once those aspects become amenable, further possibilities might become available. Granted that there is the possibility that the nature of God might be distorted by being refracted through our human cognitive prism, how do the proponents of this cognitive limitation viewpoint demonstrate the constraint rather than taking it as

---

<sup>12</sup> Given that humans are good at inventing languages – there are literally thousands of languages – it may be the case that at least one language is particularly suitable for God-talk. Still, hopefully we do not have to descend to glossolalia or talking in tongues.



axiomatic?<sup>13</sup> Perhaps God is comprehensible and it turns out our understanding is rather spot-on.<sup>14</sup>

An example, I would suggest, of such defeatist pessimism is van Inwagen (1988, pp. 243-244) who is well aware of the charge of theological obscurantism but seems to suggest that Christians should be prepared to accept apparent contradictions. He does not attempt to directly address obscurantism; rather, he deflects *tu quoque*. Van Inwagen uses the example of ‘obscurantist’ twentieth-century physics telling us that an electron is both a wave and a particle, and that before the time of quantum field theory, which gives us a plausible explanation of the apparent contradiction, this is somewhat comparable to the mystery of the Trinity being three-in-one – even going so far as characterising it using loaded pseudo-religious language such as a ‘revelation’ from nature and ‘... the doctrine of the Duality’ (*ibid.*). Van Inwagen asserts that we too await a satisfying response to the Trinity conundrum. He offers one response, which he states from the outset that he does not endorse and will not be terribly unhappy if it is found wanting for the Trinity is after all a mystery. It is also not clear that the analogy with the electron is apt: presumably van Inwagen cannot claim that God is either one personal being who at least sometimes presents as three, for that is modalism, or a collection of three persons who appear to be one, for that suggests deception (Tuggy, 2003a, p. 178). Van Inwagen’s attitude is that any alleged demonstrations of contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity can be answered although we may not be able to understand the answer; I am not sure that something is answered if we do not understand the answer. He invites us to consider his response on the basis of its coherence; that is, his approach is one of establishing logical possibility.<sup>15</sup>

Van Inwagen, I would argue, has misrepresented the science. He fails to point out that twentieth-century physics did not simply conjecture that the electron is both a wave and a particle in the same way at the same time: this was the implication of repeated observations performed by many independent experimenters. Quantum field theory

---

<sup>13</sup> Presumably the Christian response would be that our reason is impaired by our fallen and sinful nature.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the philosopher who rejects omnibenevolence in resolving the Problem of Evil might be calling a spade a spade despite the protestations of the majority of Christian philosophers.

<sup>15</sup> I discuss this penchant for logical possibility among Christian philosophers in §6.

subsequently offered us the explanation that the duality depends upon what observation one wants to make. Most importantly, van Inwagen admits that the wave-particle duality is something investigable by experimentation; that is, the hypothesis concerning duality is testable and there is an established and well-respected widely applicable methodology available to resolve the issue, not one that merely sought a logical possibility. Science is tentative and treats a ‘mystery’ as a motivation to do further investigation in order to move nearer to the truth. Van Inwagen does not offer a comparable methodology to investigate the unfalsifiable hypothesis of the Trinity, and he freely admits that he does not even propose to explain the three-in-oneness. To repeat: van Inwagen is concerned with logical coherence. He attempts to demonstrate this coherence using a piece of logical reasoning – Relative Identity Logic – which he acknowledges does not appear to have any utility outside of Christian theology (*ibid.*, p. 259). Thus, we have to answer van Inwagen’s question of whether the Trinitarian is in an analogous position to the physicist with a resounding ‘No’.

Still, there is perhaps some utility to be extracted in van Inwagen’s attempts at coherence. Prior to quantum field theory, scientists were in a quandary in that light behaves both in wave-like and particle-like manners, so perhaps something along the lines of a relative approach is appropriate. This could be expressed by means of adopting a hybrid model to better explain disparate observations; that is to say, one single model is insufficient to capture the richness of a phenomenon. This is a theme I take up at several points in the dissertation; indeed, the very notion of what is meant by entities of the Bimodal God is a hybrid approach, as will be explicated in Chapter 9.

The idea that there are some things, such as the Trinity or the Incarnation, that human unaided reason cannot know and so require divine revelatory intervention for enlightenment can be seen as a convenient and unfalsifiable card to play for the theologian who is unable to articulate plausible reasons for his beliefs or, worse, wants to obfuscate. This is especially so when we are told that such revelation is only available after death.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, even if the Trinity or the Incarnation reveals something to us about God, the revelation might not be concerned with answering

---

<sup>16</sup> Presumably then the Afterlife would not be a busman’s holiday for philosophers.

metaphysical questions but rather with God providing us with a path to experience and worship him.

We also have the contentious notion of ineffability: if God is ineffable then this implies that the more God reveals himself to us the less, ironically, we understand.<sup>17</sup>

#### **SECTION 4. INCARNATION-TALK**

By 'Incarnation' I refer to a proper incarnation, *viz.* the divine has really taken on flesh as a metaphysical fact rather than simply enjoying epistemic access to a human temporal mind or *contra* Hicks (1977, p. 178) a mythological sense engineered to express a valuation and evoke an attitude. This understanding of a proper incarnation is grounded in the understanding of the church fathers as expressed in the various conciliar pronouncements; I understand the latter as to purport to at least partially inform us about the ontological nature of Jesus Christ, not simply to set linguistic boundaries of how we discuss the Incarnation (Coakley, 2002, pp. 148-149). By assuming a realist position, there is proper philosophical work to be done in resolving alleged contradictions (Le Poidevin, 2009, pp. 704-705).

#### **SECTION 5. PERSON-TALK**

When discussing the Trinity and the Incarnation, often commentators presume an implicit shared understanding of the term 'person'; they especially presume that 'person' is being used univocally across 'divine person' and 'human person' and/or across mediaeval and modern usages. Much of our conceptualisation of the Trinity and the Incarnation hinges upon the definition of the term 'person'. Accordingly, §4.2 of Chapter 4 will attempt to offer a clear and distinct analysis of 'person', especially in identifying differences between a standard modern usage of a person and what the church fathers allegedly understood in their conciliar pronouncements.

---

<sup>17</sup> For example, one can envisage at least some early Christians to be theologically satisfied with their notion of a monotheistic god, but then the doctrine of the Trinity developed and generated psychological dissonance.

## SECTION 6. EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS AND CONFUSING THE LOGICAL FOR THE PHYSICAL

Earlier the issues of the burden of proof and of extraordinary claims requiring extraordinary evidence were raised. Davis (1983, pp. 5-6) for instance acknowledges that some people might find some Christian beliefs, such as the Incarnation, preposterous, with such beliefs being seen as comparable to what Davis considers preposterous beliefs such as ancient alien astronauts building the pyramids. Davis is dismissive of the people who believe in the latter. *Contra* Davis, no matter how unusual a belief might be, it is important to look at evidential warrant in assessing claims: ancient alien astronauts would have operated within the laws of nature and potentially would have left physical evidence and so the claim is investigable whereas the Incarnation invokes seemingly unprovable supernaturalism. We can authoritatively disprove the ancient alien astronaut hypothesis: there is a lack of in-favour evidence which we would expect to find and we have concrete evidence of how the pyramids were in fact built – the method is actually inscribed in some of the pyramids. Thus, the believers in ancient alien astronauts are genuinely mistaken, not necessarily preposterous. But what would be the evidential path that could prove the two natures of Jesus Christ? Tellingly, Davis (*ibid.*, p. 119) states that his aim is to show that the assertion of the two natures has a coherent meaning and so is possibly true but that he will not present arguments that it is true. This preference for logical coherence and disregard for actual evidence is replete throughout his book in which he freely admits that he often does not know how to demonstrate that some Christian belief or other is true; we see this preference and disregard in the works of many Christian philosophers, such as Morris (1986), van Inwagen (1988) and Pawl (2016).<sup>18</sup> Charitably, we might be prepared to accept this given that Davis's book focuses on logic; but, as he himself states (1983, p. 59), logical possibility is insufficient. The difficulty for Davis is that God beliefs seem to require extraordinary evidence whereas beliefs such as in ancient aliens are decidable on mundane evidence [Did the aliens leave behind a laptop, or perhaps a chisel made from a metal not found on Earth, in a sealed sarcophagus?].

---

<sup>18</sup> Pawl (2016, p. 2) off the bat declares that he makes no attempt at showing Conciliar Christology to be true or even that it is *possibly* true. He does not even purport to show that it is logically possible. His modest claim is that the arguments against Conciliar Christology are logically inconsistent. This is a thin defence indeed.

Something is logically possible if it does not involve a contradiction. Consider the following proposition:

$p = \langle \text{Daisy the rabbit exists} \rangle$

The proposition  $p$  does not involve a contradiction, so it is logically possible that Daisy the rabbit exists. If Daisy the rabbit exists, then the proposition is true, otherwise it is false.

If we conjoin  $p$  with its negation then we have a contradiction:

$p \wedge \sim p$

$\langle \text{Daisy the rabbit exists and Daisy the rabbit does not exist} \rangle$

If we have a contradiction, then the proposition is false.

Does the mere logical possibility of Daisy's existence mean that she actually exists?

No: we need something more to ascertain whether she exists, such as the fact that I can see her drinking water in her cage now.

Consider this proposition:

$q = \langle \text{There is a bachelor in the pet shop with his wife} \rangle$

Is  $q$  logically possible? No, for this is an analytical truth: the concept of 'bachelor' precludes having a wife. The logical difficulty is implicit rather than explicit:  $q$  does not have a contradictory form.

Consider this proposition:

$r = \langle \text{Daisy the rabbit hops over the Blackpool Tower} \rangle$

Is  $r$  logically possible? Yes, for there is no contradiction. In order for there to be a contradiction, we would need something like:

<Daisy the rabbit hops and does not hop over the Blackpool Tower>

Is *r* physically possible? No.

One, of course, should not confuse the logical for the physical: Just because something is logically possible does not necessarily mean it is physically possible. Physical possibility is usually taken to be a subset of logical possibility (Le Poidevin, 2023, p. 150). By physically possible, I mean something can be actual if the physical laws which obtain in that subset are complied with. We noted that the proposition *r* is logically possible but not physically possible. In our actual world, Daisy the rabbit cannot hop over the Blackpool Tower. Such a physical impossibility conforms entirely to our whole world experience given our understanding of the laws of physics and biomechanical analysis.

In comparing hypotheses, I suggest that it would be philosophically unsatisfactory to adopt a hypothesis simply because the alternatives are worse; that is, instead of inference to the best explanation we have inference to the least objectionable explanation or ‘best of a bad bunch’. If hypotheses are bad, they are *bad*. It seems to me that it would be better to adopt a null hypothesis of ‘There is nothing of explanatory substance to offer here’.

Assuming we do have some explanatory substance to offer, in comparing competing hypotheses about an entity or phenomenon when we lack compelling evidence pointing to a particular one, there are some widely accepted theoretical virtues we could look for in helping to evaluate which hypothesis is the inference to the best explanation. It is granted that in employing these theoretical virtues, the inference to the best explanation might not result in actually obtaining the truth. The following theoretical virtues should be read individually *ceteris paribus*; when read jointly, there may be trade-offs, and we may need to make value judgements as to where our weighting should be.

First there is explanatory scope: the hypothesis which explains more data concerning the phenomenon under discussion is to be preferred. Relatedly, it is desirable that the notions we devise have wider applicability outside the phenomenon or even cognate area we are looking at. Second is conservativeness: the hypothesis which more coheres with our prior knowledge of the world is, in the first instance, to be preferred.<sup>19</sup> Third is simplicity or parsimony: the hypothesis which makes the fewest assumptions is to be preferred. Fourth is conformity to our intuitions: granted, intuitions vary, but the hypothesis which at least does not conflict with strongly held intuitions held by the majority of people is to be preferred. Fifth is reliability: the hypothesis which retains its explanatory value in differing initial conditions and scenarios is to be preferred. Sixth is predictive success: the hypothesis which makes testable predictions or retrodictions, especially where these are novel, is to be preferred. Seventh is independence from our biases: the hypothesis that is judged on its merits under the other categories regardless of whether we want it to be true or not is to be preferred.

In this dissertation, I am going to try to make a modest positive claim for how a timeless God can be incarnate. This involves my assuming a burden of proof. In the absence of a timeless God himself being available for cross-examination in a [temporal] lecture theatre, it is difficult to conceive of what evidence could be marshalled in favour of the proposition <A timeless God can be incarnate>. I would, nevertheless, like to try to move beyond mere logical possibility. When a claim is made that something is possible, that possibility needs to be demonstrated and the demonstration needs to be substantive: mere logical possibility can reduce to vacuous wordplay.<sup>20</sup> Thus, without fear or trembling, I will try to argue that if a timeless God incarnates then my proposed solution, or something close to it, is how he needs to do it. Moreover, we

---

<sup>19</sup> I am sympathetic to Sider's (2001, p. xiv) view that inconsistency with a firmly established scientific theory is a particularly strong reason against a metaphysical claim.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, a material conditional with a false antecedent does not tell us whether the consequent is true or false:

If Blackpool is in France, then the Eiffel Tower is in England.

This material conditional is true, for a material conditional is defined as only false when the antecedent is true and the consequent is false; otherwise it is true (should then one use a Royal Mail stamp when posting a letter at the Eiffel Tower?). We can say that logic is neutral about what there is, given that logic is usually seen to be concerned with the form of arguments rather than content.

should be mindful that there are some metaphysical necessary truths which are not truths of logic, for example if something is red then it is coloured. At the very least, I intend to show that the commitments and consequences of my case may be favourably compared with other approaches. I will take the above stated theoretical virtues to be useful.

My preferred approach is methodological naturalism. This is the presumption that the investigation of reality is best achieved through the natural laws and empirical evidence we discover and gather using science. This does not rule out that some aspects of reality may require invoking non-scientific principles or the supernatural. Nor does it imply that there is only one path to truth. It most certainly does not presuppose philosophical naturalism, that is, the view which holds that there is nothing but the natural world as studied by the natural sciences. However, it does imply that we should try to exhaust natural explanations before resorting to those non-scientific principles or the supernatural. This is because, as far as I can tell, no one has satisfactorily demonstrated a means to investigate an alleged supernatural realm, whereas we do have established means for investigating the natural, so we are on surer ground if our default approach is methodological naturalism. Granted, we are studying God and he is putatively and quintessentially supernatural, so there are limitations in this approach, but I hope the journey should be instructive, if only in helping to identify where we simply have to admit that we do not know and so need to withhold judgement (Tuggy, 2003a, p. 179).

In adopting an empirical approach, I do not mean *a posteriori* evidence for the existence of God, analogous perhaps to a natural theology, in contrast to *a priori* proofs, such as ontological arguments. I am not arguing for the existence of God or timelessness; these are taken as presuppositions. Rather, I mean tentative confirmation that something seems physically possible rather than simply logically possible, and how this coheres with the traditional understanding of God and the plausibility of an incarnation. For instance, if it is true that a photon of light from its 'perspective' does not experience the succession of time despite being part of the spatio-temporal universe, then we have an instance of something which we can use to support the idea of a timeless being operating in the temporal world. This idea will



need to be fleshed out: it could, for instance, be an appeal to God having a specious present<sup>21</sup> lasting for all of time (Alston, 1989, p. 136).

## SECTION 7. CONCEIVABILITY AND METAPHYSICAL POSSIBILITY

I have rejected the notion that logical possibility entails physical possibility. It is interesting to consider how conceivability relates to logical possibility. Something conceivable might be logically possible yet physically impossible; we can conceive of Daisy the rabbit hopping over the Blackpool Tower. Indeed, it is relatively uncontroversial that conceivability does not entail physical possibility (Chalmers, 2002, p. 146). Something logically impossible would be inconceivable and physically impossible: we cannot conceive of a square circle.

In this dissertation, by possibility, I am referring to metaphysical possibility, rather than logical or physical possibility, unless I state to the contrary. Metaphysical possibility can, for instance, make use of the device of possible worlds. The actual world, the spatio-temporal universe we live in, could have been different; for example, the Nazis might have won World War II and so this dissertation would probably have been written in German. That the Nazis might have won WW2 does not involve logical contradiction, so it is logically possible and metaphysically possible. On the other hand, that water might have been made of XYZ instead of H<sub>2</sub>O is logically possible, for it does not involve logical contradiction, but not metaphysically possible, for a substance made of elements other than 2 parts hydrogen and one part oxygen we would not call water.

Admittedly, it is contentious that conceivability entails metaphysical possibility. 'Entailment' seems too strong. Perhaps it would be better to say that conceivability provides a defeasible reason in favour of possibility. Chalmers (2002, pp. 147-149) makes a useful distinction between *prima facie* conceivability, where a hypothesis is possible for a subject on first appearances, and ideal conceivability, where a hypothesis is possible for a subject upon ideal rational reflection. A hypothesis may initially pass the criteria for *prima facie* conceivability (for example there is no logical

---

<sup>21</sup> Roughly, the notion of a temporal duration directly perceived in a single perception.

contradiction) but upon further ideal rational reflection fail to pass the criteria for ideal conceivability (for example the hypothesis can be ruled out *a priori*). The criteria for ideal conceivability will be demanding, for if a hypothesis passes such criteria then its justification in favour of possibility cannot be rationally defeated.

It is useful to employ metaphysical possibility as a way to move beyond mere logical possibility towards the realm of what actually could be: something logically possible is discoverable *a priori* whereas metaphysical possibility points us to the *a posteriori*.

We have established that Daisy the rabbit hopping over the Blackpool Tower is logically possible [does not involve a contradiction] but physically impossible. At first blush, this might sound vacuously true, especially if we cannot conceive of Daisy the rabbit making that hop. However, what if there were a possible world in which the laws of physics or of biology were different: gravity might be much weaker or rabbits might have a much greater leg strength relative to body weight. When we incorporate the device of possible worlds we can more easily conceive of and argue that it might be physically possible for Daisy the rabbit to hop over the Blackpool Tower, just not our Blackpool Tower. Moreover, we have evidence in the actual world, our world, to inform our conceiving of the possible world  $W_{\text{[Extraordinary Hopping Rabbits]}}$ : gravity on the Moon is one-sixth of Earth's<sup>22</sup> and the Australian rocket frog [appropriately named] can leap more than fifty times its body length.

There are limits. That we can conceive of the possible world  $W_{\text{[Extraordinary Hopping Rabbits]}}$  does not entail that Daisy the rabbit can hop over the Blackpool Tower in our actual world; as stated, conceivability does not entail physical possibility. Nor does anything go in terms of metaphysical possibility, for the more removed our metaphysical speculation is from our actual world, the less plausible and heuristically useful is the device of possible worlds: we can conceive of a possible world in which Daisy the rabbit sprouts wings to fly over the Blackpool Tower, but now we deserve incredulous stares from onlookers.

---

<sup>22</sup> Not that I am suggesting we transport Daisy the rabbit and the Blackpool Tower to the Moon as a philosophical field experiment. Well, not Daisy anyway.

There are difficulties in judging the theoretical relevance of various thought experiments, especially where the thought experiments raise more issues than they purport to answer. We should be clear on what the metaphysics is. Possibly my favourite fantastical Leftowian analogy is the time travelling dancer called Jane who repeatedly time travels back (wholly, not as temporal parts) to the dance stage to form a whole chorus line of dancers called the Rockettes (Leftow, 2004, pp. 312–23) and this, Leftow argues, supports the intelligibility of the notion that God may live his life in three ‘streams’ or modes.<sup>23</sup> I find the notion of backwards time travel to be deeply problematic and possibly unintelligible,<sup>24</sup> so Leftow’s thought experiment in many respects is of limited value for me in dealing with a timeless God; nevertheless, it raises some interesting issues and potentially points to some resources I can make use of in my proposed reconciliation; I discuss this time-travelling analogy further in §4.4 of Chapter 4. Another thought experiment with difficulties would be Moreland and Craig’s (2003, p. 593) offering of Cerberus, the three-headed dog from Greek mythology, to model the Trinity; here fiction has to be stacked onto fiction as Moreland and Craig ‘enhance’ Cerberus *ad hoc* with rationality and self-consciousness; I find far fewer resources in this offering to help me.<sup>25</sup>

There is also a tendency in the Christian philosophical world to make occasional bizarre claims. Consider, for instance, Swinburne’s assertion that any human could become a crocodile (2011, p. 157). This claim is not made with a carefully worded, nuanced thought experiment to illustrate surprising consequences of a profound philosophical conundrum but simply is a throwaway remark flowing from his statement that he does not think human nature is essential to ordinary humans. We have no

---

<sup>23</sup> Leftow does use the term a ‘Father-Son-Spirit chorus line’ (2004, p. 312).

<sup>24</sup> Backwards time travel seems to be highly unlikely according to our current understanding of physical laws and the configuration of our universe. One of the problems for instance is that when Jane ‘generates’ multiple instantiations of herself, there appears to be a gross violation of conservation laws. Granted, a manoeuvre employing temporal parts could address this, but Leftow rejects this solution (Leftow, 2004, p. 308). There is also the matter of whether the past is there to travel to: a presentist for example would say no. More philosophically, there is also the little matter of paradoxes: has Jane not altered the past?; what if one of the Janes accidentally knocks one of the others off the stage which kills her?; how does the ‘original’ Jane intend to restore the timeline so that only one Jane exists after the dance is over?

<sup>25</sup> In the real world, we have the case of human conjoined twins. These are two persons with overlapping bodies, not one human with two heads. This implies that Cerberus would be three dogs with overlapping bodies rather than one dog with three minds. Moreland and Craig claim that Cerberus is clearly one dog with three minds; this, I would suggest, is implausible.

evidential support for ordinary humans becoming crocodiles. It seems sensible to conclude that human nature is essential for ordinary humans. However, we can grant that if God the Son took on human nature in addition to his pre-existing divine nature then human nature is not essential to GS.<sup>26</sup> Presumably GS could have taken on the nature of a reptile too.<sup>27</sup>

When it comes to God, we are dealing with a being purportedly transcending the physical; hence, it seems apt that in conceiving of him in possible worlds, we are very much exploring the realm of metaphysical, not physical, possibility. We should be prepared to be surprised, as our *a priori* intuitions might not be well-informed and/or in conflict: a timeless God incarnating into the temporal world is, *inter alia*, an unfamiliar context, and unfamiliar contexts might reveal otherwise occluded metaphysical facts (Almeida, 2008, pp. 1-4).<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, I would suggest that we should try to make our intuitions better informed and less conflicted by looking at what goes on in our actual world; this especially makes sense given that God allegedly entered our actual world.

## **SECTION 8. BIBLICAL DATA AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

### **8.1. Biblical data**

In this dissertation, direct appeals to biblical data are of limited value, not least because biblical data underdetermine what is understood by eternity (Craig, 2001a, pp. 14-20; Helm, 2010, Ch 1).

### **8.2. Concept of God**

Especial attention is paid to Classical Theism as exemplified by the works of Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas. This classical theistic approach with its concomitant divine simplicity and timelessness was the mainstay of Christian understanding of God

---

<sup>26</sup> In Chapters 7 and 9 I take a more qualified approach to God the Son possessing human nature. I argue that GS possesses human nature from eternity, which suggests that it is essential, but that the human nature is only completed with the Incarnation, which suggests an element of contingency.

<sup>27</sup> There is no biblical warrant for a reptilian incarnation.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that a timeless God incarnating into the temporal world is not one of the unfamiliar contexts Almeida discusses in his 2008.

up to and throughout the mediaeval period; the notion of theistic personalism with God located in time is a relatively recent development. Concepts of God are explored in Chapter 4.

### **8.3. Concept of the Incarnation**

In order to help identify the Christian orthodox view, reference is principally made to various conciliar pronouncements where these pertain to relevant issues regarding the Incarnation, such as the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) that God the Son was begotten, not created, and the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), that Christ was of two natures. Undoubtedly, some of these conciliar pronouncements were at least partially informed by or interpretation made based upon the Bible; however, it should be noted that a major motivation for the convening of councils was often precisely because of disagreement among Christians given the underdetermination of many doctrinal matters by biblical data.

## **SECTION 9. THEORIES OF TIME**

The examination of these will be crucial. See Chapter 3.

## **SECTION 10. NOMENCLATURE**

### **10.1. Traditional language**

Many modern writers refer to God using masculine pronouns but then fashionably add apologies for any unintended sexism as such usage is traditional and is simply a relic of the absence of satisfactory universal or gender-neutral terms in English. I follow tradition.

### **10.2. Christian theological terms**

I will capitalise when referring to the Christian version of various terms. For instance, I will use 'Incarnation' when referring to the specific Christian doctrine as opposed to incarnation in general; and 'Person' when referring to the members of the Christian Trinity as opposed to persons in general.

In the literature, 'Jesus Christ', 'Christ' and 'God Incarnate' are often synonymous. I use the term 'Jesus Christ'.

### **10.3. Miscellany**

In the literature, 'soul' and 'mind' are usually treated as synonymous. Unless otherwise indicated, I follow this usage.

When first encountered in a section, 'Jesus Christ' and 'God the Son' are written out in full. Subsequently in that section, these are abbreviated to 'JC' and 'GS' respectively.

All figures in the dissertation are created by me.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE NATURE OF TIME

‘Time is what keeps everything from happening at once.’

- Ray Cummings

#### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

§1. What is time?

1.1. A familiar stranger

1.2. Substantivalism vs. Relationism

1.3. Change

1.4. Timeless changelessness and temporal changelessness

1.5. How long is a piece of string?

1.5.1. Finite duration

1.5.2. Infinite duration

1.5.3. Relativistic effects

1.5.4. Instant

1.5.5. Gunky

1.5.6. Timeless duration

§2. A Theory and B Theory

2.1. What are they?

2.2. Some examples of A- and B-theories

2.2.1. Presentism

2.2.2. Growing Block Theory

2.2.3. Moving Spotlight Theory

2.2.4. Eternalism

§3. The Block Universe

3.1. What is the Block Universe?

3.2. The passage of time

§4. One more time

4.1. Physical, metaphysical and psychological

4.2. Super-time

4.3. Relative timelessness

4.4. Timeless *sans* creation

4.5. Omnitemporality

§5. Eternity

5.1. What is eternity?

5.2. Of God and Man

§6. Insights

6.1. Logical priority

6.2. Time, change and the Bimodal God

6.3. Motivation for the Block Universe

6.4. Preferred Theory of Time

6.4.1. Desiderata

6.4.2. A-theories and Timelessness

6.4.2.1. The classical tradition

6.4.2.2. Time's Way

6.4.3. Opting for the B-theory

**OVERVIEW**

This chapter introduces various terms and definitions which inform many of the discussions in subsequent chapters. It first discusses the relation of change to time. It then considers what is duration. Much of the contemporary discussion of time is conducted using terms derived from McTaggart, so next an examination is made of his A-series and B-series followed by an explication of the A- and B-theories of time. Then comes a discussion of the block universe. After that, some definitions of different types of time will be noted. Penultimately, an exploration of discrete time series will be made,



with an emphasis on the work of Brian Leftow. Finally, the relevance of these discussions in relation to the Research Question will be explicated.

## **SECTION 1. WHAT IS TIME?**

### **1.1. A familiar stranger**

One of our presuppositions is that time is real. McTaggart notoriously argued in his seminal 1908 paper ‘The Unreality of Time’ that time is unreal. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine McTaggart’s argument.<sup>1</sup> However, McTaggart bequeathed us a conceptual apparatus and language in which the concept of time is often conducted.

Our whole existence is infected with time, and we take it to be so commonplace in our experience that we often do not give it a second thought other than perhaps to lament that we do not have enough of it. We do not observe time directly. When asked to provide a definition of time, we become aware of our own perplexity of what it is and struggle to articulate our befuddled understanding. As Augustine remarked ‘What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know’ (Augustine, 1998, Book XI, xiv). Whilst it would be a fair comment that there is no broad consensus among philosophers in the modern era as to what time is, useful conceptual engineering has been done on its nature.

### **1.2. Substantivalism/Relationism**

Substantivalism is the view that space and time exist independently of anything else.<sup>2</sup> Metaphorically speaking, space and time provide an inert container within which matter (objects) exists and moves (events) independently of the container. If you take away the contents of the container, the container remains.<sup>3</sup> This implies that there can

---

<sup>1</sup> Briefly, McTaggart concluded that time was unreal because he believed that time essentially involves a moving present, but that no such thing could exist.

<sup>2</sup> Except perhaps God.

<sup>3</sup> Under substantivalism, the concrete objects are other than spacetime [although their spatio-temporal properties are logically dependent on it]. There is also the view of super-substantivalism. This holds that concrete objects are regions of spacetime; hence, not only is spacetime independent of its contents, but its contents are

be empty time, *viz.* nothing in the container, and there can be time without change, *viz.* the contents of the container do not move (Benovsky, 2010, p. 491).

Relationism is the opposing view that there are no such things as space and time; rather, there are just material objects, spatially and temporally related to one another; this is, therefore, a reductionist view. You cannot take away the container, for there is no container. If you take away the motion of the material objects, that is, events, you take away time; and if you take away the material objects themselves, you take away space. Broadly, we can identify times with sets of simultaneous events or with proposition-like complete momentary states-of-the-whole-world (*ibid.*, p. 492). This means that time cannot be empty and that time requires change.

It will be argued below that time requires change and that change is ubiquitous in our physical universe. This favours relationism.

### 1.3. Change

It is a truism that change requires time: Daisy the rabbit is hungry at  $t_1$  but sated at  $t_2$  after feasting on fresh hay. The converse that time requires change is contentious. By 'change' is meant real change with respect to a state of affairs involving properties such as size or shape of entities. This is to be contrasted with allegedly pseudo-change such as 'McTaggartian' change (Shoemaker, 1969, p. 364) where an event recedes further into the past,<sup>4</sup> for instance the death of Daisy's dam;<sup>5</sup> or grue-like change, such as something being grue before  $t_1$  and non-grue after (*ibid.*, p. 365), for instance Daisy's hay which is green but described as grue before  $t_1$  but remains green instead

---

reducible to spacetime. Under super-substantivalism, if God is temporal then he would appear to be constituted by spacetime, which would be an undesirable result. Super-substantivalism also implies that if spacetime perdures, which is the standard view, then objects perdure; this would be a significant argument against endurance (Sider, 2001, p. 110; see also my Chapter 8 for discussion of different theories of persistence).

<sup>4</sup> For McTaggart, the only real change is the event changing its A-properties from future to present to past (and further past). He uses the example of a hot poker. A hot poker which cools is always hot at the earlier moment(s) compared to the later moment(s) of coolness. *Contra* McTaggart, most people would consider the poker to have undergone an intrinsic or genuine change, not mere variation in how things are from one time to another.

<sup>5</sup> Daisy examples are my examples, not Shoemaker's.

of turning blue after  $t_1$  and so loses its *grue* description; or external change,<sup>6</sup> for example the leftover hay changes when Daisy no longer thinks about it.

Some commentators assert that time can exist in the absence of change, that is, a substantialist view. This implies that perhaps God can be strongly immutable, which is normally associated with timelessness, but temporal, so it is useful to consider whether there is a difference between timeless changelessness and temporal changelessness.

One notable commentator is Shoemaker. In his seminal 1969 paper 'Time without Change', Shoemaker offers a thought experiment in which a world has three regions, A, B, and C. These alternatively undergo 'local freezes' of one year's duration and these freezes occur at different cycles: region A has a freeze every three years, region B every four years and region C every five years. The denizens of the respective regions can observe the local freezes in the other regions. The denizens of the frozen region will not experience that time has passed; they cannot observe their own frozen state. However, they may be informed later from the denizens of the other regions that time has passed; moreover, if they were observing the other unfrozen regions just before their own region became frozen, they can compare the before and after states of the other unfrozen regions when their own region unfreezes and infer based on the changes that have occurred that time has passed and by what extent whilst they were frozen; for example, they might see that a tree has grown by a certain height commensurate with one year having passed. Using the lowest common multiple of those respective durations, a total or global freeze can be extrapolated in which all three local freezes coincide; this will be the sixtieth year, for  $3 \times 4 \times 5 = 60$  (*ibid.*, pp. 369-371). During this global freeze, there will be no observers of time passing; if someone, *per impossibile*, in one of the three regions could observe the freeze then this in itself would represent change. In the sixty-first year, the three regions become

---

<sup>6</sup> Sometimes referred to as '*mere* Cambridge change'. A Cambridge change is when something changes iff some predicate applies to it at one time, but not at a later time; for example, my coffee is hot at  $t_1$  and cold at  $t_2$ . However, although everything that changes in the sense of intrinsic change also changes by the Cambridge criterion, the converse is not necessarily true: I may be taller than my daughter at  $t_1$  but shorter than her at  $t_2$  not because I have intrinsically changed but because she has grown. Thus, a *mere* Cambridge change concerns only extrinsic properties. Real changes are a subset of Cambridge changes. See Geach (1969, pp. 71-72).

unfrozen. Given the inductive support of the regularity of local freezes and their durations, as evidenced by denizens exchanging notes of their record-keeping of periodicity and maintaining standard clocks, the denizens of all three regions, Shoemaker asserts, have reasonable grounds for believing that the predicted global freezes will occur on schedule and that the time elapsed during those global freezes will be one year.

The denizens could be mistaken: the inductive support of the periodicity of local freezes and their durations give no guarantee that global freezes will occur and will be of comparable length, for maybe the cycle resets differently each time or perhaps instead of one year passing a trillion years passes; there is a myriad of other problematic possibilities (Le Poidevin, 2010, p. 172). Still, time, independently of any change in the three regions, has seemingly kept tabs as to when the global freeze is to end, and this supports the assertion that there can be time without change; and that this time has an equable flow.

Such a move to absolute time conflicts with the current scientific understanding that we live in a relativistic universe, where time does not have an equable flow but speeds up or slows down depending upon one's motion or the strength of a gravitational source. Shoemaker acknowledges this and explicitly chooses to disregard modern physical theory and states that he is concerned with whether time without change is a logical or conceptual possibility, not necessarily a physical possibility. He readily permits himself to consider possible worlds in which the physical laws can differ markedly from those in our universe (Shoemaker, 1969, pp. 368-369).

The import of Shoemaker's thought experiment is not, however, a direct argument for the logical possibility of time without change, as perhaps it is often interpreted, but rather is an indirect argument which trades, *inter alia*, on an epistemological point (Le Poidevin, 2010, p. 173): how do we know that there is a global freeze if, *ex hypothesi*, there can be no observers? Shoemaker (1969, p. 368) states that his aim is to show that it is conceivable that the denizens of his thought experiment world can have very good reasons for thinking that there are global freezes and for the predictability and

length of such changeless intervals despite not being observers themselves during the freezes. Whilst this does not prove the logical possibility of time without change, it goes, Shoemaker claims, to counter those contrary arguments, usually of a verificationist flavour, that employ certain considerations of how time is measured and of how we are aware of its passage.

*Contra* Shoemaker, I prefer direct, not indirect, arguments and wish to look at the universe we actually live in. Let me offer my own thought experiment. Imagine in our metaphysical laboratory we carve a small cuboid out of our universe, say a box.<sup>7</sup> We make the box isolated and perfectly sealed so that it is a closed system, that is, there is no interaction between the box and the universe remaining outside the box. Further imagine that we have the ability to detect the passage of time in the box, regardless of whether the correct account of time is substantivalism or relationism. On this box we perform a subtraction process. We remove the contents of the box, such as the leftovers of Daisy the rabbit's lunch. Is the box empty? No, there is still air. We remove the air. Empty now? No, there is still radiation. We attempt to create a perfect vacuum by removing all heat from the box so that it is at absolute zero ( $-459.67^{\circ}\text{F}$  or  $-273.15^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $0^{\circ}\text{Kelvin}$ ). We find that nature conspires against us. In order to reach absolute zero, we would require an infinite amount of energy, which is impossible. Still, we can get close to it: half a billionth of a degree F above absolute zero (Ketterle *et al.*, 2003). At such closeness, hopefully we should gain some inkling of what a perfect vacuum looks like. Also imagine we could examine nature at the quantum level. Do we find [almost] changelessness? Far from it: We encounter a seething foam of quantum effects with virtual particles popping into and out of existence. If, *per impossible*, we could reach absolute zero, our physical theories predict that we would continue to see those quantum effects (Simpson and Leonhardt, 2015). Change appears to be inherent in the universe.

Shoemaker identifies one sort of objection to his argument to be the notion that we have no good grounds for believing that no changes whatsoever occur in a region

---

<sup>7</sup> The universe is not harmed in the process.

during an ostensible local freeze in that region (1969, p. 371). I agree with the objector: there must be some changes in every interval of time. Shoemaker says that if we agree with the objector then it is a short step that this also commits one to the view that everything must change during every interval of time, which Shoemaker presumably interprets as a *reductio ad absurdum*. I accept the implication. We have learnt that, as far as we can reasonably ascertain, there is always and everywhere change in the universe – the quantum field with its fluctuations pervades the whole universe.<sup>8</sup> In a contest between a direct argument employing empirical evidence from the known universe and an indirect argument concerning possible worlds with radically different laws of physics, I think the direct approach is more credible. We have no empirical evidence that there is time without change in the universe, not least because we cannot achieve a state of changelessness – as evidenced by my thought experiment of the cuboid cut out of the universe. There is always change. Thus, in reconciling Timeless God's timelessness and Incarnate God's temporality, we have to incorporate a plausible handling of change not threatening Timeless God's immutability.

#### **1.4. Timeless changelessness and temporal changelessness**

It could be that there is no substantive difference between timeless changelessness and temporal changelessness (if we allow for temporal changelessness; see §1.3 as to its plausibility). The implication of no substantive difference is that there is no intrinsic difference to the structure of changelessness, so a changeless object in the temporal world is intrinsically no different to a changeless object in a timeless world (Le Poidevin, 2010, p. 176). At first blush, this might imply that Timeless God could exist in the temporal world and that the issue of handling change is dissolved.

I, however, would suggest that there are differences between a timeless world and a temporal world such that it does not seem plausible that we can have a changeless object in the temporal world. Again, I would look beyond logical thought experiments<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle implies a field cannot be quiet; it is always fluctuating, and the fluctuations create those very short-lived particles called virtual particles mentioned in the main text.

<sup>9</sup> Le Poidevin (2010, pp. 176-178) makes a direct case for the logical possibility of time without change. He offers us the suggestion that temporal changelessness exhibits an internal structure, consisting of a series of temporally ordered but qualitatively identical states that timeless changelessness lacks. Here the idea is that if a

and consider the universe as we find it. Our temporal world is, *inter alia*, constantly in motion, pervaded throughout with quantum fields and infused with causation involving different relata.<sup>10</sup> When the intrinsic properties<sup>11</sup> of an object change, this has repercussions elsewhere – strictly speaking, everywhere – in the temporal world; this idea rules out that if time is everywhere but change is not, then there could be regions of time without change. For there to be a changeless object in the temporal world, it would have to be an object that is a closed system within that temporal world. This would mean, for instance, that the changeless object is outside the pervasive quantum fields and the causal chains of the temporal world; again, see §1.3. But if an object is such a closed system, in what sense is it in the temporal world? My assertion is that any object in our temporal world is *ipso facto* caught up in the world's causal nexus.

In any case, incarnation, and especially the Incarnation, does not simply mean being in the temporal world as a static entity; rather, it involves, *inter alia*, interacting dynamically with creatures. Consequently, even if temporal changelessness were possible, it would not be applicable to Timeless God entering the temporal world as Incarnate God. This reinforces the point that we have to handle change.

### 1.5. How long is a piece of string?

Time is often defined in terms of duration but duration in turn is often defined to be a number of consecutive temporal positions or intervals of time (Pike, 1970, p. 8), and so we have a circular definition. It is desirable to define duration, and thence time, in non-temporal terms.

---

qualitatively identical state persists through time then a causal story should be given. Le Poidevin asserts that the resultant causal structure of numerically distinct but qualitatively identical states is sufficient to sustain a temporal structure and so we have time without change. The assumptions made in his three steps to arrive at his possible world make his possible world divorced from the universe we live in, but this is granted, of course, for his is a thought experiment for logical, not physical, possibility.

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting how in sci-fi movies about someone stopping time they are able to move among the frozen other objects, seeing birds in mid-flight and rabbits in mid-binkies etc. Presumably they are breathing air molecules (but how if the air molecules are frozen?) and receiving photons on their retinas (but how if the photons are frozen?).

<sup>11</sup> Intrinsic properties are those that are had by an object just in virtue of the way that object is, regardless of what other objects are like, for instance perhaps shape and mass. Extrinsic properties (or relational properties), in contrast, depend on what other objects are like, for instance my being an uncle depends not just on me but also on other people.

### 1.5.1. Finite duration

We can think of duration in terms of change: on whatever basis we denote that the world has changed, then that could represent a unit of duration. In defining time as the measure of change, we could for instance say that time passes at the rate of one hour per ten binkies and that a day has the duration of two hundred and forty binkies.<sup>12</sup> The choices of binkies, how many binkies in an hour, and how long is a binky are all conventional. If there is no change in the world, then there is no measurement of time; perhaps there is still time, but it would be undifferentiated (Swinburne, 1994, pp. 75-80).

Given that duration is defined in terms of change, it follows that duration cannot be zero in a world that is always changing. If duration were zero, then this would mean a changeless world. A changeless world is effectively a timeless world.

### 1.5.2. Infinite duration

If the duration is infinite, then obtaining an operational measure or metric of time is problematic. Duration is normally understood to be a measure of elapsed time. We have reduced the temporal positions or intervals to units in terms of periodic change but the normal understanding remains intact. It is not clear how we can determine the length of each interval if their sum is infinity, for infinity invites all sorts of paradoxes. For instance, say we take two series of numbers, such as the natural numbers and the odd natural numbers. Each of these respective series sums to infinity, yet intuitively the sum of natural numbers must be greater than the sum of the odd natural numbers for the sum of natural numbers includes the even natural numbers too. However, the natural numbers and the odd natural numbers are of the same infinite order, for they are denumerable. Some infinities, on the other hand, are larger, for example the real numbers are a higher order infinity and are not denumerable with the natural numbers. There do not seem to be any physical analogues – actual infinities – to help us understand these paradoxes.

---

<sup>12</sup> A 'binky' is a jump and twist that rabbits do. A contrived example but sounds better than saying that time passes at the rate of one hour per hour. Moreover, we have the delightful sight of rabbits frolicking.



### **1.5.3. Relativistic effects**

The foregoing discussion of duration is at a level of abstraction which ignores Einsteinian relativistic effects, as these do not impact how this dissertation uses the concept of duration.

### **1.5.4. Instant**

In everyday discourse, an instant is often taken to mean a very brief period of time; that is, it has a non-zero duration. For example, we might say:

The car accident happened in an instant.

In this meaning of a non-zero duration, 'instant' and 'moment' are often used synonymously.

A second meaning is that employed in physics where an instant is taken to be of zero duration of time. For example, we might say:

The quantum-entangled particles communicated instantaneously.

A third meaning is that an instant is taken to be a specific moment of time. For example, we might say:

At that instant, Leftow realised that he could not get the time machine to work.

A fourth meaning, according to substantivalism, is that a particular instant is primitively numerically distinct to others; the instants are not qualitatively discernible (Benovsky, 2010, p. 495).

A fifth meaning, according to relationism, is that an instant is a collection of simultaneous events and things; a time-series, therefore, is all the collections of simultaneous events in the order in which they occur (*ibid.*, p. 492).<sup>13</sup>

In this dissertation, the fifth meaning will be the default understanding when discussing the temporality of the created world. However, context will primarily determine which usage is employed, and in the event of possible ambiguity the particular meaning will be explicitly stated.

### 1.5.5. Gunky

The philosophical term of art ‘gunk’ applies to any whole whose parts all have further proper parts; that is to say, a gunky object is not made of indivisible atoms or simples. If time is gunky, then every interval of time can be further divided into smaller and smaller intervals infinitely, and, thus, time is dense or continuous, not discrete.<sup>14</sup>

Although modern physics has not come to a definitive conclusion on the nature of time, there appears to be a minimum interval of time known as Planck time, which is approximately  $5.391247 \times 10^{-44}$  seconds. The Planck time arguably is not an artefact of our present inability to measure at smaller scales but something ontologically fundamental. This implies that time is discrete, not dense or continuous (Wendel, Martínez and Bojowald, 2020); that is, that time is not gunky.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I assume that time is not gunky. The significance of this assumption will be discussed in Chapter 8, but the basic thought is that if time is gunky then there can be no instants and I require instants in my account of the nature of persistence.

---

<sup>13</sup> A useful metaphor is that an instant is a snapshot or movie frame; so, an instant is a metaphysical slice of time without duration but with temporal location. I explicitly use this metaphor in §3.3 of Chapter 8 and §3 of Chapter 9.

<sup>14</sup> Discrete is like the ordering of the integers, so every temporal moment is followed by a unique next instant. Dense is when between any two moments, there is always a third and so the series of moments is isomorphic to the rational number series. Continuous is like dense, so between any two moments there is always a third and the series of moments is isomorphic to the real number series. This follows Hawley (2001, p. 51).

### 1.5.6. Timeless duration

Although duration is normally understood to be a measure of elapsed time, some commentators, such as Stump and Kretzmann (1981), have suggested that there can be atemporal duration. Whilst we have to be cautious in that atemporal duration might be being used in a technical sense that admittedly violates normal usage (*ibid.*, pp. 445-446; 1992, pp. 464-465), nevertheless the notion is an important issue which informs what it means for God to live in the eternal present; see Chapter 4.

## SECTION 2. A THEORY AND B THEORY

### 2.1. What are they?

The terms 'A-series' and 'B-series' were coined by McTaggart (1908) and subsequently became incorporated into the A- and B-theories of time.

An A-series is where events are temporally ordered according to tense: events are said to have A-properties of futurity, presentness and pastness respectively. There is a metric to this order, that is, it is meaningful to talk about temporal distance.<sup>15</sup> Thus, events change their position in the series. For instance, before 24 July 1969 the first Moon landing was a future event; on 24 July 1969 it was present; and after 24 July 1969 it was past. These properties of futurity, presentness and pastness are fundamental to the nature of time: they are intrinsic, objective and monadic.

Accordingly, an A-theory refers to a tensed or dynamic theory of time, in which time flows and, on most variants of A-theory, we have temporal becoming, that is, things come into existence and temporal unbecoming, that is, things go out of existence. A defining characteristic of an A-theory is that it gives ontological absolute privilege to the present. It is contentious what this ontological absolute privilege consists of but a

---

<sup>15</sup> When we say, for instance, that one event is five days in the past and another is three days in the future, what we mean by 'day' is constant so we can compute that the events are eight days apart.

plausible explanation is existence. This flow, which is a real property of time for the A-theorist, accords with our deepest intuitions: we subjectively feel that time flows.

Under an A-theory, real change is said to occur. At a minimum, objects and events are moving through time with their intrinsic A-properties constantly changing. Other intrinsic properties usually change too: a hot poker cools down.

With an A-theory, the universe is viewed as being three-dimensional space modulated by the passage of time. Space and time are distinct: time is a completely different kind of dimension from the spatial dimensions.

In a B-series events are temporally ordered tenselessly according to earlier than, simultaneous with and later than relations; these two-place relations are often referred to as B-relations. Again, there is metric order. The events do not change their position in the series, for if an event is, for instance, earlier than another then it will always remain so: the event of Jim Bakker going to jail in 1989 for fraud is always twelve years earlier than the event of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson's appearing on television in 2001 and blaming abortionists, gays and feminists (among others) for making God angry and so allowing the terrorist outrage of 9/11.

Events under the A-series are ordered accordingly to their A-properties of pastness, presentness and futurity. Events under the B-series are ordered accordingly to the B-relations of earlier than, simultaneous with and later than. Even though events under the A-series and the B-series are ordered on a different basis, the events are in the same order. In order to generate an A-series, it is necessary to determine which moment is the present: the present is ontologically privileged. This determination of presentness is not inherent in the A-series; rather, it is determined from without. The B-series does not require such a determination, for all times are equally on a par.

The B-theory detenses events, that is, time does not flow. We do not have temporal becoming and unbecoming, but rather all things are merely ordered and will always remain in that order; hence, the B-theory is often characterised as a tenseless static

view. As temporal creatures, we still have the subjective experience of time flowing but this is a mere function of our psychology and time flowing does not objectively happen; that is, time's flow is an epistemic rather than an ontological feature of our lives. All times, past, present, and future are equally existent and are ontologically on a par. We can say that each time is present, but only relative to itself, not absolutely. For observers, the present is indexical: Neil Armstrong's stepping onto the Moon is 'now' for him as equally as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson's appearance on television is 'now' for them and your reading of this dissertation is 'now' for you.

A spatial analogy is sometimes made in order to conceptualise the B-theory. We think of all spatial locations as currently existing and that what is 'here' or 'there' is relative or indexical rather than absolute; for example, if I am in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University and say 'I am here' then that 'here' is different than if I am in the Bill Bryson Library of Durham University and say 'I am here'. The B-theory says something similar about time: what is past, present or future is a matter of temporal perspective, just like what is 'here' is a matter of spatial perspective. Indeed, the B-theory is often characterised as a theory that spatialises time.

Under the B-theory, what we ordinarily consider to be real change does not occur. The before, simultaneous with and after relations remain constant. There is change in the sense of properties being held at a particular time and the properties not being held, or different properties being held, at a different time: a carrot is uncooked at  $t_1$ , the carrot is cooked at  $t_2$  and the carrot is eaten at  $t_3$ . *Contra* the A-theory account with its focus on intrinsic properties, some B-theorists argue that this sense of properties being held at different times is real change (Mellor, 1981, Ch. 7); this matter is taken up in Chapter 8, especially §3.2.

With the B-theory, the universe is viewed as being four-dimensional: the three dimensions of space and the one dimension of time are similar and together make up a unified manifold called spacetime.<sup>16</sup>

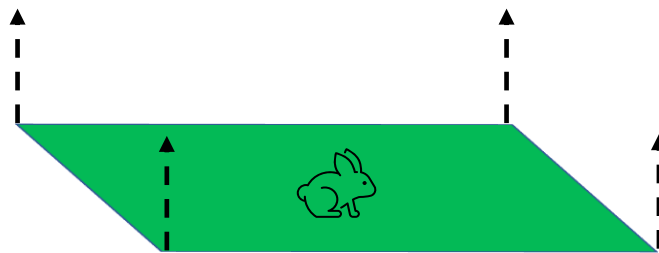
---

<sup>16</sup> In this context, 'four-dimensionalism' is the notion that reality is ontologically four-dimensional in the sense of other times as well as other places being real. This should be distinguished from the usage in terms of

## 2.2. Some examples of A- and B-theories

### 2.2.1. Presentism

Presentism is an A-theory. Under presentism, the only real time that exists is the present. Hence, it is the view that necessarily the only temporal objects and events that exist are those that exist in the present – no objects and events exist in time without being present, that is temporal presentness and temporal existence are co-extensive (Bourne, 2006, pp. 79-80; Leftow, 2018, p. 175).<sup>17</sup> By existence is meant actual existence, not mere possibilities. Say that the present is 6 August 2024. What once was, is no longer: T.rex have long since roared their last roars and have slipped out of reality. What will be is open: future human settlements on Kepler-452b are not in reality. It is, therefore, an ontologically austere view. Presentism may be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 3.1:



**Figure 3.1: Presentism**

The green slice represents the present moment. There are no other moments, that is, there is no past or future. Daisy the rabbit exists in the present. The dashed arrows are pointing up to represent movement to the future, with the present constantly changing.

---

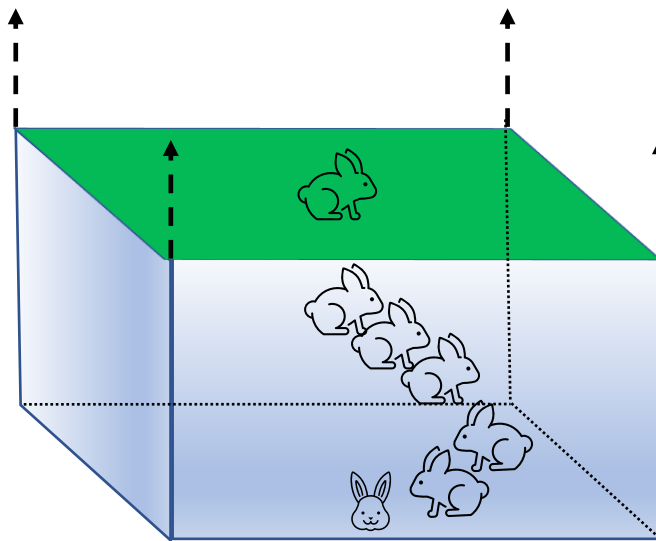
persistence whereby ‘four-dimensionalism’ means objects are mereologically four-dimensional in the sense of having temporal as well as spatial parts (see Chapter 8).

<sup>17</sup> This is a restricted presentism. That is to say, it does not preclude the existence of non-temporal entities such as God and abstracta. Leftow (2018, pp. 173-175) discusses the distinction between such restricted presentism, or temporal presentism, and universal presentism where the latter excludes atemporal reality; under universal presentism, God would be temporal, for time is all that there is to reality.

### 2.2.2. Growing Block Theory

Some A-theories allow for objects and events to exist at other times as well as the present. The Growing Block (or Growing Past) Theory, for instance, envisages the present and the past as both existing, with the past continuously being added to as objects and events enjoy their moment in the fleeting present before moving into the past; again, the future does not exist (Tooley, 1997). T. rex continue to roar in the past; however, their roars are always the same roars they ever made when they were in the present; there will be no new roars.<sup>18</sup>

The present is ontologically privileged in that it is the latest time and is infused with the dynamism of temporal becoming. The Growing Block Theory may be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 3.2:



**Figure 3.2: Growing Block Theory**

This is only a section of the rich tapestry of the universe: it shows Daisy's worldline from the moment she was born till the present; Daisy is wholly present at each moment of time along her worldline, that is, the representation should not be interpreted as showing temporal parts. Once more, the green slice represents the present moment.

<sup>18</sup> If you consider life to be activities rather than states, then the dynamism of the present [activities] implies in some sense that although the past [states] exists it is dead. So, perhaps quiet t-rex.

There is the past, as represented by the blue, but there is no future. Daisy exists in the present and in the past. Again, the dashed arrows are pointing up to represent movement to the future; that is, the present is constantly changing. At each new present moment, the past grows.

### 2.2.3. Moving Spotlight Theory

The Moving Spotlight Theory is an A-theory that posits the existence of objects and events in the past, present and future. The present is again ontologically privileged; it is metaphorically highlighted by a moving spotlight, with the past identified as those objects and events that have been highlighted but no more, and the future identified as those objects and events waiting in the wings to enjoy the glare. The deeper question of why the present is so privileged is usually taken as a primitive; under the moving spotlight theory it cannot be existence itself for future and past objects and events exist too; and if it were existence, then this would collapse the moving spotlight theory into presentism (Sider, 2001, p. 17). The moving spotlight theory may be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 3.3; again, this is only a section of the rich tapestry of the universe showing only Daisy's worldline:

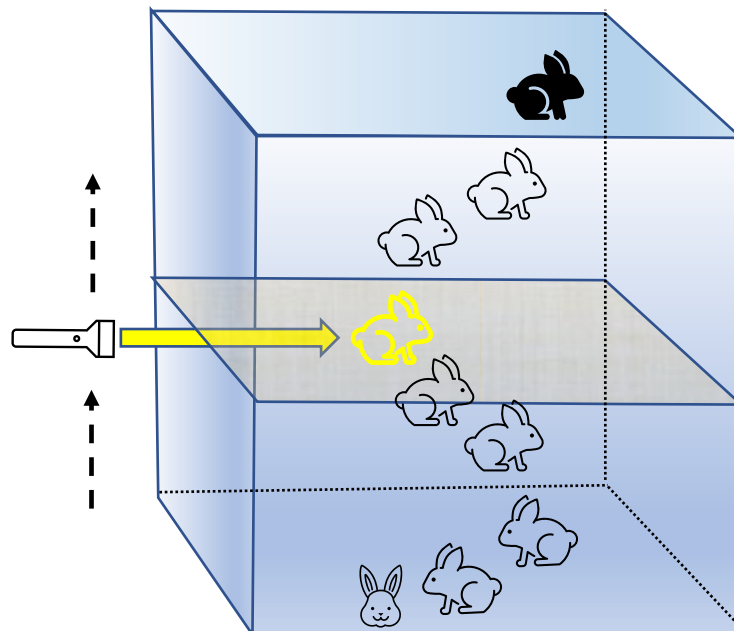
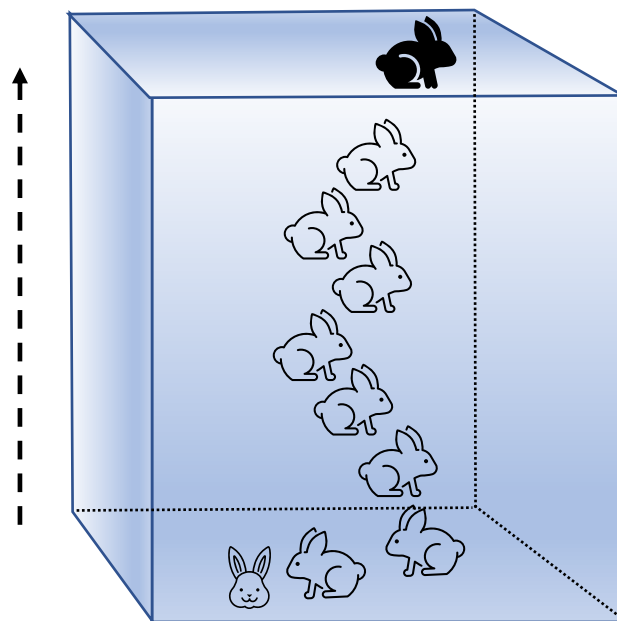


Figure 3.3: Moving Spotlight Theory



### 2.2.4. Eternalism

Eternalism is an implication of the B-theory. Like the moving spotlight theory, under eternalism all times exist. However, in contrast to the moving spotlight theory, all times, past, present and future, are ontologically on a par; that is, the present is not ontologically privileged.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, what is past, present and future is merely indexical or a matter of perspective for a given observer: for the Wright brothers on 17 December 1903, the successful flight of their self-propelled heavier-than-air aeroplane is present and the Moon landing of 1969 is in the future; for the first human colonists on Kepler-452b on 10 March 2825 admiring their first dawn on an alien planet the Moon landing of 1969 is in the past; for Neil Armstrong the Moon landing of 20 July 1969 is present. Eternalism may be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 3.4:



**Figure 3.4: Eternalism**

There is no green slice, which in the A-theory diagrams represents the present. Again, this is only a section of the rich tapestry of the universe; it shows Daisy’s worldline,

<sup>19</sup> This ontological privileging of the present, together with concomitant implications about temporal passage and genuine change occurring rather than mere variation across time, importantly distinguishes A-theories from B-theories. Accordingly, it would be mistaken to characterise the moving spotlight theory as an enhanced B-theory, where the enhancement is the privileging of the present. For book-length treatment, see Cameron (2015).

from the joyful moment she was born through to the sad moment of her death. ‘Past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’ are all represented by the blue; there is no privileged present. The direction of time is from the bottom of the diagram to the top: Daisy’s birth is earlier than her death.

