

Eternalist Relativity as  
a Form of Compatibilism

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TTPH 523 – Metaphysics 1  
Dec 5, 2017 (October 2022)

### Abstract

Within Christian philosophical and systematic theology, God is understood as possessing omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, among (or as an extension of) other attributes such as Immensity and Eternality, yet it is commonplace in both Christendom and theistic philosophy to posit God as experiencing sequential reality. That is, experiencing time with us rather than possessing omnitemporality. Curiously, there is agreement among theists that God is outside of *matter* and *space*, yet there are objections from both determinists and indeterminists to the idea that God is outside of the domain of *time*. Within this paper, given the understanding of God's Omni-attributes, I suggest that it is reasonable to doubt that something as immense as God may be subject to, or fully exist within, a temporal manifold; with that in mind, I attempt to create a rudimentary form of **Eternalist Compatibilism**. I hope to establish this by suggesting that from the human perspective *within time*, there does exist a real and qualitatively different *present tense* (A-theory/ Endurantism<sup>1</sup>) as well as libertarian *free will*, while from outside of the dimension of time (as we know and experience it) God considers all moments as *Eternally Present* (B-theory/Worm Perdurantism<sup>2</sup>) exercising his *Divine Providence* deterministically. Therefore, within the field of Christian philosophical theology, Persons of the Trinity may experience sequential time alongside humankind (Incarnation, Pentecost, etc.) while the Father remains transcendentally outside of time and space. In light of this, I contend that the friction over sovereignty and foreknowledge may be illusory, and rather represents two sides of the same but complex reality; in other words, a type of *Eternalist Relativity*.

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<sup>1</sup> The object enduring through the forward motion of sequential temporal reality.

<sup>2</sup> Objects having spatial as well as temporal extension, in which the eternal perspective would not only see the object, but also see it in every moment of its existence.

In the Eternal, on the other hand, nothing passes away, but the whole is simultaneously present. But no temporal process is wholly simultaneous. Therefore, let it see that all time past is forced to move on by the incoming future; that all the future follows from the past; and that all, past and future, is created and issues out of that which is forever present. Who will hold the heart of man that it may stand still and see how the eternity which always stands still is itself neither future nor past but expresses itself in the times that are future and past?

-St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book Eleven, Chapter XI

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Both the statement that our final destination is already settled and the view that it still may be either Heaven or Hell, seem to me to imply the ultimate reality of Time, which I don't believe in. The controversy is one I can't join on either side for I think that in the real (Timeless) world it is meaningless.

-C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Books, Broadcasts and the War 1931-1949*.

### **Assumptions of this Paper**

For the sake of this paper, without exploring theological or naturalistic objections against free will, I am assuming that human beings are significantly free volitional creatures. I do not mean to dismiss some very nuanced soteriological positions, but in order to push ahead to the type of compatibilism that I am advocating, I am assuming the position that human beings are, with the exception of being enslaved to vices that they freely allow in, or events forced upon them causing a limitation of choices, *free creatures*.

Further, I am assuming that God's calling in salvation (however it may manifest) has at its ultimate goal, the preserving of an efficient amount of human free will. If affecting or overriding the will occurs, be it through arranged events as within *Molinism* or deterministic causation as within *Calvinism*, it would be applied (for the most part) as a rebooting of the human software; a freeing from the tyranny of vice, and not enough to unmake the creature, or undo the imprint of the Imago Dei. In other words, I am assuming the intuitive stance that *free will* is required for love, and love is the ultimate relationship that God enjoys with creatures

made in his image. That is, if God's goal were to create eternally significant beings, or beings bearing His image (the *Imago Dei*), it would be necessary for him to create beings that have the capacity to enter into intimate relational love. Intimate relational love requires free will or it is (prima facie) not love, therefore, to create eternally significant beings, God would need to create self-determining beings.<sup>3</sup> What I hope to do (for the sake of brevity) is to tie a 'tidy bow' on how things unfold within soteriology, so that I may attempt to address the metaphysical concepts.