## **SECTION 3. THE BLOCK UNIVERSE**

### **3.1. What is the Block Universe?**

We can picture a static block universe in which all events and entities – past, present and future – are in existence. It does not necessarily mean that you can ever travel to those other times and see the events and entities, but, still, they are there.<sup>20</sup> It is static in the sense that there is no temporal becoming or unbecoming; everything is always there.

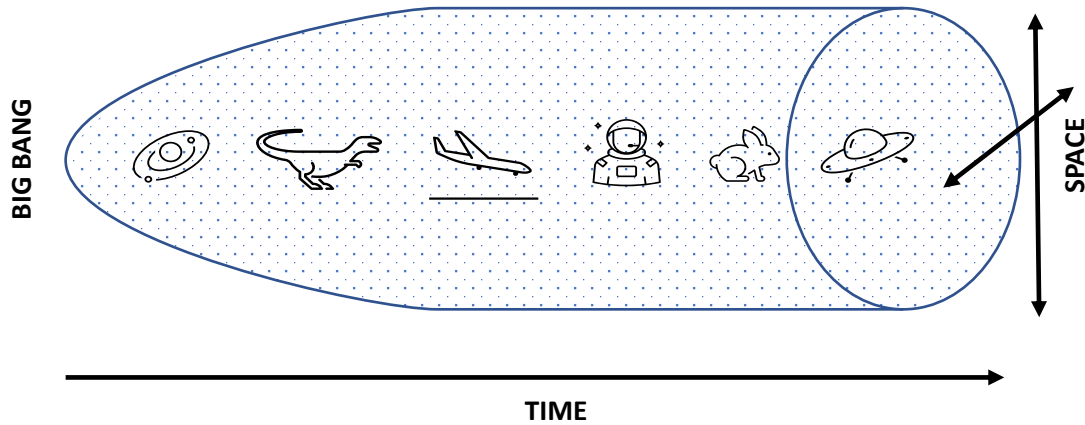
We could say that the block itself does not exist in time; rather, time is in the block, for time is simply one of the dimensions that the block possesses.<sup>21</sup>

The block universe may be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 3.5:

---

<sup>20</sup> If time travel is possible, it presupposes a B-theoretic block universe. Under an A-theory such as presentism, there simply are no other times to travel to.

<sup>21</sup> We do not want to commit a fallacy of composition and say that the block universe itself has the property of time because its contents have time. It is also possible that the block universe itself exists within a greater or super-time. If God exists in that super-time, he might appear to be timeless from the perspective of our time series; see §4.2.



**Figure 3.5: Block universe**

The block universe is viewed as being four-dimensional, that is consisting of three dimensions of space (collapsed into two in Figure 3.5) and one dimension of time interwoven into a fabric of spacetime. Consequently, what is meant by a given time - 'present', 'past' or 'future' - is simply a four-dimensional spatio-temporal coordinate of an observer within the block; these coordinates are represented as dots in Figure 3.5. According to Einsteinian General Relativity, different observers at different coordinates will, for example, identify their location as being present.

Figure 3.5 is similar to Figure 3.4 in that it represents eternalism. Usually, the block universe is illustrated with the left of the diagram showing the Big Bang and the far right showing the heat death; time is often portrayed as running from left to right; and space increases from left to right to represent the expansion of the universe – an aspect not represented in Figure 3.4.

In the block universe all times equally exist and yet we as temporal creatures within it are consciously aware of only a thin slice which we identify as the present. This specious present<sup>22</sup> is a limitation of our particular psychology; we can imagine aliens with wider spans of awareness who would identify various times as being present which we would identify as past or future. We can even imagine God as having an

<sup>22</sup> The specious present or experienced present is a *psychological* present and has a minimal duration for conscious beings. In contrast, the *ontological* present, whatever interval of time is involved, is conceptually divisible into smaller intervals.

infinite specious present so that all times are comprehended in one supreme act of awareness (Craig, 2001a, pp. 70-72 [he does not endorse the idea]).

### **3.2. The passage of time**

Everything is already there in the tenseless static block universe; there is no temporal becoming and [arguably] no real change. However, as temporal creatures, we still have the subjective experience of time flowing. Some plausible accounts for our subjective experience of the passage of time rely on changes in our A-beliefs and considerations of how our memories accumulate (Mellor, 1998, pp. 66-69 and p. 122). We perceive – in our limited specious present or experienced present – an event, say Daisy’s cage door closed and Daisy is in her cage at 2.00pm. At a later time, say, 2.01pm, we notice the cage door open. At a still later time, say 2.02pm, we observe that Daisy is outside her cage. These individual perceptions are integrated in our memories rather like cinematographic film frames so that when we run them in memory we have the illusion of time flowing. Moreover, from the vantage point of any particular spacetime co-ordinate, our memories are of earlier events (the ‘past’); we do not remember later events (the ‘future’) for we have not yet traversed the spacetime continuum to reach those events and build memories; this gives us the sense of the direction of time’s flow.

## **SECTION 4. ONE MORE TIME**

### **4.1. Physical, metaphysical and psychological**

Physical time is the time in the physical universe. It began to exist, because God created the physical universe; it can be measured, because of a localised internal clock depending upon the laws of nature in the physical universe; and it cannot relate well to other universes with their respective laws of nature, if such other universes exist (Mullins, 2016, pp. 32-35).

Metaphysical time may be viewed as time either beyond or separate from physical time. It may be considered to be the time of eternity where God ‘resides’. Metaphysical time is a divine time in that it reflects succession in God’s being. In contrast to physical

time, metaphysical time did not begin to exist (*ibid.*, p. 35). One view (Swinburne, 1994, pp. 75-80; 2016, p. 230) is that God is in a metaphysical time that has no intrinsic metric and so is amorphous or 'dead-time'; there is no fact of the matter whether one second or one trillion years passes for example when God is waiting to create the physical universe.<sup>23</sup>

Psychological time is subjective or phenomenological time; that is, it is our perception of physical time rather than time *per se*.

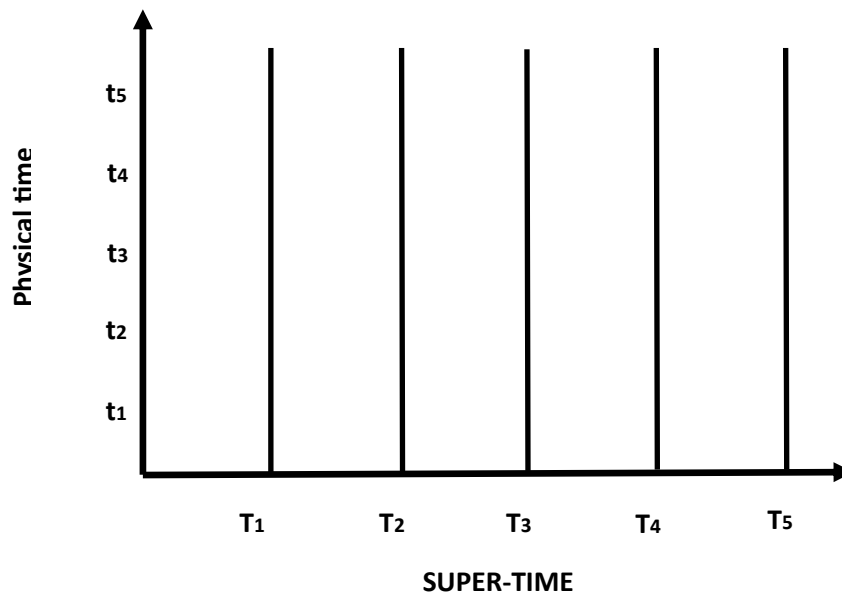
#### 4.2. Super-time

Let us say that God is in metaphysical time; that is, he is not within the physical time of the created universe but is within his own time. Further assume that metaphysical time and physical time are discrete; that is, God's time does not map onto our time at all. God could be changeable within metaphysical time, for example, he might have sequential thoughts. From God's point of view, all of our physical time – all of the block universe – is available to him at once; in Figure 3.6 any instant of super-time such as  $T_3$  has all of physical time  $\{t_1 \dots t_5\}$  available.<sup>24</sup> However, from our point of view we would only have available a single instant of God's time so he would seem changeless, and if we accept that there is no time without change then God appears to be timeless; in Figure 3.6 any instant of physical time has only  $T_1$  available. We can call this form of God's metaphysical time 'super-time' or 'hyper-time'.

---

<sup>23</sup> This seems to presuppose a substantival view of time. In contrast, Craig (2001b, p. 274) offers that whilst relational views of time might be able to accommodate time without change subsequent to the occurrence of a first event, they make no room for the existence of empty time prior to the first event.

<sup>24</sup> Figure 3.6 is similar to Figure 1.1 in Craig (2001a, p. 24) but was derived independently by me.



*Figure 3.6: The relation of super-time and physical time*

This idea of super-time might be helpful in addressing some aspects of the Research Question: it offers an explanation, for instance, how all of physical time can be available to a ‘timeless’ God. However, there are significant points of departure. Firstly, under this view God in himself is temporal, albeit in a time different to ours. It is a presupposition of this dissertation that God is truly timeless; the mere appearance *quoad nos* of timelessness is insufficient.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, this view does not address the Incarnation. The crux of the Research Question is not that God knows what is going on in our created universe but is incarnate in it. Thirdly, it is not clear that God could incarnate into our physical time from his super-time if the two time-series are truly discrete. Presumably God is not a prisoner of time – of any time – and has his mysterious ways, so would be able to incarnate but this notion needs to be developed.

### 4.3. Relative timelessness

Padgett (2000) proposes an understanding of God as being relatively timeless. This hybrid view – God is neither absolutely timeless nor absolutely temporal – employs

---

<sup>25</sup> This notion of the appearance of timelessness is further explored in §6.4.2. below where I discuss Leftow’s ‘Time’s Way’.

the concept of amorphous time, where time has no intrinsic measure but is constituted purely by the divine life itself, in contrast to the physical time of the universe which has an intrinsic measure based on the regularity of laws of nature. God is not measured by his metaphysical time. However, God can change in some ways in his relationship with his creation, and this dynamic change entails that God is temporal. Given the incommensurability of the amorphous time of eternity and of the physical time of the universe, Padgett says that God is timeless relative to our spatio-temporal universe but also in some ways is temporal in his amorphous time. This is a non-standard understanding of timelessness and is not applicable to what is meant by timelessness in this dissertation, which follows the standard definition of being outside of time or time-free.

#### **4.4. Timeless *sans* creation**

Craig (1998; 2001a) also offers a hybrid view. His suggestion is of two phases in God's life: God is timeless *sans* creation but temporal *avec* creation. It is important to note the terminology that God exists timelessly 'without' creation rather than 'before' creation as there is not literally a before. Craig's idea is that God is timeless but contingently so. If God does not create the universe, then God remains timeless. However, once God creates the universe then he is inexorably drawn into temporality, for he stands in a new causal relation of sustaining the universe or at least coexisting with it.

In sustaining the universe, we may consider God to be experiencing tense and temporal becoming, and so this involves intrinsic change in God which makes God temporal. On the other hand, if we consider the relation of simply coexisting with the universe, then this is extrinsic or *mere* Cambridge change and it is contentious whether this really implies that God becomes temporal.<sup>26</sup> The line of argument, though, that God remains timeless if he is subject to only extrinsic change does not seem a fruitful

---

<sup>26</sup> By analogy, when a child grows taller than a parent, the parent is in the new relation of 'being shorter than'. This does not involve substantive change within the parent although it does involve intrinsic change in the child. *Contra* Craig, Helm (2001, p. 162) questions what is shown by God having a relation to creation that he did not have before; he uses the rather disarming example of whether thinking of the number 7 for five minutes results in the number 7 becoming temporal.

avenue to account for incarnation, for incarnation involves God meaningfully entering the temporal world and experiencing its trials and tribulations.

Craig's view appears to conjoin timelessness and temporality and is thus contradictory. If Craig offered instead that God's creation of the universe occurs from eternity in one supreme act then the contradiction perhaps would be dissolved. However, this requires a commitment to the B-theory, which Craig rejects on independent grounds.

Craig's use of the term 'two phases' is potentially misleading. The notion that in creating the universe God creates time itself and so God becomes temporal implies that there is a sequence consisting of 'before' creation when God was timeless and then 'after' creation when he is temporal. Helm (2010, Ch. 12) suggests that it might be a misreading of Craig to give the normal temporal meanings to 'before' and 'after'. The charge of contradiction can be removed by characterising the two phases of God's life as logical, not temporal: God necessarily loses his default but contingent timelessness if he creates, and this loss is a logical consequence, not a temporal subsequence. This logical hierarchy idea seems a plausible interpretation of Craig's position.

This view of timeless *sans* creation does not answer the Research Question. If we accept Helm's logical hierarchy interpretation of Craig's position, then God is never timeless, for if God creates the universe – and we grant this – then God's timeless phase is only conceptual (*ibid.*, p. 224). Craig seems to accept this (2001b, p. 274). It is a presupposition of this dissertation that God is truly timeless; the mere conceptual possibility of timelessness is insufficient. Furthermore, Craig seems to be using his commitment to the A-theory to constrain his construal of God's relation to time. This is the reverse of the logical priority I give, *viz.* it is God's nature which drives the properties of time; see §6.1 below. Finally, Craig's position implies that God is timeless or temporal only contingently. However, in §4.2 of Chapter 1 I argued that timelessness and temporality are modes of existence that are held necessarily.



#### **4.5. Omnitemporality**

Omnitemporality is the notion that God's existence spans all times. By 'all times' is meant both metaphysical time and physical time.

As outlined in §4.1, metaphysical time may be viewed as God's time. As a 'divine time', metaphysical time reflects succession in God's being; DeWeese (2002, p. 56) offers that the causal succession of mental states in God's conscious life grounds the flow and direction of metaphysical time. Metaphysical time and physical time are not identical, and so if metaphysical time has a metric then this metric is determined in a way other than how the metric in physical time is determined (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, if God is omnitemporal, then God's metaphysical time maps in some way onto our physical time so that God will be temporally present at every present moment of any possible physical time. For example, although we cannot say how long God waits in creating the universe, once God creates the universe then God knows that the aliens from Kepler-442b will take six minutes of physical time after entering the Earth's atmosphere to position their spacecraft one hundred metres above St. Peter's Basilica.

If God is omnitemporal, then God is metaphysically temporal. There is succession and so change in God's being. God is also understood to be both transcendent and immanent with respect to physical time, perhaps in an analogous way to his omnipresence. Whilst we can say that God transcends physical time, this is not the same as pure timelessness which entails strong immutability. Although omnitemporality may have attractions in offering an account of how all of physical time is available at once for God to embrace, it does not address the Research Question which is concerned with a timeless or time-free God.

### **SECTION 5. ETERNITY**

#### **5.1. What is eternity?**

One meaning of eternity is everlastingness. To be eternal would mean to be in time without beginning or end, successively moving along the temporal dimension.

An alternative meaning of eternity is timelessness. On this understanding, to be eternal would mean to be time-free; that is, to be at no time. This entails changelessness or non-successiveness, for if there is change then there is time.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the meaning of eternity as timelessness is assumed.

## **5.2. Of God and Man**

God is said to live at eternity.

Man, of course, is assumed to live in a temporal universe. Whilst this assumption will not be questioned in this dissertation, the manner in which man persists through time will be qualified (see Chapter 8).

## **SECTION 6. INSIGHTS**

### **6.1. Logical priority**

If God is considered to be the creator of all, including the physical time of the universe, then it follows that the properties of time will derive from God. Consequently, in evaluating different conceptions of time and/or weighing up trade-offs among the conceptions, our control will be what best fits with our model of God.

### **6.2. Time, change and the Bimodal God**

The Bimodal God Thesis is that there are in some sense two entities of the same God: Timeless God, who is timeless, and Incarnate God, who is temporal. Given the above discussion regarding the connection between time and change, we are in a better position to flesh out some ideas about the Bimodal God. For instance, consider the following valid argument for Timeless God's timelessness:

P1: There cannot be time without change.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> It is contentious that there cannot be time without change. I argue for it in §1.3 and §1.4.

P2: There is no change at eternity.

P3: If Timeless God exists at eternity then Timeless God is changeless.

P4: If Timeless God is changeless then Timeless God is timeless.

P5: Timeless God exists at eternity.

C: Timeless God is timeless.

Similarly, consider the following valid argument for Incarnate God's temporality:

P1: If something changes then it is temporal.

P2: The contents of the created universe change.

C1: The contents of the created universe are temporal.

P3: Incarnate God is a part of the contents of the created universe.

C2: Incarnate God is temporal.

In attempting a reconciliation between timelessness and temporality in the Bimodal God, these arguments point to the need to handle change.

### **6.3. Motivation for the Block Universe**

If there really is temporal becoming, then not all of mobile time is available to God at once. God would have to rely upon memory<sup>28</sup> and the future would be unavailable, so God would not be able to just observe everything from eternity. With the block universe, all of mobile time is available to God at once. If we consider God to be the God of classical theism (see Chapter 4) who possesses all of his life at once and has all of mobile time available to him, then this supports adopting the concept of the block universe.

---

<sup>28</sup> With the usual caveats about the Growing Block Theory: if the past still exists, then God does not need memory to inspect it.

## 6.4. Preferred Theory of Time

### 6.4.1. Desiderata

There may be independent reasons outside of the context of the Research Question for favouring one theory of time over another. For instance, we might want to reject presentism (and by implication other A-theories) because of concerns over truth-making (what in the present grounds truths of the past?) or its alleged inconsistency with relativity theory (if what exists is simultaneous with now, then this leads to a ‘fragmentation’ of reality because what is simultaneous with what I am doing now is relative to my frame of reference and there are many other frames of reference with their own sets of simultaneous events). However, in the following, the focus is on a set of desiderata specifically addressing the Research Question.

The Bimodal God Thesis requires a theory of time that fits best with the following desiderata:

- (1) Allows Incarnate God to dynamically interact with his temporal creatures.
- (2) Allows Timeless God to embrace the whole of his temporal creation at once.
- (3) Allows Timeless God to retain his timelessness.

### 6.4.2. A-theories and Timelessness

A-theories accord ontological privilege to an absolute moving present and involve real change. Desideratum (1) would seem, therefore, to be better catered for by A-theories as these capture ideas of temporal becoming, simultaneity, interaction and responsiveness in real time.

Desideratum (2) is better catered for by eternalism in that under the B-theory all times exist and so are available for Timeless God to embrace. Although all times also exist under the A-theory of the moving spotlight theory, the ontological privilege given to the present in that theory would seem to preclude Timeless God’s embrace all at once. The importance of ‘all at once’ will be spelt out in Chapter 4 where the notion of what it means to live at the eternal present is explored. In addition, the preferred choice

would be the B-theory in that it is more parsimonious, for we do not have to account for a moving present.

A characteristic of timelessness is changelessness. *Prima facie*, the dynamism of A-theories precludes timelessness. If A-theories and timelessness are incompatible, then a B-theory in which no real change occurs would better cater to desideratum (3).

We appear to have a conflict: B-theory is preferable for Timeless God but A-theories are preferable for Incarnate God. A potential resolution of the conflict would be if we could conclude that at least some A-theories, despite initial impressions, are compatible with timelessness. If so, we could opt for an A-theory in preference to the B-theory since the lack of dynamism in the B-theory tells against desideratum (1).

#### **6.4.2.1 The classical tradition**

Historically, there have been some significant thinkers who have held that presentism is compatible with divine timelessness, such as Augustine (Confessions, 1998, Book XI). Indeed, Mullins (2016, Ch. 4) argues that presentism is the traditional view of classical theists. It is useful to explore how such thinkers account, or at least may plausibly be so interpreted, for all of [physical] time being available at once to a timeless God in the eternal present, given that under presentism the past and the future do not exist and so *prima facie* would appear not to be available.

An assumption in play that eternalism is necessary for God to embrace all times at once is that God's knowledge is in some sense perceptual or observational; that is, if something, such as the past or the future, does not exist then God cannot embrace it (*ibid.*, p. 77). Mullins argues that classical theists, however, did not hold that God's knowledge is such, but rather that it is based upon a perfect understanding of the divine essence. Accordingly, a phrase such as 'all of time is present to God' speaks to God's mode of knowledge, not the ontology of time (*ibid.*).

There are several problems, however, in this notion of a timeless God's perfect understanding of creation through his essence in the context of presentism, and there

are some more general reservations concerning divine timelessness and presentism. I shall consider some of them.

Firstly, whilst God might have the divine idea of what an entity is like, this is distinct to the entity actually existing: embracing an idea is not equivalent to embracing an existent. It is implausible that entities do not have a truer existence outside of the divine intellect, for how can God know entities *in themselves* merely by knowing himself (Mullins, 2016, pp. 96-97).

Secondly, if one accepts that the created entity has libertarian free will, then this would seem to preclude the divine essence knowing the actual choices the creature would make. Under presentism, a timeless God would have to wait, *per impossible*, for the particular time at which the choice is made.<sup>29</sup> This implies that what God knows changes, for the truth value of the proposition corresponding to the choice is indeterminate prior to the decision and determinate afterwards. Libertarian free will can be denied or some form of a Molinist account of omniscience can be employed,<sup>30</sup> but these are further commitments that have to be taken on board compared to the simplicity of an eternalist account which allows God to be directly aware across time of the choice as it happens.

Thirdly, and relatedly, there is a grounding problem with regard to truths about the past and the future. Under presentism, there is temporal becoming so entities come into and go out of existence. If an entity no longer exists, or is yet to exist, then it cannot act as a truthmaker. One retort might be that truths about their existence are grounded in the essence of God. However, this implies succession in God for at some time a proposition that an entity exists would be true and then at a different time the proposition would be false.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> In his 2018, Leftow does not address the libertarian free will argument. However, he does discuss the issue about God having to wait. It is the third of four arguments for the incompatibility of timelessness and presentism which he challenges. See my §6.4.2.2 below.

<sup>30</sup> I acknowledge that a smorgasbord of responses is possible to this issue. Exploring those would, however, take me beyond the scope of the dissertation.

<sup>31</sup> Although Leftow does not directly consider this issue of truthmaking in his 2018, temporal becoming informs the fourth argument he challenges. See my §6.4.2.2 below.

Fourthly, a further challenge to God's omniscience is the broader problem under presentism as to how God could know what time it is now. On A-theories, the present is ontologically privileged and changes from moment to moment. It is plausible that an omniscient God should know when is now, but such changes are in tension with a timeless God's immutability.<sup>32</sup> Once again, the simplicity of an eternalist account provides resources for this: it denies there is an ontologically privileged now, for the present is merely indexical to the standpoint of a created entity.

Fifthly, a timeless God cannot create a presentist temporal universe out of nothing (Mullins, 2016, p. 101). The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is that in some sense 'before' the universe, God existed alone; that is to say, the universe is not co-eternal with God. With creation, God exists with the universe. These are two different states of affairs, for God stands in a new causal relation; that is, there is change (Craig, 2001, p. 87).<sup>33</sup>

Sixthly, a timeless God cannot sustain a presentist universe in existence, for again this implies successive change (Mullins, 2016, p. 103). Mullins (2016, pp. 119ff) and Craig (2001, p. 88) note that one proposal in the tradition to try to address these concerns of creation *ex nihilo* and sustaining is the Thomist one that God is not really related to creation even though creation is really related to God. Granted that under the Thomist tradition, there may be analogy in play regarding the term 'cause' when applied to God and to creature. Nevertheless, for Craig (2001, p. 89) in particular, this idea of a mixed relation is implausible given the causal relation.<sup>34</sup> It also seems to have undesirable theological implications concerning the notion that God is in a loving relation with his creation and forgives the repentant sinner (Mullins, 2016, p. 125).

---

<sup>32</sup> This is the first of four arguments for the incompatibility of timelessness and presentism which Leftow challenges in his 2018. See my §6.4.2.2 below in response.

<sup>33</sup> This is the second of the four arguments Leftow challenges. See my §6.4.2.2.

<sup>34</sup> I acknowledge that a variety of responses are possible to the use of analogy in theological language. At least *prima facie*, one feels the force of the concerns of Mullins and Craig. Exploring these issues of analogy in depth would take me beyond the scope of the dissertation; however, I consider various aspects of the use of analogical language in my §3 of Chapter 2 on Methodology.

We may conclude that the classical tradition does not offer satisfactory accounts of the compatibility of timelessness and presentism.

#### 6.4.2.2 Time's Way

Some modern-day analytic philosophers have argued for the compatibility of timelessness and presentism. One such prominent commentator is Brian Leftow, who offers a negative defence. In his 2018, Leftow considers four arguments for the incompatibility of divine timelessness and presentism; he takes presentism to be the test case for theories of time with an absolute moving present [A-theories]. The four arguments are (i) that a timeless God does not know a changing 'now' and so this threatens omniscience, (ii) in creating a temporal universe a timeless God comes into a new relation and so has changed and so becomes temporal, (iii) God has to be kept waiting in sustaining entities at different times, and (iv) a timeless analogue of temporal events exists in eternity but is incomplete because the future has not yet occurred but as the future in the temporal world unfolds so the analogue should change, which would be contrary to immutability. Leftow asserts that these four arguments have an underlying common assumption which he dubs 'Time's Way': the way things are for things in time is the way they are for God. Leftow challenges this assumption and argues that there is room for temporal things to be some other way for God than the way they are for things in time. The room is facilitated through the idea of discrete times. If successful, Leftow would show that it is possible to opt for an A-theory.

In presenting his argument, Leftow employs subscripts to qualify verbs referring to a time series and capitalisation to indicate existence in a different time series. Whilst this makes perfect sense, it does not always facilitate, I would venture, a straightforward read so I prefer to illustrate Leftow's argument using my own abstract diagrams.<sup>35</sup> In Figure 3.7 TIME-1 and TIME-2 are discrete times series; that is, no event in one is earlier than, at the same time as or later than any event in the other. This is denoted

---

<sup>35</sup> Without trepidation I ignore Geach's (1969, p. 74) admonition that 'Nothing is sillier than to think that you can settle philosophical problems about time by drawing diagrams'. My concern here, in any case, is clarification, not settlement. Furthermore, I am pleased to see that I am not the only one who devises diagrams to help illustrate Leftow's work on different time series and timelessness: see for instance Page (2024).



by the not-equal sign between the two series. Events in the two series are represented by T1E1 (TIME-1 Event 1), T1E2 (TIME-1 Event 2), T2E3 (TIME-2 Event 3) etc.

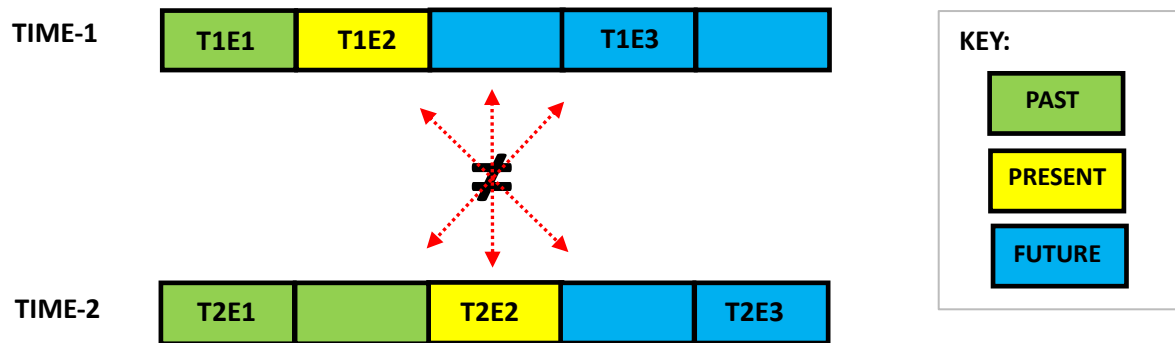


Figure 3.7: Discrete time series

TIME-1 and TIME-2 have their own absolute present, represented by the respective yellow blocks. There cannot be one absolute present spanning the two series for then the two series would not be discrete. It follows that there cannot be simultaneity between the two time series.

The event T2E1 is past in TIME-2; it existed.<sup>36</sup> From the perspective of TIME-1, T2E1 exists but is neither past, present nor future given the discreteness.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, from the perspective of TIME-2, T1E2 exists tenselessly although in TIME-1 it is present. Figure 3.8 illustrates the perspective of TIME-1 on the events in TIME-2:

<sup>36</sup> Leftow employs subscripts to qualify verbs referring to a time series. He would write 'it existed<sub>2</sub>'.

<sup>37</sup> Leftow employs capitalisation to indicate existence in a different time series. He would write 'it EXISTS'. So in TIME-1 it EXISTS but in TIME-2 it existed<sub>2</sub>.

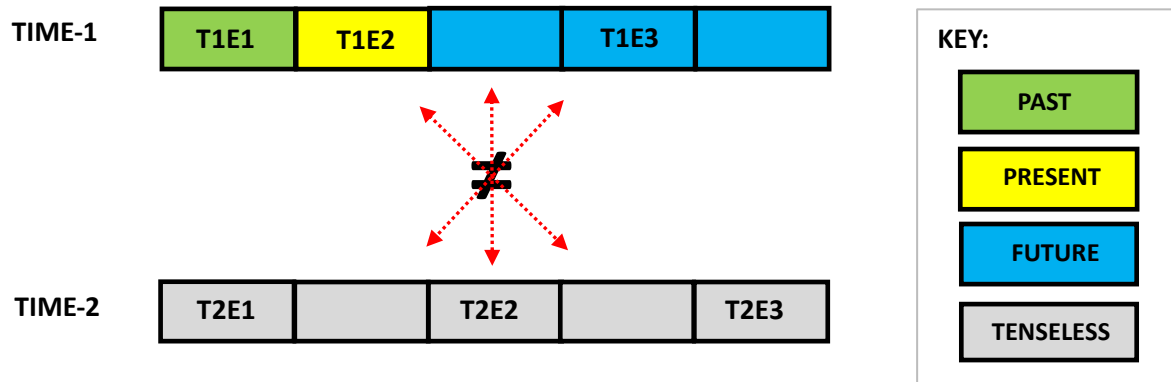


Figure 3.8: The perspective of TIME-1

Having established that TIME-1 and TIME-2 are discrete series,<sup>38</sup> Leftow (*ibid.*, p. 186) asks us to consider that TIME-1 is one instant long; that is, that all there ever was, is or will be to TIME-1 is one instant. This is illustrated in Figure 3.9:

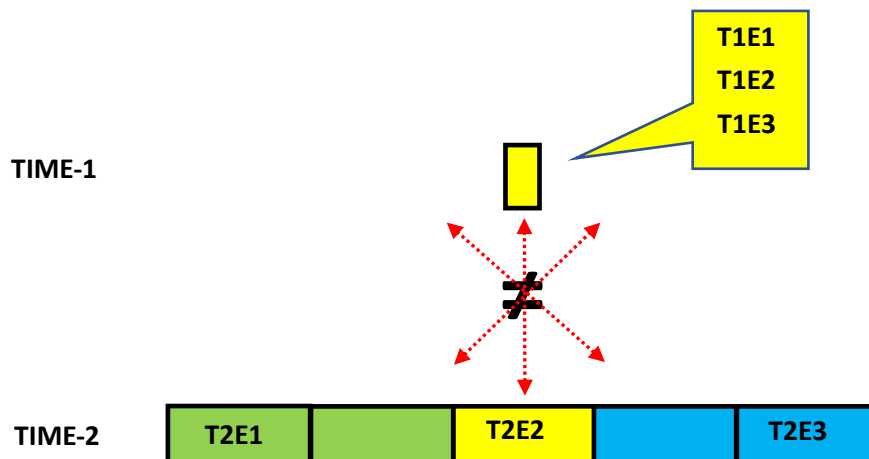


Figure 3.9: TIME-1 is but an instant

Note that all the events of TIME-1 are contained within that instant. Given that TIME-1 consists of one instant, there is no later time for these events to be past at.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> A point on nomenclature: Leftow in his 1991a (p. 22) calls discrete time series ‘extrinsically timeless’ to each other even though they may be internally temporal. Thus, TIME-1 and TIME-2 are extrinsically timeless to each other.

<sup>39</sup> If such a present did pass away, it would be past. I presume Leftow’s claim is that not simply are there no further instants for such a present to pass to but also that it is not even a possibility for such a present to be succeeded by further instants for the mere possibility would imply temporal flow.

According to Leftow, TIME-1 is a present that is fixed and *ipso facto* is eternal; that is, in TIME-1 there are events without duration so, Leftow argues, they are intrinsically timeless even though they are located in time.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the present in TIME-2 is flowing and so is temporal; T2E1 for instance has moved into the past. For Leftow, TIME-1 is an analogy for God's relation to our time; we can consider it to be a point-like or instant-like model of eternity.

Leftow claims that the case that divine timelessness and presentism (the representative for A-theories) are incompatible rests on Time's Way. He needs to falsify Time's Way. He asserts that by showing how the present in TIME-1 can be eternal and by showing how from the perspective of TIME-1 all the events in TIME-2 exist tenselessly, this incompatibility is resolved: God in TIME-1 experiences all events in TIME-2 at once whereas observers in TIME-2 experience the temporal flow; thus, Time's Way, according to Leftow, is falsified.

I am not persuaded that Leftow succeeds. The standard meaning of a temporal series is a set of events coming one after another. By stipulating that the whole series of TIME-1 is a single instant, he has begged the question by denuding the temporality from TIME-1, so of course it is trivially true that TIME-1 is now unchanging and hence possibly timeless. Furthermore, there is an underlying reason, perhaps for example involving causality, why the events are ordered as they are in a temporal series. To claim that from the perspective of TIME-1 the events in TIME-2 are tenseless whereas from within TIME-2 the events are tensed and that this demonstrates the falsity of Time's Way is only to make an epistemological claim and ignores what is the actual truth of the matter or ontological status regarding the order of events in TIME-2. On presentism, there are truths of the matter, *viz.* there is an absolute moving present and temporal becoming; this absolute moving present and temporal becoming are part of the furniture of the universe, that is, they are ontological not perspectival; hence, for things in time in TIME-2 the way things appear is the way things actually are. If God

---

<sup>40</sup> This manoeuvre of events with no duration is anticipated in Leftow's 1991a (p. 31). At first blush, 'intrinsically timeless' even though 'located in time' has a whiff of contradiction about it.

perceives the events in TIME-2 all at once and believes this is how they are objectively then God is mistaken, which *ex hypothesi* is impossible.

In keeping with my methodological approach, I prefer to look at the universe we actually live in. It is not clear that discrete time series are possible in our universe; for example, if an entity belonged to two discrete time series, we would get the bizarre situation of it having phases of its history during which it is not older, younger or the same age as some other phases in its history. If discrete time series are possible, it is also not clear that we would be able to observe a time series other than our own, for observation in itself would presumably involve interacting with the other time series and so *ipso facto* they would not be discrete. In addition, if we had thoughts in two discrete time series then we would have the further bizarre situation of some thoughts not being earlier or later than any of our other thoughts. Leftow in his 1991a (pp. 22-29) agrees that there are these difficulties. However, in his 2018 (p.184), Leftow offers the idea that some inflationary cosmologies let baby universes ‘pinch off’ from a parent spacetime and so such baby universes would become temporally discrete from the parent. Leftow asserts that such cosmologies are offered as physical explanations, and he makes the claim that the evidence they explain confirms them and that such evidence for them is stronger evidence than conceivability or intuition that discrete time series are possible. Leftow does not state what evidence such cosmologies are supposed to explain; it would support his case if he could say something like that cosmologists have observed ‘tears’ or ‘scars’ in the fabric of our universe, but they have not. *Contra* Leftow, the pinching off of baby universe is an intriguing prediction that falls out of some highly speculative inflationary models but does not explain any concrete evidence. We can only observe what is in our universe. Perhaps realising this, Leftow resorts to his fallback position of God (*ibid.*, p.184; also 1991a, pp. 29-31): we could, Leftow alleges, have reason to believe in discrete time series for we could have reason to believe that God had revealed them to us;<sup>41</sup> God with his mysterious ways would know of other time series, especially if he were the creator of them. However, now Leftow is piling speculation upon speculation.

---

<sup>41</sup> One wonders why God would want to make this revelation.

Leftow has not demonstrated that Time's Way is false; therefore, if God's experiences time the way things in time do, then it looks like God would be infected with temporality. If it were successful, Leftow's argument at best would show the coherence of the idea that a timeless God could coexist with every moment of dynamic time without being drawn into temporality himself. Mere coexistence though is insufficient in addressing the Research Question, which wants an account of how a timeless God can be incarnate. Elsewhere, Leftow attempts such an account (for example, his 2002a), and this attempt will be explored in detail in Chapter 6.

#### **6.4.3. Opting for the B-theory**

Divine timelessness and presentism – and by Leftow's light all the other A-theories – appear to be incompatible.

The B-theory scores well in coping with desiderata (2) and (3). Much philosophical work will need to be done to allow a plausible satisfaction of desideratum (1) under a B-theory. This work will be significantly advanced by a view on personal persistence discussed in Chapter 8. Accordingly, the preferred theory of time for the purposes of this dissertation is the B-theory.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE NATURE OF GOD

‘Those who dance are considered insane by  
those who cannot hear the music.’

- George Carlin

#### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

§1. Classical Theism

§2. Theistic Personalism

§3. Bimodal God

§4. The Trinity

4.1. The difficulty

4.2. The nature of a person

4.3. Latin and social trinitarianisms

4.4. Life streams

§5. The Incarnation

§6. Living in the Eternal Present

§7. Insights

#### **OVERVIEW**

Two standard concepts of the Christian God are Classical Theism and Theistic Personalism. These are examined respectively to see which is more consonant with my proposal of the Bimodal God. Next, the doctrine of the Trinity is explored, for understanding what is meant by a trinitarian ‘Person’ might help inform what is meant by the entities under the Bimodal God thesis. Then the Incarnation is considered in order to flag whether God the Son in assuming a human nature takes on a particular aspect of human mentality. Finally, an examination is made of what it means for God

to live in the eternal present and how this differs from living in the temporal world; we obtain the result that an eternally present God experiences all of temporal time at once.

### SECTION 1. CLASSICAL THEISM

A historically influential concept of God, especially in the mediaeval period as exemplified in the works of Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, is Classical Theism. A central notion of classical theism is a particular understanding of how God is the creator of everything distinct from himself and so everything depends causally upon him (Davies, 2003, pp. 2-3). This particular understanding is that God uniquely creates 'from nothing' (*ex nihilo*); that is, God does not use any pre-existing material in creating and solely accounts for there being something rather than nothing. Moreover, creation is continuous; that is, God sustains everything in being. Given this notion of God as creator, various corollaries are said to follow, such as, *inter alia*, his aseity, that is, God owes his existence to nothing outside himself; his impassibility, that is, he cannot be caused to change by his creation; and his immanence, that is, his ubiquitous presence in creation in the sense of causing the existence of everything and everywhere.

In the classical tradition, God is thought to be, *inter alia*, simple, necessarily existent, ontologically independent, timeless, incorporeal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipresent, immutable, impassible, creator and sustainer (Pike, 1970, p.130; Davies, 2003, pp. 2-9). Several of these divine attributes, for example omnipotence, are thought to be held essentially; that is, without them, God (*de re*) would cease to be God (*de dicto*). Others are said to be held contingently; for example, God is creator of the universe, and if he had chosen not to create then he would still be God. The motivation for PBT is to emphasise God's perfection, transcendence and utter otherness from his creation; God is *sui generis*.

A fundamental aspect of classical theism is God's aseity, *viz.* the notion that God is an absolutely independent being, and hence exists entirely from himself; that is, he is not dependent on anyone or anything else. Plausibly, it follows that such aseity is undergirded by the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity. This is the doctrine that God, radically unlike his creation, has no parts; that is, there is no complexity or composition in God

(Stump and Kretzmann, 1985, p. 353). If God had parts then this implies that those parts in some sense are prior to or separate from God and thus God is dependent upon them. Accordingly, one way of thinking about the earlier listed properties, such as omnipotence and omniscience, is as merely conceptual distinctions we make *quoad nos* of the unitary self-instantiating divine property, rather than as really separate attributes of God (*ibid.*, p. 356); the analogy of a rainbow with its seven colours emanating from white light is sometimes employed to visualise this.<sup>1</sup> Even the notion of one divine property, however, may be an inadequate representation, for it implies a distinction in God as subject or bearer and property or attribute held. It is better perhaps to think of the attributes as predicates we ascribe to God, not properties that God has. The divine property can be thought of as the essence or nature of God; that is, God does not have any real properties that are distinct from the divine substance. From this, it is said that God is identical to his essence,<sup>2</sup> his essence is identical to his existence<sup>3</sup> and hence God is identical to his existence (*ibid.*, pp. 354-355). Thus, rather than saying that God is omnipotent, good, just, *etc*, it is more appropriate to say that God is omnipotence itself, goodness itself, justice itself *etc* (Rogers, 1996, p. 170):<sup>4</sup>

(1)  $\forall F(\text{God is } F \rightarrow \text{God} = F\text{ness})$

Plantinga (1980, p. 47) characterises divine simplicity as implying that the properties are identical to one another, that is there is property collapse, which he considers to be absurd given that properties such as goodness, power and knowledge are self-evidently distinct; and, worse, that God is a property if God is identical to his intrinsic properties. Plantinga is thinking of properties as universals, which are abstract objects. He further points out that if God were an abstract object then God would not be a causal agent or person, so it follows that God cannot be a property. Plantinga has

---

<sup>1</sup> An Anselmian view of the doctrine of divine simplicity would deny even conceptual distinction (Rogers, 1996, p. 167; Mullins, 2016, p. 53). The Thomist view seems to allow for logical and conceptual differences, but not, of course, metaphysical ones (Stump and Kretzmann, 1985, p. 373). Leftow (1988, p. 194-195) claims that Aquinas left open the route of allowing for complexity in respect of some theological distinctions with regard to trinitarian concerns whilst maintaining metaphysical simplicity.

<sup>2</sup> That God is identical to his essence secures the important result in terms of aseity that the essence is not more basic than God. Further discussion of God's identity to his essence is made in §2.2.1 of Chapter 9.

<sup>3</sup> Essence is what some entity is and existence is that the entity is. In creatures, these are always different.

<sup>4</sup> Thus, there is the contrast between God as simple being and Socrates as composite being. God = wisdom but Socrates is wise, meaning God is identical to wisdom and Socrates has the property of being wise.



possibly misconstrued the doctrine of divine simplicity. Davies (2000, p. 555) argues that Plantinga interprets the doctrine as telling us something about God's properties, which is a positive account, whereas the doctrine on Davies' understanding, following Aquinas, precisely denies that God has properties at least in one sense; that is, the doctrine is a piece of apophatic or negative theology.

Rogers argues that the notion of God as a property is not the standard mediaeval understanding; rather, the traditional doctrine was that God does not have any properties at all (1996, p. 166) and that God is pure act (*ibid.*, p 171). This means that Plantinga's criticism of the doctrine of divine simplicity based on the idea that God is just a property, which as an abstract object is inert, entirely misses the mark. As pure act, God is better thought of as the source or standard of what we understand by those properties (Leftow, 2006). It follows, for instance, that God does not have existence but is in fact the highest existence; God is not a mere being among others but Being itself in its prime instance. Divine simplicity can be succinctly captured in the notion that God has his properties by being them.<sup>5</sup>

A further implication of being pure act is that there are no unrealised possibilities in God. Being perfect, God cannot change, for any such change would mark a departure from the state of perfection. This lack of difference between potentiality and actuality affords a *strong* meaning to immutability: there is not merely the complete lack of change in God but the modal property that God cannot change (Aquinas, 2014, ST PI.Q9.A1). A *weak* meaning to immutability would be that God does not change in terms of steadfastness of character (Swinburne, 2016, pp. 231-234).

The doctrine of divine simplicity also supports the notion that God is strongly immutable in that arguably only things with parts or distinct aspects can change, for whatever changes must stay partly the same (Leftow, 1988, p. 196). Consider an object such as an apple. At  $t_1$  the apple is red and sweet; at  $t_2$  the apple is discoloured and sour. Some parts or aspects of the apple have changed but some parts or aspects have remained the same, such as its core, so we judge that it is still the same apple. If, however, all the properties or aspects changed, including for example being an

---

<sup>5</sup> Augustine is credited with coining the phrase 'God is what he has'.

apple and being identical with this apple, then it would be the case that the apple has not changed but actually disappeared and been replaced by something else (Leftow, 2014, §3).

A distinction is sometimes drawn between intrinsic and extrinsic change. An intrinsic change, sometimes referred to as *real* change, is a non-relational change involving only the subject whereas an extrinsic change is a relational change involving something else in relation to which the subject changes (Craig, 2001a, p. 31; Leftow, 2005, pp. 59-61). In this context, intrinsic change would be change within God, that is involving only the subject God; for example, God successively contemplating different aspects of his perfection. Extrinsic change would be change outside God or relational involving something else to which the subject God changes; for example, Putin thinking of God casting his soul to the eternal flames. Given his perfection,<sup>6</sup> God is commonly thought not to be able to undergo any intrinsic change but plausibly God can undergo extrinsic change (Stump and Kretzmann, 1985, p. 354). Thus, even if we do talk about properties being identical to one another in God, this should be understood as the claim that only God's intrinsic or real properties are identical to one another, not that his extrinsic properties are.

We may readily grant that if God undergoes intrinsic change, then he is temporal. Possibly, if God undergoes extrinsic change, then he is also temporal for extrinsic properties imply that God came to have those properties and this would make God mutable (Mullins, 2016, pp. 50-51; for a contrary view, see Leftow, 2005, pp. 62-66).<sup>7</sup> Aquinas attempts to foreclose this by arguing that a commitment to strong immutability derived from the doctrine of divine simplicity means that God stands in no *real* relation to anything, for to say that God stands in relations would be to introduce complexity into God; whilst the relation of the creature to God is a real one, God's relation to a

---

<sup>6</sup> Perfection would be merely one reason for supposing that God does not undergo any intrinsic change. Going back to first principles, under classical theism, God is thought for example to account for all real change and cannot therefore be subject to it.

<sup>7</sup> Mullins rebukes Stump and Kretzmann for seemingly failing to understand that divine simplicity is a determinate concept which does not admit of extrinsic change lest temporality is introduced, although he acknowledges that they admit that they are weakening the concept (Mullins, 2016, p. 57; Stump and Kretzmann, 1985, p. 369).

creature is one of reason only (Aquinas, 2014, ST Pl.Q45.A3.ad1).<sup>8</sup> Thus, divine simplicity entails strong immutability which implies timelessness.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, we can approach this from the presupposition of timelessness: We can deny that God changes extrinsically on the basis that a thing changes extrinsically only if different things are true of it at different times but if God is timeless, that is time-free, then there never are two times such that different things are true of God at those different times; that is to say, what is ever true of God is true timelessly (Leftow, 2014, §4).

A corollary that follows from such strong immutability is that God is impassible: he cannot be affected by his creatures, for if he were so affected then this would imply that his creatures have engendered further actualisation in God, which is ruled out by his being pure act.

It was earlier stated that several of the divine attributes, such as omnipotence, are thought to be held necessarily and others are said to be held contingently, such as being creator. This dichotomy seems to introduce complexity into God contrary to divine simplicity. If we consider God to be perfect and pure act then presumably God is all which informs that perfection:

(2)  $\square \forall F (F \text{ is constitutive of perfection} \rightarrow \text{God is } F)$

This implies that all the divine attributes are held necessarily, for if an ostensibly contingent attribute were not held necessarily then possibly there could be the case of God not having the attribute and of another being [God+] with that attribute and that being would be greater than God.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, it seems more ontologically apt to hold attributes necessarily rather than contingently: existence is good to have but necessary existence is more suggestive of perfection. Accordingly, if timelessness, for

---

<sup>8</sup> Aquinas's position is considered to be 'extraordinarily implausible' by Craig (2000, p. 98), especially on the basis that it implies the denial of God as the cause of the world (*ibid.*, pp. 100-101).

<sup>9</sup> Rogers (2000, p. 32) argues also that simplicity entails timelessness because under simplicity God is identified with his act of being so his essence is identical with what he does and hence if he were temporal he would do different things and so become a different being, which would be an undesirable result.

<sup>10</sup> Granted that on the Anselmian definition of a being than which no greater can be conceived then God+ would be that being, not God. God+ is my heuristic device to help explore issues about necessity.

example, is an attribute constitutive of perfection then God has to be atemporal lest we could conceive of a being greater than him.

If God *had to*, for instance, create, then that would be unorthodox from the Christian perspective. However, that God is not absolutely free might not be as surprising as it seems. Most theologians will accept that there are some things absolutely precluded from God given his nature, for example God cannot commit suicide. Perhaps the idea is that God is absolutely free in the sense that, given omnipotence, he cannot be coerced from without. It might be that God is not absolutely free to refrain from creating not because the created universe is a contingent effect of an intrinsic change but because he is compelled by some principle of plenitude from within, that is, from his essence as distinct from his will, to diffuse his goodness. If the argument goes through that a strong version of divine simplicity results in modal collapse, and we do not want the result that everything God does he does by necessity, and thus we should revise or abandon divine simplicity (Mullins, 2021, pp. 94–96 and 2016, pp. 137–143; Moreland and Craig, 2003, p. 525), then that does not impinge the Research Question. What does impact the Research Question is whether God is able to change his mind: Did God make a decision to create in the sense that there was a divine state in which God had not yet decided to create and then there was a subsequent state in which God had decided? If so, we have a succession of thoughts which implies that God is temporal contrary to our presupposition that God is timelessness.

One way forward to attempt to resolve these difficulties is to employ the distinction between absolute necessity and conditional (or hypothetical) necessity.<sup>11</sup> Consider the following:

(3)     $\square$  (God is omnibenevolent).

This is absolute necessity. If God fails to be omnibenevolent, then he ceases to exist.

---

<sup>11</sup> This discussion falls under the familiar distinction between the absolute power of God, that is, what God has power to do in abstraction, and his ordained power, that is, God must act only in accordance with what he has ordained.

(4)  $\Box$  (if God makes a promise, then God makes a promise).<sup>12</sup>

Hence:

(5)  $\Box$  (if God makes a promise, then God keeps that promise).

This is conditional necessity. If God makes a promise then, given his omnibenevolence, he will keep that promise; that is, the necessity of keeping his promise is conditional upon him having made it. Thus, conditional necessity may be thought of as a state of affairs being necessary given prior states of affairs.

In the case of creation, necessarily if God creates then he creates (as per (4)). If God is timeless, then this act of creation is from eternity and so there is never a 'time' when the decision to create could have been otherwise: God did not weigh up 'before' creation the pros and the cons and then came to a decision based on those deliberations. Thus, plausibly it is conditionally necessary that he creates (Stump and Kretzmann, 1985, pp. 367ff); *ditto* for other putative contingent attributes. Assuming that this the actual world is the best possible world and a principle of sufficient reason, then there is no possible world in which God does not create. Given that free will is often defined as being able to do otherwise in some libertarian sense,<sup>13</sup> it would seem that God cannot do otherwise than what he does, even though God is not compelled at eternity to create; that is, it is not absolutely necessary that he create, at least in the sense that if he does not create then he goes against his essential character and ceases to exist.

Given its commitment to God's timelessness, the concept of God under classical theism is aligned to my notion of Timeless God. My Bimodal God thesis, however, might conflict with divine simplicity, for if Timeless God projects himself into Incarnate God then this implies parts and there is the concern that parts are in some sense prior to or separate from Timeless God and thus Timeless God is dependent upon them. I

---

<sup>12</sup> In modal logic, this is symbolised as  $\Box$  (if p then p). This should be contrasted with (if p then  $\Box$  p), which is modal collapse, *viz.* all contingency in the world is removed so all modal categories collapse into the single category of necessity.

<sup>13</sup> There are other definitions of free will. In their 1985, Stump and Kretzmann question this assumed definition of free will and replace it with Aquinas's theory of the will as a natural inclination towards goodness associated with the agent's understanding of goodness.

would offer several responses to such concerns. Firstly, Incarnate God is not prior to Timeless God but exists from eternity. Secondly, Incarnate God is not separate from Timeless God but may be thought of as the Bimodal God being in some sense multi-located. Whilst conceptually we may distinguish Timeless God and Incarnate God as parts, such parts do not threaten the Bimodal God's aseity for ontologically they are inseparable. A possible analogy in the physical world is quarks, which appear to be the building blocks of physical reality. Quarks raise some interesting issues of fundamentality. They seem to be dependent upon each other. Quarks come in threes. If you try to separate a quark, for instance, from the triplet, the energy you are exerting is greater than the pair production energy of a quark-antiquark pair, so before the separation could happen, the energy being directed produces quark-antiquark pairs and the original quark triplet remains stubbornly intact (Siegel, 2014). It is simply not possible to separate quarks. So we can meaningfully talk about a proton, for instance, being made of quark parts which we can conceptually separate into three but we can never in actuality remove one of those parts. Thirdly, it is misleading to say that Bimodal God is dependent on Timeless God and Incarnate God since the relation is one of identity. Summarising, we can concede that Bimodal God may be thought of as being made of parts but that the parts in question result in a composition that is innocuous and does not threaten the spirit of the doctrine of divine simplicity.

## **SECTION 2. THEISTIC PERSONALISM**

The God of classical theism strikes some as too divorced from the dynamic God portrayed in much of biblical data and from our modern sensibilities about what a person is. These biblical data and modern sensibilities are perhaps especially brought into focus when we contemplate the ministry of Jesus Christ. In particular, properties such as timelessness, strong immutability and impassibility seem at variance to the notion of a personal God who loves and interactively responds to his creation; such a divorced God would be in Swinburne's words '... a very lifeless being' (2016, p. 233). An alternative understanding of God, which has gained greater traction in the modern era, is Theistic Personalism (Davies, 2003, pp. 9-14) with its emphasis on God's personhood, intervention in his creation and intention to create good (Swinburne, 1994, pp. 126ff). God is still viewed as necessarily existent, omnipotent, omniscient,

omnibenevolent, omnipresent, creator and sustainer, but, in contrast to classical theism, is considered to be personal, mutable, passible, and temporal. 'Temporal' usually means that God is everlasting: he exists at all moments of time (*ibid.*, p. 137-138); he experiences temporal succession, that is, God experiences some events before he experiences others; he never began to exist and will never cease to exist. With the apparent closer alignment to the biblical data, such a god can be thought of as 'The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' rather than the God of the Philosophers.

God's temporality can be understood in several ways (DeWeese, 2004). A common interpretation is that God is everlasting: God never begins to exist, exists through all moments of time, and never ceases to exist. It is, however, a presupposition of the Research Question that God in his default mode of existence is timeless. Accordingly, the theistic personalism concept of God is of limited value in addressing the characteristics of Timeless God. However, it may offer insights to inform addressing the characteristics of Incarnate God, especially with a view to squaring these characteristics with Timeless God.

### **SECTION 3. BIMODAL GOD**

In Section 4.4 of Chapter 1 I proposed the Bimodal God Thesis. This is a hybrid concept which combines both modes of existence of timelessness and temporality. As Timeless God, God exists timelessly outside creation in what can be considered his main or default mode of existence, and this mode of existence is necessary. As Incarnate God, he also exists embodied and temporally within creation in his secondary mode of existence, and this mode of existence is contingent upon whether he chooses to create. Thus, my use of the term 'Bimodal' refers to a distinction between God existing outside and inside time.

Bimodal God does not change from existing timelessly to temporally; rather, Bimodal God always exists as two entities from eternity. These two entities are two-in-one: they are qualitatively different but numerically the same; that is, they are the same individual. This is somewhat akin to Latin trinitarian notions. In §4.4, I examine Leftow's work, especially his 2004, in which he suggests that there might be three distinct parts

or streams of God's life always occurring at once and consider its applicability to the Bimodal God Thesis. I combine this examination with an extended discussion of the two-in-one conundrum in §2.2.1 of Chapter 9 to offer a comprehensive and nuanced account of what I mean by two entities.

Under the Bimodal God Thesis, for Timeless God and Incarnate God to be the same individual, they need to share a unity of consciousness in the right sense. This right sense will be explicated in Chapter 7.

## **SECTION 4. THE TRINITY**

### **4.1. The difficulty**

The Trinity is a distinctive Christian concept. It is the doctrine that God is three persons-in-one: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The three Persons are consubstantial, that is of the same divine substance or nature, and so are one being.<sup>14</sup> They are said to be co-equal and co-eternal (Swinburne, 1994, Ch. 8).

One charge levelled against the Trinity is that it is tritheistic whereas the Christian faith is committed to monotheism. Van Inwagen (1988, p. 242) sums up the difficulty:

For do we not say all of the following things? There is one divine Being, but there are three distinct Persons, each of whom is a divine Being; and the one divine Being is a Person, though not a fourth Person in addition to those three; nor is he any one of the three.

One takes on board van Inwagen's observation that anyone attempting to give an account of the Trinity will find it difficult to avoid some heresy for some quarter of the Christian community (*ibid.*, p. 246).

A common Christian attitude to the Trinity is that it reveals something to us about God; some believers feel a full revelation awaits us only *post mortem*. This revelation,

---

<sup>14</sup> This is often expressed as the Persons of the Trinity are one *ousia* (or substance) but three *hypostases* (or persons).



however, might not be concerned with answering metaphysical questions to satisfy the curiosity of philosophers but rather with God providing us with a path to experience and worship him.

The primary focus of the Research Question is how to reconcile the timeless and temporal modes of existence, not to solve the mystery of the Trinity. However, in modelling the Christian God, it is desirable to understand the Incarnation in the context of the Trinity (Sanders and Issler, 2007). An account of how the Bimodal God Thesis handles this three-in-one issue (or two-in-one) is done in §2.2.1 of Chapter 9.