I am also assuming a **non-standard version of relativity theory**, one in which reality *presents* to us simultaneously, which is to say, an objective present-tense, both here on Earth and in Andromeda. For the sake of simplicity, I am avoiding theories of how the unimaginably large block of space-time may be carved, as well as how the various implications of *time* being positionally relative over vast distances may affect the passage of time. I am viewing concepts such as intergalactic travel, not as an exercise to posit a *future* Andromedian launch trajectory landing in Earth's *past*, but rather that it would result in their landing at a location in space that Earth no longer occupies.<sup>4</sup>

That is to say, much like a WWII gunner attempting to shoot a long-distance or high-velocity target, one cannot aim at the place that the target's impression was received (to use Hume's term), but someone would have to calculate the trajectory of where the target would eventually be. Andromedans would need to consider the amount of time that it took the impression of the Milky Way to be received, galactic speeds, trajectories, and rotations, as well as Earth's specific location in relation to its star. Nevertheless, I propose that God's vantage point from Eternity, or from the eternal state, necessitates that he may access all moments irrespective of location or temporal sequence.

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<sup>3</sup> This is an *Imago Dei* based theodicy based on (or supported by) Plantinga's free will defense to the logical problem of evil.

<sup>4</sup> This is based on the Andromedian paradox.

### Thesis

The basic thesis starting point is this: if God exists logically prior to time, space, and matter, and his act of creation is the original causation of time, space, and matter, then God is not of the universe and his essence cannot be completely contained within the universe. That is to say, God's infinitude, immensity, and incommunicable attributes cannot be contained within, or limited to, the physical spatiotemporal universe. I think that this initial statement is uncontroversial, as it is certainly common among classic-minded theologians and philosophers to consider God in the following way:

- (1) God is *omniscient*: God is not limited to the knowledge that is discoverable within the physical universe, yet he has access to all information and laws regarding all objects and occurrences.
- (2) God is *omnipresent*: God is not limited or located within the physicality of space, yet God may enter, as is appropriate, into his created order, to access or manifest without regard to limits in spatiality.
- (3) God is *omnipotent*: God is not limited to powers of the material universe, yet all expressed powers, both known and unknown, have their ultimate source in him and are thereby contingent upon him.

That is to say, as deep as the mysteries and hidden laws of the universe may be, and as vast and shocking as the distances within the universe are, and as astonishing as the manifest powers of the universe appear, a transcendent creator would still be greater than the system that he has created. Therefore, I would like to suggest that God's nature, much in the same way that he is not limited by knowledge, space, or powers, is likewise not to be contained within, subject to, or limited by, *time*. That is to say, to (1), (2), and (3), we should add the following:

- (4) God is *omnitemporal*: God is outside of the operation and sequential procession of time, yet he considers all time as eternally present, and in accordance with the divine *Omnis*, he, therefore, has access to all moments and may be said to be "in" every moment.

Regarding this *omnitemporality*, I mean this to include the concept of *meta-temporality*, which is to say *beyond* temporality, similar to how God's other attributes are logically understood or said

to operate. Additionally, when I say ‘in time’ throughout this paper, I mean ‘in’ not to suggest spatiality, but rather as the way that a substance exists in its properties. As an example of how I use ‘*in time*,’ I refer to Edward J. Khamara, in his essay, *Eternity and Omniscience* (1974),

A human being indeed must be *in time* in order to be aware of the lapse of time through the perception of change; but God, being omniscient, need not be *in time* in order to know of the passage of time.<sup>5</sup>

The idea that God is *outside* of the operation of time, and from eternity considers all time as eternally present, is also noticeably represented (with varying amounts of nuance) by both Boethius and Augustine,<sup>6</sup> and both philosopher-theologians envisioned all moments as being eternally present with God. The concept of the *eternal present* is found among Aquinas scholars as well, for instance, Matthew Levering uses the phrase, “the Father’s nontemporal primacy.”<sup>7</sup>

I will therefore restate what I have mentioned in the introduction; the human perspective *within time* experiences a real and qualitatively different *present tense* (A-Theory/Relational Endurantism), one where volition is active as the streams of impressions come rolling in, and where we experience spontaneous free volition (libertarian free will). However, on the other side of our reality, from outside of the dimension of time, God considers all moments as *Eternally Present* (B-theory/Worm Perdurantism), seeing beings comprised of both a spatial and temporal extension, as he selects individuals through his *Divine Providence* (deterministically). Thus, I contend, the friction over sovereignty and foreknowledge may be illusory and may constitute an inadvertent theological move to place all of God’s nature within the domain of time rather than considering that these may be two sides of a same but complex reality.