#### 4.2. The nature of a person

I understand the modern usage of what is a person to be the standard interpretation having its antecedents in Descartes' (1637) emphasis on the self as a conscious subject, with this Cartesian concept being extended by the work of Locke (1975, p. 335). In this modern usage a person is usually considered to be an autonomous self with an independent mind and will, with powers of self-reflection,<sup>15</sup> able to think of himself as persisting over time and place and who is a member of our moral community;<sup>16</sup> that is, there is a focus on the individual and on psychological traits (Locke, 1975, p. 335; Baker, 2000, pp. 8-9; Jaeger, 2020, pp. 284-285).<sup>17</sup> Importantly, the corollary follows that identity of consciousness determines the identity of person (Locke, 1975, p. 342).<sup>18</sup> Such a person is a single subject of experience.

This is not necessarily what some of the early church fathers understood in their use of 'person' in their conciliar pronouncements (Pawl, 2016, pp. 30-34).<sup>19</sup> The term 'person' was a contentious one for the early church fathers. For instance, if we take a

---

<sup>15</sup> A quick definition of a person would be an entity with a first-person perspective or the capacity for such. The emphasis on the first-person perspective is particularly noticeable in the work of Baker (2000).

<sup>16</sup> One should add the usual caveats about an entity having the capacity to be a person in the normal course of development, for example a baby, or having previously exercised the characteristics of a person, for example a comatose patient *etc.*

<sup>17</sup> Locke's definition of a person is '... a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places' (1975, p. 335).

<sup>18</sup> Locke gives us the thought experiment of the waking and sleeping Socrates. If waking Socrates and sleeping Socrates have different consciousnesses, then they are different persons albeit sharing the same body.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Coakley (2002, p. 162) asserts that the influential Council of Chalcedon 451 CE does not tell us (or at least does not explicitly commit itself to), for instance, what hypostasis means when applied to Jesus Christ, nor what the divine and human natures consist in, nor how many wills Jesus Christ had.

strong stance on God's transcendence, then at least some of these attributes might preclude God being a person in the modern sense: to categorise God as a self might be to impose limitation on God; and God should not be considered to be a member of our moral community. Conversely, if we take a strong stance on God's immanence, then this might be incompatible with the distinctiveness needed to constitute an autonomous person. Furthermore, the term 'person' might be equivocal when talking of a divine person and of a human person. These possible differences may become significant when we evaluate whether my concept of Incarnate God is a person in the same sense as the incarnate form of the Son in Jesus Christ, with the latter said to be fully *divine* and fully *human*.

Boethius's perspective helped to inform the thinking of at least some of the early church fathers. In 'A Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius' (Stewart *et al.*, 1973), Boethius defines a person as an individual substance of a rational nature; this is a metaphysical perspective in contrast to the standard modern psychological one. According to Pawl's (2016, p. 32; 2020, p. 6) understanding of the common mediaeval view, an individual substance (Latin 'supposit'; Greek 'hypostasis') is as follows:

x is a supposit (hypostasis) if and only if x is a complete being, incommunicable by identity, not apt to inhere in anything, and not sustained by anything.

That is to say, an individual substance subsists of itself and separate from all else; that is, it is ontologically fundamental.<sup>20</sup> The clause 'x is a complete being' precludes any kind of parts and thus secures that there cannot be parts of suppositis that are suppositis themselves; for example, Daisy's paw is not itself a rabbit. The second clause 'incommunicable by identity' is specifically to preclude the divine nature or essence itself being a supposit in addition to the three divine persons; whilst the divine nature itself is considered to be a complete being, it is nevertheless communicable to the three divine Persons. The third clause 'not apt to inhere in anything' is meant to preclude anything accidental from counting as a supposit; this was to assuage some worries regarding the Eucharist *viz.* that when transubstantiation occurs the body and

---

<sup>20</sup> Perhaps a useful shorthand to employ is to think of a hypostasis as a concrete individual, a property-bearer. A hypostasis is not a person, but a rational hypostasis plausibly is.

blood of Jesus Christ might be considered to be supposita but in fact remain as accidents which do not inhere in any substance. Finally, the fourth clause 'not sustained by anything' is to preclude the human nature of JC, which is dependent upon the sustaining power of the person God the Son, from being a suppositum in its own right; this notion of sustaining is distinct from the sense in which God is said to sustain everything.

With regard to 'rational nature', the Boethian definition does not tell us what attributes constitute it. However, attributes such as having a mind, having consciousness, having self-consciousness and having a will are plausible candidates and would be consistent with the Boethian definition (DeWeese, 2007, pp. 138-139). Alston (2002, p. 187) comments that he finds the current fashion to assert that persons as used by the early church fathers had a meaning radically different from the modern term 'person' to be '... misguided and even confused'. Alston commends the Boethian definition in that it captures the notion that there is real individuality in the Trinity but not necessarily anything distinctively personal: whilst the persons of the Trinity may be considered to be distinctively personal in possessing knowledge, purposes and intentions, such a conceptualisation does not include modern ideas of for example autonomy. The concern of the early church fathers was perhaps more a broader one of the aptness of various metaphysics, such as Aristotelian substance metaphysics, in conceptualising the Trinity rather than defining 'person' *per se* (*ibid.*, p. 188). Mindful of Alston's view that there might be at least partial univocity between what the early church fathers thought and what we in the modern era think of the term 'person', we should nevertheless be cautious that we are not projecting onto the early church fathers our modern sensibilities of what 'rational' means or placing emphases on aspects of personhood that were not the main focus of them; the understanding of the early church fathers, although not excluding such attributes, might have been such to draw attention more to the spiritual side of an entity (Jaeger, 2020, p. 285, fn. 32).

Whilst acknowledging the usefulness of the Boethian substance-based understanding of a person, especially when considering some trinitarian issues, this dissertation takes the standard modern understanding of person to be more apt. This is in order to help better secure the unity of consciousness between JC and GS.

The standard modern understanding of a person equates a person with only one consciousness. This is true unity of consciousness. This will be the person of GS, who pre-existed the Incarnation. We do not want to say that GS becomes a different person in the Incarnation, for that would be contrary to his timelessness.

Under the Boethian definition of a person, it is possible to have two ‘persons’ in the Incarnation, for persons are grounded in natures and there are two natures. The mediaevals would not have seen this as problematic in JC because one of the ‘persons’ (the human nature) is a proper part and so does not qualify as a *supposit* and so is not truly a person on the substance metaphysics in play.

I would argue, however, that we have to consider the possibility that the ‘person’ from the human nature could be separated, if only conceptually, from the hypostatic union. If so, then this ‘person’ would be a *supposit* with a rational nature and plausibly would enjoy the full characteristics of personhood including an autonomous mental life. If the ‘person’ from the human nature would enjoy an autonomous mental life post-separation, it is reasonable to presume that it enjoys, at least potentially, that mentality pre-separation. If so, then this implies Nestorianism. The disqualification of being a robust person, and hence avoiding Nestorianism, by being a proper part is merely stipulative according to the substance metaphysics and does not address this concern about mentality. If the charge of Nestorianism goes through, then this results in a disunity of consciousness in JC.

### **4.3. Latin and social trinitarianisms**

With respect to the Trinity, one view, known as Latin Trinitarianism, is that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are numerically distinct persons of the one divine substance or essential nature but not numerically distinct divine agents; that is, they are a single actor, with a single will and a single action. The three Persons are ‘... somehow God three times over’ (Leftow, 2004, p. 304). Accordingly, this view denies that the three Persons have distinct centres of consciousness. Here, the term ‘person’ refers more to a mode, role or ‘persona’ played, which appears to be more in line with the mediaeval understanding of ‘person’. As such, the monikers ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Spirit’ may be thought of as just different names for the same being or for

different roles or different phases in the life of that being. If God is timeless, then these three distinct parts of his life are always occurring at once; see §4.4 below for discussion of Leftow's proposal which employs the analogy of a time-traveller returning to the same point in public time repeatedly so that it might be said that there are three successive events in the life of that time-traveller occurring at once. On the other hand, the numerical distinctiveness of the Persons is shored up by holding that there are intra-trinitarian relational properties (the immanent Trinity) which distinguish them (Jaeger, 2020, p. 283), for example the Father begets the Son but not *vice versa*, and that they have distinctive activities in the world (the economic Trinity), for example the Father is creator and the Son is redeemer. All this is not necessarily to imply that the one divine being or Godhead is personal;<sup>21</sup> however, if we do say that God is personal then the Persons are individually personal to the extent that they are each God.<sup>22</sup> The emphasis under Latin trinitarianism is on the unity or wholeness of God, and this seems naturally supportive of the notion of monotheism.

One alternative view, known as Social Trinitarianism, is that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are numerically distinct persons in the more modern robust sense with three distinct centres of consciousness and three distinct centres of knowledge, will, and action (Moreland and Craig, 2003, p. 583; Hasker, 2013, p. 23); however, they still count as one God for they are of the same divine substance or essential nature. In contrast to Latin trinitarianism, the greater emphasis is on the diversity of the Persons. One motivation for this divine society of three distinct Persons offered by Swinburne (1994, pp. 177-178) is the sharing of love. The divine unity is said to be maintained by the three Persons necessarily loving each other so perfectly and acting in such perfect harmony as to qualify as one being. Despite the assertion by Swinburne that this unity constitutes monotheism, one can see how the charge of tritheism is easily laid. It is surely a concomitant of sharing of love that there is a distinction between the subject and object of the love; whilst there can be self-love so that the subject and object are the same, this would be inconsistent with the notion of sharing.

---

<sup>21</sup> By way of contrast, in Islam, for example, God is not normally understood to be personal (Legenhausen, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> Christians do not wish to say that there are four Gods: the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

One approach to help mitigate the charge of tritheism under social trinitarianism is to appeal to perichoresis. This is the coinherence or mutual indwelling of each of the Persons in the others. This personal interpenetration is so complete and harmonious that the three self-conscious Persons can be considered to be one in consciousness, will and action. This, however, seems to diminish the distinctiveness of the three Persons too much and so militates against the motivation for having social trinitarianism (Ward, 2015, Ch. 36). Perhaps at best we can say that the perichoretic unity, like the hypostatic union, is a pointer to a greater truth but remains profoundly mysterious.

Under social trinitarianism, logical space is seemingly allowed for the three Persons to act autonomously; that is, they are in some sense independent selves, even if as a matter of fact they never fail to act in complete harmony. Whilst this logical space might militate against monotheism, it possibly does have the virtue of better affording opportunities to prevent the ascription of some properties of one of the Persons to the others; see §2.5 of Chapter 5.

Whilst the emphases of Latin trinitarianism and social trinitarianism may differ, both are trying to grasp an underlying reality from different angles and arguably tend to converge when suitably qualified (Ward, 2015, p. 145). This is in keeping with my looking for hybrid approaches, although, like Ward, I prefer unitive rather than social models, especially because unitive models are more consistent with what I have to say about ensuring unity of consciousness under the Bimodal God proposal.

#### **4.4. Life streams**

In his 2004 'A Latin Trinity', Leftow offers an account of God as one person [ordinary meaning] always living in three streams simultaneously. A Person [one of the members of the Trinity] is God living a particular part of his life: in one stream of events, God is the Father; in another stream of events, God is the Son; and in a third stream of events, God is the Holy Spirit. The notion of one person purports to maintain the orthodoxy of monotheism; the notion of three Persons purports to maintain the orthodoxy of trinitarianism. Leftow envisages differences between the Persons based on something like God's personal timeline, having set the scene using the thought experiment of the

time-travelling Jane (*ibid.*, pp. 307-312). This attempts to show how one person might be wholly present in many places at once. By time travelling, Jane is in many places at the same moment in our lives or *public time* but not at the same moment in her life or *personal time*; that is, distinct segments of her life coincide with the same segment of ours repeatedly. By analogy, we can think of each of three Janes dancing simultaneously on the stage as respectively corresponding to a stream of God's life. In the case of Jane, it is not her whole life repeated multiple times on stage; the Janes are successive parts along her personal timeline and do not add up to her whole life. In the case of God, each 'Jane' or stream represents events which add up to the life of a Person; no event of his life occurs in more than one strand; and the lives of the three Persons add up to the life God lives as the three Persons.

In his 2007 'Modes without Modalism', Leftow elaborates that the events in God's life are mental: God generates and lives as the three Persons, by generating and living in three distinct [non-overlapping] mental streams (*ibid.*, p. 374). For Leftow, there is one divine substance, but this one divine substance can bear distinct streams of consciousness. Accordingly, Leftow contends that there are three Persons just in case there are three Locke-persons. For Leftow (*ibid.*, pp. 367ff), a Locke-person is a substance who is the subject of mental states, but it is an event- or state-based substance in the sense that the occurrences of certain events/states constitute the person in existence; these events/states are Lockean modes or processes which are generated by the substance. On Leftow's stipulation,<sup>23</sup> a Locke-person corresponds to a distinct stream of consciousness. God has three such distinct streams and so is self-conscious or a person three times over.

Under the Bimodal God Thesis, Timeless God is timeless, so the applicability of something like God's personal timeline is limited. In following the time travel analogy, Leftow's thinking is oriented by imagining God to be temporal: in his 2012b (p. 334) he even makes the claim and emphasises that on God's personal timeline, God is never two (or more) Persons at once, although, of course, at a point in public time, we encounter each segment of God's life as the Father concurrently with those segments

---

<sup>23</sup> For his purposes, Leftow does not require that Locke's full theory of personal identity, where the stream of consciousness has to have the right sort of mental events, applies.

at which God is the Son and those segments at which God is the Spirit. Leftow (2004, p. 321) acknowledges that if God is timeless, the discreteness of episodes in his life is not along a timeline but it is, he claims, enough like discreteness along a timeline in its causal aspects. By causal aspects under timelessness, Leftow means that there are three aggregates of events each with the right internal relations to count as a single life and there are the right generation relations to set each single life off from events in the other sets, such as God the Father begetting God the Son *etc.* Thus, Leftow is talking about an events-based ontology of the Persons [see previous paragraph about the concept of a Locke-person]. It is not clear, however, how substantial God is. Leftow remarks (*ibid.*, p. 328) that each Person is as substantial as God is for they have the same trope of deity since each Person is God in a different part of God's life. This is perhaps less than perspicuous. Leftow had argued earlier in his 2002b (p. 204; repeated in 2004, p. 305) that the three Persons are all one God in that they have the same divine nature, that this nature is the same trope which is instantiated three times, and since '... bearers individuate tropes' it is the same bearer three times over. However, it is still not clear what the substance or bearer that is God actually is. With regard to social trinitarianism, Leftow asserts that there are three distinct tropes of the divine nature because there are three distinct and discrete Persons.<sup>24</sup>

Leftow's proposal, I would suggest, needs further elaboration given that a trope is normally understood to be a particularised property<sup>25</sup> and so by definition being instantiated three times is ruled out;<sup>26</sup> that is, there is a one-to-one correlation between bearers and tropes.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Leftow (2004, p. 305) accepts that a trope is a particularised property: he notes that Cain's humanity is distinct from Abel's because it is Cain's humanity, not Abel's. It is not convincing that in the case of the trope of divinity, it is the same bearer [God] three times over; this does not explain how God is able to be three times over. For Leftow to assert that it is the same bearer three times

---

<sup>24</sup> This is disputed by Hasker (2013, Ch. 27) who in his own form of social trinitarianism argues that a single divine concrete divine nature or trope of deity can support simultaneously three distinct lives or Persons.

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps we could allow that a trope is *primitively particular*; that is, what explains the difference in one instantiation of a trope and another is nothing, so the trope could be shared. This, however, would be an *ad hoc* move.

<sup>26</sup> See Tuggy (2003b, pp. 173-175) for related discussion, albeit concerning Hasker, not Leftow.

<sup>27</sup> Hasker (2013, p. 54 and Ch. 28) suggests that the one-to-one correlation between bearers and tropes need not hold universally by appealing to the notion of constitution: the three Persons are constituted by one trope of deity but are not identical to one another. The nature of constitution is, of course, in itself contentious.



over because the Father, the Son and the Spirit *just are* God – somewhat in the manner of the time-travelling Jane being repeated three times over because of different segments of her life occurring concurrently in public time, so there is just one trope of humanity<sup>28</sup> – looks like question begging and is simply repeating the problem. Furthermore, his offering that the Persons are distinct but not discrete because they ‘... have God in common, though not exactly as a common part...’ (2002b, p. 204) and leaving it at that does not especially clarify matters. In contrast, the Bimodal God Thesis offers that the divine nature is a concrete particular (see §2.2.1 of Chapter 9) and that what we think of as the multiple entities of Timeless God, such as Incarnate God, are unified by the one divine consciousness; that is to say, there is only one stream of consciousness, not three as Leftow envisages. It is inappropriate on aseity grounds for the divine nature to be a mere property (or set of properties) for this implies the divine nature exists prior to God and is instantiated by God; furthermore, if we subscribe to the doctrine of divine simplicity then there are in any case no properties in God.

It is also unclear under Leftow’s model how the right generation relations set each single life off from events in the other sets, such as God the Father begetting God the Son *etc.* Leftow (2004, p. 314) acknowledges this but proclaims that he is at no disadvantage in this respect for nobody else has been able to explain how the generation relations work. The Bimodal God Thesis, in contrast, offers an explanation that what is meant by Timeless God generating Incarnate God is Timeless God extending his consciousness into the temporal world.

---

<sup>28</sup> Paradoxes are aplenty when it comes to time-travel. Leftow (2004, pp. 309-311) has a partial stab at resolving some standard ones, such as one Jane killing another Jane with a knife; Leftow’s putative resolution is to metamorphose Jane into a Janet in a possible world in which God implements a particular solution to General Relativity and deprives Janet of libertarian free will. However, he does not address what I consider to be a major incoherence in his time-travelling account. When segments of Jane’s life travel back in time to form a dancing chorus line, what happens to those segments in the original public timeline from whence they have travelled? Do those segments temporarily disappear from the original public timeline leaving spatio-temporal holes in reality? If so, that is problematic. If not, then the time machine is a duplicating machine which has merely sent back copies of Jane. In the latter case, what is the guarantee that those copied segments of Jane will sync up correctly with their originals when they are returned to the original public timeline? Moreover, what does it mean to say that there are multiple Janes? Furthermore, two (or more) Janes meeting together on the public timeline possibly run afoul of Leibniz’s Law.

Leftow (*ibid.*, p. 315) asserts that God as Father has no internal access to and is not thinking the thoughts of God as Son; this is said to be analogous to the case of the time-travelling Jane whereby for instance the leftmost Jane in the Rockettes chorus thinks her individual thoughts and the rightmost Jane thinks her separate individual thoughts. He implies that the Persons, like the Janes (*ibid.*, p. 308), might enjoy personal relationships with one another and engage in dialogue with one another, and yet these are all supposedly the thoughts of the same being. Despite claiming that his model is Latin trinitarian and insisting that there are not three subjects thinking the thoughts, this looks similar to a common understanding of social trinitarianism with its notion of the Persons having distinct centres of consciousness.<sup>29</sup> It is also not clear on Leftow's model how God is conscious of all three life-strands at once; we have the peculiarity of a single person, experiencing simultaneously three different strands of personal existence, without any internal access to each other, and God does not have any additional experiences in which he is simultaneously aware of all three strands at once (Hasker, 2009, p. 160; 2010, p. 435). A major disanalogy between the time-travelling Jane and the Persons of the Trinity is that it seems plausible that the different Janes cannot access each other's thoughts because such Janes are successive life-segments from Jane's private timeline whereas the whole lives of the Persons are simultaneous (Hasker, 2009, p. 159, fn. 11). Thus, Leftow's proposal looks like it results in a profound disunity of consciousness in God. In contrast, the Bimodal God Thesis stresses unity of consciousness and assures it by arguing that there is one centre of consciousness.

Notwithstanding the reservations expressed above, Leftow's model of three life-strands is useful in raising several metaphysical issues. In performing the reconciliation between Timeless God's timeless thoughts and Incarnate God's temporal thoughts, the Bimodal God Thesis will need to provide a plausible account of what the ontological status is of the two entities; that is, the philosophical problem involves not just dealing with the content of the thoughts but also with who the bearer of the thoughts is/are: see §2.2.1 of Chapter 9.

---

<sup>29</sup> It might be more accurate to describe Leftow's model as a hybrid of Latin and social trinitarianisms. See the discussion by Hasker (2013, pp. 114-115).

## SECTION 5. THE INCARNATION

According to orthodox Christian belief, when God the Son incarnated into history in the form of Jesus Christ, there was a hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. This hypostatic union in the one person is said to be without confusion, without alteration, without division and without separation whilst respecting the distinctiveness of the respective two natures, as, for example, expressed in the Definition of Faith from the Council of Chalcedon 451 CE (from Tanner, 1990, p. 86):

... we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ ...

The one person in the hypostatic union is GS. The human nature which GS takes on cannot be a person in its own right, for then there would be two persons.

The motivation for the Incarnation is for soteriological purposes. A traditional idea is that GS took on human nature to show identification with our human condition, for it is asserted that what has not been assumed has not been healed.

The focus of the Bimodal God Thesis is not whether Incarnate God, in entering the temporal world, takes on an additional nature, such as human nature; rather, it is whether the successive thoughts and changing doings of temporal Incarnate God can be reconciled with the non-successiveness, strong immutability and timelessness of

Timeless God. However, I hope to show that the Bimodal God Thesis has the resources to provide a plausible account of the Christian Incarnation.

## **SECTION 6. LIVING IN THE ETERNAL PRESENT**

Under the Bimodal God model, Timeless God exists timelessly outside the block universe in his main mode of existence and he also exists temporally as Incarnate God within the block universe in his secondary mode of existence. An account has to be given of how the lived experiences of Timeless God and Incarnate God can be reconciled without Timeless God being drawn into temporality. The first lynchpin of the reconciliation lies in the extraordinariness of living in the eternal present, which will now be examined.

In Book V, Prose VI of 'The Consolation of Philosophy' (Stewart *et al.*, 1973, pp. 422-424), Boethius writes:

'Eternity therefore is the complete possession all at once of illimitable life, which becomes clearer through a comparison with temporal things. For whatever lives in time progresses as something present from what is past to what is future, and there is nothing placed in time which can embrace the whole extent of its life equally. It does not yet grasp tomorrow, and it has already lost yesterday. Even in today's life you do not live more than in the moving and transitory moment ... So that which embraces and possesses equally the whole completeness of illimitable life, and for which there is not some of the future missing nor some of the past elapsed - that is rightly held to be eternal. And it must be in possession of itself and always present to itself and must have present to itself the infinity of moving time.'

Timelessness is offered as the perfect mode of existence, for temporality is an incomplete possession of life as it involves not yet being able to grasp some of one's life (the future) and losing some of one's life (the past). This perspective is most apt when trying to conceptualise the life of Timeless God. Timeless God lives his whole life at once in the eternal present. If Timeless God is pure act, then this life is complete in that there is nothing that could possibly be further actualised in it.

In his timelessness, Timeless God is strongly immutable. This entails that all of his life consists of one supreme act from eternity, albeit with potentially infinite ramifications in created time (Helm, 2010, p. 28). It must consist of one act otherwise there would be succession, and hence change and time.

Plausibly, eternity has no duration, for duration is normally understood to be a measure of elapsed time; more anon. This suggests that the eternal present is in some sense an instant, but it is not a moving or transitory moment: there is no logical space for another instant for it to move to, given timelessness, nor can it cease to exist, given Timeless God's necessary existence. The interpretation of eternity as a static, durationless instant is supported in for example Boethius's work 'The Trinity' (Stewart *et al.*, 1973, p. 21).

The block universe was created in that one supreme act from eternity; hence, creation itself does not represent a change in Timeless God. All the physical time of creation – the infinity of moving time in Boethian terms – is experienced by Timeless God at once in his single supreme act of awareness. Whilst Incarnate God is subjectively experiencing succession in the tenseless block universe, Timeless God experiences all these happenings at once in the eternal present; hence, no change occurs in Timeless God.

This idea that Timeless God does not experience temporal succession means that Timeless God's relation to each event in the temporal sequence of the created universe is the same as his relation to any other event; for example, Timeless God's observations of Roman Catholic priests participating in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 CE and of the first landing on Earth of aliens from Kepler-442b in 2666 CE are all experienced at once in the eternal present. This relation is ontological, not epistemological; that is, all temporal objects and events really are existentially present at once to Timeless God, not merely Timeless God's awareness of events all occurs at once (Lewis, 1988, pp. 75-77; Leftow, 1991b, pp. 159-161; *contra* Pike, 1970, p. 11).

A popular mediaeval geometrical analogy to illustrate God's relation to time was a circle. The centre point of a circle represents eternity and the circumference represents all moments of time. All points on the circumference are equidistant to the centre and *vice versa* but vary in distance and in successiveness to one another. Accordingly, all moments of time are equally present to eternity, but are past or future in relation to one another. As a point, eternity is captured in its entirety; it is not divisible; such indivisibility is consistent with divine simplicity. This is a helpful way to visualise the notion of Timeless God's relation to each event in the temporal sequence of the created universe being the same as his relation to any other event.<sup>30</sup>

In their seminal article 'Eternity' (1981) on God's timelessness, Stump and Kretzmann identify four ingredients in the Boethian definition of eternity as '... the complete possession all at once of illimitable life': first, an eternal or timeless being has life; second, such a life is unlimited, that is, without beginning or end; third, this life has a special non-temporal sort of duration; fourth, the life is possessed all at once (*ibid.*, pp. 430-434).

The first ingredient, that an eternal or timeless being has life, is relatively uncontentious. Stump and Kretzmann do not address what is meant by the life of a timeless being; presumably it must be some sort of pure consciousness, for if it were biological life or something analogous then that would involve process with concomitant sequence, but then this would beg the question against atemporality.<sup>31</sup> However, talk about a life means that, for instance, abstracta are ruled out. Moreover, Stump and Kretzmann are drawing attention that the Boethian definition views eternity in terms of the life of God rather than that eternity is some sort of quasi-time where [when] God lives; it would be nonsensical to think of an 'unoccupied' eternity for that would be comparable to a life not being lived by anyone (Leftow, 1991a, p. 140).

---

<sup>30</sup> Another popular mediaeval analogy was the observer on the highest peak who sees all the objects and events in the plain below. As Rogers (2007, p. 8) notes, the circle and the highest peak are spatial analogies. Rogers interprets Anselm as analysing eternity as a sort of fifth dimension present to all of four-dimensional space-time; she concedes that such a notion does not readily offer a concrete image but might be closer as a description of the real situation.

<sup>31</sup> And indeed in discussing Aquinas in her 2003 (pp. 147-149), Stump states that life is attributed to an atemporal God on the basis of that God having a mind.

In respect of the second ingredient, Stump and Kretzmann (1981, p. 432) argue that eternal life cannot be unlimited in the sense of having no extension, in the manner for example of a point or an instant. Given the notions of divine strong immutability and possession of life all at once, whilst it is understandable to view the eternal present as analogous to the instant of the temporal now, Stump and Kretzmann insist that the more natural reading of Boethius's definition is that unlimited means infinite duration.

The third ingredient Stump and Kretzmann (*ibid.*, p. 433) identify is that the duration of the eternal life is of a special atemporal nature, not the normal understanding of enduring through time. Stump and Kretzmann assert that 'duration' must be understood in the context of the fourth ingredient, *viz.* possession of life all at once. In comparison to a temporal being which, because the events constituting its life occur sequentially, has lost some of its life to the past and does not yet enjoy its future, it is only a timeless being that can have complete possession all at once of its life and that this is the better understanding of the genuine duration of a life which is the foundation of all existence.

Stump and Kretzmann argue that since eternity is a duration without succession, an eternal being simply exists; we cannot say it has existed or will exist. Thus, an eternal being has present existence in the sense that this presentness is not demarcated by an accompanying past and future; hence, this eternal present is not the same as the temporal present. Moreover, we consider the temporal present to be a durationless instant, for if we extend it conceptually, then it deconstructs into past and future intervals. In contrast, the eternal present cannot be conceptually extended into past and future intervals, so eternity entails an infinitely extended, pastless, futureless duration.

Stump and Kretzmann's suggestion that eternity is an infinitely extended atemporal duration has resulted in much philosophical ink being spilt. On the critical side, Fitzgerald (1985, pp. 262-264) claims to have identified an incoherence in atemporal duration in light of three conditions which he expects to hold for anything to be considered a duration: firstly, two distinct particulars, such as God's thoughts or decisions, can both have the kind of extension in question, but this is incompatible with

divine simplicity; secondly, different events can have different locations in or different amounts of E-duration, or at least there must be different subphases of E-duration, even if every mental act as a whole has infinite E-duration; and thirdly, any duration is potentially divisible, for by having different positions along the extensive duration two qualitatively identical particulars can be numerically distinct. If the analogy between E-duration and other forms of duration fails at any of these three points, then Fitzgerald questions whether such a pared down concept of duration is really duration at all; on the other hand, if E-duration has all three features, then Fitzgerald wonders why such a duration is not simply a temporal duration.

Stump and Kretzmann (1987; 1992) respond to Fitzgerald's criticisms, but the impression left over remains one of E-duration being so stipulatively qualified – compatible with divine simplicity, no successiveness and no divisibility<sup>32</sup> – that all that is asserted is that eternity is durational and nothing more; that is, the concept of duration is denuded of substantive content (Helm, 2010, p. 35). Other critical commentators include Lewis (1988, pp. 74-75), who maintains the standard understanding that duration can only come about by persistence through successive moments of time; and Rogers (1994, pp. 7-8; echoed by Helm, 2010, pp. 35-36), who asks what metaphysical and theological problems are solved by the notion of an atemporal duration, and charges that attempts to make it coherent ironically result in it becoming more opaque.

Whilst we can view Stump and Kretzmann's assertion that atemporal duration is a special species of duration<sup>33</sup> as *ad hoc* and possibly incoherent, we should acknowledge that most of us probably have conflicting intuitions about the idea that a life of potentially infinite *content* can be a mere instant, that is of zero duration. It is this concern which partly motivates Stump and Kretzmann's position, for they claim that atemporality without duration is a frozen instant (1981, p. 470), which seems at odds

---

<sup>32</sup> Briefly, the gist of Stump and Kretzmann's replies to Fitzgerald is that Fitzgerald gathers his three conditions for extension based on samples of extension that are spatial or temporal and that such samples do not, they claim, apply to that which is neither spatial nor temporal. Whilst they do not dispute that spatial or temporal extensions are potentially or conceptually divisible, this does not apply to that which is atemporally extended.

<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Stump and Kretzmann's assertion is greater than simply specialness. Their claim (1981, p. 445) is that atemporal duration is the only genuine duration and that temporal duration is a mere flickering image of it.



to our conventional understanding of a life being lived. Stump and Kretzmann stress that the appeal to an extension-like eternity is to maintain an eternal present which is limitless rather than instantaneous; that it is limitless in the sense that it is not limited by a past lost nor a future yet obtained, which is a befitting mode of existence for a perfect being; and it is in that way infinitely enduring (1987, p. 218). This may, however, further muddy the waters for, at least according to Leftow (1991a, p. 128, fn.), this meaning of limitless is inconsistent with the claim that eternity involves literal infinite extension while it is consistent with a point-view of eternity; so we are left unclear whether eternity is extension-like or point-like.

In his 1991a, Leftow agrees with Stump and Kretzmann that Boethius is offering the thesis that eternity is an atemporal duration and that such an eternity is not a frozen instant. However, Leftow asserts that Stump and Kretzmann inadequately defend their position against criticism and so proffers a different defence and a different view of atemporal duration. He (*ibid.*, pp. 120-123) asks us to consider an eternity that contains earlier and later points or moments (or positions) – a defining departure from Stump and Kretzmann – but that there is no succession between them. He asserts that there must be distinct points otherwise eternity would not be an extension. This extension is said by Leftow to be somewhat like extension in the tenseless time of the B-theory.<sup>34</sup> As none of the moments pass away or are yet to come, an eternal being can somehow live its life all at once whose moments are ordered as earlier and later. Given that Leftow considers such an eternity so conceived to be somewhat similar to tenseless time, he calls his idea Quasi-Temporal Eternality (QTE). Leftow acknowledges that QTE, with its earlier and later points and yet all experienced by God at once, sounds initially contradictory (*ibid.*, p. 122).<sup>35</sup> We can consider it to be a durational-model of eternity (compare with the point-like or instant-like model also offered by Leftow; see §6.4.2 of Chapter 3).

---

<sup>34</sup> *Contra* Leftow, whilst the B-theory does not have temporal passage (or more precisely it has the subjective illusion of temporal passage of conscious beings) it does have succession.

<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that Leftow (1991a, p. 267) does not assert that God has QTE; rather, he presents it as a defensible claim that may provide some light on theistic metaphysics.

Part of Leftow's attempt to dissolve the alleged contradiction is by arguing that the distinct points in QTE are not distinct parts (*ibid.*, p. 123). Points are required in order to allegedly comply with God's simplicity; parts, on the other hand, would tell against God's simplicity. Such points can be ordered in some sense as earlier and later. Leftow asks us to think of some points preceding others logically, not temporally (*ibid.*, p. 145).<sup>36</sup> He argues that the notion that the distinct points in QTE are not distinct parts can be used to show that although God is in himself simple his duration or life can be complex. His reasoning employs the following devices (*ibid.*, pp. 134-144): firstly, an analogy with an atom of space, which is something extended but physically indivisible yet occupies a (conceivably) divisible region of space and so is itself (conceivably) spatially divisible; secondly, an analogy with an atom of time,<sup>37</sup> which, being a minimum of time rather than an instant, is something extended yet has earlier-later relations in some sense within a single indivisible present but not *hypothese* past and future parts; thirdly, a mereological argument that eternity cannot have parts; and, fourthly, an argument on the experienced present, which appears to be extended but not divisible. From all this, Leftow asserts that a simple being is only precluded from having material or spatial parts, not temporal (durational) parts.<sup>38</sup> A being is arguably not identical with that which is composed of its temporal parts, for a being's temporal parts compose not the being itself but its duration or life, so though its duration can be complex or parted this does not mean that the being itself is complex.

## SECTION 7. INSIGHTS

One can be sympathetic to Leftow's observation (1991a, p. 140; 1988, p. 191) that perhaps no one image will express all that we think possibly true of eternity and so we can only oscillate between the conflicting yet equally necessary images of an extended duration and an indivisible extensionless point; the former partly motivates his

---

<sup>36</sup> Rogers (1994, p. 11) questions whether these stretched meanings of 'earlier' and 'later' are of merit. She argues that logical priority is not at all like temporal priority, so the employment of such logical meanings denudes QTE of the very aspect which makes it 'quasi-temporal'.

<sup>37</sup> Leftow does not claim that time atoms actually exist. So long as their concept is coherent, Leftow is comfortable to employ them. He believes that the mere possibility of time atoms counts in favour of the possibility of QTE. I prefer that analogies are based on what we know to exist.

<sup>38</sup> 'Temporal parts' because QTE asserts that eternity is somewhat similar to tenseless time.

discussion of Quasi-Temporal Eternity (see §6 above) and the latter partly motivates his discussion of Time's Way (see §6.4.2 of Chapter 3). The tension arises because on the one hand eternity is a kind of life which encourages us to model in terms of duration but on the other hand we are talking about the life of a simple being which encourages us to model in terms of something partless or point-like. This idea of no one image resonates with my qualified approval of van Inwagen's proposal to bring coherence to how we understand the Trinity (see §3 of Chapter 2).

A major metaphysical surprise is that Timeless God experiences all of his life at once; that is, a complete life, with no change, seemingly in an instant as best we can conceive. A concomitant of this is that all of temporal time is experienced by Timeless God at once. For the purposes of addressing the Research Question, this latter concomitant is more important than whether the better geometrical model of living in the eternal present is an infinitely extended line or an unextended point *etc.*

# CHAPTER 5

## THE INCOHERENCE CHARGE

‘Nothing is impossible. The word itself says “I’m possible”!’

- Audrey Hepburn

### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

#### §1. Preliminaries

1.1. The Law of Non-Contradiction

1.2. Identity

1.3. Leibniz’s Law: The Principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals

1.4. Predication

#### §2. The Incoherence Charge against the Incarnation

2.1. The nature of a nature

2.2. Nature and person

2.3. Divine properties and human properties

2.4. The alleged incompatibility

2.5. Formulated with respect to the Research Question

#### §3. Some strategies for resolving the Incoherence Charge

3.1. Reduplication

3.2. Relative identity

3.3. Mereology

3.4. Restrictive

3.5. Kenosis

3.6. Two-minds models

3.7. Dialetheism

Insights

## OVERVIEW

Firstly, some preliminary concepts and terminology are considered. Next, the Incoherence Charge against the Incarnation is stated, together with its formalisation in respect of the Research Question. Then, some strategies for resolving the Incoherence Charge are outlined, broadly following the taxonomy of Cross (2009). An initial assessment is made of the various strategies; several particular implementations of some of these strategies are examined in detail in subsequent chapters.

## SECTION 1. PRELIMINARIES

### 1.1. The Law of Non-Contradiction

This dissertation uses classical logic. The Law of Non-Contradiction is considered one of the fundamental laws of classical logic.<sup>1</sup> It states that contradictory propositions cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. It may be formally symbolised as:

$$\sim \diamond (p)(p \wedge \sim p)$$

Consider the following proposition:

$$p = \langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is white} \rangle$$

Its negation is:

$$\sim p = \langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is not white} \rangle$$

If we conjoin  $p$  with its negation or complement then we have a contradiction:

$$p \wedge \sim p \\ \langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is white and not white} \rangle$$

According to the principle of bivalence, a proposition has only one truth value: it is either true or false. In a contradiction, one of the conjuncts must be true and one must be false, so the conjunction is false. Thus, a contradiction is always false.

---

<sup>1</sup> Together with the Law of Identity [each thing is identical with itself] and the Law of Excluded Middle [every proposition must be true or false].

If we were to move away from classical logic to a system of multi-valued logic, then we might for instance have the possibilities of ‘true’, ‘false’ or ‘undetermined’.

If we were to reject the Law of Non-Contradiction and allow for something to have a property and its complement at the same time and in the same way, and hence having a property does not rule out its absence, then all property distinctions break down, for example Daisy is white and not white. There are some philosophers who claim that we can have a glut, that is a sentence which is both true and false; this is examined in §3.7.

Consider the proposition:

$q = \langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is black} \rangle$

The conjunction  $p \wedge q$  is:

$\langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is white and black} \rangle$

Note, however, that the proposition  $\langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is black} \rangle$  is not the contradictory of  $\langle \text{Daisy the rabbit is white} \rangle$ . Rather, it is a contrary. With a contrary, it is possible for both propositions to be false because, for instance, Daisy is grey.

## 1.2. Identity

Identity is about sameness. Identity is reflexive; that is, self-identity is analytically true: necessarily, it is something everything bears only to itself. Given reflexivity, identity is a one-to-one relation; it cannot be a one-to-many relation.<sup>2</sup> Thus:

$$(1) \quad x = x$$

Hence:

$$(2) \quad \text{Daisy} = \text{Daisy}$$

---

<sup>2</sup> This has implications when we later interpret the claim: God = The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It also has implications when we examine the merits of various theories of persistence.

We know *a priori* that Daisy is Daisy; (2) is in some sense a necessary truth (Morris, 1984, p. 5).<sup>3</sup> This seems unproblematic.

Daisy has a secret identity. She is a super rabbit called Kryptobit who comes from the planet Krypton and presently lives on Earth. Lest she invite too much attention and numerous requests to appear on talk shows, she maintains the separate personae. We can say:

(3) Daisy = Kryptobit

Daisy and Kryptobit are numerically identical; the relata have the same referent – there is the [numerically] one being. However, that (3) is an identity seems only knowable *a posteriori* (*ibid.*, p. 6) Thus, (3) is informative in a way that (2) is not.

The identity in (3) is also symmetric:

(4) Kryptobit = Daisy

For completeness, we should also note that identity is transitive:

(5) Daisy = Kryptobit; Kryptobit = Lola; ∴ Daisy = Lola

### 1.3. Leibniz's Law: The Principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals

Leibniz's Law states:

If x is identical to y, then every property of x is a property of y, and *vice versa*.

$\forall x\forall y[x=y \rightarrow \forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy)]$

---

<sup>3</sup> Morris uses the more prosaic Hesperus and Phosphorus (the planet Venus, not Krypton).

That is, if objects are identical then there are no properties in which they differ: whatever is true of one is true of the other. The supposition is that identity under Leibniz's Law is all-or-nothing. Leibniz's Law is plausibly considered to be self-evident.

Daisy and Kryptobit have all their properties in common. Let us list a subset of those properties. For example:

(6) Daisy can hop over the Blackpool Tower and likes to eat romaine lettuce.

$Bd \wedge Rd$

(7) Kryptobit can hop over the Blackpool Tower and likes to eat romaine lettuce.

$Bk \wedge Rk$

Under Leibniz's Law,  $d = k$ , for Kryptobit is the alter ego of Daisy.

We could also list a different subset of properties for Kryptobit. For example:

(8) Kryptobit comes from the planet Krypton and likes to eat strawberries.

$Kk \wedge Sk$

Given Leibniz's Law, we may state:

(9) Daisy comes from the planet Krypton and likes to eat strawberries.

$Kd \wedge Sd$

Daisy and Kryptobit are numerically identical; they are the same being.

A distinction can be made between *numerical* identity and *qualitative* identity. Qualitative identity would be where two entities share some properties in common and so are similar to a degree. For example, an ordinary rabbit might like romaine lettuce too and so would be qualitatively identical to Daisy to the extent that both are rabbits



and both like the same lettuce. Numerical identity requires absolute qualitative identity: Daisy and Kryptobit have all their properties in common.

For any entities  $x$  and  $y$ , if there is a property one of them has but the other lacks, then they are not identical. This is the contrapositive of Leibniz's Law:

If not (every property of  $x$  is a property of  $y$ ), then not ( $x$  is identical to  $y$ ),  
and *vice versa*.

$$\forall x \forall y [\sim(\forall F \{Fx \leftrightarrow Fy\}) \rightarrow \sim(x=y)]$$

The ordinary rabbit, despite being a rabbit and liking romaine lettuce, does not have, for instance, the ability to hop over the Blackpool Tower. Therefore, it is not Daisy.

Consider the following:

(10) Daisy is hungry at 1.00pm.

(11) Having eaten timothy hay, Daisy is not hungry at 1.15pm.

Daisy is both hungry and not hungry. These are different – in fact, logically complementary - properties. Having different properties implies a lack of numerical identity; that is, there are two entities. Yet change seems to require both difference and identity: in order for change to occur, the same entity must be different - in apparent violation of Leibniz's Law. The formulation of Leibniz's Law presupposes that properties are had atemporally; that is, there is no time value. We could restrict Leibniz's Law so that it is temporally qualified, then if the different properties are held at different times, we retain numerical identity. This notion impacts my discussion of persistence in Chapter 8, particularly in respect of whether endurantism is compatible with the B-theory of time.

The converse of the Principle is the Identity of Indiscernibles, which states:

If every property of  $x$  is a property of  $y$ , and *vice versa*, then  $x$  and  $y$  are identical.

$$\forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy) \rightarrow x=y$$

Thus, if there is a qualitative difference between two entities then those entities are distinct. However, if two entities are qualitatively identical and yet we judge that that the two entities are distinct, then we would appear to need to furnish a particularising element to individuate them – assuming that the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles is true, but this is controversial. This has implications in my discussion of universals and particulars (see §2.2).

#### 1.4. Predication

We can read  $d = k$  as:

- (12) Daisy = Kryptobit
- (13) Daisy is identical to Kryptobit
- (14) Daisy is Kryptobit

However, (14) can have another meaning. The copula ‘is’ can be used for predication. For instance, consider the sentence:

- (15) Daisy is pretty

This does not mean identity, that is, Daisy is identical to prettiness; rather, it means the ascription of an attribute to Daisy, *viz.* prettiness. Accordingly, it would be wrong-headed to think in terms of identity, reflexivity and symmetry:

- (16) pretty  $\neq$  Daisy

We can readily ascribe two (or more) attributes to Daisy:

- (17) Daisy is pretty and contented.

In these examples, Daisy is the singular unitary subject to whom the attributes are ascribed. We can, however, differentiate the subject Daisy into multiple aspects or modes:

- (18) Daisy as a respector of slippers is adorable but as a respector of electrical cables is monstrous.<sup>4</sup>

This distinction between the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication is important to note as it is often appealed to in the literature: one has to be mindful of it, for instance, in order to avoid possible equivocation.

## SECTION 2. THE INCOHERENCE CHARGE AGAINST THE INCARNATION

### 2.1. The nature of a nature

According to orthodoxy, God the Son and Jesus Christ are numerically identical.<sup>5</sup> Christians believe that in the form of the one person Jesus Christ there was a hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. In order to articulate the incoherence charge, we need to consider what is a nature.

The nature of something is what kind of thing it is. We can distinguish between a natural kind and a nominal kind: a natural kind would be, for instance, a substance such as a tree or gold; a nominal kind would be a non-natural kind, such as hutches (rearranged wood) or wedding rings (rearranged gold).<sup>6</sup> A thing's nature is essential to it: if we change its nature then we change what it is. It is usually thought that we cannot change a thing's nature: a tree cannot become water and gold cannot become lead.<sup>7</sup> We normally consider something to have only one nature. According to orthodoxy, God the Son has a divine nature essentially but in the Incarnation he took on an additional nature contingently; this ability to take on a second nature helps make GS *sui generis*.

---

<sup>4</sup> She rests on slippers; she chews electrical cables. For further extended analysis on this sentence, see §3.1.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the declaration by Chalcedon is '...but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ ...' (Tanner, 1990, p. 86).

<sup>6</sup> A nominal kind exists in name only; its meaning might be established for example by linguistic convention.

<sup>7</sup> Swinburne (1994, pp. 27-32 and p. 214; 2011, p. 157) argues that human beings are not essentially human, that is humanity is a nominal kind, not a natural kind, and so can change into gorillas or even crocodiles.

Under the abstractist view, a nature is a set of properties which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient to distinguish that nature from others (Crisp, 2007, p. 41; Plantinga, 1999, p. 184); that is, a nature is an abstract object. This is applicable to both the divine and human natures. If we consider properties to be universals, then this concept of nature implies that it is something common to many; on this basis, Adolf Hitler's human nature, for example, is the same as Mother Teresa's. Swinburne (1994, pp. 212-213), for instance, claims that human nature must be universal. He argues this on the basis that an individual nature or human soul would be the essential core of the individual, that is, what makes him who he is, and so could not be possessed temporarily or accidentally by anyone else. As a result, JC could not have an individual human nature since his essential core is his divine nature or divine soul. What made JC the particular human being he was, according to Swinburne, was in fact his divine nature; this divine nature is individuated by its relational properties (of being begotten).

An alternative interpretation of nature is the concretist view. In the case of human nature, this is a view that a human nature is a concrete particular comprising a human body and, usually, a human soul (Crisp, 2007, p. 41; Plantinga, 1999, p. 184; Leftow, 2002a, p. 278).<sup>8</sup> This concept of nature implies that it is a particular individual, that is, Adolf Hitler's human nature is distinct from Mother Teresa's.

The divine nature is often portrayed as being shared by the three Persons of the Trinity, yet such sharing seems indicative of the divine nature being a property (Cross, 2009, pp. 460-461), not a concrete particular. See §3.3 below.

We could say that the abstractist approach holds that entities have properties which entail their membership in a particular kind, whereas the concretist approach holds that being a member of a certain kind entails having certain properties. Accordingly, the abstractist approach does not deny that JC is a concrete particular, but what is

---

<sup>8</sup> A concrete particular is usually considered to be a discrete, real object such as a souvenir pen from Oriel College, Oxford or a person such as Nigel Farage; that is, it is a substance of some sort. There are several views about what is meant by saying that human nature is a concrete particular. Crisp (2009, p. 165) outlines some of these: humans are essentially souls that occupy the bodies they own; human nature is a compound of a human body and soul; human nature is the product of the latter compound whereby the soul organises the matter of the body; human nature is simply a certain kind of material object.

fundamental is that the human nature is a set of properties, and these properties entail possession of a certain concrete particular; similarly, the concretist approach does not deny that the human nature of JC has properties, but what is fundamental is that the human nature is a concrete particular (Crisp, 2007, p. 46). On these understandings, in taking on human nature to form JC, GS took on either a set of properties or a concrete particular, so JC's human nature is either an abstract object, and the Incarnation is an exemplification of it, or a concrete particular.

In the taking on of human nature, a distinction can be made between two-part and three-part Christologies (Crisp, 2007, pp. 41-42). Two-part Christologies state that JC is composed of two 'parts': GS and a human body; with GS taking the place of a human soul. Three-part Christologies say that JC has 'three parts': GS, a human body and a human soul; this would be a [human] soul in addition to GS. Pawl (2016, p. 56) cautions us that we should not necessarily interpret talk of parts as being mereological; rather, 'parts' can be used in a figurative sense.

Pawl (2016, pp. 18-20) proffers that there are good grounds for claiming that a concrete particular view is broadly favoured by Conciliar Christology, and that a three-part Christology is apt (*ibid.*, p. 57); Crisp (2007, p. 71) agrees. Plantinga (1999, pp. 184-185) sees more of a conciliar compromise but with a slight leaning towards abstractism. Leftow (2002a, pp. 278-279) implies that the abstractist/concretist dichotomy might be a distinction without a difference when he asserts that an abstract nature incarnation takes place only if a concrete nature incarnation does so and *vice versa*; that is, by taking on the full natural endowment of body and soul/mind, GS also comes to exemplify the property of being human; nevertheless, Leftow asserts that there is an asymmetry in that it is only by concrete nature incarnation that properties can become exemplified.<sup>9</sup> Cross (2009, p. 462) demurs, offering the notion that abstract-nature incarnation merely amounts to GS becoming a body or a soul or something that is identical with the conjunction of body and soul, so GS begins to exemplify human nature such that the only concrete object is the person of GS himself. Marmodoro and Hill (2008, p. 101), referring to Leftow's perspective, also point out

---

<sup>9</sup> As Swinburne (1994, p. 213) stresses, natures do not do things; individuals do things, and it is their nature or natures which give them the power to do things.

that the abstractist/concretist distinction is not especially useful in developing a metaphysical account of the Incarnation since it is in effect a distinction not between two kinds of models of the Incarnation but between two kinds of descriptions of models of the Incarnation.

It might be the case that the divine nature is concrete whilst human nature is abstract; after all, we should not expect that necessarily what goes for the created is the same as what goes for the creator. Whether the divine nature is abstract or concrete will have a bearing on the two-in-one issue of the Bimodal God; and by parallel reasoning the three-in-one issue of the Trinity. These issues are discussed in §2.2.1 of Chapter 9.

## **2.2. Nature and person**

Section 4.2 of Chapter 4 discussed what is a person. A distinction was made between the standard modern concept of a person and what is often taken to be the early church fathers' or mediaeval view. Recapitulating, in the standard modern usage a person is usually considered to be an autonomous self with an independent mind and will, with powers of self-reflection, and who is a member of our moral community;<sup>10</sup> that is, there is a focus on the individual and on psychological traits. Such a person is a single subject of experience; that is to say, there is one mind and so one person: if there were a second mind in the same entity then there would be a second person.<sup>11</sup> In the mediaeval view, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature, where an individual substance subsists of itself and separate from all else, with the individualising principle being substantial form particularised in matter. Here, there cannot be an entity of two persons, for a second substance cannot exist as a proper part of another substance. That is to say, the standard modern view is a psychological one whereas the mediaeval view is an ontological one.

---

<sup>10</sup> With the usual caveats about an entity having the capacity to be a person in the normal course of development, for example a baby, or having previously exercised the characteristics of a person, for example a comatose adult patient *etc.*

<sup>11</sup> Setting aside for the moment claims of one mind resulting in more than one person under various psychopathologies such as multiple personality disorders or split-brain patients. In Chapter 7 I will discuss these in the context of psychological models of the Incarnation.

On an abstractist conceptualisation of nature, where human nature is usually considered to be a universal, the implication is that one should not treat a nature as if it were a person (Swinburne, 1994, pp. 211-215; Fairbairn, 2007, Chapter 3). Universals are conceived of as repeatable or multiply instantiable entities and so are shareable (Allen, 2016, p. 8). An individual human nature, on the other hand, would be the essential core of a person and would be non-shareable; this would raise tension with the notion of God the Son taking on human nature for he already has an essential core, *viz.* his divinity.

Some philosophers claim that properties are not universals but tropes which are particular; that is, they are unrepeatable individual qualities (*ibid.*, p. 39).<sup>12</sup> On this understanding, each person would have their own particular human nature, rather like the whiteness of Daisy's fur is unique to Daisy and is different from the whiteness of another rabbit's fur.<sup>13</sup> In the unique case of GS, such a trope of human nature would not form his essential core, perhaps on the basis of GS already having an essential core [divine nature] or of its contingency.

On a concretist interpretation of nature, we do normally think of an identity relation between nature and person. In the case of Jesus Christ, there are two natures. At first blush, this implies two persons, for in the standard modern psychological view of what is a person, having, for instance, two wills derived from the two respective natures is plausibly inconsistent with being a single person. However, in the mediaeval view, having a two-willed person is not precluded, as JC obtains his personhood solely from the divine nature, for while the human nature might have a will, it is not counted as a person because it is not an individual substance. We could suppose that if JC's human nature had not been assumed, then it would have been a person in its own right; that is, human nature is only contingently a person (Pawl, 2016, pp. 66-67).<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> An account will have to be given of how tropes resemble one another. See Allen (2016, Ch. 3) for three offerings.

<sup>13</sup> The idea that one person's humanity is a particularised property or trope is appealed to by Leftow. See §4.4 of Chapter 4.

<sup>14</sup> This supposition is challenged, however, by the anhypostasia/enhypostasia distinction: the human nature of Jesus Christ is anhypostatic, or not personal in itself, but is enhypostatic, or personalised, only in its union with the person of God the Son. Such a distinction was developed after Chalcedon to help counter Nestorian worries (Mullins, 2016, pp. 170-171). This makes sense to me because, *inter alia*, JC's human nature was not created in the regular way.

### 2.3. Divine properties and human properties

In Chapter 4, the following divine essential properties were enumerated under classical theism:

simplicity, necessary existence, ontological independence, timelessness, incorporeality, omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, omnipresence, immutability and impassibility

On an abstractist view, we may consider these to constitute the divine nature. Whilst there is wiggle room over which properties to include, these are usually taken to be the core for most classical theists. Arguably, these properties can be known *a priori*.

Similarly, there is wiggle room over which properties are necessary and sufficient for being human; some suggested essential properties are a certain evolutionary history and rationality. Arguably, these properties are known *a posteriori*. For our purposes, what is important is that a contrast may be made between the divine nature and the human nature such that the human nature includes at least some logical complements of the divine properties. Thus, human nature plausibly includes at least some of the following properties:

complexity, contingent existence, ontological dependence, temporality, corporeality, limited in power, limited in knowledge, moral fallibility, local embodiment,<sup>15</sup> mutability and passibility

### 2.4. The alleged incompatibility

For Jesus Christ to be identical to God the Son under Leibniz's Law it is necessary that JC possess every property had by GS and *vice versa* in the same sense at the same time. However, at least some of the properties held by JC, who is said by

---

<sup>15</sup> Being embodied in a human body at least at some time during one's existence seems essential for being human. This does not mean that to be a human person means that one is essentially embodied; Christians of certain substance-dualist flavour, for instance, would claim that the human person can persist disembodied after the death of the body. We should perhaps say that an entity that *began* existence as a human person is essentially embodied.



orthodoxy to be fully human, are logical complements of the properties held by GS. For example:

(19) God the Son is omniscient and Jesus Christ is limited in knowledge.

The mutual exclusivity of these contradictory properties means it is incoherent to assert that JC is identical to GS, for if they are the same person, then incompatible properties are being predicated of that one person. This is the Incoherence Charge against the Incarnation.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.5. Formulated with respect to the Research Question

The Research Question focuses on the incompatibility between timelessness and temporality. This is because the Incarnation poses a special, if not unique, problem for timelessness (Senor, 2002). Accordingly, the incoherence charge may be formulated as the following valid deductive argument:

P1: Necessarily, God is timeless.

P1\_p1: If God exists, then necessarily God enjoys the perfect mode of existence.

P1\_p2: The perfect mode of existence is timelessness.

P1\_p3: God exists.

P1\_c2: Necessarily, God is timeless.

P2: God is trinitarian, consisting of the Persons God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

C1: As one of the divine Persons of the Trinity, God the Son is necessarily timeless.

P3: Necessarily, Jesus Christ is timeless and temporal.

P3\_p1: God the Son incarnates in human history in the form of Jesus Christ by taking on human nature whilst retaining his divine nature.

P3\_p2: The Incarnation is a hypostatic union of two natures, *viz.* divinity and humanity, in one person, and the two natures are respectively preserved, without division and not confounded.

---

<sup>16</sup> Sometimes referred to as the 'Coherence Objection' or the 'fundamental philosophical problem of Christology' following Cross (2009, p. 453).

P3\_c1: Jesus Christ was wholly divine and wholly human.

P3\_p3: Necessarily, a human being is temporal.

P3\_p4: Necessarily, God the Son is timeless.

P3\_c2: Necessarily, Jesus Christ is timeless and temporal.

P4: Necessarily, Jesus Christ is not both timeless and temporal.

P4\_p1: There are only two modes of existence: timelessness and temporality.

P4\_p2: These two modes of existence are contradictories and mutually exclusive.

P4\_c1: A being cannot be both timeless and temporal.

P4\_c2: Necessarily, Jesus Christ is not both timeless and temporal.

C2: Jesus Christ is an impossible being.

One can make the parallel argument in respect of the Bimodal God by replacing ‘God’ with ‘Timeless God’ and ‘Jesus Christ’ with ‘Incarnate God’. It is not a requirement that Timeless God be trinitarian (P2). However, it can readily be stipulated that Timeless God extends his consciousness into a third entity to comport with the notion of the Holy Spirit and thus align with Christian orthodoxy.

Depending upon one’s view of the Trinity, if God the Son becomes temporal then this temporality may or may not be more likely to infect the Godhead. For instance, if one’s perspective is social trinitarianism with its three distinct Persons, then this possibly affords a logical space to prevent the ascription of at least some properties of one of the Persons to the others: GS becoming temporal does not necessarily transfer back to the Godhead.<sup>17</sup> Under a Latin trinitarian view with its emphasis on unity of the three Persons, on the other hand, the boundaries between the Persons seem more porous. The Bimodal God thesis is more aligned with Latin trinitarianism in the sense that what Incarnate God takes on appears more readily to be able to transfer back to Timeless God. Indeed, the Research Question precisely asks how the transference is blocked.

---

<sup>17</sup> Senor (1990, p. 150) is sceptical that there can be unity in the Trinity if one of its members is temporal and the others timeless, asserting that only ‘... an extreme social trinitarian might be able to hold this view’.

## SECTION 3. SOME STRATEGIES FOR RESOLVING THE INCOHERENCE CHARGE

### 3.1. Reduplication

Consider the contradictory propositions mentioned earlier:

(19) God the Son is omniscient and Jesus Christ is limited in knowledge.

Given that according to orthodoxy God the Son and Jesus Christ refer to the same person, there is a single subject bearing incompatible properties (Cross, 2009, p. 452). For ease of expression, I shall rewrite the propositions with 'Jesus Christ' as the single subject and 'limited in knowledge' as 'non-omniscient':

(20) Jesus Christ is omniscient and Jesus Christ is non-omniscient.

Reduplication, or the *qua* move, uses phrases such as '*qua* human' and '*qua* divine' to qualify the contradictory propositions. So, (20) can be expressed as follows:

(21) Jesus Christ is omniscient *qua* divine and Jesus Christ is non-omniscient *qua* human.

$(JC \text{ is } F \text{ } qua \text{ } D) \wedge (JC \text{ is } \sim F \text{ } qua \text{ } H)$

The *qua* qualifiers apply to the whole propositions.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 5.1 shows my pictorial representation of the *qua*-move.

---

<sup>18</sup> This is the first of Senor's (2002, p. 229) Three Ways. For Pawl (2016, Ch. 6), it is the 'Response of Modifying the Assertion' (A) response.

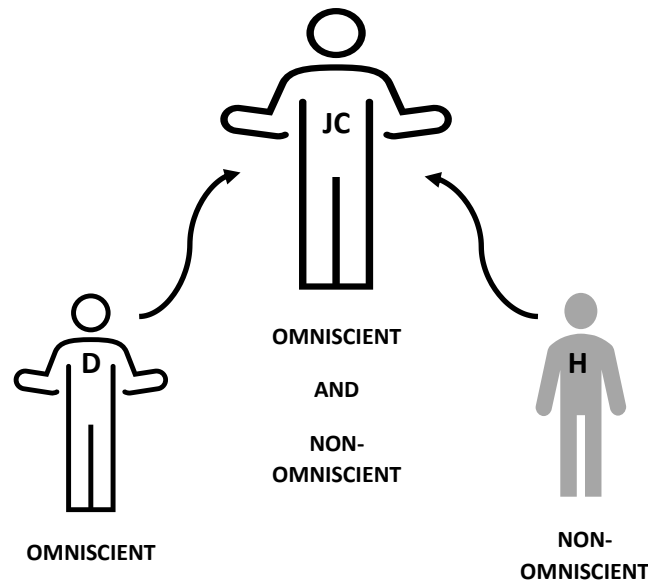


Figure 5.1: Qua-move

Thus, one is allegedly able to avoid the inference from 'JC is F *qua* N' to 'JC is F'. However, Senor (1990, pp. 152-154; 2002, p. 229; also, Morris, 1986, pp. 48-49) argues that the entailment is not avoided: for if JC is really divine and hence omniscient and if JC is really human and hence non-omniscient, then we are still left with *simpliciter* properties and the contradiction remains. That is to say, all that the *qua* move does is merely tell us in virtue of what it is that JC is a certain way; the *qua* move does not tell us how the incompatible properties are being used in different senses. Marmodoro and Hill (2011, pp. 5-6) claim that the *qua*-move in itself operates only at the linguistic level and so does not illuminate the metaphysics of how or why JC avoids having incompatible properties.

With an eye to casting light on the metaphysics, one way of representing the *qua*-move is to treat JC as a mereological sum of the divine and human natures. The contradictory properties are segregated into those different constituents of the whole, that is the respective divine and human natures, and attributed to the whole, that is JC, derivatively. That is, for any pair of properties F and  $\sim$ F, such that it is contradictory for an entity to be both F in its own right and  $\sim$ F in its own right, *prima facie* there is nothing incoherent about that entity being F in virtue of having one constituent which is F in its own right and being  $\sim$ F in virtue of having another, distinct constituent which

is  $\sim F$  in its own right. The divine and human natures act as truthmakers:<sup>19</sup> the truthmaker for JC being  $F$  is his divine nature and the truthmaker for JC being  $\sim F$  is his human nature.

Accordingly, we can, for instance, apply the *qua* qualifiers to the subject.<sup>20</sup> We can rewrite (20) as:

(22) Jesus Christ-*qua*-divine is omniscient and Jesus Christ-*qua*-human is non-omniscient.

$(JC\text{-}qua\text{-}D \text{ is } F) \wedge (JC\text{-}qua\text{-}H \text{ is } \sim F)$

[Note the hyphens]

We still have *simpliciter* properties but this allegedly avoids the contradiction because we have two subjects and the properties are ascribed to different bearers: one subject is JC's divine nature and one is JC's human nature (Pawl, 2016, p. 125). However, natures are not persons, and yet the two subjects appear to be two persons, for properties such as omniscience are what we normally think of as applying to persons. The orthodox position is that Jesus Christ-*qua*-divine and Jesus Christ-*qua*-human refer to the same person.

To avoid the problem of two subjects with its implication of two persons, one alternative is to apply the *qua* qualifiers to the predicates.<sup>21</sup> We can rewrite (20) as:

(23) Jesus Christ is omniscient-*qua*-divine and Jesus Christ is non-omniscient-*qua*-human.

$(JC \text{ is } F\text{-}qua\text{-}D) \wedge (JC \text{ is } \sim F\text{-}qua\text{-}H)$

[Note the hyphens]

---

<sup>19</sup> The truthmaker principle is that for every true proposition there is some existing entity (entities) or state of affairs that makes that proposition true (Armstrong, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> This is the second of Senor's (2002, p. 229) Three Ways. For Pawl (2016, Ch. 6), it is the 'Response of Modifying the Subject' (S) response.

<sup>21</sup> This is the third of Senor's (2002, p. 230) Three Ways. For Pawl (2016, Ch. 6), it is the 'Response of Modifying the Predicate' (P) response. Pawl also lists an additional way, *viz.* the 'Response of Modifying the Copula' (C) response, which is less commonly referenced in the literature and not discussed here.

Whilst the *simpliciter* properties ‘omniscient’ and ‘non-omniscient’ are straightforward contradictories, the complex properties ‘omniscient-*qua*-divine’ and ‘non-omniscient-*qua*-human’, it is suggested, are two separate properties, so the contradiction is allegedly avoided. However, these properties have an *ad hoc* feel to them and are rather peculiar (Pawl, 2016, pp. 135-136; Senor, 2011, pp. 105-106). Moreover, Senor (2002, pp. 230-231) questions whether this version of the *qua*-move on its own accomplishes anything. He maintains that the question of whether JC has the property of omnipotence *simpliciter* is still not answered: if he does, because of his divinity, then we also need to know if his humanity requires that he is limited in power; if yes, then nothing is resolved; if no, then we do not need the *qua*-move.

According to Pawl (2016, Ch. 7), properties such as omniscience and ‘limited in knowledge’ are not logically contradictory properties, at least in certain circumstances, if we revise the truth conditions underpinning Christological predications. These revised truth conditions build into the predicates a clause about the subject having a nature in virtue of which something is apt of it; that is, both *the nature* and *the subject* satisfy the truth conditions for those predicates. Say for instance that the initial truth condition for omniscience is ‘knows all’ and for ‘limited in knowledge’ is ‘does not know all’, then the revised truth conditions will be ‘has a nature that knows all’ and ‘has a nature that does not know all’ respectively. Pawl claims that the way we predicate of a one-natured being is not necessarily the way we predicate of a two-natured being. Accordingly, JC, a two-natured being, is omniscient just in case he has a nature that is omniscient and JC is limited in knowledge just in case he has a nature that is limited in knowledge. Uniquely, given his two natures, only JC can be both omniscient and limited in knowledge. So, instead of assuming that the predicates are incompatible and employing the *qua* move to ameliorate away the incompatibility, one starts with compatible predicates and uses the *qua* move to identify which nature is the truthmaker (*ibid.*, p. 169).

On this account, Pawl (*ibid.*, p. 194) asserts that timeless GS can become temporal if he takes on a nature which is temporal. Pawl does not stipulate that the assumption of the temporal nature was from eternity; indeed, he employs temporal language such as ‘... began to apply to him then’. This then is a real change in GS, which Pawl does

not deny. This is contrary to the argument I presented in §4.3 of Chapter 1 which denies that modes of existence can be changed. Pawl's rehashed *qua* move does not answer the charge that a timeless person taking on another nature has changed and so is temporal. Pawl states that his understanding of timelessness is different to the standard understanding,<sup>22</sup> for he believes that something can be both atemporal and temporal if it has natures which are respectively so; he readily concedes that on the initial truth conditions atemporality and temporality are contradictory (*ibid.*, p. 204). However, even if there are two natures, there is still the one subject, so a properly thought-out metaphysics, not a mere insistence on logical consistency, is, I would suggest, *de rigueur*. Pawl explicitly eschews proving his case. Pawl's justification for his non-standard understanding of timelessness is that the early church fathers must have meant it that way, for they would have 'fallen asleep at the wheel' (*ibid.*, p. 203) if they did not recognise the contradiction based on initial truth conditions. I would suggest that they crashed; more charitably, perhaps they had other motives informing their deliberations and were happy to write off the whys and wherefores of the metaphysics to the mystery of the hypostatic union.

Blount (2002, pp. 239-240) asserts that perhaps the inference from 'JC *qua* N is F' to either 'JC is F' or 'JC is  $\sim(\sim F)$ ' can be blocked in some cases. In the following, I adapt his analysis.<sup>23</sup>

Consider:

(24) Daisy the rabbit as a respector of slippers behaves well at time t.

(25) Daisy the rabbit as a respector of electrical cables behaves badly at time t.

From (24), we might infer:

(26) Daisy (*simpliciter*) behaves well at time t.

---

<sup>22</sup> Pawl also has a non-standard meaning of visibility. He (2016, p. 157) asserts that JC is both visible and invisible.

<sup>23</sup> Blount uses the example of the Notre Dame football team. A team, however, consists of several players, so it is possible that some players (the defensive ones) play well and some (the offensive ones) do not. In this case, the inferences to *simpliciter* properties in respect of the team as a whole is made more complicated. I use the example of Daisy the rabbit as a single subject to simplify matters. Rabbits are good heuristic devices. Moreover, Daisy is cuter than the Notre Dame football team.

From (25), we might infer:

(27) Daisy (*simpliciter*) behaves badly at time t.

If (24) and (25) are consistent, and if (26) follows from (24) and (27) follows from (25), then we have the contradictory:

(28) It is the case and it is not the case that Daisy (*simpliciter*) behaves well at time t.

According to Blount's analysis, we cannot infer, for instance, from (26):

(29) It is not the case that Daisy (*simpliciter*) does not behave well at time t.

This is because Daisy behaves well at time t in respect of slippers, not in respect of not behaving badly in respect of electrical cables.

(24) and (25) appear to be consistent. Accordingly, it follows that either (26) and (27) do not follow from (24) and (25), respectively, lest we obtain (28); or (26) does not entail that (27) is false (and *vice versa*). Thus, either some cases of 'JC *qua* N has F' do not entail 'JC (*simpliciter*) has F' or some cases of 'JC (*simpliciter*) has F' do not entail 'it is not the case that JC (*simpliciter*) has ~F'.

Daisy's behavioural properties are not *simpliciter* properties but properties in terms of roles she performs. However, when we ask whether someone behaves well, we normally mean *simpliciter*. We want to know whether Daisy destroys anything – we are not particularly interested in whether it is slippers or electrical cables. If Daisy destroys anything, then this bad behaviour trumps the good behaviour.<sup>24</sup>

By parallel reasoning, whilst we might consider Jesus Christ to be both omniscient and non-omniscient, or timeless and temporal, in terms of his divine and human roles respectively, what we normally want to know is whether JC is omniscient or timeless

---

<sup>24</sup> In the case of Blount's example of the Notre Dame football team, if the team won then the property of playing well *simpliciter* trumps the property of playing poorly *simpliciter* and *vice versa* if the team lost (Mullins, 2016, pp. 182-183).



*simpliciter*. The reduplicative strategy in itself does not tell us which of the incompatible properties, if either, applies to the whole (Senor, 2007, p. 66).

### 3.2. Relative identity

Whereas Leibniz's Law considers identity to be an all-or-nothing affair, this strategy argues for a relative account of identity whereby entities can be identical in just some respects; that is:

x and y are the same F but not the same G  
(where 'F' and 'G' stand in for sortal terms)

In other words, the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals, according to which if  $x = y$  then everything that is true of x is also true of y and *vice versa*, no longer holds.

In terms of the Incarnation, we could say:

- (30) God the Son and Jesus Christ are the same person but not the same being that died on the cross.

This enables us to attribute the divine properties to God the Son and the human properties to Jesus Christ. This avoids contradiction since they are two different beings yet orthodoxy is maintained in that they are the same person (van Inwagen, 1994, p. 202).

There is, however, a significant theoretical argument against making identity relative. For instance, let us suppose that two things x and y could be the same F, such as a lump of clay, but could not be the same G, such as a statue: at  $t_1$  the lump of clay that is x was fashioned in the shape of David and at  $t_2$  the lump of clay that is y was refashioned in the shape of Venus de Milo.<sup>25</sup> Thus:

---

<sup>25</sup> As far as I am aware, history does not record any statues of rabbits of comparable eminence.

(31) x and y are the same F (lump of clay) but not the same G (statue).

In this case, x could not fail to be the same G as x itself: it is David. However, y could so fail: it is Venus de Milo. Hence, x and y could be discernible, and if so, then they are not the same F.

Similarly, in respect of (30), if GS and JC are not the same being that died on the cross, then they are discernible and if they are discernible then they are not the same person.

Moreover, it can be argued that the relative identity strategy is not really a metaphysical model of the Incarnation but a linguistic move. That is to say, whilst it might be able to show that certain statements about JC are consistent, it does not show the way JC is constituted for those statements to be true (Marmodoro and Hill, 2011, p. 7).

A prominent proponent of the relative identity strategy is van Inwagen: in his 1988, he applies it to the Trinity; in his 1994, he applies it to the Incarnation. Van Inwagen's proposal of a logic of relative identity would have to be broadly appealing and persuasive enough to overcome the strong intuitive support towards the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals evinced by most philosophers. However, van Inwagen himself acknowledges that his approach is of limited appeal, appearing not to have any utility outside of Christian theology (1988, p. 259); this suggests that it is special pleading. Furthermore, even within Christian theology, his claim is merely to show the logical coherence of the Incarnation, not necessarily to shed any light on substantive metaphysical issues (1994, p. 202). It is not persuasive that he has achieved his modest claim.

### **3.3. Mereology**

This strategy avoids contradictory properties belonging unqualifiedly to one subject by thinking of Jesus Christ in terms of parts and wholes. JC has two parts, his divine nature and his human nature, with one of the contradictory properties belonging to one part while its logical complement belongs to the other part. As such, the incompatible properties are segregated from one another; and by inhering in a nature, a property

can inhere in a person. JC's unity is preserved by saying that the predicates are ascribed to him in an indirect way, that is 'borrowing' from the parts to the whole (Stump, 2003, p. 412).

Earlier, we saw:

(21) Jesus Christ is omniscient *qua* divine and Jesus Christ is non-omniscient *qua* human.

It was claimed that this fails to avoid the inference from 'JC is F *qua* N' to 'JC is F'. The mereological strategy purportedly avoids the inference by its distinction between a property a whole has in its own right and a property it has in virtue of having a part that has that property in its own right. The property of being F is predicated of JC, but it is predicated of JC just in virtue of the fact that JC has a constituent part which has the property of being F in its own right.

As Cross (2009, p. 460) points out, this strategy presents a problem in terms of the abstractist/concretist divide. If we assume that an individual nature is not the 'essential core' of a person, then it is relatively straightforward that human nature could be a concrete particular part of a divine person. However, it is not so straightforward that the divine nature could be such a concrete part. This is because, as Cross explains, the divine nature is shared among the three divine Persons, yet this would make the divine nature more like a property than like a part since a shared object is usually thought of as an abstract object. If, on the other hand, we affirm that the divine nature is a concrete part and has the attribute of, for example, omniscience then this implies that JC borrows from his human nature to show non-omniscience. This then raises questions as to what it is in general for a divine person to have a divine nature: if the divine nature is a concrete part, and the divine Persons borrow from it, then this implies that there are four concrete objects in the Godhead which suggests quaternitarianism rather than trinitarianism (*ibid.*, p. 461).<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Cross (2009, p. 461) offers the suggestion that to maintain that the divine essence is concrete there could be some sort of inclusion relation between the divine essence and the Persons: the divine essence is more than any one Person and each Person is a sphere of consciousness of the divine substance. On this understanding, the divine essence is not a part of each Person and *vice versa*.

There are other mereological models, such as Leftow's (2002a, pp. 288-289) proposal that the divine Person God the Son rather than the divine nature is a concrete part of JC. This avoids the problem identified by Cross about the divine nature being a concrete part. These points will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### **3.4. Restrictive**

Another strategy to attempt to address the incoherence charge is to restrict (Cross, 2009, p. 463) one's notion of the divine nature or the human nature so as to allow the removal or modification of troublesome incompatible properties; that is, we can rethink what divinity or humanity requires. For instance, one can deny that 'limited in knowledge' is an essential property of humanity so the contradiction between divine omniscience and human non-omniscience is dissolved.

In his 1986 (pp. 62-67), Morris makes a number of distinctions. One distinction he draws is a difference between common human properties and essential human properties. Whilst common human properties may be ones that most if not all humans have, this does not mean that they are essential for membership of the kind humanity; Morris declines to specify what are the essential human properties. He asks us to consider the example of the property of living at some point on the face of the Earth and argues that in a future of space-faring humans it may be the case that there are some people who are human who have not actually set foot on the Earth; that is to say, whilst living on the face of the Earth is presently a common human property, it is not essential. Morris employs this distinction with another distinction he draws between someone being 'fully' human and someone being 'merely' human. Someone is fully human just in case he fully exemplifies human nature but has the logical space to exemplify other natures too; whereas someone is merely human just in case he exemplifies human nature but without also exemplifying any ontologically higher natures such as divinity. On this view, someone who is fully but not merely human can lack certain limitation properties which we normally associate with the mere human condition, such as non-omniscience, possibly coming into existence, being a contingent creation, and being mortal. The assumption here is that someone who fails to exemplify those merely human limitation properties can still be human: those human

limitation properties, though common like living at some point on Earth, are not essential to being human, although they are perhaps essential to being merely human. It follows that God the Son incarnate in the form of Jesus Christ could be fully human – a nature he took on in addition to his original divine nature – and exemplify his divine properties but not exemplify incompatible merely human limitation properties.

I would suggest that Morris's inability to state what the essential human properties are is unsatisfactory and his merely human/fully human distinction is of limited utility. Firstly, the approach seems *ad hoc*. The distinctions allow one to conveniently redefine troublesome properties which we ordinarily think of as essentially constituting human nature to be *merely* human properties but not in fact essentially human properties; if they remain essentially human properties then they would have to be counted as included under *fully* human properties and so contradiction can arise between them and divine properties. This appears to be a *merely* linguistic device, not a *fully* principled metaphysical account. Moreover, whilst he is probably correct in classifying his example of living at some point on the face of the Earth as being a common property of humans but not an essential one, this tells us very little. No doubt there will be a time in the future when some humans live out their lives on colonised planets. However, living on the Earth is a common property of terrestrial creatures and so does not identify a property humans share in common which distinguishes them from non-humans. Secondly, whilst there may not be universal agreement on the properties necessary and sufficient for being human, there are certain features of being human involving limitation that are surely correct and are essential (*contra* Morris, 1986, p. 65; *contra* Swinburne<sup>27</sup>, 1994, p. 28; Crisp, 2007, p. 135).<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, as Stump observes (1989, p. 220), if the only constituents of human nature that JC takes on are those properties essential to human beings but not incompatible with any divine properties, then what ordinary humans have in common with JC as regards human nature seems rather paltry, yet the Chalcedonian formula is that JC shared fully with

---

<sup>27</sup> In his 1994 (p. 28), Swinburne claims that someone who by willing can move mountains on distant continents or can know what is going on in distant galaxies without the use of technology could still possibly count as human.

<sup>28</sup> In the neighbourhood, Leftow (2015, pp. 78-83) uses limitation as one of his arguments against materialist Christology: human limitations imply a strong commitment to kenoticism if God the Son were identical to a human body.

us in our humanity. It would help Morris's case if he could list what properties he thinks are essential to being fully human rather than obfuscating with talk of diamonds and alligators. Given the distinctions he draws, one would presume that Morris would flesh out his account with what he considers to be the essential human properties. He does not, merely asserting that we should wait for a '... perfected science or more complete revelation' (Morris, 1991, p. 166).

It is easy to think of fantastical thought experiments in which we create all sorts of imaginary scenarios and give or remove from human beings any properties we like, but there has to be a grounding in reality if the thought experiments are to be in any way plausible, let alone persuasive, as opposed to just logically coherent. If human nature is indeed a natural kind, then we do not learn about its essence through armchair reflection, or *a priori*, but rather through scientific investigation, or *a posteriori* (Senor, 2011, p. 111). All the inductive evidence – based on the conservative estimate of more than one hundred and seventeen billion humans who have ever lived (Kaneda and Haub, 2021)<sup>29</sup> – is that human beings have never shown any hint of omnipotence or omniscience: we simply do not have any evidence whatsoever of any mysterious power within ourselves that can cause Mt. Everest to move from Earth to Kepler-452b or make us aware of all true propositions. Assuming these powers really exist – and no divine being seems willing to manifest on Earth to satisfactorily demonstrate them under controlled conditions – then a proper account of what are the mechanisms behind omnipotence and omniscience should be made. If the mechanisms are within a being who is alleged to be human, then I suspect those mechanisms – perhaps some unusual combination of DNA which furnishes the brain with the ability to tap into some deeper aspect of reality in the manner of telekinesis<sup>30</sup> or ESP – would be likely to demarcate that being from homo sapiens. On the other hand, if the mechanisms are said to be supernatural, then the supernatural itself and the process by which a human being can access the supernatural need to be demonstrated; one would have

---

<sup>29</sup> And the inductive support grows every day.

<sup>30</sup> Since we are operating within the physical universe, presumably there is some utilisation of detectable energy [even in the Marvel universe, superheroes utilise energy]; otherwise, it is down to seeking a new physics or adopting magic.

to be satisfied that the human is not merely a channel through which, for instance, an evil demon is entertaining itself.

I would argue that the principal reasons for our human limitation properties are our particular bodies with their evolutionary history and our embodiment in a physical universe with its given laws of nature. Consider the issue of limited knowledge versus omniscience. There is such a disconnect between normal humans, who are subject to prone-to-error sensory apparatus, prone-to-error cognitive faculties, time delays in receiving external data, time delays in cognitive processing, limited cognitive multi-tasking abilities, and poor and limited memory, and divine beings, who reputedly enjoy perfect cognition with immediate and infallible access to all states of affairs across the whole universe as soon as they happen, that one cannot reasonably take seriously the idea that a being with omniscience is human. Even if we assume that the human brain and sensory apparatus are perfectible,<sup>31</sup> how does one allow for the finite speed of data in the universe so that the putative perfectly knowledgeable human has immediate access to all states of affairs? The light coming from the tip of our noses is a fraction of a nanosecond in the past before we even register it; the light from the edge of the observable universe is rather longer than a nanosecond; the light from beyond the observable universe never reaches us. Of course, spatial distances might not matter to an incorporeal divine being who is non-spatial, but we are talking about a corporeal spatially located candidate human being.

The simple fact for our present purposes is that human beings are temporal creatures. A timeless entity which [who] claimed to be human would be so removed from any experience of what we remotely understand to be human that we could not seriously entertain the claim. Other properties of being human might have wiggle room, but temporality as a mode of existence is a modal property; that is, a property such that if apt of something at all *must* be apt of it. As modes of existence, timelessness on the divine side or temporality on the human side are not attributes that can be restricted to resolve the contradiction. Cross (2009, p. 464 and p. 471) acknowledges this when

---

<sup>31</sup> I am not sure what a perfect human brain and sensory apparatus would be. Would it be the biological analogue to a quantum computer entangled with all the particles in the universe? But if it is biological, it would still be subject to delays in processing due to tardy biological processes such as uptake of oxygen and nutrients.

he states that a solution to the incoherence charge will likely involve an abandonment of a strong form of classical theism that includes immutability and timelessness. Gorman (2016) supports a call for a revision to classical theism and hints that timelessness would have to be dropped otherwise even a revised classical theism still leaves open the question of how the atemporal divine God the Son became human in the first place, for becoming human itself is a temporal process<sup>32</sup> and so GS would therefore have had to have been already temporal before he became human in order to be able to become human.<sup>33</sup> Pawl (2016, p. 13) recognises the latter problem as number 2 in his list of the three strongest philosophical objections to Conciliar Christology, though he would not recommend a revision to classical theism. It is a presupposition of the Research Question that God is timeless, so dropping timelessness is ruled out.

### 3.5. Kenosis

One strategy is kenoticism which is the claim that God the Son temporarily gave up troublesome divine properties such as omniscience during his sojourn on Earth. This would resolve the problem of incompatible properties, for Jesus Christ would not be omniscient *etc* at the same time as he is limited in knowledge *etc*. However, on the classical theism model, God holds these properties essentially, so it is not possible for God (*de re*) to even temporarily give them up without ceasing to be God (*de dicto*). Of course, if these properties were contingent, then it would be possible for GS to give them up without ceasing to be God.

Giving up (and reassuming properties) are *prima facie* indicative of GS being mutable and hence temporal (Mullins, 2016, pp. 161-162). Moreover, as I argue in §4.2 of Chapter 1, timelessness and temporality are not mere properties but conditions of

---

<sup>32</sup> This is in the neighbourhood of Senor's 'B' argument. See §2.3 of Chapter 6 for extended discussion.

<sup>33</sup> Gorman (2016, pp. 282-284) also proposes a distinction between strong and moderate forms of classical theism. A strong classical theism rethinks what properties are divine whereas a moderate classical theism rethinks to which being properties should be attributed to. On the latter view, a being that is *solely* divine would, for instance, be immaterial whereas a being that is divine but not solely divine could be material. Likewise, on a revised classical anthropology, a being that is *solely* human would, for instance, be contingent whereas a being that is human but not solely human could be necessary. Gorman (*ibid.*, pp. 290-291) notes that using these distinctions to resolve contradictions in the Incarnation such as Jesus Christ being both atemporal and temporal is separate from the question of how God the Son became human in the first place.



existence, and so are not properties that can be given up. Thus, the kenotic models do not have the resources to show the compatibility between timelessness and the temporality of the Incarnation.

### 3.6. Two-minds models

A further strategy to handle troublesome contradictory properties is to ascribe to Jesus Christ two minds, *viz.* divine and human, whilst retaining the position that JC is still one person. This can enable reduplicative propositions: for instance, omniscience can be attributed to the divine mind and limited knowledge to the human mind. Usually in such models, there is an asymmetric accessing relation whereby the divine mind has access to the full contents of the human mind but not *vice versa*.

On the standard modern understanding of what is a person, *viz.* psychological factors, such models with their two minds (and two wills) look like implying that there are two persons in JC. Christian orthodoxy, however, is that there was just the one person, God the Son, in JC. An important consideration in evaluating such models will be how they handle this implication of two persons. Another important consideration will be whether they are indeed successful in enabling the use of devices as reduplicative propositions.

Setting aside the important issues of whether two-mind models do in fact imply two persons and/or do succeed in reconciling contradictory properties, such models presuppose diachronic as well as synchronic thoughts and so would appear to be of limited use in accounting for the reconciliation of a timeless mind and a temporal mind. On the other hand, given that the second lynchpin of my proposed reconciliation involves the ability of Timeless God to share his consciousness in a plurality of entities, at least some of the insights learnt from examining two-mind models, if only negatively from identifying their shortcomings, may be most invaluable. Chapter 7 considers psychological models in extensive detail.

### 3.7. Dialetheism

Dialetheism is the view that there are propositions that are both true and false in the same sense; that is, there are true contradictions (Priest, 2006). It is a thesis about truth that can be used in the construction of a system of formal logic; it is not a system of formal logic itself. Instead of trying to explain away Jesus Christ's alleged contradictory properties as not being contradictory, the dialethic approach enables a contradictory Christology whose response to the incoherence problem is to accept the apparent contradictions as genuine contradictions (Beall, 2019; 2021). Although this dissertation uses classical logic, it is useful to consider what the dialethic strategy purports, as the work of Beall in particular has drawn some attention in the Christological literature.

One worry about allowing true contradictions is the principle of explosion, *viz.* such an allowing 'explodes' the theory into its trivial one according to which all sentences in the language of the theory are true so any statement can be proven from a contradiction. This may be symbolised as:

$$p \wedge \sim p \vdash q$$

To illustrate the problem, consider the following argument:

- P1: Jesus Christ is omniscient.
- P2: Jesus Christ is limited in knowledge.
- C: Rabbits have wings.

If P1 and P2 are true then their conjunction is a true contradiction. Reasoning classically, any conclusion then follows. If so, this would make it impossible to distinguish truth from falsehood. However, the assertion that rabbits have wings for example might be something we are not prepared to accept.<sup>34</sup> Hence, there is the motivation for the law of non-contradiction in order to maintain meaningful discourse.

---

<sup>34</sup> Daisy the rabbit would welcome having wings for it is tiring to repeatedly hop over the Blackpool Tower. However, it is a Moorean fact that rabbits do not have wings.

Proponents argue that dialetheism does not necessarily commit one to trivialism; that is, the logical theory that all propositions are true and that all contradictions of the form ‘ $p \wedge \sim p$ ’ are true. In contrast to systems of logic such as classical logic which are susceptible to explosion, there are systems of logic known as paraconsistent logics that aim to be inconsistency-tolerant and to eliminate explosion, so that it should be possible to reason with inconsistent information in a controlled and discriminating way. If these systems are successful, the upshot would be that they would allow some true contradictions without jeopardising all logical proofs.

Beall (2019, p. 437) argues that in order to prevent or at least restrict explosion in a given theory it is necessary to find a counterexample to a pair of propositions which are allegedly absurd through being contradictory. He asserts that the objection that once we allow some contradictions we have no grounds to reject any contradictions is simply unmotivated (*ibid.*, p. 418). He asks us to consider what he offers is a directly analogous claim:

Once we admit that quantum reality is funny we have no grounds to reject that all of reality is funny.

It is not clear what Beall means by ‘funny’ but let us presume he means ‘contradictory’ for he is looking for true contradictions. Beall does not offer argument or evidence that quantum reality is contradictory. Perhaps he is thinking of a superposed cat that is allegedly both alive and dead. However, such superposition reflects our epistemic access: once we observe the cat, it is one or the other but not both. So, I am not prepared to grant Beall that quantum reality is contradictory. The putative funniness at the quantum level disappears once we scale up to the macro level and reality comes more readily comes within our ambit of epistemic access.<sup>35</sup> We can appreciate the point that Beall is alluding to: *if* quantum reality were funny [contradictory], we do have grounds for rejecting that all of reality is funny because there must be some underlying principle preventing the generalisation of funniness. In the case of quantum reality,

---

<sup>35</sup> For an accessible introduction to the quantum world, see Mullin’s ‘Quantum Weirdness’ (2020).

presumably the principle would be one of the funniness averaging out at higher scales or a many-worlds approach of handling contradictions.

Beall acknowledges that there are probably few true contradictions, and that those he has in mind would be found in strange cases of extraordinary phenomena (*ibid.*, pp.419-422). He offers the *sui generis* dual nature of JC. One, however, has to be suspicious of a view on logic that has utility in only one field of study, and possibly only one instance therein.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, this offering appears to be question-begging: what is required is an explanation of why JC is the exception that proves the rule of not normally allowing true contradictions. Beall anticipates and responds to this charge of his case being *ad hoc*, but his responses are unconvincing. *Contra* Beall, persuasive independent motivation implies applicability to fields outside of theology and, furthermore, it is not clear that the conciliar texts' statements of orthodoxy purportedly involving *prima facie* contradiction do invite a natural response accepting his Contradictory Christology.

All our inductive evidence of the physical world supports the notion that it is just not possible for something to be and not to be in the same way at the same time. If Beall could find in our physical reality a real counterexample, then we can proceed to the discussion of why the counterexample does not lead to explosion. Meanwhile, classical logic remains secure.

## INSIGHTS

The basis for the Research Question is that there is a contradiction between timelessness and temporality. There are various strategies commonly identified in the literature which are proffered to handle the contradiction between several pairs of divine and human properties, such as omniscience and limited knowledge. The properties of timelessness and temporality have not been, however, a primary concern for most commentators. In an initial assessment of those strategies in this chapter, the

---

<sup>36</sup> This is reminiscent of van Inwagen's Relative Identity Logic.

acid test has been whether they offer a resolution, either explicitly, indirectly or in terms of possibly providing resources, to the timelessness/temporality contradiction.

Given the use of classical logic in this dissertation, an appeal to dialetheism to accept the contradiction is rejected, and, in any case, dialetheism does not appear to be plausible on its own merits. In a similar vein, the theoretical concerns over relative logic also invite rejection.

Restricting one's notion of the divine nature or the human nature so as to allow the removal or modification of troublesome incompatible properties seems too *ad hoc*. Importantly, it does not seem possible to remove the possession of timelessness, for such is a condition of existence and is a modal property (see §4.2 of Chapter 1). Regardless, the presupposition of the Research Question is that God is timeless and this has to be incorporated into the solution.

The main challenge for using kenotic models to address the Research Question would appear to be that they involve change, which is incompatible with timelessness. Thus, they too are rejected.

There are perhaps possibilities to develop an approach which incorporates elements from mereological, reduplicative and two-minds models. The idea would be one of segregating the two contradictory properties so that the subject of the incarnation does not have them in the same way at the same time. In furtherance of exploring this *prima facie* promising avenue, Chapters 6 and 7 will look in depth at some putatively suitable models and see whether they can help deliver the resolution.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **MODELS OF THE INCARNATION (NON-PSYCHOLOGICAL)**

‘Blessed are the cracked, for they shall let in the light.’

- Groucho Marx

#### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

§1. Stump and Kretzmann’s ‘Eternity’

§2. Compositional models

2.1. Introduction

2.2. Stump’s ‘Aquinas’

2.3. Leftow’s ‘A Timeless God Incarnate’

Insights

#### **OVERVIEW**

This chapter begins with Stump and Kretzmann’s discussion of the Incarnation. It examines whether their proposed device of ET-simultaneity provides useful resources in accounting for how a timeless God interacts with the temporal world. Next, an introduction is given of what compositional models are, including an outline of transformational and relational approaches. In examining these compositional models, attention is paid as to whether a timeless God has to undergo change in order to form the composite. To help illustrate some of the philosophical difficulties, examinations are made of Stump’s interpretation of Aquinas and of the mereological model of Leftow.

## SECTION 1. STUMP AND KRETZMANN'S 'ETERNITY'

The main responses in the philosophical literature to Stump and Kretzmann's seminal 1981 article 'Eternity' usually focus on whether their notions of a simultaneity relation between timeless and temporal beings and of atemporal duration are coherent (for instance, Fitzgerald, 1985). However, Stump and Kretzmann do discuss the Incarnation (1981, pp. 451-453). In order to appreciate some of the parameters of their incarnational discussion, it is desirable to briefly consider their ideas on the simultaneity relation.

Stump and Kretzmann, in addressing how a timeless God can apparently produce temporal effects in response to temporal happenings, introduce their device of Eternal-Temporal Simultaneity (ET-simultaneity). They initially use the analogue of frames of reference in Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity to help characterise this model: eternity is like one unique reference frame in addition to multiple time reference frames. This device takes on board that timelessness is a different mode of existence to temporality. Given that modes of existence are normally thought to be mutually exclusive, there does not seem to be a common-denominator reference frame to reconcile the two modes of existence. ET-simultaneity is defined in terms of reference frames to cover the two modes of existence respectively (*ibid.*, pp. 436-439) so that all of time is present at once to eternity. They make the claims that from a temporal standpoint the temporal present is ET-simultaneous with the whole infinite realised-all-at-once life of any eternal entity but earlier or later to other temporal moments, and that from the eternal standpoint all moments of time are ET-simultaneous to the eternal present. They use the example of Nixon's resigning from the Presidency and his death as both being present at once in the eternal present.<sup>1</sup> The term 'ET-simultaneous', therefore, seems to be a placeholder for the mysterious common-denominator element which would explain how the temporal present and the eternal present can be mapped onto each other (and thus, for example, facilitate causation), without reducing what is temporal to what is eternal, which would make time illusory, or what is eternal to what is temporal, which would make eternity illusory, or having recourse

---

<sup>1</sup> Given that Nixon was alive at the timing of the writing of 'Eternity', some might feel that Stump and Kretzmann show poor taste in choosing him as an example.

to a third mode of existence:<sup>2</sup> indeed, they specifically deny that eternal *x* would exist in time and temporal *y* would exist in eternity by emphasising that Nixon is a temporal being, not an eternal one, and so he is not simultaneously alive and dead in eternity (*ibid.*, p. 443).<sup>3</sup> Hence, ET-simultaneity is a species of simultaneity which is not within but in some sense between reference frames, whereby eternal entities which are eternally present and temporal entities which are temporally present are *ipso facto* co-present. Thus, it is argued that whilst a timeless God responds to temporal happenings, these responses are not temporally later but ET-simultaneous.

The notion, however, that ET-simultaneity is a species of simultaneity which is not *within* but *between* reference frames is, I would suggest, rather opaque. We deserve an account from Stump and Kretzmann to explain what they exactly mean.<sup>4</sup> The notion of reference frames is normally understood to convey the idea that the measurements of time *etc* are relative from within the reference frame so that whilst two or more reference frames may differ in their measurements both (or all) are correct. The use of 'between' is suggestive of being outside reference frames so as to secure absolute measurement, and so talk of reference frames is inapt.

---

<sup>2</sup> Leftow (1991a, pp. 222-228; for further elaboration, see Page, 2024, pp. 15-21) offers the view that temporal entities are also actual in eternity as well as in the temporal realm, so God is not simultaneous with temporal entities existing in time, for that would draw God into temporality, but rather God is simultaneous with temporal entities existing in eternity; thus, there is a common denominator reference frame (God's) shared by both timeless and temporal entities, so such entities can be causally related. He argues for this on the basis of his Zero Thesis: God has no spatial location, so there is no spatial distance between God and temporal entities, so the spatial distance between God and temporal entities always remains the same, so there is no motion relative to God in God's frame of reference [there can be motion relative to other temporal entities], so there is no change relative to God in God's frame of reference, so God's spacelessness entails creatures' timelessness [on a relational view of time] in God's frame of reference. The notion though that the spatial distance between God and temporal entities is zero is an obvious category mistake (Craig, 2001a, pp. 92-93). Leftow (1991a, p. 225) admits that someone who accepts his Zero Thesis also accepts that the colour yellow and the number 3 are spatially contiguous with all spatial things.

<sup>3</sup> Stump and Kretzmann address Kenny's concern (Kenny, 1969, p. 264, cited in Stump and Kretzmann (1981, p. 447) of his writing simultaneously with Nero playing the fiddle by arguing that unlike simple simultaneity, ET-simultaneity is not transitive (Stump and Kretzmann, 1981, pp. 439-440; Leftow, 1991b, pp. 151ff). It is not transitive because for ET-simultaneity to apply there has to be either an eternal or a temporal standpoint from which the simultaneity is observed.

<sup>4</sup> Leftow (1988, p. 206) offers that one can '... define a sort of simultaneity ...' that will obtain not just within but between reference frames. He asserts that if we suppose that two events occur at the same time in reference frame A and that the same two events also occur at the same time in reference frame B, one could say that two events occur at the same time not merely within reference frame A and within reference frame B but 'between' reference frames A and B. I consider my remarks about inaptness in the main text to still stand.



If the device of ET-simultaneity works, one can imagine – *caveat lector*, this is *not* Stump and Kretzmann’s thought – a timeless God manipulating a philosophical zombie Jesus Christ all of whose actions are determined from eternity by the timeless God’s responses to temporal happenings. If a timeless God merely produces effects in the temporal world by manipulating a zombie, then we would not have a proper incarnation. Moreover, if there is to be causation involving a timeless God and the temporal world as in manipulating a philosophical zombie, then such causation arguably needs to be in the same dimension. This invokes the issue that an agent needs to be temporal in order to produce temporal effects, which Stump and Kretzmann (*ibid.*, pp. 447-449) acknowledge as a standard concern in the literature. If the agent does not need to be temporal in order to produce temporal effects, then we are faced with the requirement to produce a satisfactory account of atemporal causation; we do not, though, have such an account. Stump and Kretzmann assert that their ET-simultaneity model responds well to these concerns by adopting co-occurrence as a theoretically justifiable condition on causal connection between an action and its effect. The philosophical zombie is not, however, Stump and Kretzmann’s thought because *inter alia* they recognise (*ibid.*, p. 451; also, Senor, 2002, p. 224) that the Incarnation presents a particular difficulty. With the Incarnation, the issue is not simply how a timeless God produces temporal effects but that the timeless God enters time; that is, the timeless God is also a component of the temporal effect; and, furthermore, that the timeless God remains somehow atemporal.

In response to the particular difficulty of the Incarnation, Stump and Kretzmann appeal to the doctrine of the two natures and the *qua*-move, together with their ET-simultaneity model, to offer *prima facie* grounds to deny the incompatibility of a timeless God being incarnate (1981, p. 452). Given God’s timelessness, the possession of the human nature is from eternity. Stump and Kretzmann employ their ET-simultaneity device by asserting that at some temporal instants, *circa* 4 BCE to 30 CE, the human nature is temporally actual yet ET-simultaneous with the divine nature.

Stump and Kretzmann’s approach to the Incarnation hinges on the plausibility of their ET-simultaneity model. It is implicit in the meaning of timelessness that it bears no

temporal relations to any object or event whatsoever. Hence, much ink has been spilt on whether the ET-simultaneity model even offers a possible solution to the simultaneity relation of the eternal and the temporal, for their claim that observers in the respective reference frames see an eternal entity(/event) and a temporal entity(/event) as both being ET-simultaneous in each reference frame appears to merely restate the problem. At best, Stump and Kretzmann's notion of co-presence appears to be *ad hoc* and thin.

Stump and Kretzmann do not provide a suitable model to show the compatibility between timelessness and the Incarnation. Still, they help draw attention to the issues of how human nature can be possessed from eternity but be temporally actual at some specified temporal instants; and the need for an account of how temporal moments, all at once, can be some-species-of-simultaneously present with a timeless God.

## SECTION 2. COMPOSITIONAL MODELS

### 2.1. Introduction

Compositional models of the Incarnation are ones in which there are two constituents or related property-bearers - God the Son and the human being Jesus - forming a single composite substance - Jesus Christ - with internal relations holding between those constituents (Marmodoro and Hill, 2008, p. 119).<sup>5</sup> These relations are internal<sup>6</sup> in that they relate the constituents of a single composite substance, as opposed to external<sup>7</sup> relations which relate distinct substances. The internal relations purportedly establish the genuine unity between the constituents so that there is a single individual who is both divine and human.<sup>8</sup> The composite may bear properties in its own right

---

<sup>5</sup> The relations of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures are usually taken by orthodoxy to be a mystery. The philosophical presumption is that composition is restricted, not universal. This is in order to help secure that we only get an incarnation through the hypostatic union. If composition were universal, then other constituents, such as Daisy the rabbit's right paw, could form part of the Incarnation, so a further account would need to be given to preclude such undesirable possibilities (Leftow, 2011b, p. 21 [Daisy's paw is my example, not his]).

<sup>6</sup> An example of an internal relation is existential dependence: Jesus (the human) comes into existence at the moment he is united to God the Son (Marmodoro and Hill, 2008, pp. 123-129).

<sup>7</sup> An example of an external relation is co-naming: God the Son and Jesus (the human) allegedly form a genuine unity because others treat them as a genuine unity (*ibid.*, p. 117).

<sup>8</sup> Marmodoro and Hill (*ibid.*, p. 117) point out that whilst in using external relations one may speak of a composite entity made up of the two distinct substances, one may not speak of a greater substantial unity. It is, of course,

but also the constituents bear their own properties. Compositional models attempt to offer us an account of what it means for GS to become human.

One influential view of compositional models is the concretist three-part form, wherein the pre-existent GS takes on a concrete particular comprising a created human body (B) and a created human soul/mind (S) as a proper part. The human body and the human soul/mind may be referred to as a body/soul composite (B + S). This does not mean that GS assumes a human being, which would be possession, not incarnation; nor does it mean that GS is transformed into a human being, for the orthodox claim is that GS became incarnate *in* human flesh, not became human flesh.<sup>9</sup>

Given that three-part compositional models include a divine soul/mind and a human soul/mind, it would appear at first blush that there are two persons. The orthodox position is that there is just one person. Note will be taken in the following discussion of how the various models deal with the issue of the unity of the composite so that despite there being several constituents there is genuinely only one person (Marmodoro and Hill, 2010, p. 470).

A distinction may be made between transformational compositional models and relational compositional models (Marmodoro and Hill, 2011, pp. 8-11; Le Poidevin, 2023, p. 40). In the former, GS acquires B + S as a part and is transformed into a divine-human composite or JC.<sup>10</sup> In the latter, GS is joined with B + S and thus becomes part of but not identical to JC; that is, GS comes to stand in a certain relation to B + S.

---

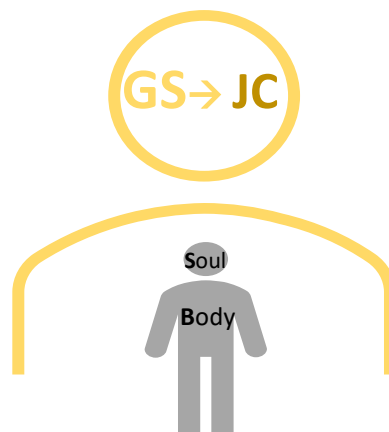
a greater substantial unity we are after in trying to give a metaphysical account of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that Marmodoro and Hill (*ibid.*, p. 119) reject models based on external relations.

<sup>9</sup> Merricks (2007, p. 294) takes a physicalist approach and argues that at the Incarnation God the Son was transformed into a human body. This minority view – possibly only held by Merricks himself – is challenged not only on theological grounds but on the philosophical point that it is not clear that an immaterial entity can become a material entity (Leftow, 2002a, p. 284, and especially his 2015; Plantinga, 1999, p. 186).

<sup>10</sup> An interesting question is what does it mean to acquire a part. A useful conceptualisation is that parthood requires being integrated into the essence of that to which a thing is attached as a part. See Senor (2007, pp. 57-59) and his discussion of the case of 'Torso'.

If human nature is taken to be a particular thing, that is, one person's human nature is not the same as another's, then it is common to associate relational compositional models with concretism: GS enters into a relation with a concrete particular because natures are concrete particulars (Marmodoro and Hill, 2011, p. 11). One of the ideas in play here is that to form a relation the relatum that one is joining to needs to be extrinsic. Conversely, transformational compositional models are typically associated with abstractism: GS acquires a second nature by acquiring a set of essential properties because natures are sets of essential properties; that is, human nature is a universal so one person's human nature is the same as another's (*ibid.*). An idea in play here is that in transforming oneself, one needs to incorporate at least some elements of what one is transforming into as part of one's intrinsic self, and this more readily lends itself to incorporating properties.

Flint (2011, p. 71) refers to the transformational compositional model as Model T.<sup>11</sup> Figure 6.1 shows my representation of Model T, with the right pointing arrow from GS to JC indicating transformation; that is, GS and JC are numerically identical:



**Figure 6.1: Model T**

Model T is a mereological account. B + S becomes a proper part of GS.<sup>12</sup> GS is, therefore, intrinsically human, for it is an intrinsic feature of GS that he has a part which

---

<sup>11</sup> Named after Thomas Aquinas, not 'Transformation'.

<sup>12</sup> Again, this implies that an immaterial entity can become a material entity (*contra* Leftow, 2002a, p. 284, and especially his 2015).

has human characteristics as intrinsic properties; that is, properties of one part transfer to the whole (Le Poidevin, 2023, p. 50).

On the Boethian understanding of a person as an individual substance of a rational nature, Model T satisfies this requirement of a sole person on the basis that no substance has a distinct substance as a proper part and B + S is a proper part of GS (Flint, 2011, p. 72). However, on the standard modern understanding of a person based on psychological traits, we have two minds under Model T which is suggestive of two persons. Still, it is also a plausible principle that no person has another distinct person as a proper part (*ibid.*), in which case Model T conforms to this stricture.<sup>13</sup>

The principle that no person has another distinct person as a proper part is one appealed to by a number of commentators. It can be challenged by some suggestive albeit highly speculative real examples in nature.<sup>14</sup> If we adopt the standard modern understanding of a person based on psychological traits and are not speciesist, then a case can be made that, for instance, an octopus contains multiple persons. An octopus has nine brains: one in the central core and one in each of its eight arms. The brains in the arms enjoy extensive functional autonomy; for example, if one arm is torn off in a battle with a predator then the arm will continue to engage with the predator so that the octopus proper can escape. Given this extensive functional autonomy and the fact that octopuses appear to exhibit mentality, it is plausible that there is a disunity of consciousness in an octopus such that each brain might be thought of as being a person in itself (Carls-Diamante, 2022). In the case of humans, we could look to various psychopathological conditions such as multiple personality disorders and the effects in some patients of commissurotomy.

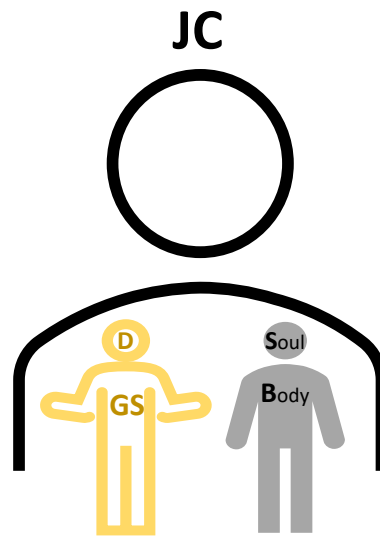
---

<sup>13</sup> The principle is often asserted as plausible without argument. Marmodoro and Hill (2010, p. 484) offer Aristotelian homonymy as one possible systematic justification for it: if something does not have the defining function of the kind it belongs to, then it is not a member of that kind. Leftow (2002a, p. 281) offers support for the principle by appealing to a Geachian cat with hair being plucked.

<sup>14</sup> Moreover, if Christian philosophers can use fantastical tales of time travel, three-headed dogs and humans turning into gorillas or crocodiles, then I can use science fiction scenarios of symbiotes such as in *Stargate SG-1* (MGM TV Series 1997–2007). The personhood of the human host is retained but usually placed in a submissive role by the personhood of the symbiote Goa'uld, hence it is logically possible that one person is a proper part of another.

Since Model T involves transformation, it would appear to be ruled out by divine immutability. Divine immutability is entailed by timelessness, so Model T is not a suitable account of incarnation for the purposes of reconciling timelessness and temporality.<sup>15</sup>

Flint (2011, p. 79) refers to the relational compositional type of model as Model A.<sup>16</sup> This is also a mereological account. In contrast to Model T, Model A does not have B + S become a part of GS; instead, B + S and GS are proper parts of the whole JC. Figure 6.2 shows my representation of it:



**Figure 6.2: Model A**

Model A has the implications, *inter alia*, that GS is extrinsically and derivatively human, by virtue of his relation to human entities, and that GS is human yet wholly insulated from the normal effects of being human (Le Poidevin, 2023, p. 50). As such, it might offer a suitable account for reconciling timelessness and temporality, for GS can be intrinsically immutable and yet undergo extrinsic change in the temporal world with those changes being *mere* Cambridge changes.

---

<sup>15</sup> There are other grounds upon which one may wish to reject Model T such as the standard argument against mereological increase or 'growing argument' (Flint, 2011, pp. 72-79). These are not considered in this dissertation.

<sup>16</sup> The A is an allusion to automotive history.

At first blush, it would appear under Model A that JC is a person. However, GS is a divine person, who exists before the composite is formed. Possibly, B + S is a person too. So once again we would appear to have too many persons. Given the plausible principle that no person has another distinct person as a proper part (see above), then if JC is indeed a person, this implies *ipso facto* that GS and B + S are not persons. However, it is impossible that GS ceases to be a divine person; we may set aside the issue of B + S on some basis of not having the opportunity to develop personhood. We could conclude that JC is not in fact a person, for if JC is not a person then GS can be both a proper part of the composite and a person. Crisp (2011, p. 51) dubs this idea that JC is not a person the ‘no-person objection’ to Model A; it is represented in Figure 6.2 by showing the head of JC to be empty (the initialism ‘JC’ is above the head, not inside; compare with Figure 6.1). In examining Leftow’s version of Model A (see §2.3), we will consider how he deals with this problem.

Less influential compositional models are two-part models wherein GS assumes a B but not a S, so JC’s human nature just is his human body; thus, human nature would be a concrete particular (Crisp, 2011, p. 45). In §3 of Chapter 9 I propose a model in the neighbourhood of such an approach albeit with the crucial difference that I consider the acquisition of a human body as resulting in the completion of a pre-existing abstract human nature; that is, the human nature is not solely the human body.

## 2.2. Stump’s Aquinas

In her 2003 ‘Aquinas’, Stump discusses her interpretation of what she takes to be Aquinas’s compositional account whereby God the Son, who has a divine nature, assumes an additional human nature as a part. This human nature is a concrete particular of a body and a rational soul; such a nature has its own will, intellect, causal powers and activity. The composite whole Jesus Christ is the same person as GS, for there is a union of person. This appears to be a Model T account.

In Aquinas’s model a distinction is made between a property a whole has in its own right and a property it has in virtue of having a constituent that has that property in its own right. In the composite whole JC, contradictory properties belonging to the human

and the divine natures are ascribed to him in an indirect or derivative way by 'borrowing' from the parts to the whole (Stump, 2003, pp. 412ff). The idea of 'borrowing' is that the whole has the property in question in virtue of having constitution relations to the part that has the property non-derivatively. Properties that are borrowed are not really had by the whole; that is, it is not the case that JC is F *qua* divine nature and not-F *qua* human nature, but rather JC is derivatively-F *qua* divine nature and derivatively-not-F *qua* human nature. Contradiction is thus allegedly avoided by the *qua*-move of segregating the properties to the respective natures and claiming that the whole JC has them both but not in the same respect; that is to say, since JC does not have the properties in his own right, there is no incoherence in claiming that JC is both F and not-F.

The question arises as to what properties if any belong to the composite person JC in his own right rather than derivatively from the parts. The property of knowing something, for instance, would appear to be something a person has in his own right (*ibid.*, p. 415). According to Stump, on Aquinas's view most properties have to be attributed derivatively, the few exceptions being perception and cognition. This flows from Aquinas's commitment to the notion that JC has two intellects and two wills which are radically different from each other: even properties involving intellect and will are predicated of the whole person JC in virtue of being predicated of a constituent (*ibid.* p. 416).

On Aquinas's model, JC with his two intellects and two wills appears to have two minds and *ipso facto* to be two persons. However, not all constituents are equal. Stump interprets Aquinas's position as being that the divine nature controls the human nature. The person of JC is the person of GS who exists before the Incarnation; accordingly, the divine nature is essential to GS whereas the human nature, on the other hand, is something that was added to GS upon incarnating and is contingent. On Aquinas's metaphysics following the Boethian definition of a person, although JC's human nature has a rational nature, it is not a hypostasis, that is, an individual substance, and so is not a person; if it were not a part of the composite then the human nature would qualify



as a person.<sup>17</sup> The person JC always operates with the divine nature, and only sometimes through the human nature; JC can choose to operate with just his divine mind, or with his divine mind and human mind, but never just with his human mind (*ibid.*, pp. 416-417).

Given the way the divine mind can switch the human mind on and off, as it were, Stump raises the issue of whether the divine mind can switch off its omniscience and so allow the human mind to display its limited knowledge (*ibid.*, p. 417). Stump contrasts omnipotence and omniscience. JC could in principle self-limit his divine powers and operate with the limited powers of the human nature but keep his omnipotence latent, *able* to be reactivated and hence ultimately still be omnipotent. Omniscience, in contrast, is not a case of being *able* to know everything but rather *actually* knows everything. Stump notes that at first blush the reduplicative strategy of segregating the attributes does not appear to be available here as omniscience will always be at the forefront since the divine mind is always operative.<sup>18</sup> If JC had properties and their logical complements belonging at the level of the whole, that is, non-derivatively, then the properties would be had in the same respect and so contradiction ensues, as Stump acknowledges. However, after an extended detour through discussion of an actor with a contact lens, human agnosia and alien invasion (*ibid.*, pp. 418-422),<sup>19</sup> Stump argues that Aquinas's model allows for the reduplicative strategy to be available since JC can operate simultaneously through both the divine and human minds (*ibid.*, p. 423).

I find Stump's analysis of JC having omniscience and non-omniscience reduplicatively to be curious. If JC were asked when the Day of Judgement will be, then presumably he would state that he both knows (through the divine mind) and does not know (through the human mind), which we would find puzzling and uninformative.<sup>20</sup> We

---

<sup>17</sup> As Pawl (2022, pp. 325-326) explicates Aquinas, the human nature lacks personhood not by subtraction (something it fails to have) but by addition (being united to the divine nature).

<sup>18</sup> The divine mind always being operative forecloses the option of JC alternating between the divine and human minds which would be one way of successfully employing the reduplicative strategy (Stump, 2003, p. 417).

<sup>19</sup> Given my predilection for real-world examples to inform metaphysical speculation, I am amenable to the actor and the agnosia; however, I balk at the alien invader.

<sup>20</sup> Cf NRSV: Mark 13:32.

would be compelled to ask, 'But do *you* really know?'. The 'you' here is the self of the person GS, who is synonymous with the divine mind for it existed before the human mind, controls the human mind and will persist when the human mind dies. Stump (*ibid.*, p. 422) correctly points out that the human mind is something had by GS since it came into existence; in contrast to her alien invasion scenario, it never had the opportunity to develop into a different person. However, this, I would argue, is a distinction without a difference: it is not at all convincing that a person can have two minds. But even if we grant Stump the two minds, it is not clear why omniscience and non-omniscience are not contradictory when they are borrowed from both natures with both the divine and human minds exercising simultaneous awareness. The answer to the question about the Day of Judgement does not, I would suggest, vary according to where the properties are held; it does vary according to whom is asked, and the *who* is the person GS with his self of the divine mind. The divine mind is pre-eminent in that it is the source of personhood and its knowledge trumps the knowledge of the human mind. Accordingly, it is not convincing that Aquinas's model, on Stump's interpretation, blocks the inference from 'JC is F *qua* N' to 'JC is F *simpliciter*'.