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<sup>5</sup> E. J. Khamara, "Eternity and Omniscience," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 24, no. 96 (July 1974): 206. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Volume I*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. G. Pilkington (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., n.d.), Book Eleven, Chapters VI, XI, XIII, XIV, and XVII.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016), Note: he uses this phrase after commenting on the *sed contra* (“on the contrary”) section of article 4, which in turn was citing book 5 of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*.

Consequently, and beyond the scope of this paper, I contend that this move among theologians originates from an abandonment of the Eternalism of early biblical Christianity. Thus, we may see determinists arguing that God reaches through the corridors of time to undo human volition, quite often conflating concepts of *foreknowledge* with *predestination*. Thus, we see some libertarians now suggesting that the future is ‘open’ and not fully known by God; a move that renders God’s omniscience essentially meaningless, and if true, by logical consequence, the other *omnis* must follow suit.

### Some Notable Objections

Here at Talbot School of Theology, Eternalism seems to be a minority view, and perhaps more interestingly, advocates are often more intuitive than evaluative. Therefore, my fussing is likely a smaller subset of a minority view. However, we are also privileged to be in a supportive academic environment that makes for interesting conversations and friendly arguments. This has afforded me the opportunity to encounter a number of intelligent objections to the views expressed in this paper. The most challenging are the following:

Objection #1: This Eternalist Compatibilist view would have human beings existing as both created/contingent beings *and* eternal beings. Something is either, P or  $\neg$  P. This type of view would have the space-time manifold, that beings are located within *contingently*, actually existing *eternally* with God outside of time-space in some fashion. Since this block exists in eternity, it is, therefore, eternal itself. Therefore, beings within the block are eternal by default. Something cannot be both contingent and eternal.

Closely related to objection (1) is,

Objection #2: B-theory is *static* reality; therefore, God has become temporal to relate with creation.

Likewise, objections (3) and (4) seem related:

Objection #3: Something outside of Time cannot relate to temporal objects. God could not exit or enter time while sustaining creation.

Objection #4: B-theory entails hard-deterministic foreknowledge, i.e. God’s foreknowledge creates the future.

### **The Nature of Time and Reality: Addressing Objections 1 and 2**

Due to the similarities between objections (1) and (2), I will attempt to answer them together. Specifically on objection (1), while I agree that either  $P$  or  $\neg P$  is true and necessary to existence, I am doubtful that it applies between eternal and sequential reality so neatly. I will resist the charge that the B-theory's *Block-view* entails a static existence (detailed shortly below), but I would rather suggest that the eternal perspective is an expansion of the qualities we experience within sequential reality. That is to say, the block of space-time may be viewed as a sub-reality of a greater eternal reality; however, objection (1) seeks to treat sequential reality as ontologically on a par with eternal reality. I believe that this is improper. It may well be the case that the question here is not  $P$  or  $\neg P$ , but rather  $P$  or  $P'$  ( $P$  or  $P$ -prime). Truly, even in our shared temporal reality, some sub-categories are *true in different ways*. Imagine that a Naval Captain of an aircraft carrier, the USS Pickavance, has the hobby of creating model aircraft carriers while onboard a real aircraft carrier! Imagine that the Captain has assembled a perfect model of the USS Pickavance, the very vessel that he commands. One cannot surmise that this real Naval Captain is likewise also the captain of the model of the USS Pickavance, there is similarity, but that similarity is not functionally relevant. He has *power* over the model to freely unmake it or do what he will, but not the *authority* that he has over the real vessel, which is exponentially more vast, and most notably, not wholly transferable to the model ship, while it is certain that the model's well-being is tied in with the fate of the real ship. If we apply this same concept but point it toward eternity, instead of toward an object existing within space-time, I believe we would have a similar lack of categorical reach. In other words, God may have created our space-time manifold within a larger reality, and that does not make the contents of that closed system eternal in the same way that Eternity is eternal.