In her discussion of Aquinas's model of the Incarnation, Stump does not consider the issue of divine timelessness versus human temporality. Presumably she would claim that these incompatible properties too can be segregated to the respective two natures. Let us grant Stump's interpretation that JC can operate simultaneously through both the divine and human minds. It needs to be explained how GS's timeless mind which lacks succession can be conjoined with a temporal human mind that has a succession of thoughts. In Chapter 8 I argue for a view on temporal beings' personal ontology and persistence conditions which allow for apparently diachronic or successive thoughts to be treated synchronically or at once and so be potentially reconcilable with a timeless divine mind. That aside, the notion under Aquinas's model that the divine mind can switch the human mind on and off is, however, potentially useful in that reconciliation for it can inform the asymmetric accessing relation between the divine mind and the human mind so that the divine mind allows the human mind the subjective experience of time's flow.

### 2.3. Leftow's 'A Timeless God Incarnate'

In his 2002a 'A Timeless God Incarnate', Leftow uses a mereological account to argue how a timeless God the Son could be incarnate in a temporal Body + Soul and yet remain timeless.<sup>21</sup> His model is that GS and B + S come to compose one thing, labelled JC [Jesus Christ] in his 2002a or GS+B+S in his 2011a 'Composition and Christology'. For ease of explanation, I shall use JC to refer to the composite rather than GS+B+S, although the latter is Leftow's later preferred term.<sup>22</sup>

Leftow employs the relational compositional model or Model A. GS is a proper part of the composite, so GS is not identical with JC (Leftow, 2002a, p. 294).<sup>23</sup> B + S is also a proper part of the composite. B + S does not become part of GS. By B + S, Leftow means the full natural endowment of a human being, viz. a human body and a soul, which carries a human mind and will (*ibid.*, p. 278).

With JC having concrete parts, Leftow's model facilitates the use of the *qua*-move: concrete parts, as substances, are bearers of properties. The motivation here is to segregate the atemporality of GS from the temporality of B + S.

We may refer to the composite JC as being both timeless and temporal, in the sense that it has a part, GS, which [who] is timeless and a part, B + S, which is temporal. The temporality of B + S does not flow to GS; it flows to JC.

Leftow whets our appetite regarding the attempt to square timeless composing part(s) with the circle of temporal composing parts by posing the question:

---

<sup>21</sup> Leftow's attempt at this reconciliation is seen as an exemplar in certain quarters of the Christian philosophical community. Helm (2010, pp. xv-xvi) writes, "At one stage I thought that I might venture even further into explicitly Christian territory with a Chapter on God's eternity and the Incarnation, but I gave up the idea on realizing that I could not improve on Brian Leftow's 'A Timeless God Incarnate'."

<sup>22</sup> In a footnote (2011a, p. 318) Leftow concedes that JC is a poor choice of terminology for GS+B+S as it implies that the composite is a person rather than personal; the person in the composite is GS.

<sup>23</sup> Leftow's attempt is also less seen as an exemplar in some other quarters of the Christian philosophical community. Cross (2009, pp. 461-462) notes that according to Chalcedonian orthodoxy Jesus Christ is identical with God the Son, so in denying this Leftow's proposal risks a Nestorian denial that GS, as opposed to the whole JC of which he is a part, is human, or has human attributes, at all. Leftow (2002a, p. 294), however, contests the charge of unorthodoxy: he asserts that GS is the person who is the psychological core of JC and so to worship JC is to worship GS.

Given that causal relations unite parts into substances and a timeless God can have causal relations to a temporal being, is there any good reason *a priori* to think that a timeless God's causal relations to some temporal being(s) could not be such as to form with them a single substance? I cannot think of one. (2002a, p. 288)

'Substance' is a contentious philosophical term of art and Leftow has not clarified exactly what he means by it here. In addition, it is not clear what he means by a *single* substance. A standard way of thinking about substances is as the basic building blocks of reality:<sup>24</sup> they are ontologically independent, can have causal relations and are the bearers of properties. When Leftow claims that causal relations unite, for example, quarks into protons and neutrons, these together with electrons into atoms and thence molecules *etc*, and that these later conglomerations are substances, he seems to be thinking of substances as composite objects or things;<sup>25</sup> but this conflicts with the notion of substances as basic building blocks. It is also contentious whether causal relations unite parts into substances, although one may grant that causal relations are a plausible candidate for a principle of composition. In any case, these constituents of protons *etc* are all temporal and material entities. Even if we grant that the resultant conglomerations are substances, this does not license Leftow to claim that a timeless and immaterial part, GS, can form a substance with a temporal and material entity, B + S. We may also question whether a true incarnation has occurred here, for GS has not become human but merely one member of an aggregate (Marmodoro and Hill, 2008, p. 116; Cross, 2009, pp. 461-462).

Leftow uses a negative logical defence in arguing that divine timelessness and the Incarnation are compatible. He presents two major arguments by Senor (1990, p.150 and p.157) for holding that divine timelessness is incompatible with the Incarnation. The first argument, known as [A], is that temporal predicates apply to GS because they apply to JC and JC is identical to GS;<sup>26</sup> and the second argument, known as [B],

---

<sup>24</sup> An interesting perspective is offered by Baker (2000, p. 9): She takes persons to be basic substances in that they must be included in any complete inventory of the world.

<sup>25</sup> On this understanding, substances are things which can exist independently of other substances other than their parts, so planets, humans, rabbits and the Blackpool Tower are substances.

<sup>26</sup> Reminder: Leftow denies that JC is identical to GS (2002a, p. 294).

is that in taking on human nature GS underwent a change in his intrinsic properties and so is mutable and hence temporal.<sup>27</sup> Leftow then sets out enough of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation to show how the arguments allegedly fail. As Leftow considers the two arguments to be perhaps the strongest cases for the incompatibility, he concludes that it is *prima facie* plausible that God can be both timeless and incarnate (2002a, p. 273). In his 2007, Senor discusses Leftow's model. Leftow, in turn, responds in his 2011a and clarifies his model. In the following, I will alternate between Leftow's 2002a and 2011a in evaluating his model. I reject this approach of a negative logical defence: establishing that one's opponent's arguments fail to show incompatibility does not in any way support that one's own position is compatible. However, my main concern is not so much in whether Leftow successfully defeats the [A] and [B] arguments, and the criticisms raised in Senor's 2007 work; rather, my interest is a broader one of how Leftow deals with a myriad of issues pertaining to the compatibility of timelessness and incarnation, and how the results of such explorations inform my proposed reconciliation.

According to Leftow (2011a, pp. 314-315), Senor thinks Leftow's mereological reading of the *qua*-move is supposed to block the inference from 'JC *qua* N is F' to 'JC is F'. Leftow ask us to consider the claim:

Jesus Christ is of limited power *qua* human but not *qua* divine.

The inferences would be:

JC is of limited power *qua* human; hence, JC is of limited power.

And

JC is not of limited power *qua* divine; hence, JC is not of limited power.

Leftow asserts that a mereological Christology can in fact grant these inferences and that nevertheless they do not yield the contradiction:

---

<sup>27</sup> Senor (1990, p. 160) also offers an argument [C]. However, [C] considers whether the temporality of God the Son entails the temporality of the Trinity and so is not Leftow's present concern.

JC is and is not of limited power.

The powers that are proper to the parts (GS, B, S) belong to the whole (JC). GS is not of limited power in and of himself; this would be contrary to his divine nature which includes unlimited powers; these unlimited powers are his intrinsic powers. However, in composition with B + S, he acquires the use of a limited set of powers. These limited powers of B + S are intrinsic to B + S but extrinsic to GS; they are powers that GS has due to external relations with B + S. As the powers are proper to distinct parts of the composite, there is no contradiction in the composite containing both. Thus, Leftow argues that GS can act solely through those limited powers whilst remaining intrinsically omnipotent.

Leftow argues that a mereological Christology can also block the inference. This is because properties of parts need not become properties of other parts of the same whole. He uses the example of part of a wall that weighs a ton, but another part may weigh less: this does not mean the wall both weighs and does not weigh a ton, and it also does not mean that all parts weigh a ton. Similarly, though GS forms a composite with B + S which possesses only limited power, this does not mean that GS ceases to be omnipotent.

*Contra* Senor, Leftow (*ibid.*, p. 315) states that he does not claim his model makes the *qua*-move to resolve incompatible properties. When Leftow says that the composite is omnipotent *qua* divine, what he means is that it contains a divine part which is omnipotent; and when he says that the composite is non-omnipotent *qua* human, what he means is that it contains a human part which is non-omnipotent. Leftow fully accepts that if the composite is F *qua* human in virtue of having a human part then it will typically be true that the divine part is not F and so the composite is not F *qua* divine, and *vice versa*. Leftow states that since both *qua*-statements are true, they have equal claim, just as *qua*-statements, if they have any such claim, to transfer their predicate to the whole composite. However, the mereological reading does not discriminate and adjudicate between them, and nor does it explain why properties transfer; all the mereological reading tells us is that if either property transfers, it does so in respect of a part of the whole having the property primarily (*ibid.*, p. 316). For

Leftow, it is not in general true that if a whole consists of two parts, one F and one non-F, it follows that the whole is both F and non-F. He illustrates this with the example of an apple which consists of a nutritious part and a non-nutritious part: whilst its nutritious part nourishes, its non-nutritious part does not, but it does not thereby follow that an apple both nourishes and does not nourish (*ibid.*, p. 289); rather, we simply say that the apple nourishes. Similarly, an apple is red because of a red part, its skin, and is non-red because of a non-red part, its flesh, but we do not say that the apple is both red and non-red but rather that it is red. For Leftow, which attribute transfers to the whole has to be decided on a case-by-case basis. This is in contrast to Stump (2003; see my §2.2 above) where seemingly there is no principled filter to determine which attributes are appropriately borrowed at which time.

Figure 6.3 shows my representation of Leftow’s *qua*-move case-by-case. The scales represent whatever decision-making process is used to make the determination.

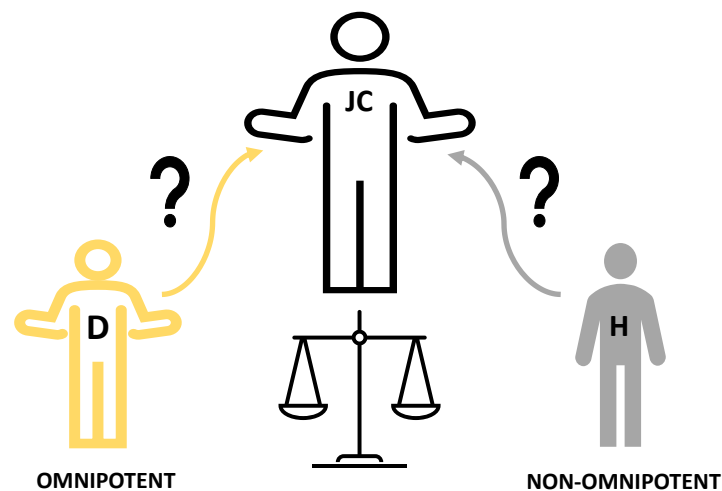


Figure 6.3: Leftow’s *qua*-move case-by-case

Senor (2007, p. 66) charges that if the transfer of an attribute has to be done on a case-by-case basis, then the *qua* move does not provide any general help in resolving the logical difficulties of the Incarnation. However, Leftow argues that the mereological reading successfully blocks the move from ‘JC *qua* N is F’ to ‘JC is F’ and so does indeed handle the logical problem; a corollary of such successful blocking is that it

leaves the transfer to be worked out one at a time. This strikes me as somewhat missing the mark: the incoherence problem is how to reconcile incompatible properties, not the claim that logical space needs to be created to address the issue. If the transfer has to be worked out on a case-by-case basis, then this implies the lack of underlying philosophical principles informing the determination and looks *ad hoc*.<sup>28</sup>

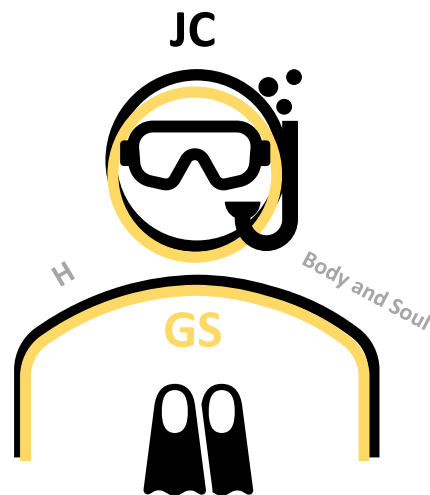
To further illustrate his model, Leftow employs the analogy of a scuba diving suit to portray B + S as merely the fleshy garment which provides the instrument for GS to act in the temporal world, so that GS remains timeless and yet incarnate *via* B + S (2002a, p. 292; see also 2011a, p. 317 for further discussion of B as an instrument). Like a scuba diving suit keeps the diver isolated from the water it touches, B + S is GS's 'environment suit' to let him manoeuvre in time and yet stay dry from temporality. This appears to be a version of the Habitus model although Leftow himself does not explicitly align himself with this categorisation (Crisp, 2011, pp. 47-49).

Figure 6.4 shows my representation of Leftow's scuba diver analogy. The timeless GS takes on the scuba garment of B + S so that he is untouched by the 'waters' of temporality.

---

<sup>28</sup> My own suggestion for a possible principle is a Divine Trumping Principle (DTP): If a divine attribute and a human attribute in a composite are incompatible, the divine attribute trumps the human attribute in flowing to the whole unless the trumping results in a greater incoherence. For instance, the DTP would select divine omniscience to flow to the composite JC, for human limitedness in knowledge is a subset of what can be known. Conversely, the DTP would select human temporality to flow to the composite JC, for the composite JC was created and died. If divine timelessness flowed to the composite JC, this would result in greater incoherence since something cannot both change and not change.





**Figure 6.4: Leftow's 'Habitus' model**

Leftow's model has, I would suggest, several shortcomings. A diver in a scuba suit moves around; we do not consider the scuba suit to be animate in and of itself. Similarly, GS is, by orthodoxy, the sole person in the composite and is 'living a life'; that is, it is GS who is moving about and interactively responding in real-time in the waters of the temporal world. Leftow claims that the life lived in B + S is not a temporal part of GS's life, for a timeless life has no temporal parts, but in that case it is not clear what sort of life is being lived, for JC's life seems to be a continuation of GS's existing life. Leftow (2002a, p. 282) does proffer that the life lived in B + S has the right sort of causal and other ties to GS's life to count as simply an extension of it; however, more needs to be spelt out here to explain how the causal and other ties bridge the atemporal/temporal gap. Furthermore, incarnation implies a genuine unity between GS and B + S, but the relation of instrumentality under this putative Habitus model is arguably too weak to support this (Marmodoro and Hill, 2010, p. 480). Conversely, if the claim is made that B + S has a mind and a will, and these are not merely distinct but are sufficiently independent that they can be said to be animating the wetsuit, then we appear to have two persons. One concurs with Mullins (2016, p.159, footnote) when he states that he simply does not understand the metaphysical import of Leftow's analogy of the diver in the wetsuit. Moreover, given the point that it is reasonable to suppose that when the full human endowment of B + S is present we do in fact have a human person, together with the further point of Leftow's assertion that GS is not

identical to the composite JC which has B + S, Leftow's model does seem to imply that we have two persons, viz. GS and B + S. Given the principle that a person cannot have a person as a proper part, if the composite JC is not a person then GS and B + S can be proper parts of JC and be persons; this is in contrast to Model T, where B + S is a proper part of GS but is not a person.

In response, Leftow (2002a, pp. 281-284) acknowledges that in the normal course of events the created part B + S would on its own have constituted a person, but that in the unique case of the Incarnation it instead joined with a pre-existing person GS to constitute a 'larger' person. B + S was assumed by GS at B's conception and so did not get the chance on its own to constitute a person; the human nature of JC at no time existed apart from GS and so never formed a supposit or hypostasis, which is a necessary condition for personhood on the Boethian definition. However, Leftow seems to be leaning more towards a modern understanding of what a person is when he explains that the psychological core of JC is the person GS because B + S did not develop its own sufficiently independent psychology.<sup>29</sup>

Let us grant Leftow's response in countering the allegation of two persons. His model does not, however, account for how timeless GS's mind that lacks succession can be conjoined with a temporal human mind that has a succession of thoughts. It is the latter problem which I consider to be a stronger case, *contra* Leftow, for the incompatibility of timelessness and the Incarnation than Senor's two arguments.

In evaluating the plausibility of Leftow's model, it is important to see how it handles the issue of a timeless part, viz. GS, composing with a temporal part, viz. B + S, without becoming infected with temporality. Leftow states an argument for the incompatibility as:

If part of a whole changes intrinsically, the whole *ipso facto* changes intrinsically.  
Whatever changes intrinsically is in time. So if part of a whole changes

---

<sup>29</sup> In his 2011b (pp. 30-37), Leftow offers a variety of suggestions as to why B + S does not form a separate person; including the notion that S is the human soul of GS and does not determine the identity of someone other than GS, that is, GS's identity is overdetermined.

intrinsically, the whole is in time, and not just partly in time. S + B changes intrinsically. So Jesus Christ is in time. So God the Son is in time. (2002a, p. 293)

Leftow's response is to claim that changing wholes can have unchanging parts; this is the main counter to Senor's argument [A].<sup>30</sup> He asks us to imagine a rotating sphere with two characteristics: its parts do not change their relations to one another; and it is not changing its place as a whole. Such a sphere would rotate about its axis. Leftow argues that the part of the sphere which just overlaps this axis is point-thick like the axis, and so it cannot spin as points have no circumference. This point-thick part does not have parts moving relative to one another or the rest of the sphere. In a universe consisting solely of this sphere, the axis-overlapping part of the sphere would be wholly motionless, absolutely and relatively.

In respect of his claim that a rotating sphere can have parts that do not change their relations to one another, Leftow asserts that we can rule out for example Brownian motion within the sphere. This appears to be a basic misunderstanding of what Brownian motion is: Brownian motion concerns the random motion of particles suspended in a medium (Lavenda, 1985); only if the sphere were a liquid or gas would Brownian motion be applicable.<sup>31</sup> One presumes Leftow refers to a solid sphere; if so, he is technically correct that there is no Brownian motion albeit for the wrong reason. However, the constituents of all spheres in the physical universe known to us are composed of atoms which have sub-atomic parts, such as electrons, in constant movement. To still the atoms would require freezing them to absolute zero. As I noted in §1.3 of Chapter 3, nature conspires against us as this would require, *per impossibile*, an infinite amount of energy. Consequently, we may reject Leftow's first characteristic.

Leftow's second characteristic is that the sphere is not changing its place as a whole. This assertion, however, does not specify to what the sphere is apparently not changing its place as a whole. In the physical universe we actually live in, there is

---

<sup>30</sup> Reminder: the [A] argument is that temporal predicates apply to GS because they apply to JC and JC is identical to GS.

<sup>31</sup> A star is a gaseous sphere. However, it is not a perfect sphere and has nuclear fusion going on within, so not a stellar example for Leftow.

always motion. A sphere resting on a table might appear to be stationary. It is, however, only stationary relative to the table. The table itself is on a part of the Earth which is tectonically moving at a very slow speed, perhaps a few inches per year. The Earth itself is rotating at c.1,000 mph and revolving around the Sun at c.67,000 mph; the Sun is revolving around the Milky Way galaxy at c.448,000 mph; and our galaxy is hurtling through space at c.1,300,000 mph (Herman, 1998). Thus, other than relative to the table, the sphere is moving at variable speeds. Leftow does ask us to abstract away everything else in the universe, so that the universe solely consists of this sphere. We may grant this stipulation but should remind Leftow that we have entered the realm of a complete divorce from physical reality.

Leftow argues that the part of the sphere which just overlaps the axis is point-thick and so cannot spin as points have no circumference. Axes and points, however, are abstract mathematical constructs, not spatio-temporal entities in the physical universe. A point for instance has no size or shape, only location, so it is inapt to say that something overlaps it; the word 'thick' is misleading. What Leftow's claim literally means is that part of the sphere overlaps a location, but in this case the map is being confused for the place as a point is in effect a co-ordinate on a map rather than a tangible defined area of turf. Hence, contrary to Leftow's claim (2002a, p. 294), such a sphere in such a universe is not clearly conceivable and we have no reasonable cause to remotely think it possible.

In summary, Leftow has not demonstrated that a changing whole can have an unchanging part; *ipso facto*, his case for a timeless GS being the unchanging axis-part about which the temporal composite JC spins is not persuasive. Accordingly, he has not successfully countered Senor's [A] argument.

Figure 6.5 shows my representation of Leftow's notion that GS is an unchanging timeless part around which a temporal composite JC spins:

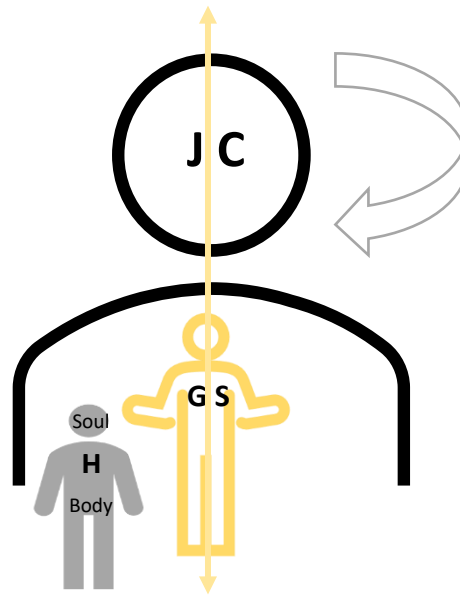


Figure 6.5: Leftow's spinning JC

In response to Senor's [B]<sup>32</sup> argument, Leftow considers the two premises underpinning it: God the Son began to be human; and whatever begins to be human changes intrinsically.

With regard to the first premise, a standard response Leftow might be expected to offer is that timeless GS never began to be human because he has a human nature from eternity.<sup>33</sup> This is one of the moves I make in my proposed reconciliation; see §2.2.2 of Chapter 9. This is not, however, the move Leftow deploys. Leftow asserts that if GS is timeless then he timelessly has the property 'being human' due to events in time (2002a, p. 295) – presumably from the happenings *circa* 4 BCE to 30 CE. It is not clear, though, what is meant by 'due to': perhaps Leftow is offering some causal account, but causality seems a temporal notion. In addition, if GS has the property 'being human' due to events in time but time itself was created then there appears to be a prior state in which GS was in a sense 'waiting' for time to be created so that he

<sup>32</sup> Reminder: the [B] argument is that in taking on human nature GS underwent a change in his intrinsic properties and so is mutable and hence temporal.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, Blount (2002, pp. 14-15) for related discussion.

might be influenced by those events. Such a prior state cannot be temporal, for this would conflict with timelessness, as Leftow acknowledges.

Leftow could suggest that the prior state was a logical one, but he does not make this move either. Instead, Leftow questions whether there are real problems if we do indeed speak of GS as being human before B + S appeared. He asserts that earlier items can have properties due to later events (*ibid.*, pp. 295-298). He uses the example of his believing yesterday that the next Pope will be Catholic. Just as his belief is allegedly true due to its relations to a future event, similarly GS could have been human before 4 BCE in virtue of what was to happen in 4 BCE. This is unconvincing. On most A-theories of time,<sup>34</sup> beliefs about future events are neither true nor false for the future does not yet exist and so the potential happening cannot act as a truthmaker. Perhaps Leftow has in mind a B-theory whereby there is a fact about the matter because the 'future' already exists. But consider the case of the spilt milk. At noon I buy a carton of milk. At 4pm I knock the carton of milk over. It is surely not true to say that at 2pm I already have spilt milk based on that later happening. Regardless, the belief that the next Pope will be Catholic is trivially true because the next Pope can only be Catholic according to the rules governing the succession; that is to say, the belief is formed from understanding those rules, not from the actual occasion of the succession.

By introducing this speculation of whether there is a real problem with the use of a temporal 'before', Leftow has muddied the waters in a discussion about a timeless God. There simply cannot be a temporal 'before' when talking about a timeless God. It is worth exploring Leftow's rationale for his digression as it illustrates features evident in many of his arguments of asking us to accept fantastical assumptions and using language in highly stipulative ways.<sup>35</sup> His idea that if GS is the first part to exist of the whole JC then before the whole JC exists it is already meaningful to refer to it.<sup>36</sup> He uses the example of a brick wall. According to Leftow, the first brick laid is the

---

<sup>34</sup> An exception would be the Moving Spotlight Theory. See §2.2.3. of Chapter 3.

<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, one has to admire Leftow's metaphysical creativity.

<sup>36</sup> If Warren Buffet found a penny on the floor of a lift, picked it up and proclaimed that it was the start of his next billion, do we really think that that billion already exists?

beginning of a wall; that is, we do not have to wait until there are enough bricks<sup>37</sup> to count as a wall of which it is part. Leftow believes that the builder's intent is sufficient to make it the first part of a wall, even if the rest of the wall is *never* built. By parallel reasoning, Leftow suggests that GS is part of the human composite JC as soon as GS exists, even if the rest of the composite does not yet exist for it is the builder's [God's] intent for that composite to be created; that is, if we speak as if GS existed *before* 4 BCE, we can also say GS was human before 4 BCE.<sup>38</sup>

I doubt that Leftow would raise the roof if he were invited to a construction workers' party. One brick does not make a wall. This is a conceptual truth. Regardless of a builder's intent, a single brick is simply a brick. By analogy, when Michelangelo painted the first stroke on the Sistine Chapel, Pope Julius II would not have been amused to immediately receive Michelangelo's final bill, though perhaps on Leftow's logic he could have offset the bill with the receipts from sales to the Vatican Museum in 2024. There might be the intent for a single brick to be the start of a wall, but the builder could change his mind and use the brick as an exercise step, a paper weight or an exhibit at the Tate Gallery or even to abandon the project; similarly, Michelangelo might have proceeded to paint a rabbit.<sup>39</sup> In Leftow's case, the builder of JC is rather special and presumably we can be assured that JC will come about. Still, this does not license some sort of backwards causation.

In addressing the concern that if B + S did not exist until 4 BCE then it appears that GS was not incarnate till then, Leftow makes a distinction between GS becoming incarnate and the event of GS's becoming incarnate not being *completed* until 4 BCE (*ibid.*, p. 297). Leftow argues that some events have scattered temporal locations. He illustrates his thinking with the example of the assassination of President Lincoln. Leftow asks when did Booth kill Lincoln. Booth shot Lincoln at  $t_1$  and Lincoln died at  $t_2$  [a day later history records]. Undeniably, Booth's shooting was the cause of Lincoln's death, but, Leftow continues, it does not seem right to say that the killing was a

---

<sup>37</sup> Or presumably even a second brick.

<sup>38</sup> Reminder: We cannot speak as if GS existed *before* 4 BCE. GS is timeless.

<sup>39</sup> In one possible world, Michelangelo supported rabbit-rights. Hence, the defiant painting of a rabbit by Michelangelo would have been 'due to' Pope Francis declaring in 2015 that Catholics should not breed like rabbits – a remark deeply offensive to rabbits.

continuous event stretching from  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ ; rather, it was a temporally scattered event. Similarly, Leftow submits, the Incarnation is another scattered event: GS performs the action of taking on JC's flesh timelessly and this taking on is completed in 4 BCE. Furthermore, just as Booth did not have to change intrinsically for the event he initiated to become completed, similarly, Leftow argues, GS does not change intrinsically for the event of becoming incarnate to become completed.

Leftow's assertion that though B + S did not exist until 4 BCE, GS was, nonetheless, incarnate is unconvincing. This is a stretched meaning of incarnation. Whilst Booth's shooting at  $t_1$  did not instantly result in Lincoln's death, the shooting and the resultant death, and the intermediate causal-chain elements, are all in the temporal world. It seems wrong-headed to say that GS took on JC's flesh *timelessly* and the process completed at a temporal date. We need more explanation of what Leftow means by GS taking on flesh timelessly. If he means simply that GS has the intention from eternity to take on flesh then this seems uncontentious. However, that Booth formed the intention to assassinate Lincoln is not the same as actually pulling the trigger. Likewise, that GS formed the intention to incarnate does not in itself mean the Incarnation was accomplished.<sup>40</sup>

With regard to the second premise of Senor's [B] argument, Leftow (*ibid.*, p. 298) disputes that GS in beginning to be human changed intrinsically. Leftow argues that GS becoming human consists in his becoming part of a whole, that is his beginning to have certain extrinsic relations to B + S. He uses the analogy of someone of constant height becoming shorter than someone else because that someone else is growing taller [a *mere* Cambridge change]. Leftow invites us to tell some story as to what the relations are that involve GS forming a whole with B + S and why GS cannot have these unless he changes intrinsically.

---

<sup>40</sup> We do not punish people for crimes they have not yet committed. Perhaps Leftow is a fan of the Tom Cruise science-fiction movie 'Minority Report' in which the police have a psychic technology which enables them to arrest and convict murderers before they commit their crime.



Here is one story. When someone becomes taller than me because they are growing taller and I am remaining constant in height, there are two separate entities involved, so it is appropriate to refer to the relation between us as extrinsic. In the case of GS forming a composite with B + S, we are talking about one entity, *viz.* the composite JC. GS is a proper part of that composite. It is, therefore, apt to refer to the relations between GS, B + S and JC as intrinsic, not extrinsic. Consider the analogy of a mechanical watch: the composite watch only achieves its function when the proper parts are working cooperatively. If GS is so insulated from the composite that we consider changes in the composite to be extrinsic to GS, then we should question whether a true incarnation has occurred; GS appears not to be a proper part of JC.

Let us, however, grant the insulation of the immutable and impassible GS from the changes of the composite, such as the action of JC weeping over Lazarus (John 11:35, NRSV). A further issue arises, which Crisp (2011, pp. 63-64) calls the 'no-person objection'; relatedly, Senor (2007, p. 56) in his discussion of Leftow's 2002a refers to JC being 'an impersonal conglomerate'. This asks who the subject of the actions is: it is apparently not GS, for this is presupposed; it is not JC, for the composite is not a person but merely a mereological sum; and it is not B + S, for that would entail two persons. It must in some sense be GS, for only a person is the subject of an action such as weeping; however, it cannot be GS *simpliciter*, given his immutability and impassibility. Perhaps what we want to say is that it is GS, as the sole person, who derivatively does the action through moving the human nature, which has mutability and passibility. This is indeed Leftow's position through his Habitus-like model: in his 2011a (pp. 317-318), for instance, Leftow specifically addresses Senor's 'impersonal conglomerate' characterisation by explicating that JC is *personal* but not a person.

We seem to be presented with the dilemma that either we accept that GS is changeable in wielding an instrument (B + S) or we grant sufficient autonomy to the instrument at the cost of possibly yielding a second person [perhaps a 'quasi-person'] and weakening the unity of the composite. Given the non-negotiable presupposition of GS's timelessness for our purposes, we are directed to the latter approach, which is undesirable on for example Nestorian concerns.

We may conclude that Leftow's model does not provide a suitable model to show the compatibility between timelessness and the Incarnation.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the comprehensiveness and imaginative if sometimes strained analogies Leftow employs in his discussion bring into sharp focus several philosophical issues and so provide us with much – potentially red and nutritious - food for thought.

## INSIGHTS

Whilst I would argue that Stump and Kretzmann do not provide a suitable model to show the compatibility between timelessness and the Incarnation, they help to draw attention to two issues which will need to be handled in my proposed reconciliation: how human nature can be possessed from eternity but be temporally actual at some specified temporal instants; and how temporal moments, all at once, can be some-species-of-simultaneously present with a timeless God.

The examination of compositional models has been instructive. Transformational models involve change and so would appear to be ruled out by divine immutability. Relational models offer greater promise. A variant of Model A, with its implication that God the Son is extrinsically and derivatively human, would allow GS to remain intrinsically immutable whilst undergoing extrinsic change in the temporal world. However, there are, I would argue, two principal problematic issues concerning such models for my proposed reconciliation: firstly, they do not address how the diachronic thoughts of the human part are to be reconciled with the synchronic thoughts of GS; secondly, we may question whether a true incarnation has occurred. In my reconciliation in Chapter 9 I will address these issues but in order to do so it is

---

<sup>41</sup> Leftow (2002a, p. 299) also offers the suggestion that the Incarnation is a modal, not temporal claim. That is to say, a timeless God 'becomes' incarnate due to variation across logical space: he is incarnate at some possible worlds but not all; such modal variation need not require temporality, only variation across possible worlds (see Paul, 2019). Leftow asks why this is not enough to make orthodox sense of the claim that GS took on flesh. The Christian orthodox claim, however, is that GS incarnated temporally. If GS incarnates, then he does so with conditional necessity; that is, necessarily if he incarnates then he incarnates; and if he incarnates necessarily then he incarnates in all possible worlds. Moreover, the supporter of the doctrine of divine simplicity can argue that it implies that God is the same in all possible worlds, for if God varies across possible worlds then he is different which is contrary to his simplicity.

necessary to lay the groundwork with an exploration of psychological models of the Incarnation and of the persistence conditions of human beings.

## CHAPTER 7

### MODELS OF THE INCARNATION (PSYCHOLOGICAL)

‘I’ve got the brain of a four-year-old. I’ll bet he was glad to be rid of it.’

- Groucho Marx

#### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

#### §1. Preliminaries

- 1.1. Terminology
- 1.2. The Unity of Consciousness
- 1.3. The Self

#### §2. Psychological Models

- 2.1. Two-Minds Model of Morris
- 2.2. Divided-Mind Model of Swinburne
- 2.3. Restricted Inclusionism of Bayne
- 2.4. Monothelitism of Craig and DeWeese
- 2.5. Kryptic Model of Loke
- 2.6. The Bilingual Mind (my proposal)

#### §3. Insights

#### **OVERVIEW**

This chapter begins with a review of some terminology used in discussing psychological models of the Incarnation and some important pointers as to what constitutes unity of consciousness and its relation to the Self. It then looks at some prominent psychological models of the Incarnation. These psychological models are assessed with regard to how they respond to the accusation of being committed to two persons in Christ and, most importantly, how they cope with the timelessness versus temporality issue. The latter issue is particularly understood in terms of the difficulty

noted by, *inter alia*, Swinburne (2011, p. 160, fn 18), Mullins (2016, p. 171 fn 52) and Bayne (2001, p. 127): how can a timeless mind with synchronic thoughts co-experience the diachronic thoughts of a temporal mind.<sup>1</sup>

## SECTION 1. PRELIMINARIES

### 1.1. Terminology

A standard distinction is made between access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness (Block, 1997; Bayne, 2001, pp. 128-129). Access consciousness is when the subject has high level direct availability to the contents of the mental states which can be used for rational use; for example, in willing to act on the basis of my beliefs and desires, those beliefs and desires are access-conscious. Phenomenal consciousness is when the subject has the mental states with an experiential or subjective flavour. Access consciousness does not necessarily imply ownership of the mental states whereas phenomenal consciousness connotes something it is like to have those mental states or a sense of ‘those are my thoughts’.

Conscious states are co-subjective when they are had by (belong to, are owned by) the same subject at the same time (Bayne, 2001, p. 129). For example, my experiences of hearing the loud Tom bell in the distance and seeing wandering cows near to me in Christ Church Meadow are co-subjective.

Introspective consciousness is an attentive awareness of one’s own mental states. Such awareness itself has phenomenal consciousness: there is something it is like to pay attention to one’s mental states. When I meditate in the Meadow, I inwardly observe my pleasant thoughts of the cows and rabbits and am aware that I am observing those feelings and thoughts.

The subconscious refers to mental contents which exist outside of consciousness (Colman, 2001, p. 714). It can be divided into the preconscious and the unconscious.

---

<sup>1</sup> For Swinburne, Mullins and Bayne, such a reconciliation is considered to be not possible. This is the view taken in the literature, and, as far as I can tell, unanimously so.

The preconscious refers to mental contents that are not presently in consciousness but are accessible to consciousness by directing attention to them (*ibid.*, p. 574). This is similar to the dispositional versus occurrent belief distinction: dispositional belief refers to a belief that is not currently being considered by the mind but can be recalled and become an occurrent belief; occurrent belief refers to a belief that is currently being considered by the mind.

The unconscious refers to mental contents that are not presently in consciousness and are not accessible to consciousness. Such contents may 'percolate' into consciousness under special circumstances, for example through dreams or therapeutic intervention, but normally are repressed.

## 1.2. Unity of consciousness

At the basic descriptive level, unity of consciousness is the notion that we experience several conscious experiences simultaneously; that is, they are co-conscious. A prominent view to characterise this unity is the subsumptive one (Bayne and Chalmers, 2003, pp. 26-32). This is the idea that several individual phenomenally conscious experiences are presented simultaneously and co-subjectively as one all-encompassing or totalising phenomenally conscious experience;<sup>2</sup> that is, this all-encompassing state is a conscious state in its own right and there is something it is like for the one subject to have the individual experiences subsumed into it. The contents of this one all-encompassing consciousness are available to a variety of cognitive sub-systems, such as those involving belief-formation, agency, and memory consolidation.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Bayne and Chalmers (*ibid.*, p. 33) offer their total phenomenal unity thesis which says that, necessarily, there is always a single phenomenal state that subsumes all of one's other phenomenal states at a time.

To illustrate these notions, say that I am sitting imprisoned in an economy class seat on a long-haul flight from Manchester to Singapore. The seat feels uncomfortable. My

---

<sup>2</sup> Bayne and Chalmers (2003, p. 37) call this a conjoint phenomenology.

<sup>3</sup> At least in the case of humans. Whilst a timeless God may have agency, it is more controversial to claim that a timeless God has belief-formation and, especially, memory consolidation.

jaw muscles are aching because the meat I am eating is like leather. I can hear the pink noise of the engines and the shrill of a baby behind me. I am trying to watch the latest Tom Cruise movie, although with all the discomfort such a viewing is mission impossible. These individual experiences appear unified to my consciousness, and there is something it is phenomenally like to have this sense of unity. They are available to my belief sub-system, which is harbouring the belief 'Economy class is lousy'; to my agency sub-system, which is forming the determination 'Next time I will travel business class'; and to my memory consolidation sub-system, which is transferring to long-term memory a collection of bad memories.

There is also unity of consciousness over time. For the purposes of addressing the Research Question, our concern is with the unity of consciousness at one time, or more precisely at once, as the subject of the conscious experiences principally under study, God, is timeless.

### **1.3. The Self**

An interesting question is what binds together all of the mental states of a single self as the states of a single self (Bayne, 2022, pp. 243-245). Unity of consciousness is a necessary but not sufficient condition to conclude that those mental states are co-subjective. There are two aspects to this binding problem: synchronic and diachronic. The synchronic binding problem refers to what unifies mental phenomena that are simultaneous with one another, that is at one time; for example, the experiences had in the economy flight mentioned earlier. The diachronic binding problem, on the other hand, refers to what unifies mental phenomena over time; for example, the experiences of a fresh-faced seven-year-old at Overdale Primary School watching the first Moon landing wondering about his future educational choices with the same individual aged sixty-two graduating wizened-faced from Leeds University wondering what comes after a PhD.

There are several different suggestions to resolving the binding problem. For instance, dualists can appeal to the activities of an immaterial soul (Moreland, 2018) and animalists can appeal to the activities of an organism; that is, there is a 'substance'

underpinning the approach. In this dissertation, the approach taken with respect to God is that there is a divine substance or 'soul'; and the approach taken with respect to human beings is a reductionist psychological one, as this, *inter alia*, is more in keeping with the conceptualisation of persons principally being used, *viz.* the modern Lockean one (see §4.2 of Chapter 4). The reductionist psychological perspective is that there is not an entity 'self' *per se*, such as a soul, but rather that what we take to be the self is constituted by mental phenomena and the relations that hold between them – making the self a sort of psychological network – and so the binding problem is resolved by appealing to the nature of those relations. The account favoured here for understanding those relations is one of phenomenal unity and co-consciousness, that is, experiences belong to a single self in virtue of occurring within a unified stream of consciousness (Bayne, 2022, pp. 243-245; Dainton, 2004, 2008). That two different approaches are taken in respect of the divine and the human helps to secure the result that in the Incarnation the human self is not fundamental but is grounded by mental phenomena: if the human self were fundamental, then we would risk raising, for instance, the Nestorian problem of two persons.

It is granted that the approaches of phenomenal unity and co-consciousness seem to handle the synchronic aspect better than the diachronic aspect of the binding problem (Bayne, 2022, p. 245). The standard neo-Lockean notion is that our personal identity persists by psychological continuity grounded in causal relations of memories, beliefs *etc* between psychological states, which can survive even radical physical disruption such as transferring to a different body (Locke, 1975, p. 340).<sup>4</sup> It is less clear though that we can survive radical psychological disruption where there is not a single, uninterrupted stream of consciousness over extended time, such as when we lose consciousness during sleep or general anaesthesia.<sup>5</sup> In order to address this diachronic continuity concern, Dainton (2008, Ch. 4) offers an alternative neo-Lockean notion of experiential or phenomenal continuity which he calls the C-theory: he argues

---

<sup>4</sup> Locke furnishes us with the example of a prince's soul entering and informing the body of a cobbler. Parfit (1984, pp. 254-257) offers by way of a fission case thought experiment that our personal identity does not necessarily persist despite psychological continuity. But Parfit's thought experiment has moved the goal posts: if a whole brain was transferred to another body, we would plausibly say that personal identity persists.

<sup>5</sup> Granted, the loss of consciousness in sleep, especially when we are lucid dreaming, is not nearly as profound as general anaesthesia. With general anaesthesia, we do not have any conscious or conscious-like experiences. It is, nevertheless, still the case that in both situations the stream of consciousness is interrupted.



that we are *experience*-producing systems who survive interruptions in the flow of experience; that is, a subject of experience is a being that has the *capacity* to have experiences. As a result, the experiences of say the seven-year-old and the sixty-two-year-old, notwithstanding the many episodes of unconsciousness and memory lapses in between, belong to the same self because they are produced by the same experience-producing system. However, whether the necessary and sufficient conditions for our persistence through time is psychological continuity through causal relations or experiential features<sup>6</sup> is moot for the purposes of addressing the Research Question, for in Chapter 8 I will argue for a view of personal identity and persistence that dissolves the diachronic problem.

A human being has the sense that he or she is a single subject of experience. This appears to be an ontological insight, not merely an epistemological one: there is, I would suggest, an identity between being a self and being a subject of experience. If a human being exhibits feelings of being a plurality, we are likely to interpret the situation as one of psychopathology. On the other hand, according to Christian orthodoxy, it is claimed that God is a plurality of persons. The term 'person' is contentious. In §4.2 of Chapter 4, we opted for the standard modern conceptualisation of a person. Whilst it was acknowledged that the conciliar church fathers may have had different understandings or emphases along Boethian lines, we were sympathetic to Alston's (2002, p. 187) comments that the assertion that persons as used by the early church fathers had a meaning radically different from the modern term 'person' to be somewhat misguided. If we employ the standard modern conceptualisation of a person, then on a Latin trinitarian interpretation there arguably is a single subject of experience. However, on the social trinitarian view, there would appear to be three subjects of experience, and profound questions arise as to whether such a being has a unity of consciousness: unity of consciousness in terms of access consciousness would be plausible but in terms of phenomenal consciousness less so.

---

<sup>6</sup> Dainton (2008, p. xiii, footnote) resists the term 'psychological continuity' for his account based on experiential features, although he grants that given that experiences belong to the realm of the psychological, then continuities in experiences are one form of psychological continuity if we construe 'psychological' in a broad manner. He wishes to distinguish his experiential features usage to the standard account of psychological continuity in the literature.

It is plausible that the unity of consciousness, whether in embodied or non-embodied entities, is reflective of a unitary 'self'. The self is unitary in that it is conscious of itself as the ultimate and sole bearer of all other conscious states. Given that the self is phenomenally aware of itself of having two or more other phenomenally conscious experiences simultaneously, this entails Bayne and Chalmers's (2003, p. 24) unity thesis that consciousness is necessarily unified.

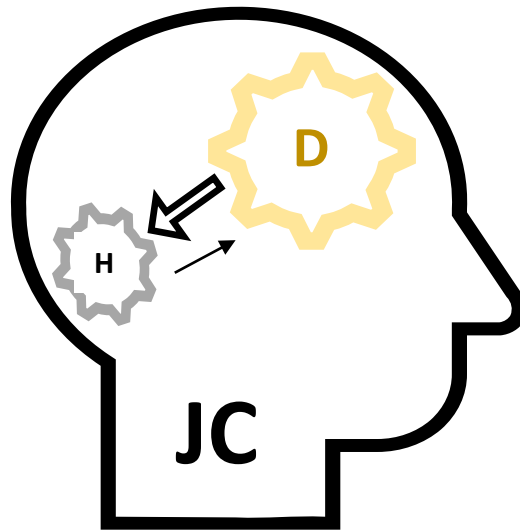
In examining psychological models of the Incarnation, it is important to take cognisance of what the respective proponents mean by the self and by unity of consciousness, and whether any equivocation is committed when these concepts are applied separately to the human and to the divine.

## **SECTION 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL MODELS**

### **2.1. Two-minds model of Morris**

Morris introduces his two-minds model in his seminal 'The Logic of God Incarnate' (1986, pp. 102-107; pp. 149-162). He proposes that we recognise in Jesus Christ something like two distinct ranges of consciousness: the eternal mind of God the Son, with its distinctive divine consciousness, and the human distinctive consciousness, which came into existence and developed during the course of JC's human life. Morris asserts that there is an asymmetric accessing relation between the divine mind and his human mind, with the divine mind enjoying full access to the human mind but not *vice versa*; the human consciousness has limited access to the divine consciousness according to what the divine consciousness grants. 'Consciousness' here is meant as a substantive notion; it does not simply mean that JC had, for instance, two doxastic, or belief, systems or two wills, although, as Bayne (2001, p. 126) notes, it does include that claim too. Also, the more natural reading is that the two consciousnesses are concurrent, or both active, at times (*ibid.*, p. 127).

Figure 7.1 shows my representation of Morris's two-minds model. The two minds are portrayed by two cogs. The asymmetric accessing relation is shown by the shape and thickness of the respective arrows.



**Figure 7.1: Morris's two-minds model**

Such a two-minds model allows for reduplicative strategies to allegedly resolve the contradiction of incompatible properties such as omniscience and non-omniscience: JC knows something *via* his divine mind which he does not know *via* his human mind.

Morris comments in a footnote that the word 'mind' has to be used to denote something a person *has* rather than something a person *is* (1986, p. 102). There are deep philosophical waters in play here of what constitutes personal identity and I would not relegate it to a mere footnote for I disagree with Morris. In Chapter 4, I contended that what substantively makes a person is his mind and that what substantively makes a mind is consciousness; therefore, if there are two distinct streams of consciousness then, subject to some qualification, there are two minds and hence two persons.

Morris also comments, in the main text, that the term 'two-minds' is possibly misleading (*ibid.*, p. 102). Furthermore, he says that we cannot know what it is like to be God with two distinct streams of consciousness. He later comments that it might be more appropriate to consider JC as having different levels or ranges of mentality (*ibid.*, p. 105). This is somewhat muddying the waters.

I am unsure whether Morris is trying to proffer a carefully nuanced account or is hesitant because he suspects that his model is underdeveloped – possibly both. Regardless, Morris is asserting that there is some sort of pronounced disunity in the mental life of JC. In his ongoing discussion, Morris gives the impression of leaning towards a literal meaning of two minds.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the two-minds label seems apt in that the biblical narrative portrays a JC seemingly operating at times with a human mind that is significantly distinguishable from the divine mind, for example, when JC says that it is the Father's will, not his will that should be done (NRSV: Luke 22:44) and the cry of dereliction (NRSV: Mark 15:34), but at other times employing abilities properly conceived of as belonging to the divine mind, such as performing miracles.

Ordinarily, we associate one mind with one person, but in the special case of the Incarnation, having two minds does not entail there being two persons, according to Morris (1986, p. 157). Whilst cautioning us that we do not know what it is like to be God with two distinct streams of consciousness,<sup>8</sup> Morris uses analogies and thought experiments in order to try to help us gain a handle on modelling a being with more than one mind. Morris asks us, for instance, to look at examples of lucid dream states and human psychopathologies, such as dissociative disorders and commissurotomy (*ibid.*, pp. 104-106).<sup>9</sup> The idea here is that allegedly there are human analogies to illustrate the notion of two (or more) minds, with potentially different beliefs, in the one person.

I commend Morris's use of real-world phenomena to help illustrate his claims; this is in keeping with my own methodology. However, it is highly contentious whether such dream states and psychopathologies are really indicative of multiple minds; they

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, Morris writes 'Thus there came to be two minds, the earthly mind of God Incarnate and his distinctively divine mind, but two minds of one person ...' (1986, p. 162).

<sup>8</sup> Presumably we do not even know what it is like to be God with one stream of consciousness.

<sup>9</sup> This is where the corpus callosum, together with some other tissue tracts, connecting the two hemispheres is severed resulting, it is alleged, in a separate mind in each hemisphere. Note, though, that it is the corpus callosum, together with some other tissue tracts, which is severed, not all the connections (some of which are deeply embedded within the brain stem and are inoperable). Consequently, there are still possibilities for cross hemispheric communication. Indeed, most patients who have undergone commissurotomy continue to function normally in everyday tasks: two 'minds' usually only appear under special laboratory conditions. The notion of two minds appearing is a gross over-simplification and misleading, although there are invariably some interesting processing differences between such patients and normal people (Gazzaniga, 1985).

appear much more to be fragmentation of one underlying mind.<sup>10</sup> The fragments belong to one mind by having a causal history and being grounded in the one brain. In the case of split-brain patients, there are plausible alternative accounts such as the ‘switch model’ (Bayne, 2008) according to which a patient possesses only a single stream of consciousness, both at a time and across time, that shifts from one hemisphere to the other from moment to moment. If, on the other hand, one takes the view that there are indeed multiple minds, and that multiple minds mean multiple persons, then one is potentially drawn to such absurd conclusions as the therapist is committing murder by achieving the therapeutic goal of ridding the patient of ‘excess’ minds. Morris is aware of these issues, even down to the killing of an alter (1986, p. 106), and says that he intends his use of examples of psychopathologies to be only partial analogies for the two-minds model.

Even granting Morris his use of psychopathologies and setting aside the issues of interpretation within psychopathology, there is something distinctly inappropriate or amiss about using human psychopathologies to model God’s mind: if it is a poor analogy to use a human mind, with all its limitations, to model a divine one, it is surely even worse to use a malfunctioning human mind to model a divine one with perfect cognition (DeWeese, 2007, p. 132).

To help us obtain a better grasp on the asymmetric accessing relation, another thought experiment Morris invites us to consider involves two IT systems S1 and M (1986, p. 158). Morris posits that we can ascribe mindedness to S1 and M. M is the master system and has immediate and complete access to all the data coming from S1’s sensors as well as further data from its own resources, but S1 does not have access to [all of] M’s data; that is, it is an asymmetric relation of access. Morris then claims that we can imagine the relation of S1 to M to be a unity comparable to the one alleged to hold between the human and divine minds in JC, a unity which he then wants to conceptualise as two minds in one person. This analogy does not in itself inform us how we are to proceed with that subsequent conceptualisation. Morris claims that the

---

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of fragmentation in dissociative identity disorder (which used to be known as multiple personality disorder) see for instance Fisher (2017).

mere fact that M can so access S1 does not imply ownership, that is that M has S1 as one of its own minds.

To reinforce his point that the asymmetric accessing relation explicitly does not imply ownership, Morris (*ibid.*, p. 159) also employs the example of a thought experiment of telepathy<sup>11</sup> whereby just because a telepath has perfect access to the thoughts of another it does not mean that the telepath owns those thoughts; that is, the telepath has access consciousness but not phenomenal consciousness. Similarly, the divine mind has complete access to the thoughts of the human mind in JC but does not necessarily own them. Likewise, God has asymmetric access to the innermost thoughts of everyone, but we do not want to draw the conclusion that we are all incarnations of God.<sup>12</sup> Morris assures us that the two-minds model does not have the implication of universal incarnation; see below for Morris's discussion of causal and cognitive powers.

We may grant Morris's point that the asymmetric accessing relation does not imply ownership. If it did, then some problems arise. For instance, the set of beliefs held by the human mind presumably includes false beliefs engendered by living in first-century Palestine, and yet we normally hold the divine mind to possess only true beliefs (*ibid.*, pp. 159-160), so it would be incompatible for the divine mind to own those false beliefs. However, only people can have beliefs, not minds *per se*; thus, if Morris wishes to maintain the separation of beliefs between the two minds then it would seem that he has to accept that there are two persons. Orthodoxy, though, is that in JC there is just the one person. Thus, Morris's proposal, without further development perhaps such as a distinction between persons and mental subjects (Cross, 2009, p. 468), arguably does not resolve the problem of contradictory beliefs being held by the one person.

---

<sup>11</sup> I also commend Morris's use of IT systems. I am less inclined to commend references to telepathy.

<sup>12</sup> Zagzebski (2013) argues for a new divine trait of omnisubjectivity, which is God's ability to know what it is like for each of his creatures to be themselves; for example, God knows what it is like to be a rabbit and what it is like to be Donald Trump from a first-person perspective. Helm (2010, pp. 75-76) asserts that this is too demanding a requirement for omniscience and argues that through the principle of the transitivity of identity it has the absurd result that we are all God and all identical with one another. It would also seem that God would be at risk of emotional contagion incompatible with his impeccability and omnibenevolence.

A further problem arises in describing the asymmetric accessing relation between the divine and human minds. This denies what Bayne (2001, p. 130) terms the Non-Perspectival Thesis:

Necessarily, for any two token experiences P and Q, P and Q are either co-conscious or they are not.

Let us say P is the experience of feeling anger at a fig tree and Q is the experience of sustaining the universe.<sup>13</sup> P occurs in JC's limited human consciousness whilst Q occurs in his divine consciousness. For the two-minds model, P and Q are access co-conscious relative to the divine consciousness but not to the human consciousness, which does not experience the godly act of sustaining the universe. This relativism, however, appears to be peculiar, for co-consciousness seems to be a relation that holds between experiences, not between experiences and particular consciousnesses or perspectives (*ibid.*). It is a plausible principle that two token experiences should be either co-conscious or not (Marmodoro and Hill, 2010, p. 478; Le Poidevin, 2023, pp. 76-78).

If we accept the Non-Perspectival Thesis, P and Q should be access co-conscious to both the divine consciousness and the human consciousness in light of the claim that God the Son and JC are one and the same person or self and hence the experiences have just the one subject. Moreover, P and Q appear to be phenomenal co-conscious: there is something it is like for both the divine consciousness and the human consciousness to understand P and Q to be thoughts belonging to the same self. Given that P is an experience of passion and so is something not entertained by the divine consciousness<sup>14</sup> and Q is not something experienced by the human consciousness, it is a challenge for Morris's two-minds model to explain away these features of co-consciousness – both access and phenomenal – which should be there if there is only one person.

---

<sup>13</sup> My examples, not Bayne's, who writes in general terms.

<sup>14</sup> On our understanding of God as the impassible God of classical theism.

We can, of course, reject the Non-Perspectival Thesis. In this case, Morris's model can explain the human consciousness not experiencing Q: the human mind simply does not have access; there is, after all, an asymmetric accessing relation. However, this does not account for the divine consciousness having access- and phenomenal-consciousnesses of the passion P.

Therein lies the rub. It is one thing to have access consciousness, quite another to have phenomenal consciousness. The divine mind can have access consciousness to P in the sense of knowing the facts of the matter, but not in the sense of feeling that those are its thoughts. Also, the divine mind understands that the thoughts about Q are its thoughts; the human mind is not even aware of Q. Yet ownership of thoughts is significantly constitutive of personhood. If the divine mind does not own the human thoughts of JC – there is mere access consciousness, not phenomenal consciousness - we seem to have two distinct owners and hence two persons contrary to Morris's insistence and orthodoxy that there is only one person in JC.

If the human mind of JC is comparable to a normal human mind, then arguably it has an autonomy such that the divine mind cannot own it.<sup>15</sup> Contrariwise, if the divine mind does own it, then the divine mind likewise owns all our minds: we are all incarnations of God. Both of these possibilities are ruled out by orthodoxy, so there has to be a relevant difference between JC's human mind and ours. Morris identifies this difference as being based on causal and cognitive powers (1986, pp. 160-163). Whilst our causal and cognitive powers depend upon God, as our creator and sustaining cause of existence, nevertheless they are ontologically distinct from God's powers. Thus, God (or a telepath) uses his own powers to access our thoughts which are generated by our own powers. In contrast, the causal and cognitive powers of JC are the same as GS's, for they are one person. Although JC was fully human, he was not a created human being; that is, he was not a human being created with a set of causal and cognitive powers distinct from God the Son's. Morris asserts that the operation of these causal and cognitive powers through the human body gives rise to a human mind. Hence, there are two minds, with the second or human mind belonging to the

---

<sup>15</sup> On the basis that God created us with libertarian free will and respects our moral autonomy.



same person as GS on the basis of origin from the same set of causal and cognitive powers.

Morris's account purports to provide an explanation as to why we are all not incarnations of God and of how the human mind of JC arose. However, if the causal and cognitive powers which gave rise to JC's human mind are the same as GS's, then Morris needs to provide further explanation as to how exactly the two minds are truly distinct.

In addition, Morris's account does not satisfactorily explain how there can be just one person, a single centre of causal and cognitive powers, when the human mind of JC can have thoughts, beliefs and acts of willing which are not owned by the divine mind (Bayne, 2001, p. 134). If GS's mind has only access consciousness with respect to JC's human mind, then we appear to have two persons. On the other hand, if the divine mind has phenomenal consciousness with respect to the human mind, then we appear to have one person but a divine mind that possibly entertains false beliefs *etc.* Neither horn in this dilemma is acceptable to the orthodox Christian position.

To recap: Two-minds models, of which Morris's model is considered an exemplar, claim that a single individual has two streams of consciousness at once, one of which is contained within the other. I would argue that it is highly problematic that one and the same person can have two streams of consciousness: such implies two minds and hence two individuals. Morris is sensitive to this implication, suggesting that although it may be impossible for any merely human being to have more than one mind, this does not necessarily apply to God (1986, p. 157), for JC, to use Morris's proffered distinction, was fully human but not merely human. Morris asserts (1991, pp. 173-174) that for mere humans the human mental system was intended by God to define a person; however, this was not so in the case of JC. In the latter, the human mental system was created to belong to a pre-existent person with a divine mind. Whilst in the normal human case there is a one-to-one correspondence between mind and personhood, this correspondence does not hold for JC, for here the determiner of

personhood is the ultimate ontological status of his divinity. This suggestion, however, looks like special pleading and is *ad hoc*.

Morris's model is silent on the issue of timelessness versus temporality. Nonetheless, we can try to identify whether it has the resources to cope with the issue or otherwise to prove instructive for our purposes.

Morris's model appears to presume that the operations of the divine mind and the human mind in JC are similar in kind but differing in degree and scope. The asymmetric accessing relation is suggestive of a certain commensurability: if the operations were radically different then it is problematic to envisage how the respective minds could have, for instance, access consciousness. One could appeal, of course, to God's mysterious ways but that would be philosophically unsatisfactory. Thus, at first blush it seems that the two minds are either both timeless or both temporal. If one of the minds were timeless and the other temporal, then there appears to be a need for a 'translation' device to facilitate commensurability, for a timeless mind lacks succession in its thoughts whereas a temporal mind has succession in its thoughts. What is needed is a way for diachronic or successive thoughts to be treated synchronically and so potentially afford a reconciliation between a temporal human mind and a timeless divine mind. Morris's model, however, does not provide the resources for this; in contrast, my proposed reconciliation in Chapter 9 specifically offers such resources. Furthermore, if the operations of the two minds are radically different, then this is even more suggestive of there being two persons.

## **2.2. Divided-mind model of Swinburne**

Swinburne discusses his 'divided-mind' model in 'The Christian God' (1994, pp. 201-211). This is the view that Jesus Christ has a single mind but with two systems of belief or two consciousnesses: the divine knowledge system, with its concomitant beliefs and which enjoys the fruits of omniscience, and the human belief system, which reflects the limitations of the human condition and the acquisition of knowledge according to the socio-cultural milieu in which JC grew up. At least some of the beliefs acquired by the human belief system are incomplete or false and/or possibly

motivation for unbecoming behaviour, so God the Son chooses to keep the two belief systems somewhat separate. Swinburne (*ibid.*, pp. 201-202) invites us to think of the analogy of the Freudian notion whereby someone can have two sets of beliefs and in performing an action she can act on one set of beliefs and not be guided by the other set of beliefs; however, in contrast to the Freudian notion, here the subject – God – has an overarching awareness of both sets of beliefs and the ability to compartmentalise lacking in the Freudian patient. Swinburne classifies the beliefs of the human system as an inclination to believe rather than a belief *per se*. By ‘inclination to believe’, Swinburne means that the object of such an inclination is a proposition that ‘does not form part of a general view of the world, but merely guides the subject’s actions in certain circumstances’. Such inclinations are consciously accessible by the divine mind but are not taken on board to count as beliefs because they are not expressive of the divine mind’s worldview.<sup>16</sup>

There is an asymmetric accessing relation in that the divine knowledge system has access to all the beliefs [inclinations to believe] the human system contains but not *vice versa*, and the knowledge of which beliefs held by the human belief system are true or false but not *vice versa*.<sup>17</sup> This asymmetric accessing relation between the two systems gives us the flavour of two consciousnesses, one divine and one human. As in Morris’s model, the more natural reading of Swinburne’s model is that the two consciousnesses are concurrent, or both active, at times (*ibid.*, p. 127).

Figure 7.2 shows my representation of Swinburne’s divided-mind model. The divine system has complete access to the human system and this is shown by a thick arrow; however, the human system has limited access to the divine system and this is shown by a thin arrow.

---

<sup>16</sup> Presumably, the human belief system would contain some true propositions that would be expressive of the divine worldview and thus count as beliefs. Swinburne’s concern is with the problem of contradictory beliefs.

<sup>17</sup> Presumably, if the human belief system had access to the divine belief system, it would find out which of its own beliefs are false and would no longer entertain them.

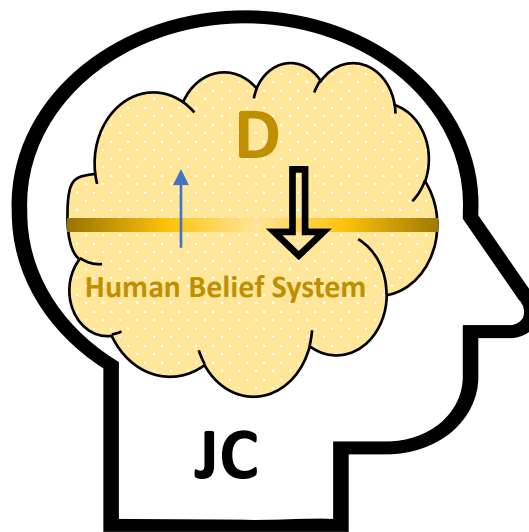


Figure 7.2: Swinburne's divided-mind model

Swinburne's model recognises that the owner [God the Son] of the divine belief system understands that some of the beliefs of the human belief system are false or unsuitable and so should not be incorporated into the divine belief system, whilst the 'owner' of the human belief system recognises that it is the owner of the latter system and is unaware, or at least not fully aware, of the divine belief system. But a key question is how distinctive are those two owners. Swinburne says that the respective divine and human natures and wills are kept to some extent separate so that JC, in his mission on Earth, is closer to us in our limited human condition. Depending upon how we interpret 'to some extent separate', all this sounds suggestive of two subjects of experience and hence two individual persons, although Swinburne in his Christian orthodoxy maintains that there is just the one person albeit with the two doxastic systems.<sup>18</sup>

My observations on Morris's model are mostly applicable to Swinburne's model. Swinburne's model has more resources than Morris's in handling incompatible beliefs:

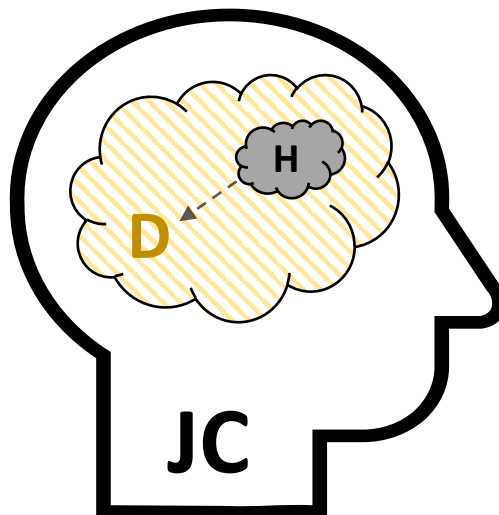
---

<sup>18</sup> Swinburne (1994, p. 215) claims that God the Son can only take on a human 'soul' in the sense of a human way of thinking and acting and that such a soul is not enough to individuate a human being. By not having a full 'regular' human soul, Swinburne's account might invite the charge of Apollinarianism. On the other hand, that GS takes on a human soul in the sense of a human way of thinking and acting might mitigate and possibly counter the charge of Apollinarianism (Cross, 2009, p. 470). In §4.10 of Chapter 9 I address similar concerns to my proposed reconciliation.

Swinburne simply denies that the human beliefs are really beliefs. We may, however, be reluctant to accept that human beliefs are mere inclinations to believe. With regard to my point about there being something distinctly inappropriate about using human psychopathologies to model God's mind, I would question whether Swinburne really wants to draw inspiration, even as an analogy, from Freudian insights, for these, *inter alia*, concern a pathological self-deceptive account.

### 2.3. Restricted Inclusionism of Bayne

Bayne (2001) refers to the models of Morris and Swinburne as the 'inclusion model' or 'inclusionism', in order to emphasise that under these models Jesus Christ allegedly not only had two consciousnesses, human and divine, but that the human one was contained or included within the divine one. He discusses a number of objections to such models and offers his own model called Restricted Inclusionism (RI) to address several of these objections. My representation of Bayne's model is shown partly in Figure 7.3 and then completely in Figure 7.4:



**Figure 7.3: Bayne's Restricted Inclusionism**

Restricted Inclusionism holds that at any one point in time JC had only a single stream of consciousness, in contrast to Morris's and Swinburne's models of two. RI endorses what Bayne calls the consecutive model of containment, *viz.* that the divine and the human 'consciousnesses' were held consecutively rather than concurrently; again, in

contrast to Morris’s and Swinburne’s models. Before the Incarnation, God the Son fully experienced the natural state of his divine consciousness, with its omniscience *etc.* During the Incarnation, JC’s consciousness mostly had a human flavour with all the limitations inherent therein.<sup>19</sup> JC might have had occasional access to the divine contents of consciousness; this, however, would not be one mind or consciousness accessing another but rather the having of sorts of conscious experiences and states that are typical of the divine (*ibid.*, p. 138), although Bayne does not elaborate what it means for a human consciousness to have the latter. This is represented in Figure 7.3 by the divine consciousness being faded and the arrow between the human consciousness and the divine consciousness being a broken line. After the Incarnation, JC’s consciousness reverted to the full experience of the divine status.<sup>20</sup> Figure 7.4 captures this idea of consecutive containment:

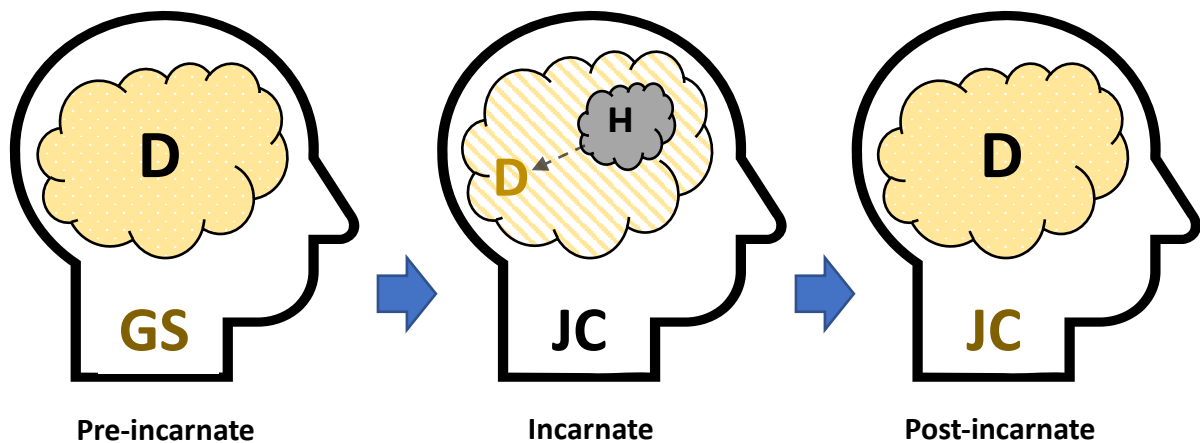


Figure 7.4: Bayne's consecutive containment

Bayne’s proposal is more parsimonious than Morris’s and Swinburne’s models in accounting for JC’s synchronic identity or identity at a given time; there is no need to worry about two concurrent consciousnesses and these being incompatible with there being just the one person, for Bayne’s model denies that there are two consciousnesses.

<sup>19</sup> This model essentially looks like a kenotic one.

<sup>20</sup> It is not clear what this means in terms of God the Son retaining human aspects in the post-incarnate state; this is reflected in Figure 7.4.

With regard to RI accounting for JC's diachronic identity or identity across time, Bayne argues that this depends upon one's choice of a theory of personal identity and does not present insupportable problems.

Bayne (*ibid.*, p. 127) recognises the difficulty that a divine timeless mind undergoes no succession in its thoughts, that is, has a synchronic structure, whereas a human temporal mind experiences successive thoughts, that is, has both synchronic and diachronic relations; and so an account has to be given of how the 'minds' of a timeless God and its incarnate form share the same phenomenal consciousness. In addition, if a divine timeless mind consists of a timeless collection of mental states whilst a human temporal mind consists of a temporal series of mental states then plausibly we have two independent minds and hence two persons. Bayne sees little prospect in resolving these difficulties; his inclusionist model explicitly presupposes God's temporality with God's one consciousness undergoing consecutive change.

#### **2.4. Monothelitism of Craig and DeWeese**

A recurring challenge to many models of the Incarnation examined thus far, in this and the previous chapter, is that they imply two persons. God the Son, with his divine mind, was a person before the Incarnation. On a concretist understanding of human nature, if in the Incarnation he took on the full natural endowment of a human being, including a human mind, and if this full natural endowment normally on its own would be a person, then it seems plausible that there are two persons. This challenge seems particularly acute when the standard modern psychological understanding of what is a person is employed, for two minds imply two persons. We have seen various responses to this challenge, and it has been adjudged that these responses are not convincing.

Assuming the association of personhood with a mind, a more direct response to the challenge of implying two persons is to deny that GS took on a human mind or at least the full capabilities of a human mind. This approach has not been favoured by most Christian commentators because it is considered unorthodox in that it allegedly denies

the full humanity of Jesus Christ:<sup>21</sup> the allegations include that GS merely took on animality [a human body], not humanity, and that in not taking on the full human nature GS could not redeem humanity.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the heretical view known as Apollinarianism was that JC had a human body but that the divine mind took the place of the human rational soul or mind, so that his human mental life just was his divine mental life.<sup>23</sup>

Two Christian commentators who independently have taken the more direct response are Craig in his 2003 'Incarnation' and DeWeese in his 2007 'One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation'. Craig and DeWeese offer a two-part abstract Christology. Their views are similar and, at the risk of some injustice on relatively minor points, treated together here.

Craig (2003, p. 608) and DeWeese (2007, p. 144) argue for monothelitism, *viz.* the position that Jesus Christ had only one will, in contrast to the conciliar orthodox position of dyothelitism that JC had two wills, a divine one and a human one.<sup>24</sup> For the monothelite, only persons have a will, whereas for the dyothelite, natures have wills. The 'will' is considered to be the psychological faculty of volitional agency by which a person purposively strives or self-determines in accordance with, *inter alia*, his beliefs, desires and abilities. JC had only one will – the divine will – because he was the one person GS who possessed only his divine mind; however, that mind qualified for both divinity and humanity in respect of properties held. Craig and DeWeese understand human nature to be abstract, not concrete; accordingly, wills are more plausibly grounded in persons, not natures (DeWeese, 2007, pp. 131-133 and p. 144); again, this is in contrast to the orthodox position of a nature being a concrete particular and

---

<sup>21</sup> The Definition of Faith from the Council of Chalcedon 451 CE (from Tanner, 1990, p. 86): '... we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of *a rational soul and a body...*' [my emphasis].

<sup>22</sup> On the plus side, if the human mind is the seat of sinful instincts, then such an approach affords an account of why Jesus Christ was not peccable.

<sup>23</sup> One could take the view that to have a human soul is for a person to be related to a human body in a certain exclusive way. On this understanding, we could say that God the Son *becomes* a human soul (Merricks, 2007, p. 293). See also my footnote 18 above regarding Swinburne's view.

<sup>24</sup> Dyothelitism was declared by the Third Council of Constantinople in 681 CE. This can be seen as a development or clarification of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE which had declared two natures.



so wills are grounded in natures.<sup>25</sup> The one person GS is the common constituent or hypostasis that unites the two natures.

That wills are grounded in persons seems more plausible than that they are grounded in natures. The will is integral to what on the standard modern understanding we take a person to be. On this view, we do not take the will as belonging to a mere part of the person, in this case, a nature; *a fortiori*, we do not take multiple wills as belonging to multiple parts or natures. Granted, in the personage of JC we allegedly have a *sui generis* case of one divine person with two natures and the argument could be made that the Incarnation reveals to us something about the concepts of person and natures. This is highly speculative. In any case, it is not at all clear that what goes for divine persons goes for human persons.

In response to the allegation that GS merely took on animality in the Incarnation, Craig (2003, pp. 608-609) reformulates Apollinarianism. Craig offers the proposal that GS was the archetypal man and so already possessed human nature within his pre-incarnate divine form. His assumption of a corporeal body in the Incarnation gave that flesh the properties necessary to make it a complete human nature including being a human self. This is reminiscent of Leftow's (2002a, p. 279) assertion that an abstract nature incarnation takes place only if a concrete nature incarnation does.<sup>26</sup> Craig denies that the flesh taken on would have existed as a person in its own right outside of the Incarnation. Craig makes use of the anhypostasia/enhypostasia distinction: the human nature of Jesus Christ is anhypostatic, or not personal in itself, but is enhypostatic, or personalised, only in its union with the person of GS; in other words, the individual human nature of JC supervened on the individual divine nature of GS (Craig, 2003, p. 609; see also Mullins, 2016, pp. 170-171). It follows that when we say that JC is a person, we strictly mean by 'person' a divine person; if we also say that

---

<sup>25</sup> Moreland and Craig (2003, p. 611) also argue that dyothelitism does not have Scriptural support.

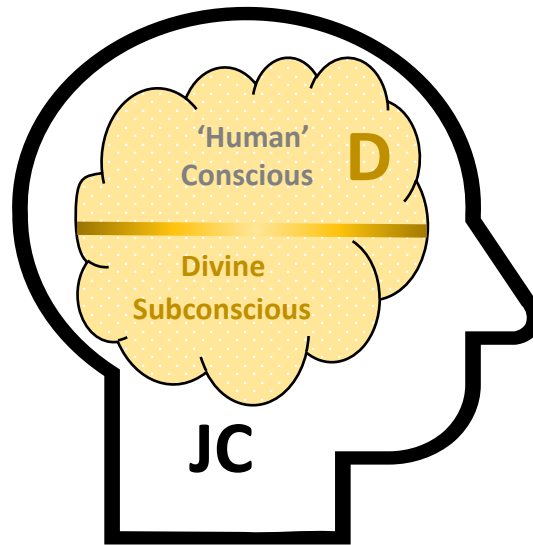
<sup>26</sup> A further perspective on abstract-nature incarnation is that in assuming the properties of human nature, GS assumed the property of being a human soul. That is to say, GS did not stand in for a human soul because JC had no human soul – which would be Apollinarian – but rather GS became a human soul. The taking on of properties is additional to GS's existing status; that is, GS did not cease to be a divine person. Another possibility is that there is no such thing as human souls or any particular kind of soul *per se*; rather, there are souls *simpliciter*; so all that is required for a soul, in this case GS's, to be counted as a 'human soul' is for that soul to be in a certain relationship of attachment to a certain body for the period of the incarnation (Crisp, 2007, pp. 50 ff).

JC is a human person, perhaps with the intention to capture his identification with humanity, we are speaking loosely and do not mean a human nature personalised by a created human personhood.

One potential concern with his and DeWeese's models which Craig (2003, p. 610) identifies is to what extent they preclude the use of the reduplicative strategy. Some properties seem amenable to the *qua*-move. For instance, JC is omnipotent in respect of his divine nature but limited in power in respect of his human nature given that the latter includes a weak human body; similarly, JC is eternal in respect of his divine nature but mortal in respect of his human nature given that the latter includes a perishable human body. Other properties, however, seem more problematic. JC is said to be omniscient in respect of his divine nature but limited in knowledge through his human nature, but it is difficult to envisage how a single conscious subject can entertain both, for there is only the one divine mind; similarly, JC is impeccable in respect of his divine nature but peccable through his human nature but again there is only the one divine mind with its beliefs, desires and volition.

Craig (*ibid.*, pp. 610-611) offers a response to these difficulties. Claiming to employ insights of modern psychology, he postulates that the divine aspects of JC's personality were largely subliminal; that is, we can imagine JC possessing something like a normal human conscious experience but with an underlying divine subconsciousness. During the Incarnation, GS allowed only those facets of his person to be part of JC's waking consciousness consistent with typical human experience, while the remainder lay dormant in his subconscious.

Figure 7.5 shows my representation of Craig's subliminal model. There is only one consciousness, *viz.* the Divine (D). This one consciousness, however, is partitioned into a 'human' conscious [note the scare quotes], consisting of facets of GS's person, and a divine subconscious.



**Figure 7.5: Craig's subliminal model**

On the whole, Craig's and DeWeese's models represent a plausible account to answer the challenge of avoiding two persons in JC: there is just one mind so there is just one person. Furthermore, that there is only one mind in JC supports the notion of a unity of consciousness, which is a key component of the attempted reconciliation under the Bimodal God thesis. Also, if we wish to align the concept of the Bimodal God with the concept of the Christian God when incarnating, then the notion of a subliminal self might provide resources for how the Bimodal God can likewise exhibit some of the alleged incompatible properties. That GS already possesses a human nature in his pre-incarnate form<sup>27</sup> might be useful in supporting a claim that the Bimodal God does not have to undergo intrinsic change in becoming incarnate.<sup>28</sup>

One challenge to Craig's and DeWeese's models is that they assume the commensurability of divine and human persons. As I discussed in §3.4 Chapter 5,

---

<sup>27</sup> This may be unorthodox. Compare with the declaration of Chalcedon 381CE's '... begotten *before the ages* from the Father as regards his divinity, and *in the last days* the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity...' [my emphases] (Tanner, 1990, p. 86). I would proffer that this declaration of Chalcedon is consistent with the idea of God the Son possessing human nature in terms of properties from eternity and that human nature being completed with the assumption of a human body at a point in time.

<sup>28</sup> Stump and Kretzmann (1981, p. 453) assert that a timeless God the Son could not at some time acquire a human nature he does not eternally have lest he forfeit his timelessness. There, they do not present an analysis of what it means for GS to possess human nature from eternity and how this resolves at least some problems of the Incarnation.

human beings are so quintessentially limited that if we encountered someone without the same limitations but who claimed to be human we would politely suggest that they were making a category mistake. The limitations infuse our psychology. We are, for instance, mortal creatures and know that our projects will end and our legacies will be ultimately frustrated and forgotten; GS is necessarily existent and so has no such anguish. We are also peccable, arguably excelling at sinning and devoting considerable time and resources to so doing; JC, in contrast, was said to be fully like us in humanity but impeccable.<sup>29</sup> Relatedly, and with Craig's notion of the subliminal self in mind, we are significantly subject to irrational impulses and beliefs emanating from the conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of our human minds, which are frequently at the mercy of the embodied chaos of the hormonal system and other biological imperatives; this is not remotely comparable to a perfectly rational and impassive divine subconscious previously non-embodied. It is also not clear that Craig's model allows for a human subconscious. Most importantly, we are temporal creatures who experience our lives partially in fleeting sequential slices of time; this is not remotely comparable to a divine person whose psychology is infused by living all at once in the eternal present. Overall, the impression is that Craig's model does not quite capture the flavour of JC having a significant human mental life distinct from his divine mental life.

Finally, and most importantly from the perspective of the Research Question, it should be noted that Craig's and DeWeese's models do not consider the timelessness/temporality issue.

## 2.5. Kryptic model of Loke

In his 2014 'A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation', Loke presents his Divine Preconscious Model (DPM). This is a concrete nature three-part Christology (*ibid.*, p. 68 and pp. 72-73). It holds that prior to the Incarnation God the Son had an undivided divine mind

---

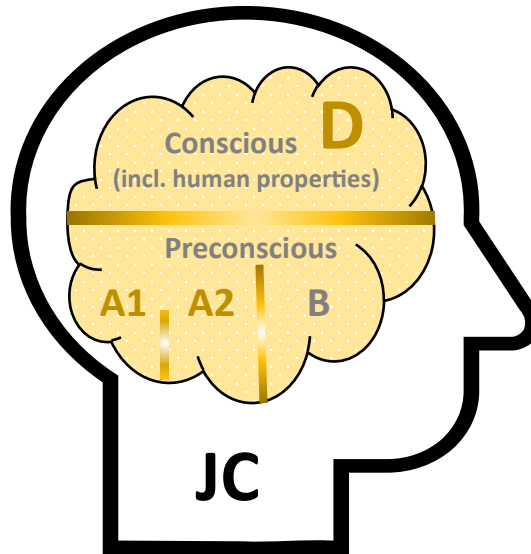
<sup>29</sup> The theological argument presumably would be that Jesus Christ had an uncorrupted human nature whereas we are fallen creatures; that is to say, sinfulness is not an essential property of human nature. After all, JC is sometimes referred to as the second Adam. But setting aside whether sinfulness is an essential or contingent property, given the inductive support of all humans in their fallenness (except perhaps Adam and Eve pre-fall, and perhaps the Virgin Mary), is it not more appropriate to say that JC did not truly experience what it is to be human? We seem to live, move and have our being in our fallenness.

without any human body. At the Incarnation, this divine mind was divided into two parts, *viz.* the conscious and the preconscious. Certain divine properties, such as omniscience, were submerged into (or hidden in – hence the term ‘kryptic’) the preconscious part of his divine mind but remained fully accessible; this preconscious would become what Loke calls ‘part A’ of Jesus Christ’s preconscious. Thus, the DPM is a form of functional kenoticism. Simultaneously, a human preconscious was created, which would become ‘part B’ of JC’s preconscious, and his divine consciousness acquired human properties, such as limited in knowledge, which were also newly created. And, of course, a human body was created (*ibid.*, p. 69). Loke further asserts that such embodiment meant that some of JC’s consciousness’s capacity to function became dependent on the brain and as a consequence JC could experience aspects of the normal human condition such as physical pain and the desire for sleep. Accordingly, the DPM maintains that JC was one person, for there is one self-consciousness, with concrete divine and human natures (*ibid.*, p. 70).

Figure 7.6 shows my representation of Loke’s DPM. There is only one consciousness, *viz.* the Divine (D). This one consciousness is partitioned into conscious<sup>30</sup> and preconscious sections, with the latter subdivided into a divine part (A) and a human part (B). Part A is further subdivided into A1 and A2: A1 is the part which D normally does not access, but can, and A2 is the part which D was willing to access, for example in order to prevent JC having false beliefs.

---

<sup>30</sup> Note the use of an adjective as a noun. This is perhaps idiosyncratic but precedents abound: we talk about the *rich* getting richer and the *poor* getting poorer.



**Figure 7.6: Loke's Divine Preconscious Model**

Loke's motivation for his DPM is, *inter alia*, to remedy what he identifies as some perceived deficiencies in such two-minds models as Morris's and Swinburne's.

One alleged problem of those models is that there are two persons. Loke (*ibid.*, pp. 47-48) argues that the problem is even worse. JC's divine mind can be imagined to be thinking:

I am aware of myself being consciously aware of the day of my coming.

However, his human mind can be imagined to be thinking:

I am not aware of myself being consciously aware of the day of my coming.

JC can also be imagined to have an overarching subject consciousness, which might be thinking:

I am aware of myself being consciously aware of the day of my coming in my divine mind and I am aware of myself being consciously unaware of the day of my coming in my human mind at one-and-the-same time.

We now appear, according to Loke, to have three consciousnesses.

In response to this, one can say that appearances can be deceptive. The overarching subject consciousness looks more like an instance of introspective consciousness of the same self rather than an ontologically distinct entity; such introspection would be the preserve of the divine mind. It is also implausible that the human mind would think that it is not aware of itself being consciously aware of the day of coming: either it is consciously aware of the day of coming or it is not, and if it is so aware then it cannot fail to be aware of being aware; this is similar to whether the pain I feel is my pain. Consequently, Loke's case for there being three consciousnesses is unconvincing, but this does not mean that the allegation of two persons based on the respective consciousnesses of the dual nature goes away.

Another alleged problem concerning two-minds models which Loke identifies is that the divine and human consciousnesses could address each other simultaneously in an I-Thou relationship thus implying two persons. This allegation, however, seems overstated. We, mere humans, ordinarily indulge in an inner dialogue with ourselves but we do not normally take this to mean that we are two individuals in one. Still, if there is substance to this allegation, Loke's DPM is well-placed in avoiding the problem. In contrast to many other three-part Christologies, under the DPM the part 'human soul' does not equate to a separate human consciousness; rather, in the Incarnation the divine consciousness simply acquired an additional human aspect.

Loke is rather quick in dismissing some of the arguments of Morris and Swinburne. For instance, Loke's comment on Morris's suggestion of the analogy of computer programs (M and S1; see earlier) as a way a person could have two consciousnesses is summarily dismissed with '... computer programs are irrelevant to this question as computers are not persons' (*ibid.*). Morris, of course, is not stating that computers are persons; he is merely employing an analogy. *Contra* Loke, one way of interpreting the phenomenon of the mind is to view it as an information-processing system and this favours analogies with computer programs; furthermore, it is no stretch to speculate that in the relatively near future there will be AI systems able to do person-like activities such as read Loke's book, point out the argumentative and conceptual flaws, and offer suggestions, including creative ones, for improvements. Still, Loke helps to sensitise

us to examine carefully whether arguments put forward to counter the allegation of two persons in two-minds models are convincing.

Loke prefers his DPM to be referred to as a one-consciousness model, for he argues that his model in fact has two minds albeit shared by the one consciousness; he classifies regular two-minds models as two-consciousnesses models (*ibid.*, p. 45 footnote and pp. 73-74). Under the DPM, the divine mind comprises the aspect of his conscious having access to the divine preconscious and the human mind comprises the aspect of his conscious having human properties and a human preconscious. These, however, seem to be emasculated interpretations of what are minds, but it may be granted that this emasculation prevents the extrapolation of the human 'mind' to personhood: when Loke talks of JC having two wills, for instance, he means that JC is one 'willer', given his one consciousness, but that this willer is influenced by desires natural to human nature, and hence a human will, and is also influenced by his divine preconscious, and hence a divine will (*ibid.*, pp. 76-77); on this basis, Loke maintains that his DPM is consistent with the orthodox position of dyothelitism, in contrast for example to Craig and DeWeese.

In considering the objection that DPM is incompatible with a strong version of divine immutability, Loke (*ibid.*, pp. 86-90), discusses divine timelessness. In brief, he argues that there is little scriptural and theological-philosophical support for God's strong immutability and timelessness; he presupposes God's temporality.<sup>31</sup> As such, he does not discuss the difficulty of reconciling a divine timeless mind which undergoes no succession in its thoughts with a human temporal mind which experiences successive thoughts. Nor is it implicit in his DPM model that there are resources to cover this possibility: that under the DPM the human temporal 'mind' is merely an aspect of the one divine mind does not furnish means to handle the transition from timeless eternity to the created temporal world.

---

<sup>31</sup> I need not address Loke's claim about the lack of scriptural and theological-philosophical support for God's strong immutability and timelessness. It is a presupposition of the Research Question that God is timeless, and timelessness entails immutability.



The DPM offers a compartmentalised view of JC's consciousness. Such compartmentalisation might be problematic in itself, allowing for a disunity of consciousness. More importantly, such an internal structure seems inappropriate for a timeless immutable perfect being; for instance, the divine properties assigned to the divine preconscious are dispositional, yet the divine mind of GS, living all at once in the eternal present and so not, for example, having to change its attention from one set of knowledge to another, would necessarily have only occurrent properties; Loke (*ibid.*, p. 115) concedes this, but, of course, dismisses it as he considers timelessness to be insufficiently motivated.

## **2.6. The Bilingual Mind (my proposal)**

My own suggestion for a psychological model would be to think of the divine and human consciousnesses using the analogy of the bilingual mind, especially where the two languages are significantly different; for example, English, an alphabetised sound-based language, and Chinese, a pictorial-based language. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis postulates that languages shape the way we think (Rosemont, 2019). It is plausible, I would suggest, that when a bilingual person thinks in one language he employs concepts that are not readily translatable, or even understandable, into the other and, albeit perhaps at a stretch, we could say that the person can think in two ways. Similarly, when Incarnate God thinks in his divine mentalese he enjoys the fruits of omniscience but when he thinks through the vehicle of human mentalese and/or linguistic language he does not have such enjoyment.

It is unlikely that a human being who is bilingual can think simultaneously in the two languages given cognitive limitations. It is, however, plausible that a bilingual human being has metacognition whereby she knows the limitations of a particular language compared to the other language whilst using the particular language. I would venture that as a consequence of his perfect cognition Incarnate God has the ability to think in the two ways simultaneously, and this would be significant in terms of supporting the notion of a timeless God with synchronic thoughts.

Importantly, under the bilingual mind model there is a single subject of experience: there is the one mind employing, as it were, two sets of tools. Thus, in my proposal there is a downplaying if not outright denial of two discrete consciousnesses and, *ipso facto*, a militating of the risk of two persons. This is in contrast to for example Swinburne's asymmetric accessing relation between the two systems which gives us the flavour of two consciousnesses, one divine and one human.

### SECTION 3. INSIGHTS

The focus of the Research Question is on how to reconcile the timeless and temporal modes of existence. However, if we wish to model more closely the Christian *deus homo* Jesus Christ, it would be theoretically virtuous to have the resources to deal with other incompatible properties such as divine omniscience versus human limitedness in knowledge.

In respect of omniscience, one approach is to restrict access so that whilst Timeless God has full access to the thoughts of Incarnate God, the latter does not have full access to the thoughts of Timeless God. A possible account for this asymmetric accessing relation would be Swinburne's divided-mind model. Under this model, Timeless God is fully aware of the inclinations to false beliefs had by Incarnate God in respect of the latter's human consciousness but does not allow Incarnate God such access to Timeless God's omniscience that would correct the possibly false beliefs. Importantly, Timeless God does not take the inclinations to false beliefs to be incorporated into his own belief system as actual beliefs lest this conflicts with his omniscience. An analogy for this would be a computer program running a subroutine: both are parts of the same system and the main program has access to all the outputs of the subroutine, but the main program only allows the subroutine those inputs the latter needs to fulfil its function. Morris employs a similar analogy but wants us to use the analogy to conceptualise two minds; I reject Morris's model as two minds is too suggestive of two persons. Overall, I think Swinburne's model is closer to the mark with its inclinations to false beliefs. However, getting the right balance more generally between the divine and human aspects of Incarnate God's psychology is problematic.

To help better capture the flavour of what it is like for Incarnate God to experience the temporal world, I consider there to be some merit in Craig's proposal of a subliminal model whereby Timeless God allows only those facets of his person to be part of Incarnate God's waking consciousness consistent with typical human experience, while the remainder lie dormant in Incarnate God's subconscious. However, I have several reservations regarding such dormancy. My bilingual mind approach better addresses, I would argue, the concern identified by Craig as to how JC is said to be omniscient in respect of his divine nature but limited in knowledge through his human nature, for it avoids notions of the divine mind being partitioned with some parts suppressed: it seems more befitting that a divine mind is simple, and more befitting of omniscience that the knowledge is occurrent, not dispositional; this latter point is particularly so if the mind holding the knowledge is timeless, which, I grant, is not Craig's concern. Similar remarks apply to Loke's Divine Preconscious Model, together with the added concern, from my perspective of the Research Question, about the divine mind undergoing intrinsic change at incarnation; however, again, I grant that Loke presupposes God's temporality.

Granted, all these models are theoretical constructs which are understood to be analogies and so are limited in various respects, but each casts light on difficult issues.

## CHAPTER 8

### PERSISTENCE

‘All the world’s a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts.’  
Act II Scene VII, As You Like It, by William Shakespeare

#### Chapter Contents:

Overview

#### §1. Preliminaries

- 1.1. Persistence
- 1.2. *Sub specie aeternitatis*
- 1.3. *Quoad nos*
- 1.4. Some desiderata

#### §2. Theories of Persistence

- 2.1. *A priori vs. a posteriori*
- 2.2. Endurantism
- 2.3. Perdurantism
- 2.4. Stage Theory

#### §3. Implications for the Research Question

- 3.1. Introductory remarks
- 3.2. A/B-theories and rejecting endurantism
- 3.3. Rejecting perdurantism
- 3.4. Opting for the stage theory

#### §4. Insights

## OVERVIEW

Firstly, some preliminaries are made to frame the discussion. Next, three main theories of persistence are considered: endurantism, perdurantism and stage theory. Finally, an evaluation is made as to which theory of persistence is most favoured in addressing the Research Question; this is adjudged to be the stage theory.

## SECTION 1. PRELIMINARIES

### 1.1. Persistence

Persistence is diachronic identity; that is, identity across time. If, say, an object existed one week ago, exists now and will exist in one week's time, then there is a sense in which the object is the same. A fundamental philosophical problem is the nature of this sameness. Particularly in our ordinary talk, we often think of sameness in terms of numerical identity; that is, it is one and the same entity: the mobile phone I am using now is the same as the one I received for my birthday last week. However, in stricter talk, such as when we are considering what are the truthmakers for our claims about diachronic identity, we notice that sameness and numerical identity are not necessarily synonymous (Hawley, 2001, pp. 62ff): my mobile phone might be the same as yours, but this sameness is the model of the phone for they are two numerically distinct phones; being the same model, the phones have many similar properties, so here sameness is thought of in terms of qualitative identity.

It is possible that the persistence conditions of an object depend upon what kind of object it is. Whilst sameness can be on the basis of numerical identity or qualitative identity, there are also other options: in the case of people, we might consider, for instance, Parfit's Relation R (1984, p. 215).<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding occasional talk of mobile phones and rabbits, the primary focus of the following discussion is on human persons. The answer to this problem of sameness informs the third lynchpin in addressing the Research Question, *viz.* the ontology and personal identity of humans.

---

<sup>1</sup> That is,  $x$  at  $t_1$  and  $y$  at  $t_2$  are the same person if there is sufficient psychological connectedness, *viz.* the holding of particular direct psychological connections, and/or psychological continuity, *viz.* the holding of overlapping chains of strong connectedness, with the right kind of cause. For Parfit, Relation R is what matters, not personal identity.

### **1.2. *Sub specie aeternitatis***

We have opted for the B-theory as our preferred theory of time (see Chapter 3). Two aspects of the B-theory particularly informed our choice: eternalism and tenselessness. Under eternalism, all [physical] times exist and are ontologically on a par and so are available for a timeless God to embrace. With tenselessness, there is no 'past', 'present' or 'future', hence God does not have to wait for a particular time to arrive, so he may, therefore, embrace all times 'at once'. As the creator of everything other than himself, God must have created time thus so.

### **1.3. *Quoad nos***

Although from God's perspective in the eternal present all of time is available at once, the human perspective is that time flows from the future to the present to the past with a vividness peculiar to the present that is in sharp contrast to our awareness of other times; that is, at least subjectively, we experience ourselves to be temporal creatures trapped in dynamic tensed time. Accordingly, it would seem that from the human perspective time is best represented by an A-theory with its ontological privileging of the present, for under the B-theory all times are ontologically on a par and the passage of time is a mere illusion, although the phenomenology arguably would be neutral in this regard for our experience of time's flow would be the same under both A- and B-theories (Le Poidevin, 2007, Ch. 5).

### **1.4. *Some desiderata***

We need a theory of persistence of God's creatures [in particular, us] consistent with all times existing at once tenselessly. Moreover, this theory needs to have the resources to account for our psychology, in particular that we at least appear to have successive or diachronic thoughts, as opposed to Timeless God's non-successive or synchronic thoughts. Furthermore, whatever persistence conditions are applicable to human beings preferably should also apply to Incarnate God, at least in respect of his human nature, if a true incarnation takes place in the sense of Incarnate God taking on our full humanity.

## SECTION 2. THEORIES OF PERSISTENCE

### 2.1. *A priori* vs. *a posteriori*

In evaluating which, if any, theory of persistence is most suited for answering the Research Question, the focus will be on *a priori* arguments. This is usually the case in the philosophical literature (see, for instance, Sider, 2001, pp. xiv-xv). However, if there are *a posteriori* arguments favouring one theory over another, then this will lend independent motivation to adopt that theory and will be in keeping with my methodological principles (see Chapter 2). Accordingly, appropriate reference will be made to some pertinent *a posteriori* arguments where these are available.

### 2.2. Endurantism

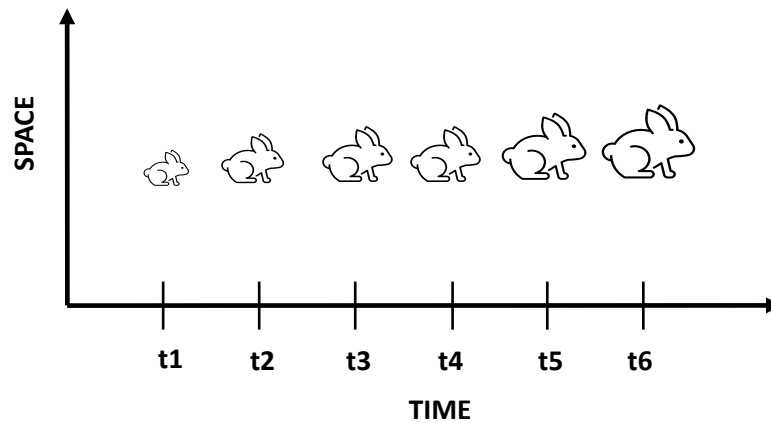
Endurantism is the theory that at least some material objects, such as rabbits, human beings and pokers, persist by being wholly present<sup>2</sup> at a succession of different times (Lewis, 1986a, p. 202).<sup>3</sup> Objects are thought to be three-dimensional; that is, whilst objects are extended at most in three spatial dimensions and so have spatial parts, they are not extended in time and so do not have temporal parts: a person for instance has spatial parts such as hands, feet and ears but not temporal parts such as that-person-yesterday, that-person-today and that-person-tomorrow. Indeed, endurantism is sometimes called ‘three-dimensionalism’. Persistence is seen as a matter of identity: the entity wholly present at one time is numerically identical to itself at other times. At a particular time, there is just the one object; in the case of a person, there is just the one person. The persisting object is said to be a continuant; that is, it persists by continuing to exist (Varzi, 2003, p. 4). Processes and events are excluded from this understanding, for most commentators accept that events have temporal parts (such as the first half and the second half of a football match).

Endurantism is represented in Figure 8.1. When we look at Daisy the rabbit at respective times, we are seeing the whole rabbit at each of those times:

---

<sup>2</sup> ‘Wholly present’ may be thought of as having all of one’s parts present at a given time.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis (1986a, p. 202) perhaps helps us to grasp the concept of endurance by offering that it corresponds to the way a universal would be wholly present wherever and whenever it is instantiated.



**Figure 8.1: Endurantism**

Objects may intrinsically change from time to time; that is, the same object changes by having different, or incompatible, intrinsic properties at different times. This is represented in Figure 8.1 by showing Daisy growing in size. By the ‘same’ object is meant numerical identity and this object is the subject undergoing the change; Haslanger (2003, pp. 316-317) refers to these aspects as the ‘Identity condition’ and the ‘Proper subject condition’ respectively.

Endurantism is often taken to be the intuitively commonsense view (Hawley, 2001, p. 10). However, it arguably does not align well with modern physics (Hales and Johnson, 2003). There are, for instance, *a posteriori* arguments that reject endurantism on the basis of its ill fit with Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity (STR), for this theory implies a certain geometry to the universe which is empirically discoverable. The philosophy of time that seemingly most coheres with endurantism is the A-theory, especially presentism (Haslanger, 2003, pp. 336ff). Presentism is the view that the only real time that exists is the present and so necessarily the only objects and events that exist are those that exist in the present (see §2.2.1 of Chapter 3). Under STR, what is ‘present’ and hence what exists is relative to a reference frame. Under endurantism, an object endures if it is wholly present at each time at which it exists. However, consider an object consisting of two proper parts A and B, which are not spatially coincident.<sup>4</sup> In the object’s rest frame at  $t_1$  the two proper parts co-exist; hence  $A_1$  and  $B_1$ . Also, in the object’s rest frame at a different time  $t_2$  the two proper

<sup>4</sup> This is an adaptation of Hales and Johnson’s (2003, pp. 532-538) argument.



parts co-exist; hence  $A_2$  and  $B_2$ . Consider another reference frame moving relatively to the object's rest frame. From the point of view of this additional reference frame,  $A_1$  and  $B_2$  co-exist. Take a third reference frame moving at a different speed. From the point of view of this third reference frame,  $A_2$  and  $B_1$  co-exist. Whilst it is true that  $A$  and  $B$  belong to the same object, they are existing together at different times in those *other* reference frames. If we take  $t_1$  to be now, and  $t_2$  not to be now, then things at 'not now' can co-exist with things at 'now'; thus, things at other times are real. Thus, if STR is correct, then this argument falsifies presentism. It also plausibly falsifies endurantism, for an object composed of  $A$  and  $B$  is not wholly present if its proper parts are existing at different times.<sup>5</sup>

As stated, endurantism is normally associated with the A-theory of time. That an object may be said to have changed in virtue of having incompatible properties at different times can also be argued for under the B-theory; indeed, this is what Mellor (1981, Ch. 7) asserts is understood by *real* change. Mellor's precise formulation is '... things, being devoid of temporal parts, change when they have incompatible properties at different B series times, provided that the difference of properties has contiguous effects' (*ibid.*, p. 114). The appeal to the B series reflects Mellor's detenser project, and the appeal to contiguous effects is to help differentiate real change from external change. Mellor's view, together with some critical responses to it, is considered further in §3.

### 2.3. Perdurantism

Perdurantism is the theory that an object is a series or sum of temporal parts at every instant that it exists and no one part of it is wholly present at more than one time (Lewis, 1986a, p. 202).<sup>6</sup> Objects are normally thought to be four-dimensional; that is, objects have temporal parts – in addition to spatial parts - spread across time somewhat in the

---

<sup>5</sup> Hales and Johnson (2003, pp. 532-538) grant that it is possible for endurantism to accommodate STR by defining simultaneity in terms of a particular inertial reference frame. However, this, they argue, will lead to the absurdity of a potentially infinite number of the same object given that there are potentially an infinite number of reference frames.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis (1986a, p. 202) perhaps helps us to grasp the concept of perdurance by offering that it corresponds to the way a road persists through space by a part of it being here and a part being there and no part is wholly present at two different places. Sider (2001, p. 2) meanders along roads too. Hawley (2001, pp. 149-150) also traverses roads but in a discussion of perdurance and the constitution relation. Roads are popular.

fashion that spatially extended objects are spread out through space. Accordingly, perdurantism is sometimes called ‘four-dimensionalism’.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to endurantism, under perdurantism an object is not wholly present at each time, only a temporal part is; we may say that such an object is ‘partly present’ at a time (Haslanger, 2003, p. 318). Whilst the four-dimensional object is numerically identical to itself, so that we may say persistence under perdurance is a matter of identity, the respective temporal parts are not numerically identical to the object but are proper parts. Nor are the respective temporal parts numerically identical to one another. Persistence through time is seen, therefore, like an object’s extension through space: an object that exists in time has temporal parts in the various subregions of the total region of time it occupies, analogous to how an object that exists in a region of space has a part in every subregion of that space. We can refer to the persisting object as a perdurant rather than a continuant (Varzi, 2003, p. 4).

There is controversy over what a temporal part is. One widely accepted definition is by Sider (2001, p. 60). He defines a temporal part in terms of ‘parthood at a time’ in contrast to parthood *simpliciter*:

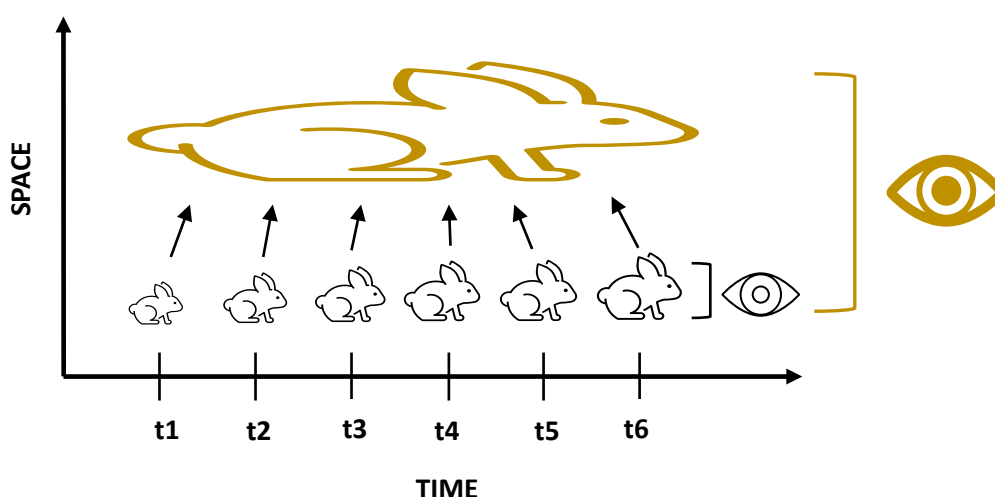
x is an instantaneous temporal part of y at instant t = df (i) x is a part of y; (ii) x exists at, but only at, t; and (iii) x overlaps every part of y that exists at t.

Temporal parts are normally thought to be instantaneous, and do not themselves persist through time.<sup>8</sup> We also speak, perhaps loosely, of non-instantaneous temporal parts, such as ‘Boris-Johnson-in-2024’. The perdurantist, however, is not necessarily committed to the existence of instantaneous temporal parts; one motivation, for instance, for allowing the existence of temporally extended temporal parts is if the perdurantist thinks that time is gunky (see §2.3). Figure 8.2 illustrates perdurantism.

---

<sup>7</sup> This usage of ‘four-dimensionalism’ should be distinguished from the notion that reality is ontologically four-dimensional in the sense of other times as well as other places being real (see Chapter 3).

<sup>8</sup> The temporal parts do not persist *through* time. Under the block universe, they will, however, always exist at their space-time coordinates.



**Figure 8.2: Perdurantism**

In Figure 8.2, Daisy is the mereological sum of temporal parts. This mereological sum or super-object is represented by the elongated large Daisy in the upper half of the diagram; the respective temporal parts are the regular-shaped little ‘Daisies’ in the lower half of the diagram. The super-object is sometimes referred to as a four-dimensional worm; this captures the notion that it is divisible along the temporal dimension into shorter segments, so in slicing super-object Daisy we would obtain the shorter segments of little Daisies in the lower half of the diagram.<sup>9</sup> It is very important to note that this diagrammatical representation of super-object Daisy employs considerable artistic licence and should be viewed with caution, as representing shape under perdurance can be problematic: the four-dimensional worm will not be Daisy-shaped.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of the diagram is heuristic, not realistic ontological sculpting. If we had a god’s eye-view [the large golden eye], we would be able to see Daisy in her entirety spread out across time [Daisy is elongated to try to capture this notion of being spread out]; that is, we would be able to see her as the spread-out super-object of the aggregate of the temporal parts as well as the individual temporal parts constituting her. The spread-out super-object Daisy is the persisting object; the individual temporal parts are particular to the respective moments of time. From our normal human’s eye-

<sup>9</sup> Daisy is not harmed in the process, thankfully.

<sup>10</sup> Hawley (2001, pp. 38-39) points out, for example, that a persisting tennis ball under perdurance cannot instantiate the property being spherical because it is a four-dimensional object whereas it needs to be a three-dimensional object to instantiate such a property; its respective temporal parts will be spherical.

view [the small eye], we see only one temporal part of Daisy at a time, although Daisy would appear spatially whole to us; this is consistent with Sider's definition of a temporal part that the temporal part for a given time should be a part of Daisy at that time that exists only then but is as big as she is then (especially clause iii).

We can look at the super-object Daisy atemporally (Hawley, 2001, pp. 13-14), that is, taking all times at once,<sup>11</sup> and judge that she does not intrinsically change: the super-object is not the proper subject of change (Haslanger, 2003, p. 318); this is represented in Figure 8.2 by showing the super-object as invariant.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, we can also view Daisy temporally and judge that change may be said to occur by comparing one temporal part with another: these temporal parts are the proper subjects of the incompatible properties and are at least parts of the persisting super-object; this is represented in Figure 8.2 by showing the temporal parts varying in size. Given that super-object Daisy is the mereological sum of those temporal parts, we can claim that super-object Daisy derives properties from the temporal parts; that is, super-object Daisy is small at  $t_1$  due to the temporal part at  $t_1$  being small, and super-object Daisy is large at  $t_6$  due to the temporal part at  $t_6$  being large. Some would dispute that this is real change, for the respective temporal parts are different objects and change is not constituted by comparing such different objects; also, the temporal parts do not themselves undergo change; and questions may be raised as to whether, or to what extent, the whole derives properties from the part (Mellor, 1981, pp. 110-111; Haslanger, 2003, pp. 331ff; Hawley, 2001, pp. 38-39).<sup>13</sup> If it is the case that this is not real change, then this would be a welcome result in terms of addressing the Research Question; see §3.

Arguably, perdurantism is the view that most aligns with modern physics (Hales and Johnson, 2003). There are, for instance, *a posteriori* arguments that defend perdurantism on the basis of its fit with Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (STR).

---

<sup>11</sup> In other words, not relativised to a particular time. 'Atemporally' here does not mean timeless, or outside time.

<sup>12</sup> Hawley (2001, p. 37) informs us that this implies that whilst a banana has green temporal parts and yellow temporal parts, the banana itself is multi-coloured. This is a delightful but not necessarily tasty thought.

<sup>13</sup> If the whole does not derive properties from the parts, then it is not clear what size Daisy is. For relevant mereological discussion in the context of the Incarnation, see §3.3 of Chapter 5 and §2.3 of Chapter 6.

This is principally on the basis that the geometry of the universe under STR is understood to be Minkowskian. Both STR and Minkowskian geometry enjoy broad scientific consensus.<sup>14</sup> If we adopt realism about STR and Minkowskian geometry, then presentism is usually rejected for what is ‘present’ and hence exists is a function of which reference frame we are in and this in turn plausibly leads to rejection of endurantism (see §2.2). Such rejection of presentism lends support to eternalism and perdurantism (or stage theory).

## 2.4. Stage Theory

Stage Theory (also known as exdurantism<sup>15</sup> or the stage view) is the theory that an object is numerically identical to a particular stage. It retains the perdurantist idea of temporal parts but – on a pure view – rejects that an object is the mereological sum of temporal parts. A stage is instantaneous, so it follows that the object does not persist through time; instead of continuants or perdurants, we have processions of time-bound entities following one another (Varzi, 2003, pp. 5-6). Figure 8.3 illustrates the stage theory:

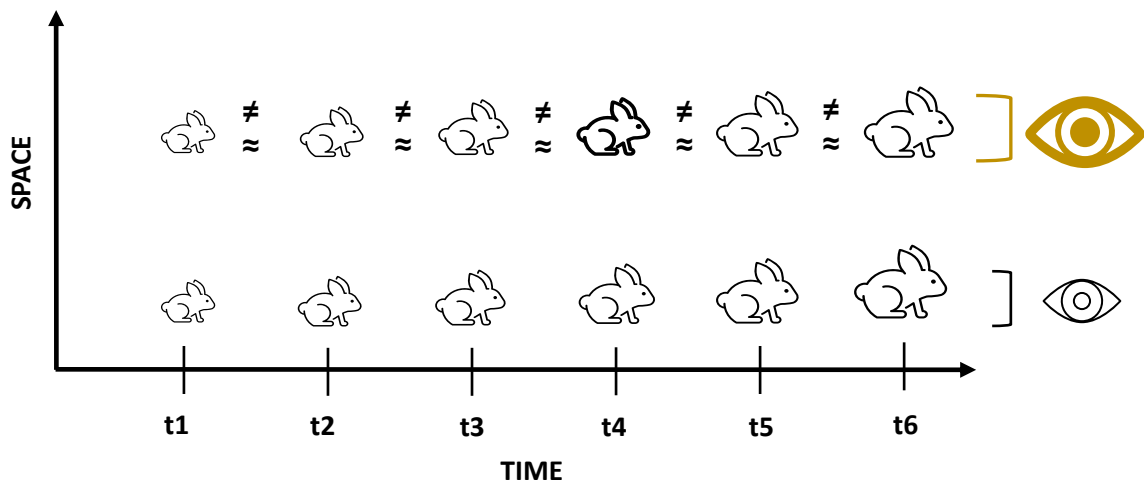


Figure 8.3: Stage Theory

<sup>14</sup> Some philosophers go against the broad scientific consensus on *a priori* grounds. For instance, Craig (1994; 2001a, pp. 32-66) rejects STR and Minkowski geometry, and Rea (1998) argues against the entailment of Minkowski geometry from STR.

<sup>15</sup> Duration via the object’s relation to entities other than or outside of it (Haslanger, 2003, p. 319), so the ‘ex-’ stands for external.

In Figure 8.3, Daisy is, strictly speaking, only one of the stages.<sup>16</sup> Let us say that she is the stage at  $t_4$  (shown in bold in the upper series). God correctly observes that Daisy is only the stage at  $t_4$  [note the not-equal signs  $\neq$ ]. From the human perspective (shown in the lower series), Daisy appears to be persisting through time and we would consider all of the stages individually to be Daisy; no stage is shown in bold. Daisy is, however, related to the other ‘Daisies’ or stages in a certain way [note the approximately-equal signs  $\approx$ ]. One way of construing this is in terms of counterpart relations: the other Daisies are counterparts<sup>17</sup> which are similar to Daisy and in some sense causally connected;<sup>18</sup> that is, whilst this counterpart relation may be considered to be somewhat identity-like,<sup>19</sup> the respective stages are not numerically identical (Varzi, 2003, p. 5); it is accepted that this introduces a certain epistemic vagueness<sup>20</sup> in connecting the various stages.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, it is not simply qualitative similarity that relates the stages in sameness; rather, the heavy metaphysical duty is done by the suitable counterpart relations. Each stage is, strictly speaking, a different object; in the case of persons, each stage is a different person.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to perdurantism, under the stage theory there is no ‘super-object’, so the ontological sculpting in Figure 8.3 is a reasonable representation (*cf.* Figure 8.2).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Why that particular stage? For my present purposes, it does not matter. It will be whatever criteria we employ for a baptismal act. In a sense, God only knows.

<sup>17</sup> These are *temporal* counterparts. This usage should be distinguished from *modal* counterparts; that is, objects (including persons) exist in different possible worlds but are never identical and so offer an account for modal properties such as possibility (Lewis 1986a, Ch. 4).

<sup>18</sup> There may be a case of immanent causation in which each instantaneous stage contains in itself the power to create the next (Varzi, 2001, p. 21).

<sup>19</sup> Identity is a reflexive, symmetric, and transitive relation whereas the counterpart relation is only a similarity relation. The counterpart relation need not be transitive or symmetric.

<sup>20</sup> *Epistemic*, not *ontic* vagueness. It is contentious whether there can be ontic vagueness in existence. The more prominent view in the literature, as far as I can ascertain, is that there is not ontic vagueness; that is, there is a fact of the matter whether something exists but such a fact might not be available to us.