However, objection (1) is better answered along with objection (2) or the charge that the B-Theory entails that eternity (for the theist) is that of a ‘static’ existence. As stated above, I resist the term “static” when describing eternity, because it infers a reality that is frozen. I think that if a being within the jurisdiction of time were to “step outside of time,” it would likely be an immense expansion of the temporal reality that we experience. To illustrate this, within the following section, we must consider an analogy of Dimensions.<sup>8</sup>

### Dimensions

We (of course) perceive our lives in 3-Dimensions,<sup>9</sup> which consists of both 1-D and 2-D objects. Further, within these 3-D impressions, we experience time as the fourth dimension (4-D), or as our textbooks indicate, we may “represent the history of the world in four dimensions (three for space and one for time).”<sup>10</sup> In that spirit, I need to stipulate that when I say “3-D perspective,” I do not mean that to indicate a “3-D world,” as the 3-D perspective resides in the 4-D temporal world.

Considering the relationship between the *known* dimensions has some very profound implications for the position that I am advocating. For instance, suppose (theoretically) that there existed living beings in a 2-D world. Essentially the 2-D being could only ever see a singular plane, or for us, the 2-D world viewed from the side. However, even ‘sight from the side’ is adding 3-D features to the 2-D being’s experience. Let us simply say that the 2-D being would experience a 1-D *quale*, in whatever way that may present to her. For the sake of this paper, however, let us say that these 1-D qualia are best represented as experiencing a *singular plane*, or

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<sup>8</sup> This type of analogy was briefly mentioned by C.S. Lewis in his Trinity analogy located in *Mere Christianity* (pp. 161-162). However, the concept probably originated from Ewin Abbott’s book, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (London: Seeley & Co., 1884). I am including Abbott in the bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> From here on out, instead of 1-Dimensional, 2-Dimensional, and so on, I will use 1-D, 2-D, 3-D, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Robert C. Koons, and Timothy H. Pickavance, *Metaphysics: The Fundamentals* (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 189. Note: this is from section 8.3.2 on the Special Theory of Relativity.

line. Therefore, a 2-D being would only ever comprehend a 1-D existence. The 2-D being would be completely blind to the rest of the 2-D world, much less comprehending all the lines extending in all directions forming a 3-D world. Similarly, I believe that we here cannot currently comprehend the 4-D as seen by the Eternal state.

However, we that reside in the 3-D *perspective* would be able to *see* the 2-D being with clarity. We could behold the landscapes imprinted therein. If we were to *speak* to a 2-D being from the 3-D, we would be able to describe the unseen environment or conditions, and we would have a positional perspective that would be powerfully transcendent. Much of what we would tell her about the landscape environment, would not translate well (you are standing next to a cliff!) and we would need to use terminology that contained a rough equivalence to correlating concepts of life and danger in the 2-D world. I suppose that we may even have to enter ‘in’ to experience that environment to know how to relate to our 2-D brethren. However, as communicators from the 3-D perspective to the 2-D, we would not only seem otherworldly, but due to speaking into a sub-dimension to ours, we would (I believe) seem transcendent and ghost-like. As an interesting tangent to the view that I am proposing, it may then be plausible to consider the concept of being a “spirit” as God’s way of communicating a complex metaphysical truth about his relation to our own spatiotemporal manifold. It may well be that a *spirit world* or having a *spirit* is a relational property; a way of communicating the truth about how God is intimately present but not physically present. Nevertheless, on this thought, I digress.