<sup>21</sup> It could also be the case that causal relations between stages are irreducible to facts about the instantaneous stages. This is a rejection of Humean supervenience, *viz.* the view that ‘all there is to the world is a vast mosaic of local matters of particular fact, just one little thing and then another’ (Lewis 1986b, pp. ix-x, quoted in Hawley, 2001, p. 73) so that there is no difference in the world without difference in the arrangement of qualities [natural intrinsic properties] at those local points [a view which Lewis defends]. Or it simply may be a brute fact that instantaneous stages pop into and out of existence *ex nihilo* (Varzi, 2001, p. 22). All philosophical theories have some primitives. In any case, we have God in the background: if he created *ex nihilo* at least once, he can do it again repeatedly.

<sup>22</sup> This invites Kripke’s (1980, p. 45 note 13) Humphrey objection that what we care about is identity, not similarity. This objection was to Lewis’s modal counterpart theory: if the ‘other’ Humphrey is in a possible world, then the real world Humphrey does not care about *that* fellow. But Lewis (1986a, p. 196) rejects the objection: the real world Humphrey is the one who has the resulting modal property that he might have won.

<sup>23</sup> Under the stage theory, a banana is banana-shaped and a tennis ball is spherical (Hawley, 2001, p. 41); and a rabbit is rabbit-shaped.

Hansson Wahlberg (2008) invokes the Leibniz's Law Problem that a person can persist whereas a stage cannot despite the person and the stage being numerically identical. He poses the question as to whether a person can be an instantaneous stage and yet persist. If Leibniz's Law holds between a person and an instantaneous stage, then it would appear to be not true that the person has existed in the past and will exist in the future, for what is true for the instantaneous stage is true for the person, and consequently the person cannot persist. Hansson Wahlberg argues that if the stage theorist wants to maintain that a person is persisting, then the stage theorist either denies the identity of a person with an instantaneous stage or hold that stages are both instantaneous and continuants. The former is the stage theorist's central thesis and so cannot be given up, and the latter allegedly incurs considerable cost in terms of an excessive proliferation<sup>24</sup> of persistence concepts.

The stage theory, however, claims to be a theory of *persistence*: stages do not persist but objects (including persons) allegedly do.<sup>25</sup> In his influential 2001 book 'Four-dimensionalism: an ontology of time and persistence', Sider contends that all continuants are stages. However, if 'continuants' means persisting through time and if the continuants are identical with stages and if the stages are instantaneous, then this seems implausible – the Hansson Wahlberg's Leibniz's Law Problem. Sider (*ibid.*, pp. 191-193) is aware of the objection and argues that the temporal counterpart relation suffices to justify the notion of being a continuant. Paraphrasing Sider, it is appropriate to say 'Daisy was once a bunny' on the basis that there is a Daisy-counterpart in the past that is a bunny and has the right sort of connection to the present Daisy-stage; the temporal property '... was once a bunny' belongs to the current stage. Sider (*ibid.*, p. 194) leaves open what is meant by the right sort of connection: it could be for instance in terms of memory, bodily continuity or primitive.<sup>26</sup> The claim that continuants are stages does not mean that stages are continuants. Sider (*ibid.*, p. 201, fn 41)

---

<sup>24</sup> One for every sortal-concept.

<sup>25</sup> Leftow (1991a, p. 31) presumably would claim that such instantaneous stages are intrinsically timeless because they do not persist through time even though they clearly have temporal location. I would suggest that if it is one metaphysical shock to find out that one does not persist, it is even more shocking to find out that one is timeless.

<sup>26</sup> Sider does not consider this to be a weakness of the stage view. He (2001, p. 194) asserts that the stage theorist need have no particular commitment on this score. For discussion supportive of Sider's non-committal stance, see Wright (2010, pp. 142-143).

proffers that he may have a person-counterpart tomorrow but not a stage-counterpart. Hansson Wahlberg (2003, p. 236-237) comments that this appears to be an appeal to contingent identity and is undesirable. *Contra* Hansson Wahlberg, Wright (2010, p.144) contends that Sider's use of two types of persistence conditions, reflecting context sensitivity, for the same referent does not commit stage theorists to a refutation of Leibniz's Law and offers progress on a number of metaphysical fronts. It does not result in a refutation of Leibniz's Law because the stage theorist is not claiming that an object both persists and does not persist by the person counterpart relation; if that were the claim then that would be a violation of Leibniz's Law.

Hawley also defends the notion of the stage theory as a theory of persistence in her 2001 book 'How Things Persist'.<sup>27</sup> However, Merricks states in his 2003 review of Hawley's book – and these comments are applicable to Sider's book – that it seems obvious that instantaneous stages do not persist and that Hawley is only able to make the claim of persistence by employing a different account to persistence than the standard one of identity, *viz.* the counterpart relation; Hawley (2001, p. 62) readily accepts that on the stage theory persistence is not a matter of identity through time. Hawley characterises the counterpart relations in somewhat negative terms. These relations are non-supervenient relations; that is, whether or not two stages are stages of the 'same' object is not entirely determined by the intrinsic properties of those stages,<sup>28</sup> nor even those intrinsic properties together with spatio-temporal relations between the stages (*ibid.*, p. 71).<sup>29</sup> The non-supervenient relations, whatever they are, underpin the relation of 'immanent causation' which holds between stages of the same object, and are characterised by their theoretical role (*ibid.*, pp. 85-86).<sup>30</sup> For the

---

<sup>27</sup> 2001 was a vintage year of publication for fans of the stage theory.

<sup>28</sup> An example of a relation wholly determined by the intrinsic properties of the relata is relative height: whether Arnold Schwarzenegger is taller than Danny DeVito is wholly determined by their heights.

<sup>29</sup> An example of a non-supervenient relation is the relation of being a certain distance apart (Hawley, 2001, p. 72). For instance, the distance between a Leeds PhD student drinking coffee in the Parkinson Building and his supervisor drinking coffee in the Laidlaw Library is not wholly determined by their intrinsic properties. Hawley explicates that she uses the term 'non-supervenient relation' to refer to non-spatio-temporal non-supervenient relations. In this case, the value of the 'A Call at the Red Lion Inn' painting by George Morland exhibited in the Brotherton Library has a non-supervenient relation to the said PhD student accidentally splashing his coffee onto it. These examples are mine, not Hawley's.

<sup>30</sup> According to Dyke (2003), this account of non-supervenient relations is unsatisfying in that it may be simply restating the claim that it is intended to explain.



purposes of this dissertation, the result that objects, including persons, do not persist is welcome, and probably essential, for the purposes of the reconciliation in Chapter 9. Under stage theory, change is seen as the possession of different properties by different stages, not the possession of different properties by the same object; recall that stages are different objects. As under perdurantism, it may be disputed whether this is real change. Hawley (2001, p. 95), however, argues that non-supervenient relations can ground the distinction between genuine change and mere difference over time between different objects; that is, genuine change is the possession of incompatible properties by stages which are linked by non-supervenient relations.

In contrast to perdurantism, the stage theory is committed to the existence of instantaneous stages; that is, the stages are not temporally extended. If time is gunky,<sup>31</sup> so there were no instants then arguably there could be no stages (Stuchlik, 2003, pp. 313-317). In §1.5.5 of Chapter 3, we assumed, based on Planck Time, that time is not gunky and so has an indivisible non-zero duration: accordingly, there are instants and hence stages.<sup>32</sup> Hawley (2001, p. 48) offers that stages must be as fine-grained as *possible* change is, not merely as fine-grained as *actual* change, and thus as fine-grained as time is.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, if stages are as fine-grained as possible change then this entails that stages are themselves unchanging (*ibid.*).

In Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3, God sees reality as it is. For us humans, we see Daisy exactly the same; our epistemic view is the same whether Daisy is wholly present, a temporal part or a stage: it would seem that we have no empirical basis on which to judge the ontological basis of persisting objects. It may be for this reason that *a priori* arguments are preferred in the philosophical literature.

---

<sup>31</sup> For every instant of time there is a further 'sub-instant' resulting in proper parts all the way down.

<sup>32</sup> Hawley (2001, p. 51) herself disagrees that time is discrete. She takes it that any finite interval of time is infinitely divisible, that is that time is dense or continuous, and develops her account of stage theory consistent with this. However, she accepts that stage theory can be made compatible with the claim that time is discrete.

<sup>33</sup> Hawley (2001, p. 48) observes that a material thing must have as many stages as it is in incompatible states during its lifetime, otherwise at least one of its stages would be in incompatible states without itself having parts and this would be problematic in terms of accounting for change.

## SECTION 3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTION

### 3.1. Introductory remarks

The focus here is on selecting the theory of persistence that is most compatible with the incarnation of a timeless God. It is not primarily concerned with which theory of persistence *per se* is most consistent with a given theory of time. Whilst the choice of a theory of persistence arguably might be constrained somewhat by a theory of time, there is probably no decisive argument that we cannot preclude a particular combination (Haslanger, 2003, pp. 320-326). Nor is it a primary concern that our chosen theory of persistence best accounts for the problem of change; it would be desirable, of course, if it did. As is often the case in philosophy, we need to examine the commitments and consequences of a position taken and make a judgement in light of our purposes.

### 3.2. A/B-theories and rejecting endurantism

As stated earlier, the philosophy of time that seemingly most coheres with endurantism and its concomitant lack of temporal parts is the A-theory, especially presentism.<sup>34</sup> In Chapter 3 we ruled out the A-theory mainly on the basis that Timeless God's immutability and the dynamism of the A-theory are incompatible; that is, on independent grounds to the actual question of persistence. Accordingly, if endurantism has an exclusive fit with the A-theory, then this necessitates a rejection of endurantism. If we reject the A-theory, then this implies we should adopt the B-theory.

In Chapter 3 we adopted the B-theory. This was principally on the basis that under the B-theory of eternalism all times exist and so are available for Timeless God to embrace at once (Sider, 2001, p. 3); again, this is on independent grounds to the question of persistence. This adoption is consistent with perdurantism and the latter's concomitant to temporal parts. The philosophy of time that seemingly most coheres

---

<sup>34</sup> Presentism allegedly dissolves the problem of temporary intrinsics. Plausibly one cannot judge there to be incompatible properties held by an object at the present time and the same object at other times if the other times, and hence the object at those times, do not exist.

with perdurantism and its temporal parts is the B-theory. Given that we adopted the B-theory on independent grounds, this is a good fit.

In evaluating whether perdurantism should be our preferred theory of persistence, it is useful to double-check that we are not too quick in rejecting the A-theory; we should consider various examples of A-theories. Perdurantism seems committed to rejecting presentism, for there can be no space-time worm if the only segment existing is the present one; the past moments are lost. There is the growing block theory, in which all of the past continues to exist as well as the newly minted present; this seems consistent with perdurantism in that we have all the moments of the space-time worm that have ever existed [and continue to exist] as well as the present moment. However, this omits the future moments of a creature's life. There is one variant of the A-theory, *viz.* the moving spotlight theory, which endorses eternalism and thus *prima facie* appears suitable as all of the creature's life is available. However, a feature of the A-theory is that the present is ontologically privileged,<sup>35</sup> and in the cases of presentism and the growing block theory there is temporal becoming. If a timeless God has to wait for times to arrive, then this connotes the passage of time within God, contrary to his timelessness. Moreover, God has the relation of coexisting with a dynamic universe, and arguably if God undergoes extrinsic change then he is temporal; this is because extrinsic properties imply that God came to have those properties thus making God mutable (Craig, 2001a, p. 87; Mullins, 2016, pp. 50-51). These considerations help support the conclusion that we are indeed right to reject the A-theory.

On the other hand, in adopting the B-theory, we should be cautious whether we are too quick in rejecting endurantism, for there are claims that endurantism and eternalism can be compatible. For an enduring three-dimensional object to exist under eternalism, an account would have to be given of it in terms of it lacking temporal parts but that plausibly handles the problem of change. Mellor (1981, pp. 110-114) argues that change should be seen as things having incompatible real properties at different B-times and that properties should be seen as relations to times. Change, for Mellor,

---

<sup>35</sup> The deeper question of why the present is so privileged is usually taken as a primitive; it cannot be existence itself for, according to the moving spotlight theory, future and past objects and events exist too (Sider, 2001, p. 17).

is grounded in B-facts. He uses, for instance, the example of a poker being hot at 2.15pm and cold at 3.15pm and asks why do these tenseless facts not count as a change in the poker (*ibid.*, p. 103). Mellor acknowledges (*ibid.*, p. 113) that some commentators will balk at thinking of properties such as temperature and shape *etc* as relations but asserts that this is fairly innocuous in its entailments.

The endurantist account is, however, famously disputed by Lewis (1986a, pp. 203-204) in his argument from temporary intrinsics for temporal parts. The Problem of Temporary Intrinsics is the problem of identity and intrinsic change: How can an object be self-identical at two different times if it possesses different intrinsic properties at those times? This is an application of Leibniz's Law against diachronic identity. Lewis took this problem to be the '*... principal and decisive objection...*' (*ibid.*) against endurantism. He asserts that intrinsic properties are properties held by an object independently of anything else in the world, that is *simpliciter*, whereas to say that properties are held at a time makes them relational; if that is the case, then properties are not really intrinsic properties at all but rather are disguised relations, and this, remarks Lewis, is simply incredible as we clearly know, for example, that a shape is a property not a relation<sup>36,37</sup> Under perdurantism, on the other hand, the two different intrinsic properties belong to two different objects, *viz.* temporal parts, so Leibniz's Law is not violated. Hawley (2001, pp. 16ff; also see Haslanger, 2003, pp. 327-330) argues that Lewis is too quick in his dismissal of the relations-to-times account: whilst an intrinsic property is not a relation an object bears to other objects, this does not tell us that it is not a relation it bears to times.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Hawley asks us to consider temporary relational properties, such as the case of someone being childless on

---

<sup>36</sup> Arguably, even Lewis's paradigmatic property of shape is not an intrinsic property in that it might be a function of the particular curvature of the space-time it is embedded in. In terms of physics, perhaps a good candidate for an intrinsic property would be mass; in terms of metaphysics, perhaps the divine properties.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis (1986a, p. 204) also discusses another possible solution to the problem of temporary intrinsics: the notion that the only intrinsic properties of a thing are those it has at the present time, so that when something purportedly has different intrinsic properties at different times those other times are ersatz other times. This is an ontology of presentism. Lewis considers that employing these ersatz other times means a rejection of persistence and is dismissive of the notion that there are no other real times.

<sup>38</sup> A property could be construed as intrinsic just in case whether or not an object has that property at a time depends solely on what the object is like at that time, independent of any other material objects. Hawley (2001, p. 17) argues that we can readily imagine, for instance, a banana having a certain shape even if it were alone in the universe but the limitations of our intuitions are exposed when we try to imagine whether or not the non-existence of time would make a difference.

Monday but a parent on Friday. Presumably, all commentators would agree that being a parent is a relational property in the obvious way. It also seems to be a relation to times. For Hawley (*ibid.*, p. 20), the best account for relations-to-times is the claim that an object has temporary properties which are relations between the object and times but that those relations are not wholly determined by the intrinsic natures of the object and times; that is, there are non-supervenient relations.

In his 1998 (pp. 94-95), Mellor clarifies and revises his position of a B-theory of change. He concludes that changeable properties are in fact non-relational properties of things and that we are to understand properties seemingly varying with time to be in respect of the truth-making B-facts differing in their locations in B-time; these B-facts do not contain times as their constituents together with things and properties. This later view counts as endurantist to the extent that the B-facts obtaining at different times have a common component, *viz.* the continuant.<sup>39</sup>

In dealing with Timeless God, we do not need to account for change at all: Timeless God is immutable. In dealing with the human side of Incarnate God, we need a theory of persistence involving whole entities who are similar but not numerically identical, together with B-facts acting as the truthmakers for properties. In dropping the insistence on numerical identity, it seems that we are not too quick in rejecting endurantism; it might be the case that endurantism can be compatible with the B-theory, but our rejection is on different grounds, *viz.* the identity condition. This reinforces the implication that we should adopt either perdurantism or the stage theory. Now we have to adjudicate between these two.

---

<sup>39</sup> One alternative account for existing without temporal parts is Simons's (2000) abstraction-theory-of-continuants proposal that whilst a continuant does not itself have temporal parts, it is intimately connected with occurrents that do, *viz.* those events and processes in which it is involved or in which it participates. Thus, a continuant exists at a certain time *t* if and because the life of the continuant has a temporal part specific to *t*. This notion that an object exists at different times only in a derivative sense, by being parts of states of affairs which, in virtue of exhibiting a causal structure, exist at different times, is considered by Le Poidevin (2023, p. 204) to be the best answer the endurantist can give to how an enduring object can exist at different times.

### 3.3. Rejecting perdurantism

Perdurantism is often interpreted to be metaphysically committed to eternalism and four-dimensional entities; that is, all times are ontologically on a par and objects consisting of temporal parts are spread out through time. The perdurantist usually takes temporal parts to be temporally extended but does not necessarily rule out temporal parts being instantaneous. If objects are four-dimensional, then this means that the temporal parts have relations of earlier, simultaneous with and later than; thus, the objects are successive and this comports with the notion of the thoughts of temporal creatures being successive. Incarnate God is a temporal being and so has diachronic thoughts. This, however, as we learnt from Chapter 7, is incompatible with Timeless God in the eternal present with his synchronic thoughts. We need an approach whereby the diachronic thoughts of Incarnate God can be structured so that in some sense they lose their temporal successiveness and hence are congenial to be reconciled with Timeless God's synchronic thoughts. We can envisage Incarnate God's thoughts as being logically structured somewhat similar to the manner in which we contemplate the letters of the alphabet: we know that the letter S succeeds R and precedes T but we do not have to traverse through the alphabet from the beginning to get to S. Recall that part of my second lynchpin for the reconciliation is that Incarnate God's consciousness *is* Timeless God's consciousness. Such a consciousness has available to it all moments of physical time in the block universe. It does not have to reason inferentially. If Incarnate God, however, solely used his human way of thinking which involves reasoning inferentially, then this would imply being dependent upon traversing his worldline in the B-universe. This is one of the reasons I reject kenotic views on the Incarnation, at least in terms of giving up omniscience. We can further imagine Incarnate God's diachronic thoughts being split up into individual cinematographic movie frames: Timeless God can run the movie frames in any order he wishes, including in such a natural sequence as to generate the appearance of motion.<sup>40</sup>

Grant that we can treat Incarnate God's thoughts as so structured. It is noted that it is the case that ordinary human beings have to traverse their worldlines for they are

---

<sup>40</sup> This invites the speculation that God is the supreme occasionalist. This would have implications for the causation component of the counterpart relation. And he is the supreme non-linear thinker.

prisoners of time, so a further issue is that in taking on a human body the implication is that Incarnate God too becomes a prisoner of time and has to traverse through time since the human body persists through time. Whilst it is the case that under perdurantism the individual temporal parts constituting the four-dimensional 'person-worm' do not themselves persist, the 'person-worm' or super-object does. Accordingly, perdurantism is not the most appropriate theory of persistence to address the Research Question. By elimination, it would appear that the stage theory should be our preferred account. However, it would be helpful to also identify positive reasons for choosing the stage theory.

### **3.4. Opting for the stage theory**

The stage theory is committed to the existence of instantaneous stages. Given that under the stage theory objects do not persist, this means that the thoughts of temporal beings are non-successive, that is synchronic. This is a most welcome result for it is directly compatible with Timeless God in the eternal present with his synchronic thoughts: all those temporal thoughts can be had at once by Timeless God for all of time is available at once to Timeless God; furthermore, the stage theory has the resources to account for our human psychology, for our subjective experience of diachronic thoughts is a consequence of our counterpart relations. Similarly, since the human body lasts only an instant, Incarnate God does not become a prisoner of time by having one. Stage theory looks like a strong candidate on positive reasons to be our preferred account of persistence.

One objection to the stage theory is its alleged weirdness that we are mere momentary beings. We have strong pre-analytical intuitions that we persist through time (Varzi, 2003, p. 6). Shock value at weirdness though is no guide to metaphysics. What the shock value should prompt us to do, despite initial discomfort, is to look fair-handedly at whether the benefits of holding a position outweigh the costs, for example in terms of explanatory value or parsimony. Nor does our momentary nature make an epistemic difference to us, for, as noted earlier, we have the same perspective on Daisy in Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3. It is granted that on the stage theory we do not persist through time in the sense of existing at more than one time. However, the stage theory arguably

allows for temporal predication, such as for lingering predicates (e.g. 'am writing this chapter') and historical predicates (e.g. 'have been studying for a PhD for three years'), *via* the counterpart relation (Hawley, 2001, pp. 53ff; Sider, 1996, pp. 438-441 and p. 450); it is accepted that no isolated stage could satisfy such predicates.

Thomson (1983, p. 213) raises the objection that the notion of temporal parts is 'a crazy metaphysic'. Although her criticism was not directly addressed to the stage view, the import of Thomson's point that it seems mysterious how temporal parts, or instantaneous stages, keep coming into [and out of] existence *ex nihilo* resonates with the allegation of the weirdness of the stage view. However, Sider (2001, p. 217) rebuts this concern: the temporal parts, or stages, do not come into existence *ex nihilo* but rather the current temporal parts, or stages, are caused to exist by previous temporal parts, or stages.

Another objection to the stage theory is its ontological profligacy in having so many stages – one for every instant (Hawley, 2001, p. 63). Perdurantism receives a similar objection too, but the contrast with endurantism is stark. This is potentially a cost to the stage theory. It is desirable, *ceteris paribus*, for a theory to posit fewer entities. A distinction should be made, though, between quantitative parsimony (having fewer entities of the same kind) and qualitative parsimony (having fewer entities of different kinds). It is granted that the stage theory lacks quantitative parsimony, but this may be considered innocuous: by analogy, think of the solutions to the question  $x + y = 2$ ; there is an infinity of answers.<sup>41</sup> However, the stage theory enjoys qualitative parsimony: there is just the one instantaneous-object kind; in contrast to perdurantism, the stage theory is not committed to the existence of sums of temporal parts.

A further objection to the stage theory concerns our mentality. Some mental processes and states seem incompatible with instantaneous entities, for example, when we have beliefs or make decisions (Sider, 2001, p. 197; Hawley, 2001, p. 47). These mental

---

<sup>41</sup> Perhaps our antipathy towards quantitative profligacy is based on a wastefulness intuition borne of our nature as finite creatures living in a world of finite resources. As an infinite being with infinite resources, presumably God does not share the intuition. It may not be an essential divine perfection to be efficient.



events are said to be quintessentially done by a persisting subject over time, and so cannot possibly be done by instantaneous stages. There are at least two responses to the mentality issue available to the stage viewer. It could be denied that such processes do require a persisting subject. The appeal can be made to the counterpart relation that such acts can be possessed by an instantaneous stage itself in combination with its relations to its previous stages, provided the stages are related in the right sense and that the previous stages possess the appropriate mental properties (Sider 2001, p. 198; Hawley 2001, p. 65; Varzi, 2003, p. 13 and p. 23). It is granted that it is consistent with the stage view that it would be impossible for a momentary stage that exists in isolation from all other stages to have mental processes such as beliefs (Sider, 1996, p. 454). Alternatively, it might be accepted that such mental events do not themselves have to have one single subject: the various counterparts count as individual subjects of the one mental activity.

I would argue that an additional objection to the stage theory concerns justice. Let me illustrate this with a speculation about Christian soteriology: If we are not numerically identical to our counterparts, then who - which person - is it exactly that God hopes to save or intends to punish? One can envisage a series of counterparts each partially dissimilar to the respective previous ones so that after a certain number of iterations it is increasingly difficult to see the resemblance between distant stages and it becomes increasingly problematic to identify who is related to whom; this implies at least epistemic vagueness in existence.<sup>42</sup> As a result, we may question whether the later person stages inherit the sins of the prior stages so that it is still meaningful to say that the later person stages can repent of those sins.<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that these problems arise for any theory of persistence, *mutatis mutandis*, which permits cumulative qualitative change, including endurantism.<sup>44</sup> Some proponents of the

---

<sup>42</sup> Hawley (2001, Ch. 4, esp. §4.11) offers the thought that if there is ontic indeterminacy at all then uniquely and to its advantage the stage theory can permit it in persistence. This is because endurantism and perdurantism, unlike the stage theory, see persistence in terms of identity. She does not discuss any implications for Christian soteriology; the speculation in the main text is mine.

<sup>43</sup> Mellor (1981, p. 106), for instance, asserts that the first prerequisite for moral and legal responsibility is identity through time, so would readily accept that later temporal parts cannot be held accountable for the actions of earlier temporal parts; *a fortiori* stages.

<sup>44</sup> Is the 70-year-old wholly present retired general to be blamed for the numerically identical 7-year-old wholly present boy who stole apples even though senescence has resulted in significantly reduced psychological continuity between the two phases [stages] of the person's life?

stage view, for example Sider (2001, pp. 212ff), combine it with unrestricted mereology (universal composition). In such a combination of views, the numerically different stages may be summed to form the four-dimensional worm objects of the perdurantist.<sup>45</sup> Being perhaps the arch-unrestricted mereologist, God might decide to form several different varying lengths of stages from a given series so that in effect there are several different worms or 'persons' and make judgements as to the varying culpability of those respective persons. Alternatively, since the relation between stages is not one of numerical identity and hence one-to-one, an individual stage can be related to multiple later counterparts so God can explore the full potentiality of a person.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the stage theory offers God considerable flexibility in administering justice: vagueness can be a blessing. One can further speculate that if the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics is correct, perhaps God has already structured the universe somewhat along these lines. The perdurantist could argue that vagueness can be removed by stipulating that only the longest worm is the true person, on the basis that the shorter combinations of stages are temporal parts. The stage viewer, however, is not committed to unrestricted mereology. Setting aside such speculations, the central point for our purposes is that each instantaneous stage is an instantaneous person and this is congenial to a timeless god: the thoughts of an instantaneous person are synchronic.

In the case of the Incarnation, the persons of the respective stages comprising what we take to be the earthly career of Jesus Christ need to be numerically identical, not similar; that is, they should be the person of God the Son: Chalcedonian orthodoxy endorses that GS and JC are numerically identical.<sup>47</sup> This implies a tension with the stage theory, for on the stage theory each individual stage is a different person. One possibility is multiple incarnations. If at each instantaneous stage GS is newly embodied, then we retain the same person of GS, with the divine substance of GS

---

<sup>45</sup> As Hawley (2001, p. 47) notes, stage theory and perdurantism share a background metaphysical picture and so sometimes stage theory can draw upon the resources of perdurance theory. In this case, the sum of stages as a four-dimensional worm might be a useful fiction [as opposed to an ontological commitment which would militate against the stage view], such as in accounting for our habits of diachronic counting (Sider, 1996, p. 448). In addition, Hawley (*ibid.*, pp. 92ff) asserts that relating stages on the basis of non-supervenient relations makes for a more natural 'bigger' object than at least some of the combinations proffered by the unrestricted mereologist.

<sup>46</sup> Thus, the stage theory offers useful resources for handling fission cases.

<sup>47</sup> '... but is one and the same only begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ ...' (Tanner, 1990, p. 86).

doing duty relating the stages rather than or in conjunction with the counterpart relation: we can imagine JC as a four-dimensional worm. It is granted that the notion of multiple incarnations may be theologically unsatisfactory.<sup>48</sup> Maintaining the numerical identity of GS and JC is, on the other hand, theologically satisfying. This offering is a partial retreat in the manner of Sider's (1996, p. 452) suggestion that the stage view should be restricted to the claim that typical references to persons are to person-stages but that in certain circumstances reference is to worms rather than stages.

Given the preceding, a materialist ontology of human beings is favoured. This would be a local materialism; that is, it is a materialism applicable to the category of human beings rather than a global materialism, since we are allowing for the immaterial divine substance of GS (van Inwagen, 2007, p. 206; 1995; Crisp, 2009, pp. 137-138). If we allow substance-dualism in respect of human beings, then presumably the immaterial human soul would be the person relating several stages, and these stages would no longer be individual persons in themselves. The meaning of a materialist ontology of human beings can remain open for the purposes of addressing the Research Question.

#### **SECTION 4. INSIGHTS**

It can be seen that there are some differences in the persistence conditions of Jesus Christ and normal humans. These are necessary in order to help make the temporal world congenial to a timeless God who incarnates without becoming infected with temporality. It might be possible to tweak my account to align the persistence conditions more, but this would incur theoretical costs which do not seem to justify the benefits. Let me recapitulate some of the above and explain the theoretical costs.

---

<sup>48</sup> Cf. perhaps NRSV: Romans 6:9 'We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.' However, I would argue that GS having multiple incarnations is not repeatedly dying but merely mirroring the persistence conditions of human beings. It is not the case that each stage dies on a cross.

Jesus Christ's abstract human nature is from eternity for it is a collection of properties held dispositionally by God the Son. This human nature forms a human being when it is joined with a concrete human body with GS providing the mind. Consonant with the stage view, this human being persists temporally from moment to moment via multiple successive incarnations of the same human nature in a series of successive human bodies, with each human body corresponding to an instant of time. It is the same human being because the successive human bodies are related by the common denominators of the human nature and the divine personhood of GS.

In the case of normal human beings, human nature is a concrete particular consisting of body and mind. This concrete particular forms a human person from its own resources; that is, there is no external person infusing the human body to give it personhood. On the stage view, such a human being exists only for a moment. There may be several stages related by counterpart relations, so that we can talk meaningfully of the human being persisting, but strictly speaking a human being, that is a human person, exists only for a moment.

JC's human nature is abstract so that it may be had from eternity. If GS had to assume human nature as a concrete particular, that is a human body and possibly a mind, to form JC then this would imply change in GS. Although JC's human nature is not completed until a human body is assumed, it is plausible to assert that the person in JC, viz. GS, always has human qualities. The assumption of the human body is *prima facie* is a change, however. This is why the notion of all moments of time being available to a timeless God at once is important. Those moments of time are on a par and represent variety rather than change in the divine life.

GS only assumes a human body, not a mind. On the standard modern understanding of person, a mind corresponds to a person. If GS assumed a human mind as well, then there would be Nestorianism. The coming into existence of a normal human being, on the other hand, does not risk Nestorianism, at least on a materialist view, for in the normal course of development the mind and hence the person is a function of the human brain and there is one mind per brain.

In the case of normal human beings, we do not have to handle the challenge of an external pre-existing person infusing the body to provide personhood. If there were a pre-existing entity, such as a human soul along say Cartesian lines, then this means that human persons persist rather than are instantaneous. Such souls could be multiply reincarnated similar to GS and his human bodies. However, substance dualism in respect of humans is a substantial price to pay in our metaphysics. Furthermore, such souls persisting would replace counterpart relations and so would undermine the stage view which we require in order to convert human diachronic thoughts into synchronic ones. Again, this would be a substantial price to pay and would present possibly insurmountable difficulties in the Reconciliation.

The Incarnation is sometimes thought of as revealing something about our human nature. In considering what is human nature, we may wish, in the manner of Morris (1986, pp. 62-67), to make distinctions such as a difference between non-essential (even if common) human properties and essential human properties with a view to reconciling these with the properties of a divine being. In light of the preceding discussion, I would like to propose that if we accept that God is timeless then the surprising revelation might be that human beings are momentary entities. The philosophical problem of how we persist through time is simply dissolved: we do not persist. In respect of his status as a human being, JC is a momentary being whose counterparts' lives and thoughts are available all at once to God's awareness.

Whatever position we take on persistence, we are faced with deep philosophical problems. There may be independent grounds not discussed here favouring one theory over another, such as solving coincidence puzzles,<sup>49</sup> but our concern is how a timeless God can be incarnate. I would offer that the stage view helps to make this problem more tractable than the alternatives of perdurantism and endurantism.

---

<sup>49</sup> For instance, consider a lump of clay and a statue. The clay and the statue may not be identical but have current temporal stages that are identical. This would favour perdurantism. On the other hand, an appeal to perdurantism might be defeated by other accounts of the lump of clay and the statue such as a constitution view.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE RECONCILIATION

HORATIO: O day and night, but this is wondrous strange.

HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Act I Scene V, Hamlet, by William Shakespeare

#### **Chapter Contents:**

Overview

§1. The Research Question - Recap

§2. Lynchpins

2.1. God's life in the eternal present

2.2. The personal ontology and personal identity of God

2.2.1. Two-(or more)-in-oneness

2.2.2. Unity of consciousness

2.2.3. Taking on human nature

2.3. The personal ontology and personal identity of human beings

§3. The Reconciliation

§4. Objections and Responses

4.1. Living in the eternal present

4.2. The Incoherence Problem is not resolved

4.3. Incarnation involves change and so is incompatible with timelessness

4.4. It is not clear what Incarnate God is

4.5. Incarnate God is not really temporal

4.6. Modalism

4.7. Human beings are more than dust

4.8. The stage view is weird

4.9. Unity of consciousness

4.10. Apollinarianism

4.11. Is the Bimodal God Christian?

§5. Conclusion

## OVERVIEW

This final chapter brings together the threads of the earlier chapters to perform the reconciliation to address the Research Question. Discussion is made of which philosophical problems are plausibly resolved by the reconciliation. Finally, a consideration of what may be taken to be the strongest objections against the proposed reconciliation are made and responses offered.

### SECTION 1. THE RESEARCH QUESTION - RECAP

The Research Question is:

How is a timeless Christian God incarnate without being infected with temporality?

In Chapter 4, we concluded that Classical Theism best informs the concept of a timeless God. As a concomitant of his timelessness, God is considered to be strongly immutable, so in incarnating in the temporal world, it is necessary that God does not undergo any change whatsoever and thus maintains his timelessness. One further important component of classical theism is the doctrine of divine simplicity. This component, however, at least in its strongest form, may be too restrictive, and needs to be qualified, perhaps in allowing differences between the Persons or in modelling God's consciousness *via* some divided-mind proposal. We may wish to opt for a basic or weak definition of divine simplicity that, at a minimum, God does not consist of constituent parts (Hasker, 2013, Chapter 7).

Incarnation means that God enters the temporal world with a human nature. In order to perform the reconciliation, certain positions will be taken on what is human nature.

In modelling incarnation *via* the Bimodal God Thesis, the proposal is that God exists both as a timeless entity, *viz.* Timeless God, and as a temporal entity, *viz.* Incarnate God. Timeless God and Incarnate God are numerically identical; they are two-gods-

in-one.<sup>1</sup> Timeless God may be thought of as the default mode of existence since God did not have to create; however, having made the decision to create then God begets, rather than creates, Incarnate God from eternity so as to be in temporal creation. The verb ‘beget’ is more apt than ‘create’, for the latter implies change.<sup>2</sup>

The concern of the Research Question is how to reconcile the timeless and temporal modes of existence. Timelessness and temporality are considered to be logically complementary properties, so propositions asserting them of the same entity in the same way at the same instant are held to be contradictories and mutually exclusive.

## **SECTION 2. LYNCHPINS**

### **2.1. God’s life in the eternal present**

In §6 of Chapter 4, we examined and found favour with the Boethian understanding of an eternal God living his limitless life all at once. For such a timeless God, there is no past, present and future, or earlier and later than; that is, there is no succession. In addition, the Boethian understanding of eternity is that all of [physical] time is present at once to eternal God.

The contrast with the temporal world is stark. In the temporal world, there is succession, and creatures only enjoy a fleeting moment of their lives at a time.

The proposed reconciliation needs to allow for God to be able to experience all of the moments of the temporal world at once. God cannot be kept waiting, so to speak, in the eternal present for events to happen in the temporal world. This means that all of time must be existent and ontologically on a par, so in §6.4.3 of Chapter 3 we opted for the B-theory.

---

<sup>1</sup> Reminder: ‘Bimodal God’ does not mean Binitarian God. Timeless God can extend his consciousness into as many entities as he wishes. He could, for example, extend into a third entity which corresponds to the Holy Spirit in the Christian Trinity and hence be three-gods-in-one.

<sup>2</sup> This resonates with Christian orthodoxy that God the Son is not a creature.



The Boethian definition views eternity in terms of the life of God rather than that eternity is some sort of quasi-time or 'realm' where [when] God lives. This enjoins us to focus the reconciliation on God's life and the life of created creatures, not the arenas in which those lives are lived. When we say that God lives in the eternal present, this is a useful *façon de parler*. However, what we are really referring to is the nature of God's life.

## 2.2. The personal ontology and personal identity of God

### 2.2.1. Two-(or more)-in-oneness

That Timeless God and Incarnate God are numerically identical yet two-in-one sounds incoherent. The parallel is with the Christian Trinity. According to Christian orthodoxy, there are three Persons but only one God. Cartwright (1987, p. 188) outlines the creedal<sup>3</sup> propositions which inform the logical problem (his formalising):

- (1) The Father is God
- (2) The Son is God
- (3) The Holy Spirit is God
- (4) The Father is not the Son
- (5) The Father is not the Holy Spirit
- (6) The Son is not the Holy Spirit
- (7) There is one God

If the copula 'is' represents absolute identity, then the propositions (1) - (6) form an inconsistent set (*ibid.*, pp. 191-192). This is because absolute identity is transitive, that is, if  $a = b$  and  $b = c$  then  $a = c$ , so, for instance:

The Father = God; God = The Son; hence The Father = The Son

But that is contradicted by (4).

---

<sup>3</sup> Cartwright's analysis is mostly based upon the Athanasian Creed although he notes wryly that the only two things known for certainty about the Athanasian Creed is that it is not a creed and was not composed by Athanasius. Still, it is theologically influential and informs much philosophical discussion in the literature.

Cartwright (*ibid.*, p. 192) continues that an alternative interpretation of the propositions is to treat 'God' as a common noun or general term:

- (1b) The Father is a God
- (2b) The Son is a God
- (3b) The Holy Spirit is a God
- (4b) The Father is not the Son
- (5b) The Father is not the Holy Spirit
- (6b) The Son is not the Holy Spirit
- (7) There is one God

The propositions (1b) - (6b) form a consistent set. However, if the relation of the Persons to the divine essence is one of absolute identity, then there cannot be more than one Person; this conflicts with (4b), (5b) and (6b). Conversely, if the Persons are judged to be sharing the common divine essence, then there cannot be fewer than three Gods, but this contradicts (7). We either confound the Persons or divide the substance (*ibid.*, p. 198).

In looking for the logical form of the Trinity, Cartwright is not seeking to solve the attendant problems but rather to identify some of the difficulties and the ease with which one can fall into error. The Trinity with its three-in-oneness is said to be a profound mystery; it is said to be something delivered to us by divine revelation and not explainable, or at least not explainable by unaided human reason; and much discussion of it in the tradition uses analogical language. It will probably be unsurprising, therefore, that in attempting to understand two-(or more)-in-oneness we may only make limited progress and be unable to satisfy all interested parties.

The primary focus of the Research Question is to reconcile the timeless and temporal modes of existence, not to solve the mystery of the Trinity. On the Bimodal God Thesis, the issue of Incarnate God arises because there is the creation of the temporal world and Timeless God wishes to enter it: if there is no temporal world, then there is no need for Incarnate God. However, in modelling the Christian God we should be cognisant of the tradition that the Persons are considered integral to the concept of

God whether or not God creates the temporal world. It also seems sensible that views about the metaphysics of the Incarnation should be consistent with views about the metaphysics of the Trinity (Rea, 2011, p. 135). Therefore, it is desirable that a plausible account be given of the relation between Timeless God and Incarnate God which can provide resources to help address at least some Christian concerns, but it is granted that I might diverge from orthodoxy. However, as stated in my Chapter 2 on methodology, I am not going to consider adherence to Christian orthodoxy to be a constraint on my investigation or conclusion: this is a philosophical, *not* theological, exercise.

To help gain traction on the two-(or more)-in-oneness conundrum, it is useful to recall that Timeless God as the supreme being and creator of all transcends his creation and delimits the possibilities of existence. It is our human experience of the spatio-temporality of the created universe that informs our concepts, and our language is invariably infused with temporal and spatial terms. In order to understand two-(or more)-in-oneness, we should, I would suggest, try to resist certain intuitions. For instance, we have powerful intuitions that one object cannot be simultaneously in more than one place, yet there are experiments which show the possibility of quantum superposition at the distances and timescales of the macro world (Kovachy *et al*, 2015). Conversely, we do not normally think of two objects as being in the same place simultaneously, yet we have the classic philosophical puzzle of a statue constituted by a lump of clay and feel the tension that there are, according to some metaphysicians, two objects present since the statue and the lump of clay have different modal and historical properties.<sup>4</sup>

As a first stab in tackling the conundrum, we might wish to conceptualise the two entities of the Bimodal God in terms of multi-location: Timeless God in eternity and Incarnate God in creation. This perspective helps capture the notion that there is a clear distinction between Timeless God in his pure state, as it were, and Incarnate God embodied in the created world. This implies that Timeless God and Incarnate God are

---

<sup>4</sup> And, indeed, there are proposed Constitution solutions to the logical problem of the Trinity, for example Brower and Rea (2005); and to the Trinity and the Incarnation, for example Rea (2011).

qualitatively different at the same instant and, following Leibniz's Law, that they are numerically distinct. However, if they are numerically distinct, then they are two gods – an undesirable result from the point of view of Christianity with its commitment to monotheism. Furthermore, a problem with thinking of Timeless God in terms of multi-location is that this invokes notions of dimensionality but Timeless God in eternity lacks spatio-temporal dimensionality; it is inappropriate to think of eternity as a dimension, a reference frame, or a [pseudo-]time *etc*; this inappropriateness reflects the Boethian definition that views eternity in terms of the life of God. Incarnate God in creation is, of course, spatio-temporal, and this is puzzling: it raises various philosophical issues such as how an immaterial thing can become material.

We could parallel Christian social trinitarianism by asserting that Timeless God and Incarnate God are two distinct Persons but one God. There are different versions of social trinitarianism. In §4.3 of Chapter 4 we saw that a widely accepted interpretation is that in the Christian Trinity there are three distinct centres of consciousness with three distinct centres of knowledge, will, and action. We also saw in §4.2 of Chapter 4 that the standard modern understanding of a person is, *inter alia*, an autonomous self with an independent mind and will. One major theme in Chapter 7 is that a centre of consciousness equates to a mind, and another theme is that unity of consciousness implies that there is always a single phenomenal state that subsumes all of a subject's other phenomenal states at a time.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, on these understandings three distinct centres of consciousness equate to three minds which equate to three persons. On the assumption that God is a person and that as a person he is a single subject of his phenomenal states, this implies three gods – again, the undesirable result of polytheism.

It could be asserted that God, as *sui generis*, is tripersonal in such a manner that although there are three distinct Persons this does not jeopardise monotheism. But the devil is in the details to spell out what 'in such a manner' means. If God is tripersonal, then it seems that he cannot be identical to any of the Persons, for the Persons are not tripersonal. The Persons are considered divine, and, by definition,

---

<sup>5</sup> Bayne and Chalmers's (2003, p. 33) total phenomenal unity thesis.

God is divine, so if divinity equates to being a God, which appears to be an analytic truth,<sup>6</sup> then it is difficult to see how monotheism is not jeopardised: moreover, there now appears to be four Gods. Perhaps God is simply a collection of divine individuals, but this would be unsatisfactory for then God would not be a person and so would lack the personal characteristics we normally associate with Godhead such as omniscience, omnipotence *etc*; God would have these characteristics at best only derivatively, and this does not fit well with what we consider to be personhood. Alternatively, God might be a composite person of the Persons, that is, God is a person but has the Persons as parts. However, this runs up against the plausible principle we examined in §2.1 of Chapter 6 that no person has another distinct person as a proper part. It is also in tension with the divine simplicity of classical theism which is our preferred albeit qualified concept of God. Our first stab in tackling the conundrum by thinking of the Bimodal God as being distinct entities is problematic; we seem to be dividing the substance.

Despite the problematic nature of the first stab, the perspective of distinct entities of God is useful. Given that timelessness and temporality are considered to be logically complementary properties, so propositions asserting them of the same entity in the same way at the same instant are held to be contradictories and mutually exclusive, this points us in the direction that it is desirable that we attribute timelessness to one entity and temporality to the other. In addition, the perspective is useful in securing a proper incarnation for a timeless god. Consider for instance the issue of omniscience. One strand in the Christian tradition is that God's omniscience is not simply an awareness of all in the sense of propositional knowledge but rather that God has an actual presence to all. This idea of actual presence may be interpreted as being phenomenally conscious within creation. Whilst God need not incarnate in order to be merely aware of temporal happenings, incarnating supports this notion of actual presence: in order to know what it is like to be a temporal entity, it is preferable to know the temporal world from within; nothing beats first-hand knowledge. Whilst through his

---

<sup>6</sup> One dissenting voice is Moreland and Craig (2003, pp. 589ff) with their Trinity Monotheism. They argue that to be God is to instantiate the divine nature and that the divine nature necessarily involves being triune, so they propose two ways to be divine: the Trinity, which instantiates the divine nature and is triune and so is properly God; and the Persons who do not instantiate the triune divine nature but are divine by being something like parts of the Trinity and so are not properly Gods.

omniscience understood as mere awareness, Timeless God could know the hearts and thoughts of all creatures from a third-person perspective, this would not capture that first-person phenomenology of really being there in creation. Timeless God needs an ontological bridge, as it were, to the temporal world, and this is what the device of Incarnate God seen as a distinct entity, helps provide.

As a second stab in tackling the conundrum of two-(or more)-in-oneness, we might wish to think of Incarnate God as a phase or episode of temporal experiences in the life of Timeless God. It is not the case that Timeless God transfers a doppelganger of himself, *viz.* Incarnate God, from the 'eternal realm' to the 'created realm'. Instead, Incarnate God is in some sense a component of the lived experiences of Timeless God. This coheres with our preference for the Boethian definition that views eternity in terms of the life of God. It is in the neighbourhood of the proposal by Leftow which we explored in §4.4 of Chapter 4 of God living his life as one person [ordinary meaning] in three streams simultaneously; an entity [of the Bimodal God] or Person [one of the members of the Trinity] is God living a particular part of his life. This reduces the challenge of Leibniz's Law in that Timeless God and Incarnate God can be numerically identical whilst qualitatively different: it is the same God but at different 'moments' of his life. We do not want the 'moments' or phases to be successive. If they were successive, this implies change and if Timeless God undergoes changes then this infects him with temporality. The phases have to be lived concurrently from eternity. This returns us to the issue of the compatibility of Timeless God's synchronic thoughts and Incarnate God's diachronic thoughts, which will be addressed in the next section.

In support of unity of consciousness, we would have to revise Leftow's account, for he envisages God as generating and living as the three Persons by generating and living in three distinct [non-overlapping] mental streams, which, despite Leftow's avowed aim through a body of works for a Latin trinitarianism (such as 2002b, 2004, 2007, and 2012a), sounds social trinitarian (Ward, 2015, p. 240). In adopting the idea of phases in God's life, we may be shifting our perspective more towards a unitarian or even modalist account, that is confounding the Persons, but such shifts might be worth the cost for our primary concern is with shedding philosophical light rather than conformity to Christian orthodoxy.

Now we have two potentially conflicting perspectives in conceptualising Bimodal God: entities and phases. I would proffer that we embrace both perspectives for no one image expresses fully what we are after, rather as in the manner of conceptualising light as a wave-particle duality depends upon what we are measuring for (see §3 of Chapter 2). On the one hand, we can think of the two entities of the Bimodal God in terms of multi-location in full cognisance that this view, whilst capturing some aspects, is just a useful fiction given our reservations about dimensionality and concerns of granting ontological discreteness; the latter would threaten numerical identity and raise the prospect of polytheism. On the other hand, we can also think of Incarnate God as a phase in Timeless God's life in order to somewhat ameliorate those worries about ontological discreteness. Whilst Incarnate God might be thought of as a [temporal] phase, this phase is occurring concurrently with any and all other phases in Timeless God's life at eternity.

Adopting both perspectives may seem like a fudge. However, I would not necessarily give equal weight to both. I lean towards phases. This is because it seems more plausible to me to think of the divine nature as a concrete particular. It is inappropriate on aseity grounds for the divine nature to be a property or set of properties - where properties are understood as (Platonic) universals - for this would imply that the divine nature would be ontologically prior to God. If this were the case, then there would be something, *viz.* the divine nature, that would make God be God; that is to say, God would be what partakes of or instantiates the divine nature, thereby becoming God; this cannot be.

On my understanding, the divine nature is a concrete particular: it is an individual substance in the Boethian sense, *viz.* a supposit with a rational nature. As a person, that is, as a supposit [with a rational nature], the divine nature is incommunicable, for being incommunicable is part of the understanding of what it is to be a supposit (Pawl 2016, p. 32; 2020, p. 6). By 'incommunicable' is meant here that the divine nature is not shareable, and not divisible, and is only identical with itself. This notion of incommunicability comports with our intuitions in the human case that a human person

cannot undergo fission; for example, we resist considering someone with dissociative personality disorder to genuinely have developed into multiple persons.<sup>7</sup>

I note that if we maintain that the divine nature is incommunicable, on the basis of being a person and so a supposit, then we are faced with the difficulties of accounting for the three Persons, ‘who’ do not share in the divine nature: we have to downplay their personhood. It may be that this three-in-oneness problem is beyond our ken and so has to remain an intractable mystery. Nevertheless, I would argue that the divine nature being incommunicable seems more supportive of monotheism: it accords, I would suggest, with our intuitions that God is *sui generis* and a being than which no greater can be conceived; when we say the latter, we are not standardly also thinking ‘... but there can be several of them’. Such incommunicability draws us to account for the Persons *via* the events or experiences in the one life of God, rather than their ontological separateness.

In contrast, if we consider human nature to be a something, *viz.* a (Platonic) universal, then such a nature is not in itself a person. One motivation for viewing human nature as a universal property is that it may be instantiated in multiple human persons. Human nature requires something else to result in a human person. In the normal course of events,<sup>8</sup> this something else would be for example a particular concrete body and mind that instantiates or bears and thus particularises our universal human nature. By contrast, the divine nature simply is the divine person God. Another motivation for viewing human nature as a universal is that this allows for God the Son to have human nature from eternity.<sup>9</sup> For supportive discussion of these points about nature and

---

<sup>7</sup> The aim of psychiatric intervention to remove alters is not seen as one of killing persons.

<sup>8</sup> In the normal course of events, human beings have only one nature. In the case of the Incarnation, we allegedly have a divine being taking on an additional human nature but remaining solely a divine person.

<sup>9</sup> The claims that the divine nature is a concrete particular but human nature is a universal may appear to conflict with the Chalcedonian definition of ‘... consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity’ (Tanner, 1990, p. 86). However, it is plausible that there is an equivocation in the Chalcedonian definition over the word ‘consubstantial’. DeWeese (2007, pp. 119-122) points out that Aristotle seems to have two conceptions of ‘substance’: on one understanding, called primary substance or first substance, a substance is something that exists in ontological independence of other things of the same sort and so refers to individuals; and on another understanding, called second substance, a substance is that which different individual members of a natural kind share in common and so refers to a universal. Accordingly, when the Chalcedonian definition talks about consubstantial with the Father it is employing the notion of the first substance but when it talks about consubstantial with us it is employing the notion of the second substance.



person, see §4.2 of Chapter 4, §2.1 and §2.2 of Chapter 5; and for supportive discussion of human nature from eternity, see §2.4 of Chapter 7.

The two perspectives on Timeless God's relation to creation, *viz.* of extending a distinct entity of himself into the temporal world and of phases, provide us with a richer insight than simply one conceptualisation alone. In attempting to address a conundrum, we accept with humility that at best we may only achieve partial answers.

### **2.2.2. Unity of consciousness**

The Bimodal God Thesis proposes that in projecting himself into creation, Timeless God extends his consciousness into Incarnate God so that the thoughts of both Timeless God and Incarnate God are the same. There is only one centre of consciousness. This is true unity of consciousness, for the conscious states of the two entities are co-subjective and co-conscious. The conscious states are also phenomenally conscious: there is something it is like from a first-person perspective for Incarnate God to be in the temporal world and Timeless God has the same phenomenal experience of being in that temporal world – for Incarnate God is Timeless God. This is part of the motivation for incarnation: human consciousness or awareness of the world is mediated through a human body with its sensory apparatus and so is different from whatever mechanism divine consciousness uses, so Timeless God wants this phenomenal experience in order to better identify with our human condition.

How Timeless God is able to extend his consciousness into two or more entities so that he is seemingly multi-located but has unity of consciousness is a challenging issue. I offered the analogue of the octopus with its nine brains as a speculation that a singular being can have multiple centres of consciousness which are unified (see §2.1 of Chapter 6). The analogy is admittedly limited: the octopus is spatial and all the nine brains have diachronic thoughts. However, we have some resources to help address and possibly dissolve this matter. This is where the perspective of Incarnate God as a phase in the life of Timeless God pays some dividends: If Incarnate God is *merely* a phase and not a robust ontologically discrete entity of Timeless God, then it

is easier to conceive of Incarnate God and Timeless God having a single centre of consciousness and thus unity of consciousness.

By incarnating, Timeless God in the form of Incarnate God takes on human nature. An aspect of being human in the temporal world is necessarily having diachronic or successive thoughts, so Incarnate God has these in respect of his human nature. This diachronic structure of thoughts is incompatible with the necessarily synchronic structure of the non-successive thoughts of atemporal Timeless God. This presents a significant challenge [Swinburne (2011, p. 160, fn 18); Mullins (2016, p. 171 fn 52); Bayne (2001, p. 127)]. Before proceeding with the reconciliation, an important preliminary step is to furnish an understanding of what it means to say that Incarnate God takes on a human nature.

### **2.2.2. Taking on human nature**

If God is strongly immutable then this entails that the decision to create is made from eternity, otherwise it would imply a change in God. Furthermore, according to Chalcedonian orthodoxy, in the Incarnation God the Son takes on an additional nature, so that the incarnate form Jesus Christ has two natures: the existing divine nature and the assumed human nature. It follows that GS must have this human nature from eternity too, for otherwise he would have changed in taking on this second nature.

If GS has a human nature from eternity, then this implies an abstractist view of human nature, *viz.* as consisting of properties. On the competing concretist view of a human nature as a concrete particular comprising a material human body and, usually, a human mind/soul, we would appear to have the absurdity of GS having a material human body from eternity, unless we adopt a view in the neighbourhood of Leftow's (2002a, pp. 295-298) claim that earlier items can have properties due to later events so that if GS is the first part to exist of the whole composite JC then before the whole JC exists it is already meaningfully to refer to it; however, the problematic nature of this proposal is discussed at length and rejected in §2.3 of Chapter 6.

It is a declaration of Chalcedon that JC is one person, *viz.* the divine Person of GS. On an abstractist understanding of nature, where human nature is considered to be a universal, the implication is that one should not treat a nature as if it were a person (Swinburne, 1994, p. 215; Fairbairn, 2007, Chapter 3). Under abstractism, therefore, JC is not a human person: JC is simply the divine person of GS. On the other hand, on a concretist interpretation of nature, we normally think of an identity relation between nature and person and so in the case of JC we appear to have a human person as well as the divine GS. Two persons is problematic: in the context of our modelling incarnation, it would potentially threaten the unity of consciousness between Timeless God and Incarnate God; and in the context of Christian orthodoxy, it would be the Nestorian heresy. This supports the notion that our preferred view of human nature should be the abstractist one. JC is a divine person with a second nature which is human; he is not a human person, and most certainly is not both a divine person and a human person. This conforms to the doctrine that the human nature of JC is anhypostatic, that is not personal in itself, and enhypostatic, that is personalised by union with the divine personhood of GS (Sanders, 2007, pp. 31-32; Moreland and Craig, 2003, pp. 609-610); that is to say, JC's human nature is incomplete apart from its union with GS. We can loosely talk about JC being a human person, but this should be understood in the weak sense that the divine person GS was undergoing human experiences.

We normally think of a human being as having a physical body. I would make a distinction between 'being' and 'nature': outside of the ontology room, we remark that a man is a decent human being, *not* a decent human nature. Whilst we can say that GS has a human *nature* in the sense of certain properties from eternity, this does not mean that he is a human *being* from eternity. I would proffer that we can only classify him as a human being, but not a mere human being,<sup>10</sup> during the period of the actual Incarnation. This follows the lead of Craig's proposal (see §2.4 of Chapter 7 for extended discussion) that GS was the archetypal man and so already possessed human nature within his pre-incarnate divine form. GS's assumption of a corporeal human body in the Incarnation gave that flesh the properties necessary to make it

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Morris 1986, pp. 62-67.

what I call a complete human *being*; Craig (Moreland and Craig, 2003, p. 609) refers to it as a complete human *nature*, but there is no essential difference between his and my view.

Leftow (2002a, p. 278) refers to the human nature that GS assumes as ‘the full natural endowment’ of a human being; that is, a human body and ‘soul’, with the soul having a human mind and will. For the purposes of incarnation, the human body is essential; by definition, incarnation is embodiment. However, I reject the notion of a soul if this means a substance dualist view of human beings; see §2.3 below. I would argue that human nature is having a set of psychological properties that, in the normal course of events, results in certain characteristics, fears and desires. Some examples of such properties would be rationality, self-awareness, moral sensitivity, the capacity for language and the capacity for emotion; some examples of the corresponding expression of such properties would be problem-solving abilities, the fear of death, conscience, sociability and the wish for happiness. These properties are necessary but not sufficient for being human. Human nature is not identical to an individual being but is something which becomes individualised. It becomes individualised by being combined with a particular human body. The combination of the properties and the physical body are necessary and sufficient for being human. Normally, the human mind that results from this combination is, I would argue, one that supervenes upon the physical body and would generate human personhood; however, in the *sui generis* case of JC, with his dual natures, personhood is solely a function of the divine substance. *Contra* DeWeese (2007, p. 141), I would further argue that having a body in ordinary cases is essential to flesh out [literally] human nature, for our psychology is significantly a function of, *inter alia*, our evolutionary history<sup>11</sup> and of how our limbic system<sup>12</sup> has developed *in utero*. In short, we have a materialist view of human beings.

Under the Bimodal God Thesis, Timeless God exists as Incarnate God out of conditional necessity: given the decision to create from eternity, human nature is had from eternity. In the case of Incarnate God, we could think of the set of properties that

---

<sup>11</sup> For example, altruism may be an adaptive response to the need to live in social groups for survival purposes.

<sup>12</sup> The limbic system is a collection of brain structures involved in processing emotion and memory, including the hippocampus, the amygdala, and the hypothalamus.

inform human nature as inherent in him but dispositional. It is Incarnate God's existence in the created world with the assumption of a human body that brings his human nature into fruition as a human being. Although human nature in combination with a human body normally develop a human mind and its accompanying will, this tendency is constrained by Incarnate God. Incarnate God allows for his [divine] mind to be partitioned, with one partition corresponding to the human psychology. The resultant human psychology, I would argue, is not a robust human mind and hence does not give rise to a distinct human person.<sup>13</sup> Incarnate God has a human mind in the sense that he can exhibit certain mental features characteristic of humanity. There is just the one will, for wills are grounded in persons, not natures (see §2.2 of Chapter 5 and §2.4 of Chapter 7); nevertheless, we could view the expression of this one will from two different perspectives, *viz.* the divine and the human.

With regard to Incarnate God exhibiting human mental features, I offered my own suggestion for a psychological model along the lines of the bilingual mind (see §2.6 of Chapter 7). Given that when a bilingual [human] person thinks in one language he may employ concepts that are not readily translatable, or even understandable, into the other, it is plausible to say that the person can in some sense think in two ways, yet we would not say that there are two minds and hence two individuals/persons behind the respective sets of thoughts. As equally as a bilingual person can choose to think in one linguistic language in preference to the other, so Incarnate God can choose to think in his human language in preference to his divine one. By employing his human way of thinking, Incarnate God experiences limitation in terms of knowledge *etc.* We can also plausibly say that Incarnate God maintains divine metacognition whilst thinking in his human way, so when he states, for instance, that he does not know something he is speaking the truth in respect of his human thought processes even though his divine self really knows. Whilst this appeal to divine metacognition addresses Loke's worry of a third consciousness (see §2.5 of Chapter 7) and addresses Stump's concern that with the divine mind always operative how can it be the case that JC appears sometimes to fail to know something (see §2.2 of Chapter

---

<sup>13</sup> That a full human mind is not assumed might be suggestive of the heresy of Apollinarianism. On the other hand, that a distinct human person does not arise will be welcome as avoiding the heresy of Nestorianism. See §4.8. Sometimes what you gain on handling one heresy you lose on another.

6), it does raise an issue about whether Incarnate God, and by extension JC, is deceptive in some of his interactions with human beings by not revealing the whole truth. My concern, though, is with the plausibility of a psychological model, not with the propriety as to why JC did not make a full revelation; this seems to be a theological matter.

My model of incarnation differs from Crisp's (2011, p. 2011) two-part compositional one. Crisp discusses a two-part compositional model in which JC is composed of GS and the concrete particular of a human body, and the human body just is the human nature. I, on the other hand, include human nature in the divine component under an abstractist proposal. Both models, however, have the important similarities of the human body as being capable of sustaining a human mental life and adjudging human beings to be essentially material. Nevertheless, compositional models, whether consisting of two- or three-parts, with their part-whole approaches, do not quite capture my modelling of Incarnate God: On the Bimodal God Thesis, human nature is more a quality of the whole rather than a part. Still, compositional models are a useful way of thinking about the metaphysics of the Incarnation, and I retain their use in §3.

### **2.3. The personal ontology and personal identity of human beings**

In §3.4 of Chapter 8, we opted for the stage theory as our preferred account of the persistence of human beings. On the stage view, each human person is an instantaneous stage. Several stages may be similar in some respects and related to one another in the right way, for example through causal and non-supervenient relations, so that we may consider those several stages or counterparts to be the same person, but the stages are not numerically identical. Given that under the stage theory human persons do not persist, this means that their thoughts are synchronic or non-successive. This is an important result for the purposes of reconciliation with Timeless God.

We normally think of souls as being *sui generis* and persistent persons. If [human] souls did the metaphysical duty of relating the stages instead of the counterpart relation, then the persons of various stages would be numerically identical contrary to

the standard understanding of stage theory. Accordingly, stage theory appears to preclude substance dualism as an account of the personal ontology and identity of human beings. This implies that human persons are essentially material beings. This commitment to materialism about human persons is a local materialism; we do not commit to global materialism, for we take God to be immaterial.

### **SECTION 3. THE RECONCILIATION**

Timeless God lives his life at all once in the eternal present. He is timeless and immutable with non-successive or synchronic thoughts.

The created universe is modelled as a block universe using the B-theory of eternalism. Timeless God has a robust actual presence with all of [physical] time. This actual presence is partly expressed<sup>14</sup> by Timeless God extending himself into creation as Incarnate God for a finite period of time of creation. Timeless God and Incarnate God are two-in-one and have unity of consciousness.

Incarnate God has two natures from eternity: divine and human. The human nature is only completed with the assumption of a human body in the incarnation. It is in respect of this completed human nature with its human psychology in the temporal world that Incarnate God is able to have putative diachronic thoughts.

The persistence conditions of normal human beings are modelled according to the stage theory: human persons exist only for an instant, with similar stages being counterparts. This entails that human persons do not persist through time and do not have diachronic thoughts.

Incarnate God is a divine person, not a human person. This divine personhood exists from eternity, so it does not pop into and out of existence momentarily the way human persons do. Instead, I propose that Incarnate God is newly incarnated with each

---

<sup>14</sup> 'Partly expressed' because Timeless God always has actual presence with all of time through his various mysterious ways, for example omniscience and sustaining power.

moment of time; that is, each time a relevant instantaneous human stage comes into existence, Incarnate God assumes it. The divine essence or ‘soul’ is the common denominator which maintains continuity – and indeed personhood – between the stages, not the counterpart-relation as is the case for normal human beings. ‘Relevant’ means a stage we take to be a member of a series of stages which correspond to what we ordinarily refer to as a particular human being persisting over time if we wish to assert that human beings persist. In the normal case, these stages are momentary persons: one person per instant. However, in the case of incarnation these stages do not in themselves constitute persons: there is only one person, *viz.* Incarnate God, who constrains the stages from becoming human persons as they do not have robust human minds. In the case of the Christian Incarnation, this series of stages would correspond to the life of Jesus Christ.

Multiple incarnations<sup>15</sup> aligned in a one-to-one correspondence with human person-stages mirror the instantaneousness of human persons. The putative diachronic thoughts of the human side of Incarnate God are structured, rather like individual cinematographic movie frames, and hence are congenial to be reconciled with Timeless God’s synchronic thoughts. It might be objected that these thoughts still have temporal successiveness. However, in the block universe all moments of time are ontologically on a par, so whilst the thoughts do have temporal successiveness,<sup>16</sup> they are tenseless. As such, the thoughts are all present at once to Timeless God. This all at once position is in sharp contrast to the situation facing a temporal being who persists in the block universe: such a continuant is a prisoner of time in that it has to traverse its worldline through all the intermediate times to go from its thought had at  $t_1$  to its thought had at say  $t_5$ . Timeless God understands that when the respective thoughts which are had by the instantaneous human person-stages of the multiple incarnations are experienced by Incarnate God they are phenomenally experienced in respect of the human nature as temporally successive. For Timeless God, the phenomenal experience would be more akin to understanding the thoughts as being

---

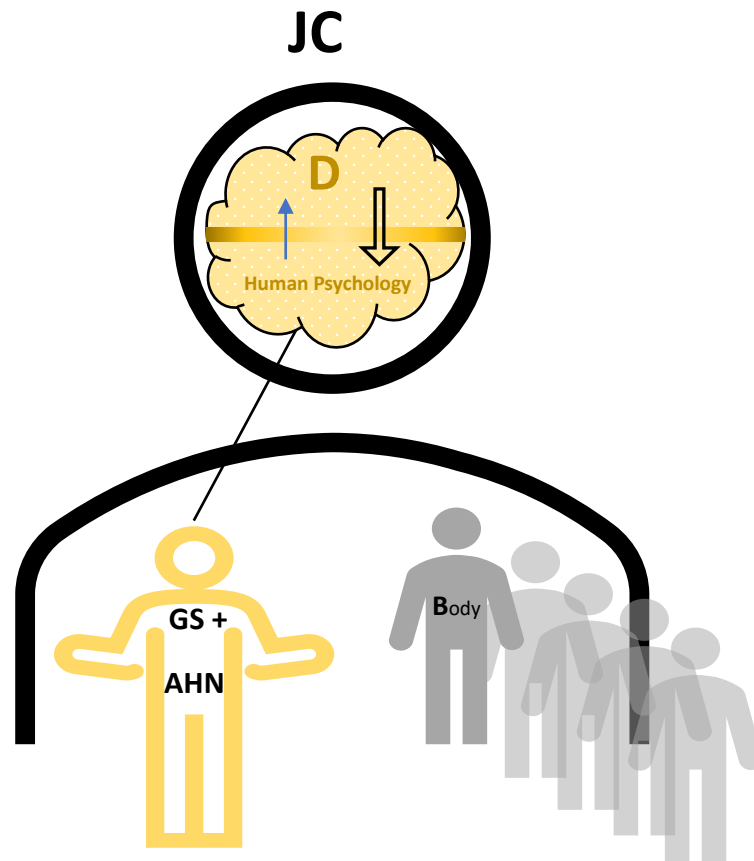
<sup>15</sup> Needless to say, this is not the usual usage of the term ‘multiple incarnations’ as used in the literature, where multiple incarnations commonly refer to God the Son (or even other divine Persons) becoming embodied on separate occasions for example to offer salvation to different humans of different ages or to aliens on other planets.

<sup>16</sup> They have relations of earlier than and later than.



causally or logically related. Divided-mind approaches may be usefully employed here whereby those phenomenally experienced successive thoughts are compartmentalised from the divine psychology. The temporal experience is an illusion of the passage of time which Timeless God permits in Incarnate God in respect of his human psychology for the purposes of the sojourn in the temporal world. My suggested model of the bilingual mind has the resources to handle this illusion: Incarnate God knows in virtue of his divine mind that he is in the block universe and that the passage of time is a subjective illusion, but it is a compelling illusion that the human way of thinking experiences and cannot step out of.

Figure 9.1 represents some of the preceding elements of the Incarnation(s):



**Figure 9.1: The Incarnation(s)**

This is similar to a two-part relational compositional model. God the Son with his abstract human nature (AHN) assumes a human body (B) but not a soul (S) to complete his human nature and thus be, *inter alia*, a human being. A principal reason

I do not favour a three-part model, in which GS assumes B + S, is that I share Merricks' concern (2007, p. 282 fn 1; see also my discussion of Craig and DeWeese in §2.4 of Chapter 7) that if an individual human nature taken up by GS is supposed to be intrinsically fully human, and so presumably would have been a normal human person if not taken up, then there is the prospect of Nestorianism. Granted that on the Boethian understanding of a person, my concern might be assuaged for the counterfactual is rejected: the individual human nature was taken up and so did not have the opportunity to form a supposit distinct from GS. However, my preferred account for persons is the standard modern understanding (see §4.2 of Chapter 4) and so two persons is potentially an issue. The standard response that it is a plausible metaphysical principle that no person has another distinct person as a proper part does not adequately assuage me, for we are dealing with the *sui generis* case of a divine person taking on the full endowment of a human person; after all, we are not claiming that a divine person can be a proper part of a divine person. On my two-part model, GS does not take on a human soul, so the problem is dissolved.

Another reason I do not favour a three-part model is that on a three-part model, GS does not integrally possess a human nature; he is merely related to it. On my two-part model, the human body so assumed is not a part of GS but his composition with it together with his pre-existing human nature, which is a part of GS from eternity, enables us plausibly to say that GS is fully human (as well as divine).

The rationale for a relational compositional model is to allow the timeless GS to enter into a relation with a temporal human body but not to change. The human body assumed is a momentary entity. For each instant of time, a new body is assumed; this is shown by the shadowy bodies adjacent to Body in Figure 9.1. The person of Jesus Christ is GS; this is emphasised in Figure 9.1 by showing GS's divine mind in the head of the composite JC, in contrast to Figure 6.2 of Chapter 6 which in representing Model A portrays what Crisp (2011, p. 51) calls the 'no-person objection'; the latter is the notion that JC is not a person because on some compositional models JC is just the mereological sum of GS and his human nature. In Figure 9.1 GS's divine mind is divided to illustrate the human psychology element, but such division should not be

strongly read as two minds or a split one-mind; hence, the dividing line is faded.<sup>17</sup> The human psychology is an expression of the human nature which the divine mind has from eternity; it is not generated by the Body, unlike in the case of normal humans on a materialist view.

Figure 9.2 captures several other of the preceding elements to show my representation of Timeless God [the golden eye] in the eternal present experiencing all at once the various temporal moments of Incarnate God [the humanoids]:

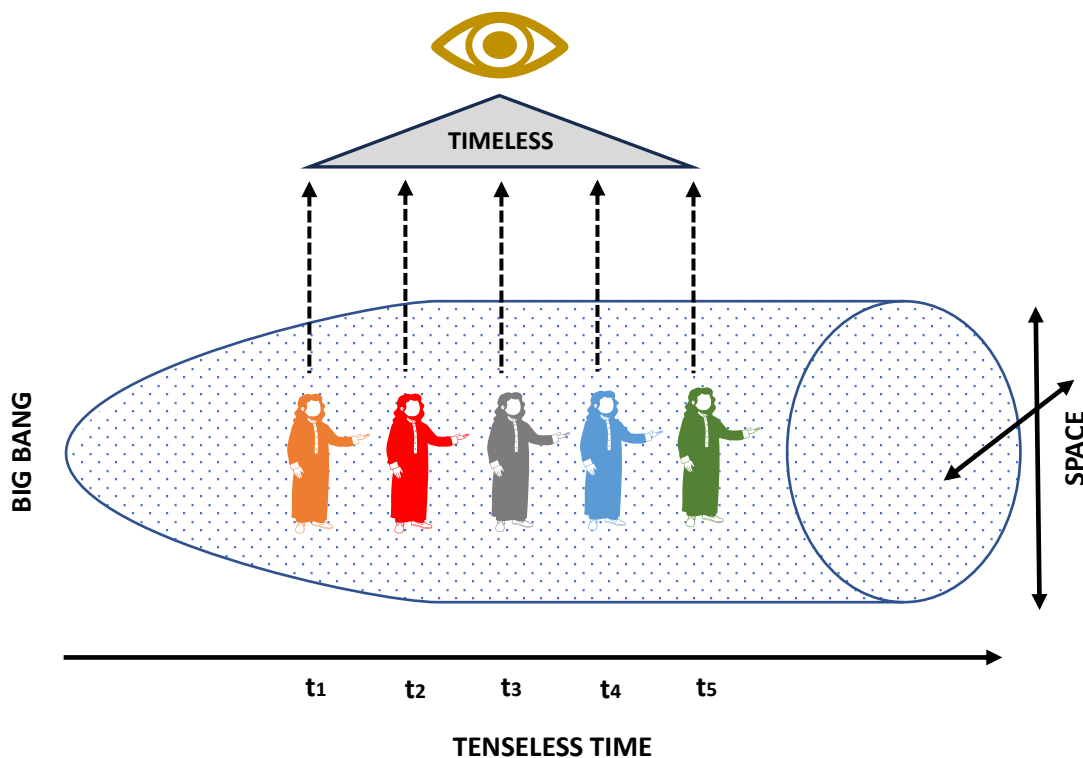


Figure 9.2: Block universe, Timeless God and Incarnate God

A challenge in using a relational compositional model to allow the timeless GS to enter into a relation with a temporal human body but not to change is that this possibly shields GS from his humanity – what Crisp (2011, pp. 50-51) calls the ‘insulation problem’. Whilst such insulation is useful for preventing timeless GS from being infected with temporality, the cost is that GS does not appear to be truly incarnate.

<sup>17</sup> This, perhaps imperfectly, reflects my notion of the bilingual mind. The human psychology is a way of thinking or a tool, not a distinct entity.

This is why it is important that we think in terms of entities of the Bimodal God, with an entity, Incarnate God, truly entering the temporal world. In so doing, it is necessary to denude the temporal experiences of Incarnate God from their successiveness and render them compatible with Timeless God. The temporal experiences of Incarnate God feed to Timeless God and are experienced by Timeless God all at once. This 'all at once' collapse is portrayed by Figure 9.2 by the timeless triangle.

Thus, I would conclude that the three lynchpins and a B-theoretic philosophy of time allow a timeless Christian God to be incarnate without being infected with temporality.

## **SECTION 4. OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES**

### **4.1. Living in the eternal present**

Objection: It is opaque what living in the eternal present is like.

Response: Yes. Living in the eternal present would be such extraordinary living that it is difficult for temporal beings such as us to conceive it. The accounts we offer are at best highly speculative. Leftow (1991a, p. 140; 1988, p. 191) provides a helpful insight when he suggests that perhaps no one image will express all that we think possibly true of eternity and so we can only oscillate between the conflicting yet equally necessary images of an indivisible extensionless point and an extended duration; this mirrors the theme in my reconciliation that no one model quite captures what we want.

It would seem that we can but offer mere analogies and acknowledge that these at best are partial. In §6 of Chapter 6, reference was made to the mediaeval geometrical analogy that God's relation to time was like a circle with the centre point of the circle representing eternity and the circumference representing all moments of time. The circle analogy is useful but does not capture for instance that the Incarnate God is on the circumference as well as in the centre.

For the purposes of addressing the Research Question, the key concept is that living in the eternal present is such that all of [physical] time is available at once to God. We

may characterise 'all at once' as an instant, accepting that the latter inevitably reflects the inadequacy of our temporally infused language and mental constructs.

#### **4.2. The Incoherence Problem is not resolved**

Objection: If Timeless God experiences all of physical time at once, then he holds contradictory properties. Say for instance that Incarnate God is hungry at 1pm but sated at 2pm. Timeless God experiences these contradictory states at once.

Response: For Incarnate God, being hungry at 1pm and sated at 2pm is not contradictory because there is the time-indexing of 1pm and 2pm in physical time. For Timeless God, the charge of contradiction has *prima facie* force only if we adhere to our temporally infused language and mental constructs.

The problem of characterising the eternal present was acknowledged in §4.1. The eternal present is *not* temporal: when we characterise 'all at once' as an instant, we do not mean at the same moment of time. Timeless God is *time-free*.

In §3, reference was made to viewing moments of time as individual cinematographic movie frames. These cinematographic movie frames have a time-index according to their position in the block universe. Timeless God, being time-free, notes, as it were, the time-index 'printed' at the bottom of each cinematographic movie frame but transcends the time-indexes. This is perhaps analogous to a normal human being flipping through a photo-album and seeing simultaneously photographs of herself as a toddler and as an adult: any contradictory properties had in virtue of the respective different stages of the human being's life do not transfer to her in the temporal now.

The life of a timeless being from our perspective is strange and counter-intuitive. This is a metaphysical bullet we have to bite.

### 4.3. Incarnation involves change and so is incompatible with timelessness

Objection: Incarnating is often understood as the act of taking on the full natural endowment of a human being, *viz.* a human body and mind/soul, and that involves change. Such change conflicts with Timeless God's immutability and hence timelessness.

Response: Essentially, this is Senor's (1990, p. 157) 'B' argument, which I addressed in §2.3 of Chapter 6.<sup>18</sup> The objection is plausible if we think of incarnating as the taking on of the full natural endowment of a human being and of Timeless God's life as successive, with pre-incarnation, incarnational and post-incarnation segments. The Bimodal God Thesis, however, understands human nature as a set of properties, that is a universal, which Timeless God has from eternity.<sup>19</sup> Such a human nature is completed by Incarnate God with the acquisition of a temporal human body.

Presumably, Senor (*ibid.*, p. 158) would counter that such completion, that is the taking on of a human body itself, constitutes intrinsic change.<sup>20</sup> I would respond that the completion with a human body in the temporal world does not represent intrinsic change because the divine life is lived all at once. More strictly, Incarnate God has a series of human bodies, each one lasting but an instant, that is, not persisting through time. All of these instants are lived at once by Timeless God in the eternal present. I readily grant that whilst those instants are lived at once by Timeless God in the eternal present, it is nevertheless the case that some parts in the life of Timeless God involve not having a human body and some parts involve having a human body and this appears to be change. However, this, I would contend, *contra* Senor (*ibid.*, p. 159), is not change but variety. It is meaningful to say that what Timeless God has at some parts of his life he always has from the standpoint of eternity; this is one of the consequences of living a life all at once. The divine life does not preclude variety in

---

<sup>18</sup> There I discussed Senor's 'B' argument in the context of Leftow's (2002a) examination of it. I argued, *inter alia*, that Leftow is ultimately unsuccessful in showing the compatibility between timelessness and the Incarnation based on his critique of Senor.

<sup>19</sup> In Leftow's (2002a) examination of Senor's 'B' argument, he does not offer what is probably the standard response that timeless God the Son never began to be human because he has a human nature from eternity.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the notion that an abstract nature incarnation takes place only if a concrete nature incarnation does so, see §2.1 of Chapter 5.

itself; it would be a peculiar life that did not have variety. Indeed, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity evidences variety in the divine nature. So long as the variety is had all at once then there is no change.

#### **4.4. It is not clear what Incarnate God is**

Objection: It is not clear whether Incarnate God is a substance or a stream of events.

Response: This is a false dichotomy: my suggestion is that Incarnate God may be viewed as both. Timeless God is the divine substance. Part of his life is lived in temporal creation as Incarnate God; they are one and the same being. It is useful to think of Incarnate God in terms of two perspectives depending upon what we want to draw attention to. If we want to draw attention to discrete Persons in order to conform to Christian orthodoxy on the Trinity, we might prefer to think in terms of substance; this is especially helpful when we feel that the addition of a physical human body distinguishes Incarnate God from the non-spatiality of Timeless God in eternity. If we want to draw attention to the unity of God, we might prefer to think in terms of events; that is, Incarnate God is a set of temporal happenings lived as part of the life of Timeless God.

The key issue is that we should be able to reconcile the temporality of Incarnate God with the timelessness of Timeless God regardless of the respective view. That is to say, whether or not Incarnate God is a substance or a stream of events, the bottom line is that he is in the temporal world. By employing the B-theory of eternalism, the stage theory on human persistence and something akin to a divided-mind model, this, I would argue, we can do.

#### **4.5. Incarnate God is not really temporal**

Objection: Incarnate God does not appear to really undergo succession and so is not temporal.

Response: The Research Question investigates how a timeless God can be incarnate without being infected with temporality, so it is a welcome result if Incarnate God is not really temporal. However, Incarnate God has a part in temporal creation, *viz.* the human body. *Prima facie*, there is succession in Incarnate God's life in the sense that we can conceptualise pre-incarnate and incarnate states in which Incarnate God does not have a normal physical human body and then does have; moreover, Incarnate God interacts dynamically with human beings in the created world by being physically present in his creation. This justifies referring to Incarnate God as temporal.

Under the proposed reconciliation with its adoption of the stage view, Incarnate God's human body has the persistence conditions of ordinary human bodies, *viz.* instantaneous or momentary entities; such bodies do not persist through time. On a materialist view of human persons, this also means, strictly speaking, that human persons do not persist through time; we may, however, consider human persons as persisting in the form of counterparts, and these counterparts are sequential. Incarnate God, on the other hand, does not persist by counterparts; on a substance dualist view, his persistence conditions rely upon the divine essence or 'soul'. The many instantaneous human bodies which Incarnate God takes on in multiple incarnations form a sequence. However, on the B-theory of time, all the instants of time are ontologically on a par and all occur at once to Timeless God in the eternal present, so all those human bodies are utilised at once from *sub specie aeternitatis*. From the perspective of the human psychology of Incarnate God there is the subjective experience of time flowing. This phenomenology, however, misrepresents the ontology, and Incarnate God's divine mind understands this. So, Incarnate God appears to be temporal in respect of his human bodies and interactions in creation, but the possession of these bodies and interactions are structured in such a way as to be reconcilable with the timelessness of Timeless God.

My offering of the many instantaneous human bodies addresses Hasker's (2002, pp. 185-186) argument that for an entity to have a number of apparently temporally successive aspects simultaneously present to a timeless God means that that entity is timeless, not temporal. Firstly, as stated it is not one human entity persisting through time but a sequence of momentary counterparts. Thus, there is not one human entity



having successive aspects. The lack of successive aspects might still invite the charge that such an entity is timeless. Therefore, and secondly, I would point out that Hasker seems to be relying upon successiveness as the sole criterion of temporality. However, there are other criteria such as temporal becoming, temporal unbecoming, temporal extension and/or location. Unambiguously, the instantaneous human bodies have temporal location. As Pike (1970, p. 8) observes, we cannot conclude that if an entity lacks temporal extension, which involves the idea of succession, it also lacks temporal location; if it did lack temporal location, then it would indeed be timeless. Thus, the instantaneous human bodies meet at least some of the temporal criteria: they are *tenseless* in a block universe, not *timeless* in eternity.

#### 4.6. Modalism

Objection: Talk of Incarnate God as a phase or strand in Bimodal God's life is suggestive of the heresy of modalism that God is one person who has revealed himself in three forms, roles or modes, that is God under different descriptions, in contrast to the Trinitarian doctrine where God is one being eternally existing in three Persons.

Response: This objection, I would suggest, is theological rather than philosophical. In §4.3 of Chapter 4 it is acknowledged that the Bimodal God Thesis is closer to Latin trinitarianism, where the unity of the Godhead is emphasised to the detriment of the distinction of the Persons, than it is to social trinitarianism, where the distinctiveness of the Persons is emphasised. If Latin trinitarianism fails to resolve the tension of maintaining sufficient distinction between the Persons and so is adjudged in some quarters as unorthodox in the Christian view, then this does not invalidate the Bimodal God Thesis as a philosophical model for addressing the Research Question.

Leftow (2007, p. 360) remarks that it is not always easy to say just what modalism is and that not every mode-concept results in modalism. One common understanding of modalism is that God wears, as it were, three different masks on three different occasions.<sup>21</sup> However, the Bimodal God Thesis would reject 'three different occasions' as implying succession, for the Bimodal God experiences all the aspects of his life at

---

<sup>21</sup> This would be the heresy of Sabellianism.

once. Still, on most accounts of modalism, reports Leftow, God is only temporarily God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; so to avoid modalism, Christians must hold the Persons' distinction to be an eternal, necessary, and intrinsic feature of God's life even if creation does not take place (*ibid.*, p. 374). If so, the Bimodal God Thesis would probably fail this test, although it should be noted that the Thesis proposes that God has human nature as an intrinsic feature from eternity so this may ameliorate the Christian concern somewhat.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.7. Human beings are more than dust

Objection: Christian tradition, at least in the folk understanding, maintains that a human being comprises a body and a soul. That Incarnate God incorporates a mere human body to complete his human nature is suggestive of a materialist Christology.

Response: The Christian tradition is often thought to be a form of substance dualism (Plantinga, 2007, pp. 118-119; Crisp, 2009, p. 139 and p. 153); that is, the notion that the body and the soul are two different kinds of substance, with the body (or matter) having the essential property of spatial extension and the soul (or mind) having the essential property of being able to think. There are different forms of substance dualism but the main idea is that the soul is the seat of personhood and can survive the destruction of the physical body (Swinburne, 2019). It is, however, mysterious how body and soul can causally interact, especially given that they cannot make physical contact.<sup>23</sup> The difficulties of such interactionism are sufficient grounds, I would argue, to reject the notion of a soul as an independent substance. Moreover, even if a plausible positive account were given of psychophysical causation,<sup>24</sup> this would, I would suggest, be unlikely to explain the sheer and utter dependence of the mind upon the body: a heavy blow to the head from a falling philosophy textbook from the top shelf can readily interrupt the consciousness of or effect personality changes on a PhD student.

---

<sup>22</sup> Human nature understood as a universal which is completed with the assumption of a concrete particular human body.

<sup>23</sup> Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia's objection.

<sup>24</sup> As opposed to a merely negative argument such as that we [allegedly] do not have a satisfactory account of body-to-body causation and so mind-body causation is no worse off (*pace* Hasker, 2018, p. 100).

It is argued in Chapter 8 that the stage theory is the theory of persistence that is most congenial to the Bimodal God Thesis. The stage theory uses the counterpart relation to relate stages rather than a human immaterial soul, and this is most consonant with a materialist view of human beings. Therefore, the charge of a materialist Christology is accepted. In any case, it is not universally accepted that the Christian tradition does maintain or require that a human being consists of a body and a soul (Baker, 1995; van Inwagen, 1995; Merricks, 2001; Corcoran, 2006).

There are other dualisms that do not have the soul/mind as a separate substance to the body. If one takes the Christian tradition to substantially include Catholic thinking, then it is important to consider Thomist dualism. Here the soul<sup>25</sup> is the substantial form of the body. That is to say, the soul is the form of a substance and that substance is the human being: A human being is the kind of substance which in the paradigm case, that is, its mature and normal state, exhibits both the properties and causal powers characteristic of animality and of rationality that are irreducible to those of its parts (Feser, 2018, p. 92). On Feser's interpretation of Aquinas, we can understand the soul as a universal (of human nature) which actualises prime matter<sup>26</sup> to make a concrete particular of a human being. This substance, *viz.* a human being, has corporeal and incorporeal operations (*ibid.*, p. 95). When the body dies, the substance of which the soul is the form continues to exist<sup>27</sup> albeit in an emasculated state: only its incorporeal operations, such as intellective and volitional functions, remain, and thus personhood is in some sense maintained.<sup>28</sup> Under the stage view being used in the Bimodal God Thesis, we could imagine this bodiless substance constantly becoming re-embodied;<sup>29</sup> that is, the soul reconfiguring new prime matter into new bodies – one body for each

---

<sup>25</sup> The soul is the substantial form of a living thing, not just humans; hence, rabbits and roses have souls too. However, the soul of a human being is different in that it is subsistent form; that is, it can continue to exist without there being any matter for it to configure (for extended discussion, see Stump, 2003, pp. 194-203).

<sup>26</sup> Prime matter is matter without any form. Secondary matter is matter having some form. See Feser (2018, p. 90).

<sup>27</sup> Thus, because the substance, in its incorporeal aspect, that the human soul is the form of, persists beyond the death of the body, we may use the locution that the soul persists beyond the death of the body. The soul itself is not a substance.

<sup>28</sup> I say 'in some sense' because on the view being considered intellective operations require sensation and imagination as aids to abstract thinking. However, such sensation and imagination are corporeal activities requiring a physical brain. Therefore, although the intellect survives physical death, it is severely restricted in what it can do without divine intervention (Feser, 2018, p. 96).

<sup>29</sup> Needless to say, this is not the Thomist position.

instant of time. The soul then would perform the function of the counterpart relation. However, this implies a human person in addition to God the Son, which raises the concern of Nestorianism, and, moreover, is a human person who is persisting through time. These latter two concerns are in conflict with the Bimodal God Thesis, so, again, the approach of a materialist Christology is preferred.

In §2.2.2 I stated that I found favour with the view that GS was the archetypal man and so already possessed human *nature* within his pre-incarnate divine form. On this view, GS's assumption of a corporeal human body in the Incarnation gave that flesh the properties necessary to make it what I call a complete human *being*. One could take the view that to have a human soul is for a person to be related to a human body in a certain exclusive way; hence, the completion in the Incarnation could be understood to mean that God the Son *becomes* a human soul (Merricks, 2007, p. 293).

Whilst we can reject the notion of a human immaterial soul, we still have the issue of how Incarnate God manipulates the human body he assumes. It would appear to me, however, that whatever mechanism God employs to sustain creation also provides the means to control a human body. This mechanism is a divine ability that we should not necessarily expect to be granted to a created being. We may not want, though, for the human body to be able to cause changes in Timeless God's mind, so perhaps an approach along occasionalist lines can be adopted to account for the *appearance* of interaction.

In short, human beings are indeed more than dust<sup>30</sup> in that they, for instance, can do philosophy, but this does not entail substance dualism.

#### **4.8. The stage view is weird**

Objection: The stage view of human persons is weird – even outrageous - and cannot possibly be true.

---

<sup>30</sup> Not that there is anything wrong with mere dust. Dust comes from the explosions of stars. Plausibly, some atoms in my left hand and some atoms in my right hand come from different supernovae; that is miraculous.

Response: The stage view posits, *inter alia*, the systematic coming into existence, perhaps somewhat mysteriously, of new instantaneous stages. This is certainly very surprising. It may also be quite disconcerting to think that strictly speaking we exist but for a moment; Merricks (2003, p. 147) considers it to be unbelievable.<sup>31</sup> However, in Philosophy there are few if any knockdown arguments, so I am not quite sure how the stage view can be demonstratively ruled out. Of course, *if* the stage view could be demonstratively ruled out, then this would likely deal a highly damaging if not decisive blow against my reconciliation.

Various philosophical objections and costs to the stage view, such as the mystery of the coming into existence of new instantaneous stages, the alleged ontological profligacy, how it handles our mentality *etc* are addressed in §3.4 of Chapter 8. It is argued there that the overall explanatory advantage given by the stage view compared to other theories of persistence is compelling in providing a resource to perform the reconciliation.

A God is extraordinary. A timeless God is extraordinary. A life lived all at once in the eternal present is extraordinary. Two-(or more)-in-one is extraordinary. A timeless God entering temporal creation is extraordinary. If you are prepared to bite these, then the stage view is, I would submit, only an additional nibble and not so weird or outrageous.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.9. Unity of consciousness

Objection: If God exists as two (or more) entities, then there are two (or more) centres of consciousness, not one. Thus, God lacks unity of consciousness.

---

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps we can be comforted by the thought that our momentary self exists forever in the block universe. Whilst Parfit was not thinking of the stage view, in his 1984 he does offer the notion that accepting the momentariness of our lives helps assuage fears on our deaths. Moreover, Rogers (2007, p. 11) suggests that even an instantaneous temporal creature all of whose existence consists in a single time-slice in a tenseless block universe may have a better existence than creatures of the tensed world who go out of existence. Intuitions will, needless to say, vary on this.

<sup>32</sup> A final remark on the Thomist analysis I considered in §4.6: Feser (2018, p. 97) states that human beings as hybrids of the corporeal and incorporeal are ‘... metaphysically speaking, real weirdos’. I concur, albeit for different reasons.

Response: This objection comprises several intertwining elements involving views on the Christian Trinity and the nature of personhood. The underlying concern is that two (or more) centres of consciousness results in more than one God.

The best account of unity of consciousness is when we have just one centre of consciousness. In §4.2 of Chapter 4, it is argued along Lockean lines (Locke, 1975, p. 342) that identity of consciousness determines the identity of person and that such a person is a single subject of experience.

Under the Bimodal God Thesis, what is meant by God having twoness is qualified. There are two perspectives: phases and entities. It is argued that both should be concurrently employed to enjoy a fuller picture.

If the consciousness of Incarnate God simply is the consciousness of Timeless God, as it is when Incarnate God is thought of as a phase in Timeless God's life, then the consciousness of Incarnate God does not undergo change since Timeless God's consciousness does not undergo change.

The challenge is when we say that Incarnate God has an additional human temporal consciousness which entertains successive thoughts. This is in tension with the non-successiveness of Timeless God's consciousness. It implies more ontological distinctness of entities and is suggestive of two centres of consciousness. The reconciliation involves making those human thoughts in some sense non-successive and so compatible with Timeless God's consciousness thereby supporting unity of consciousness.

On either perspective, phases or entities, it is argued, therefore, that there is just the one centre of consciousness. Consequently, unity of consciousness is secured and monotheism is upheld.

#### 4.10. Apollinarianism

Objection: Incarnate God has a human body but the divine mind takes the place of the human rational soul or mind, so his human mental life just is his divine mental life. This is the heresy of Apollinarianism.<sup>33</sup>

Response: This is more of a theological objection than a philosophical one: the principal concern is soteriological. However, it does raise several interesting philosophical issues. Incarnate God is a divine person, not a human person. A person has only one mind, so Incarnate God has one mind. This mind, however, qualifies for both divinity and humanity in respect of properties held. The divine mind does not take the place of the human mind but already – from eternity – has properties which in the right circumstances produce a human psychology. Thus, what is proffered is a hybrid account of consciousness, for example involving elements of Swinburne’s divided-mind model, Craig’s subliminal model and my proposal of a model based on the bilingual mind, which enables Incarnate God to be aware of the world as mediated through a human body with its sensory apparatus and human way of thinking. Whilst Incarnate God’s human mental life is not a robust human mind, it is sufficient, I would argue, to counter the charge of Apollinarianism, for such a mental life has the same phenomenology of a robust human mind. However, if by a human rational soul or mind is meant a distinct entity which is a seat of personhood, then the charge of Apollinarianism is accepted; this charge is readily accepted for otherwise the prospect of Nestorianism arises.

My assertion that Nestorianism is worse than Apollinarianism is on philosophical, not theological grounds. As stated in Chapter 2 on Methodology, I am cognisant of some theological sensitivities concerning unorthodoxy. In adjudicating between heresies where I have to in order to remain consistent with my research project, I attempt to minimise divergence from central Christian beliefs.

---

<sup>33</sup> Condemned at the first Council of Constantinople 381 CE.

My primary concern is unity of consciousness. In order to maintain the identity of God the Son with Jesus Christ, an important component I have explored has been to account for how GS and JC have unity of consciousness. We have to be careful in defining what is meant by 'person'. In Chapter 4 §4.2 I argued for the standard modern psychological understanding of what is a person, in which identity of consciousness determines the identity of person, with such a person being a single subject of experience. The Boethian understanding, which was the standard understanding of the mediaevals, is that a person is a supposit with a rational nature; that is, it is a metaphysical, not psychological understanding.

Given the standard modern understanding of a person, under Apollinarianism, there is only one consciousness, *viz.* God the Son's. This is true unity of consciousness. However, under Nestorianism there are two persons, which implies two consciousnesses and two subjects of experience. Such a disunity, I would argue, militates against the identity of JC with GS.

Under the Boethian definition of a person, ostensibly two persons, one from the divine nature and one from the human nature, is not problematic in JC because one of the persons (the human nature) is a proper part and so does not qualify as a supposit and so is not truly a person. However, this is not to deny that the 'person' from the human nature would be a supposit if it were independent of the divine person, enjoying the full characteristics of personhood including an autonomous mental life. If the 'person' from the human nature would enjoy an autonomous mental life post-separation, it is reasonable to presume that it enjoys, at least potentially, that mentality pre-separation. I would argue that if the 'person' from the human nature is such, then the disqualification by being a proper part is merely stipulative and does not address this concern about mentality. This worry about mentality conflicts with my unity of consciousness contention.

My methodology does not commit me *a priori* to rejecting either Nestorianism or Apollinarianism but merely to providing a coherent account of a timeless God who is incarnate. The resulting account may be adjudged to be Apollinarian but not Nestorian.



Apollinarianism, *ceteris paribus*, but not Nestorianism is acceptable in that it maintains the unity of consciousness so that JC is GS. That JC is GS is an important orthodox claim from the Council of Chalcedon 451CE (Tanner, 1990, p. 86). Of course, I acknowledge that Apollinarianism itself was condemned as a heresy by the Council of Constantinople 381CE. However, I follow Craig (2003, p. 609) in claiming that my account of JC's mentality is a reformulation or even rehabilitation of Apollinarianism.

#### **4.11. Is the Bimodal God Christian?**

Objection: If Timeless God chose not to create, he would not have begotten Incarnate God. However, under the Christian Trinity doctrine, the three Persons exist from eternity even without creation. Therefore, the Timeless God is not the Christian God.

Response: A pivotal characteristic of the Christian God is that he incarnates for soteriological purposes. In incarnating, God the Son takes on a human nature in addition to his divine nature. The Bimodal God Thesis is consistent with these. Furthermore, in §3.4 of Chapter 8, I suggest that the stage theory, which is a necessary ingredient in the Bimodal God Thesis, offers distinct soteriological advantages.

If we accept the antecedent in the objection, then yes Timeless God would not have begotten Incarnate God. However, according to Christian orthodoxy, the antecedent is false. In any case, the focus of the Research Question is on reconciling eternal timelessness and created temporality, and thus is concerned with the economic Trinity, not the immanent Trinity.

## SECTION 5. CONCLUSION

We may agree with Horatio that reality *is* strange but wondrous.

One does not need to be visited by the Ghost of a Father to confess this, but such a visitation might be helpful to clear up one or two metaphysical mysteries and to motivate further investigation. Time will tell whether we have exhausted our philosophical dreams.

In the concept of the triune Christian God we encounter a *really* strange entity. God is said to be three divine Persons in one divine being, that is, three Persons with one nature, not three gods. And one of these three is said to have incarnated with two natures. The Trinity and the Incarnation are profound mysteries and whatever attempts we make to try to address such mysteries are likely to result in further conundrums, rather like drilling down into a Mandelbrot set of fractals.

In this dissertation, I have offered a model for how a timeless God can be incarnate and yet remain timeless. There were plenty of metaphysical surprises along the way. Even if my avowed aim of a modest positive account has not been achieved, I would argue that my model is metaphysically defensible and my hope is that at least a little of the mystery has been lifted and that the door has been opened a bit more for further investigation. I also hope that the reader – you – has enjoyed the journey.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, S. R. (2016). *A Critical Introduction to Properties*. London: Bloomsbury
- Almeida, M. J. (2008). *The Metaphysics of Perfect Beings*. New York: Routledge
- Alston, W. P. (1989). *Divine Nature and Human Language*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press
- Alston, W. P. (2002). 'Substance and the Trinity'. In: Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Trinity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Alston, W. P. (2008). 'Does God Have Beliefs?'. *Religious Studies* 22 :287-306
- Aquinas, T. (2014). *Summa Theologica: Complete Edition*. USA: Catholic Way Publishing
- Armstrong, D. M. (2004). *Truth and Truth-makers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Augustine (1998). *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Baker, L. R. (1995). 'Need a Christian be a Mind/Body Dualist?'. *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (4): 489-504
- Baker, L. R. (2000). *Persons and Bodies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bayne, T. (2001). 'The inclusion model of the Incarnation: problems and prospects'. *Religious Studies* 37: 125–141
- Bayne, T. (2008). 'The unity of consciousness and the split-brain syndrome'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 105: 277–300
- Bayne, T. (2022). *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction*. Oxford: Routledge
- Bayne, T. and Chalmers, D. (2003). 'What is the unity of consciousness?'. In A. Cleeremans, A. (ed.), *The Unity of Consciousness: Binding, Integration and Dissociation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Beall, Jc. (2019). 'Christ - Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology'. *Journal of Analytic Theology* 7 (1): 400–433
- Beall, Jc. (2021). *The Contradictory Christ, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Benovsky, J. (2010). 'The Relationist and Substantialist Theories of Time: Foes or Friends?'. *European Journal of Philosophy* 19(4): 491-506
- Block, N. (1997) 'On a confusion about a function of consciousness'. In N. Block, O. Flanagan, and G. Guzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press
- Blount, D. (2002). 'On the Incarnation of a Timeless God'. In: Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff (eds). *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Boethius (1973). *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (eds.). London: Heinemann
- Bourne, C. (2006). *A Future for Presentism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## Bibliography

- Brower, J. E. and Rea, M. C. (2005). 'Material Constitution and the Trinity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 22 (1): 57-76
- Cameron, R. (2015). *The Moving Spotlight*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Carls-Diamante, S. (2022). 'Where Is It Like to Be an Octopus?'. *Frontiers in System Neuroscience* 16: 840022
- Cartwright, R (1987). 'On the Logical Problem of the Trinity.' In *Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Chalmers, D. J. (2002). 'Does Conceivability Entail Possibility?'. In: T. S. Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds.), *Conceivability and Possibility*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Coakley, S. (2002). 'What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections in the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian "Definition" '. In: Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Colman, A. (2001). *A Dictionary of Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Corcoran, K.J. (2006). *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul*. Michigan: Baker Academic
- Craig, W. L. (1994). 'The Special Theory of Relativity and Theories of Divine Eternity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1): 19-37
- Craig, W. L. (1998). 'The Tensed vs. Tenseless Theory of Time: A Watershed for the Conception of Divine Eternity'. In: Robin Le Poidevin (ed.), *Questions of Time and Tense*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Craig, W. L. (2000). 'Timelessness, Creation, and God's Real Relation to the World'. *Laval theologique et philosophique* 56 (1): 93–112
- Craig, W. L. (2001a). *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time*. Illinois: Crossway Books
- Craig, W. L. (2001b). *God, Time, and Eternity: The Coherence of Theism II: Eternity*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Craig, W. L. (2003). 'Incarnation'. In J. P. Moreland and W. L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press
- Crisp, O. D. (2007). *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Crisp, O. D. (2009). *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology*. New York: T&T Clark International
- Crisp, O. D. (2011). 'Compositional christology without Nestorianism'. In: Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Cross, R. (2002). *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Cross, R. (2009). 'The Incarnation'. In: Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Dainton, B. (2004). 'The Self and the Phenomenal'. *Ratio* 17(4): 365-389

## Bibliography

- Dainton, B. (2008). *The Phenomenal Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Davies, B. (2000). 'A modern defence of divine simplicity.' In: Brian Davies (ed.), *Philosophy of Religion: A guide and anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Davies, B. (2003). *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. 3rd Edition. Oxford: OUP
- Davis, S. T. (1983). *Logic and the Nature of God*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd
- Descartes, R. (1637). *Discourse on the Method*.
- DeWeese, G. J. (2004). *God and the Nature of Time*. Hampshire UK: Ashgate
- DeWeese, G. J. (2007). 'One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation'. In: Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (eds.), *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, Nashville: B&H Academic
- Dyke, H. (2003). *Review of How Things Persist*. [Online]. Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews [Accessed 5 October 2023]. Available from: <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/how-things-persist/>
- Fairbairn, D. (2007). 'The One Person Who Is Jesus Christ: The Patristic Perspective'. In: Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (eds.), *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, Nashville: B&H Academic
- Feser, E. (2018). 'Aquinas on the Human Soul'. In: Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge and J. P. Moreland (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell
- Fisher, J. (2017). *Healing the Fragmented Selves of Trauma Survivors: Overcoming Internal Self-Alienation*. New York: Routledge
- Fitzgerald, P. (1985). 'Stump and Kretzmann on Time and Eternity'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 82(5): 260-269
- Flint, T. (2011). 'Should Concretists Part with Mereological Models of the Incarnation?' In: Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Gazzaniga, M. S. (1985). *The Social Brain: Discovering the Networks of the Mind*. New York: Basic Books
- Geach, P. T. (1969). *God and the Soul*. London: Routledge & K. Paul
- DeWeese, G. J. (2002). 'Atemporal, Sempiternal, or Omnitemporal: God's Temporal Mode of Being'. In: G. E. Ganssle and D. M. Woodruff (eds.), *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- DeWeese, G. J. (2007). 'One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation'. In: Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (eds.), *Jesus*
- Gorman, M. (2016). 'Classical Theism, Classical Anthropology, and the Christological Coherence Problem'. *Faith and Philosophy* 33(3): 278-292
- Hales, S. D. and Johnson, T. A. (2003). 'Endurantism, Perdurantism and Special Relativity'. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (213): 524-539
- Hansson Wahlberg, T. (2008). 'Can I Be An Instantaneous Stage and Yet Persist Through Time?'. *Metaphysica* 9 (2): 235–239

## Bibliography

- Hasker, W. (2002). 'The Absence of a Timeless God'. In: G. E. Ganssle and D. M. Woodruff (eds.), *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Hasker, W. (2009). 'A Leftovian Trinity?'. *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (2): 154-166
- Hasker, W. (2010). 'Objections to Social Trinitarianism'. *Religious Studies* 46 (4): 421-439
- Hasker, W. (2013). *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Hasker, W. (2018). 'The Case for Emergent Dualism'. In: Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge and J. P. Moreland (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell
- Haslanger, S. (2003). 'Persistence Through Time'. In: Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Hawley, K. (2001). *How Things Persist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Helm, P. (2001). 'Response to William Lane Craig'. In: G. E. Ganssle (ed.), *God and Time: Four Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press
- Helm, P. (2010). *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press
- Herman, R. (1998). 'How fast is the earth moving?' [Online]. *Scientific American* [Accessed 14 April 2022]. Available from: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-fast-is-the-earth-mov/>
- Hick, J. (ed.) (1977). *The Myth of God Incarnate*. London: SCM Press
- Holland Jr, R. A. (2012). *God, Time, and the Incarnation*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers'
- Jaeger, L. (2020). 'Christ and the Concept of Person'. *Themelios* 45 (2): 277-290
- Kaneda, T. and Haub, C. (2021). *How Many People Have Ever Lived on Earth?* [Online]. Population Reference Bureau, Washington. [Accessed 14 April 2022]. Available from: <https://www.prb.org/articles/how-many-people-have-ever-lived-on-earth/>
- Kenny, A. (1969). 'Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom'. In: Anthony Kenny (ed.), *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Doubleday-Anchor
- Kenny, A. (1979). *The God of the Philosophers*. Oxford: OUP
- Ketterle, W. et al. (2003). 'Cooling Bose-Einstein Condensates Below 500 Picokelvin'. *Science* 301 (5639): 1513-1515
- Kovachy, T. et al. (2015). 'Quantum superposition at the half-metre scale'. *Nature* 528: 530–533
- Kripke, S. A. (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
- Lavenda, B. (1985). 'Brownian Motion'. *Scientific American* 252 (2)
- Le Poidevin, R. (2007). *The images of time: an essay on temporal representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## Bibliography

- Le Poidevin, R. (2009) 'Incarnation: Metaphysical Issues'. *Philosophy Compass* 4 (4): 703-714
- Le Poidevin, R. (2010). 'Time Without Change (In Three Steps)'. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (2): 171-180
- Le Poidevin, R. (2023). *And Was Made Man: Mind, Metaphysics, and Incarnation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leftow, B. (1988). 'The Roots of Eternity'. *Religious Studies* 24 (2): 189-212
- Leftow, B. (1991a). *Time and Eternity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Leftow, B. (1991b). 'Eternity and Simultaneity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (2): 148-179
- Leftow, B. (2002a). 'A Timeless God Incarnate'. In: Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leftow, B. (2002b). 'Anti-Social Trinitarianism'. In: Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Trinity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leftow, B. (2002c). 'The Eternal Present'. In: Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff (eds.), *God and Time*, New York: Oxford University Press
- Leftow, B. (2004). 'A Latin Trinity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 21 (3): 304-333
- Leftow, B. (2005) 'Eternity and Immutability'. In W. Mann (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Religion*, New York: Blackwell
- Leftow, B. (2006). 'Divine Simplicity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 23 (4): 365-380
- Leftow, B. (2007). 'Modes without Modalism'. In: P. van Inwagen and D. Zimmerman (eds.), *Persons: Human and Divine*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leftow, B. (2011a). 'Composition and Christology'. *Faith and Philosophy* 28 (3): 310-322
- Leftow, B. (2011b). 'The Humanity of God'. In: Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leftow, B. (2012a). 'Time travel and the Trinity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 29 (3): 313–24
- Leftow, B. (2012b) 'On Hasker on Leftow on Hasker on Leftow'. *Faith and Philosophy* 29 (3): 334-339
- Leftow, B. (2014). 'Immutability' [online]. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/immutability/>. [Accessed 10 March 2023]
- Leftow, B. (2015). 'Against materialist Christology'. In C. P. Ruloff (ed.), *Christian Philosophy of Religion: Essays in Honor of Stephen T. Davis*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press
- Leftow, B. (2018). 'Presentism, Atemporality and Time's Way'. *Faith and Philosophy* 35 (2): 173-194
- Legenhausen, G. (1986). 'Is God a Person?'. *Religious Studies* 22 (3/4): 307-323
- Lewis, D. (1988). 'Eternity, Time and Tenselessness'. *Faith and Philosophy* 5 (1): 72-86
- Lewis, D.K. (1986a). *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## Bibliography

- Lewis, D.K. (1986b). *Philosophical Papers Volume II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Locke, J. (1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In: P. H. Nidditch (ed.) *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Loke, A. (2014). *A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited
- McTaggart, J. M. E. (1908). 'The Unreality of Time'. *Mind* 17: 457-473
- Marmodoro, A. and Hill, J. (2008). 'Modelling the metaphysics of the Incarnation'. *Philosophy and Theology* 20: 99-128
- Marmodoro, A. and Hill, J. (2010). 'Composition models of the incarnation: unity and unifying relations'. *Religious Studies* 46: 469-488
- Marmodoro, A. and Hill, J. (eds.) (2011). *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mellor, D.H. (1981), *Real Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Mellor, D.H. (1998), *Real Time II*. London: Routledge
- Merricks, T. (2001). 'How to Live Forever without Saving Your Soul: Physicalism and Immortality'. In Kevin Corcoran (ed.) *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
- Merricks, T. (2003). 'Review: How Things Persist by Katherine Hawley'. *Mind* 112 (445): 146–148
- Merricks, T. (2007). 'The Word Made Flesh: Dualism, Physicalism and the Incarnation'. In: P. van Inwagen and D. Zimmerman (eds.), *Persons: Human and Divine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Moreland, J. P. (2018). 'Substance Dualism and the Unity of Consciousness'. In: Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge and J. P. Moreland (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell
- Moreland, J. P. and Craig, W. L. (2003). *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press
- Morris, T. V. (1984). *Understanding Identity Statements*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press
- Morris, T. V. (1986). *The Logic of God Incarnate*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
- Morris, T. V. (1991). *Our Idea of God*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press
- Mullins, R. T. (2016). *The End of the Timeless God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mullins, R. T. (2021). 'Classical Theism'. In J. M. Arcadi & J. T. Turner, Jr. (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
- Mullin, W. J. (2020). *Quantum Weirdness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Nagasawa, Y. (2017). *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- NRSV. (1989). *The Bible – New Revised Standard Version*. USA: National Council of the Churches of Christ



## Bibliography

- Padgett, A. G. (2000). *God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers
- Paul, E. (2019). 'Incarnation, Divine Timelessness, and Modality'. *TheoLogica* 3 (1): 88-112
- Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Pawl, T. (2016). *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Pawl, T. (2022). 'The Incarnation'. In: Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White (eds.), *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Page, B. (2024). 'Timelessness à la Leftow'. *TheoLogica* 9 (1). Published Online First: March 19, 2024
- Pike, N. (1970). *God and Timelessness*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Plantinga, A. (1980). *Does God Have A Nature?* Milwaukee: Marquette University Press
- Plantinga, A. (1999). "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth". *Faith and Philosophy* 16: 182–193
- Plantinga, A. (2007). 'Materialism and Christian Belief'. In: Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (eds.), *Persons: Human and Divine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Priest, G. (2006). *In Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Rea, M.C. (1998). 'Temporal Parts Unmotivated'. *Philosophical Review* 107: 225-260
- Rea, M. C. (2011). 'Hylomorphism and the incarnation'. In: Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Rogers, K. A. (1994). 'Eternity has no Duration'. *Religious Studies* 30 (1): 1-16
- Rogers, K. A. (1996). 'The Traditional Doctrine of Divine Simplicity'. *Religious Studies* 32 (2): 165-186
- Rogers, K. A. (2000). *Perfect Being Theology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Rogers, K. A. (2007). 'Anselmian Eternalism: The Presence of a Timeless God'. *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (1): 3-27
- Rosemont, H. Jr. (2019). '*Translating and Interpreting Chinese Philosophy*' [online]. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-translate-interpret/>. [Accessed 10 March 2023]
- Sanders, F. (2007). 'Chalcedonian Categories for the Gospel Narrative.' In: Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (eds.), *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, Nashville: B&H Academic
- Sanders, F. and Issler K. (2007). *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*. Nashville: B&H Academic
- Senor, T. D. (1990). 'Incarnation and Timelessness'. *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (2): 149-164
- Senor, T. D. (2002). 'Incarnation, Timelessness, and Leibniz's Law Problems'. In: G. E. Ganssle and D. M. Woodruff (eds.). *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## Bibliography

- Senor, T. D. (2007). 'The Compositional Account of the Incarnation'. *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (1): 52-71
- Shoemaker, S. (1969). 'Time without Change'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (12): 363-381
- Sider, T. (2001). *Four-dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Sider, T. (1996). 'All the world's a stage'. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74: 433–453
- Siegel, E. (2014). *There are no free quarks* [online]. Big Think. Available at: <https://bigthink.com/starts-with-a-bang/there-are-no-free-quarks/>. [Accessed 10 March 2023]
- Simons, P. (2000). 'How to Exist at a Time When You Have No Temporal Parts'. *The Monist* 83 (3): 419-436
- Simpson, W. M. R. and Leonhardt, U. (eds.). (2015). *Forces of the Quantum Vacuum: An Introduction to Casimir Physics*. New Jersey, USA: World Scientific Publishing
- Stuchlik, J.M. (2003). 'Not All Worlds Are Stages'. *Philosophical Studies* 116: 309–321
- Stump, E. (2002). 'Aquinas' metaphysics of the incarnation'. In: Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Stump, E. (2003). *Aquinas, The Arguments of the Philosophers*. London: Routledge
- Stump, E. (2022). 'The Nature of Human Beings'. In: Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White (eds.), *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Stump, E and Kretzmann, N. (1981). 'Eternity'. *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (8): 429-445
- Stump, E and Kretzmann, N. (1985). 'Absolute Simplicity'. *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (4): 353-382
- Stump, E and Kretzmann, N. (1987). 'Atemporal Duration: A Reply to Fitzgerald'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 84(4): 214-219
- Stump, E and Kretzmann, N. (1992). 'Eternity, Awareness, and Action'. *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (4): 463-482
- Swinburne, R. G. (1994). *The Christian God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Swinburne, R. G. (2011). 'The Coherence of the Chalcedonian Definition of the Incarnation'. In Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Swinburne, R. G. (2016). *The Coherence of Theism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Swinburne, R. G. (2019). *Are We Bodies or Souls?* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Tanner, N. (ed.) (1990). *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. London: Sheed & Ward; Washington DC: Georgetown University Press
- Thomson, J. J. (1983). 'Parthood and Identity Across Time'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 80 (4): 201-220
- Tooley, M. (1997). *Time, Tense, and Causation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

## Bibliography

- Tuggy, D. (2003a). 'The unfinished business of Trinitarian theorizing'. *Religious Studies* 39 (2): 165-183
- Tuggy, D. (2003b). 'Hasker's Quests for a Viable Social Theory'. *Faith and Philosophy* 30 (2): 171-187
- Van Inwagen, P. (1988). 'And Yet They Are Not Three Gods But One God'. In Thomas V. Morris (ed.), *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, Studies in the Philosophy of Religion Number 5, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press
- Van Inwagen, P. (1995). 'Dualism And Materialism: Athens And Jerusalem?'. *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (4): 475-488
- Van Inwagen, P. and Zimmerman, D. (eds.). (2007). *Persons: Human and Divine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Varzi, A. (2003). 'Naming the Stages'. *Dialectica* 57: 387–412
- Ward, K. (2015). *Christ and the Cosmos: A Reformulation of Trinitarian Doctrine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Wendel, G., Martínez, L. and Bojowald, M. (2020). 'Physical Implications of a Fundamental Period of Time'. *Physical Review Letters* 124 (24): 241-301
- Wright, S. (2010). 'The Leibniz's Law Problem (for Stage Theory)'. *Metaphysica* 11: 137–151
- Zagzebski, L. (2013). *Omnisubjectivity: a defense of a divine attribute*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press