I will close this analogy by simply saying that in the same way that the 2-D being would be incorrect in assuming that eternity is an endless series of perceived 1-D objects (or impressions), so too is the 3-D being’s assumptions about eternity incorrect. These assumptions seem to be roughly in two categories: (1) Eternity is an endless succession of 3-D moments, and (2) Eternity is somehow a timeless ‘static’ or frozen 4-D reality. Further, it is quite likely that we

cannot see nor understand how time operates upon us until we step out of it, much as the 2-D being does not perceive the rich landscape of her 2-D environment until she has stepped into 3-D. It seems that a step into eternity from our sequential reality (in my thinking) must at the *very least* represent that similar type of two-step reality shift as is found in the 2-D to 3-D. That is to say,

- (1) 2-D beings are limited by a 1-D quale while being connected to a 3-D reality.
- (2) 4-D beings are limited by 3-D qualia while being connected to the  $\infty$ -D<sup>11</sup> reality.

Therefore, I contend that the Eternal State, which is inextricably linked to God's Eternal transcendent nature, is not a static reality, but has all of the beauty and majesty of the 3-D perspective, including experiential joys, yet with an *exponential unfolding* that makes eternity greater than the glories of the physical world. So much greater is this unfolding, that our reality may be reckoned as a stick figure drawing of the mountains compared to experiencing Yosemite in person. However, we are separated from that unfathomable world by an insurmountable gulf called temporality. Therefore, objection (2) misses the mark, and objection (1) mistakes the nature of one of the 'P's in the conditional claim of P or  $\neg$  P.

Further still, even B-theorists of naturalistic backgrounds have arguments suggesting that the moments within the time-space block/manifold cannot rightly be understood to be static. Cambridge Philosopher Huw Price suggests, "The very thing that A-theorist presentism appeals to [objective present, objective direction, and objective flow] to support their view *is* what the block would look like from the inside," and he goes on to suggest, "the block has all these times in it, each of which is present from its own point of view."<sup>12</sup> While I do not share Price's view that the present tense is *subjective*, nor do I believe that our shared experience is some sort of

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<sup>11</sup> I am using  $\infty$ -D to mean 'Eternal Dimension' to encompass whatever is after 4-D (time).

<sup>12</sup> Huw Price, *The Block Universe B-Theory of Time – Eternalism*, (October 17, 2013) <https://youtu.be/QzJCESdH3-E?t=32m36s> (accessed December 1, 2017), @ 50:43.

coincidental proximity, I do find it interesting that he makes a differentiation between ‘inside’ vs ‘outside,’ and that upon entering into the block one experiences a forward-moving present.

While the present does seem more like a razorblade separating the past from the future, the question still arises as to what is happening when we experience the *present tense*. It is here that the theist has the advantage, as the objective present may (in fact) be God’s attentive gaze (both unfathomably terrible and beautiful) scanning and sorting the block from beyond it.

Yet even without theism, I am surprised at how close some naturalistic B-theorists come to transcendent theistic concepts, or posit ‘inside’ vs ‘outside’ perspectives in their defenses of an *objective present*. Consider this extract from David Lewis’ former professor, Donald Cary Williams, from his 1951 essay on the topic,

Let us hug to us as closely as we like that there is real succession, that rivers flow and winds blow, that things burn and burst, that men strive and guess and die. All this is the concrete stuff of the manifold, the reality of serial happening, one event after another, in exactly the time spread which we have been at pains to diagram. What does the theory allege except what we find, and what do we find that is not accepted and asserted by the theory? Suppose a pure intelligence, bred outside of time, instructed in the nature of the manifold and the design of the human space-time worm, with its mnemonic organization and the strands of world history which flank it, and suppose him incarnated among us: what could he have expected the temporal experience to be like except just about what he actually discovers it to be? How... could processes which endure and succeed each other along the timeline appear as anything other than enduring and successive processes?<sup>13</sup>

I feel some degree of vindication after reading Williams’ treatment of a reality outside of the time-space block (or manifold). I am particularly moved by his eloquent mention of a “pure intelligence, bred outside of time,” and his theorizing of this type of being entering into time and space, which would experience a sub-reality of an (inferred) greater reality.<sup>14</sup> The concept of which leads us naturally to the answer to objections (3) and (4).

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<sup>13</sup> D. C. Williams, "The Myth of Passage" *The Journal of Philosophy* 48, no. 15 (July 1951): 457-472.

<sup>14</sup> This bears an uncanny similarity to the Logos of John 1:1-14, and the Sofia (Wisdom) of Proverbs 8.

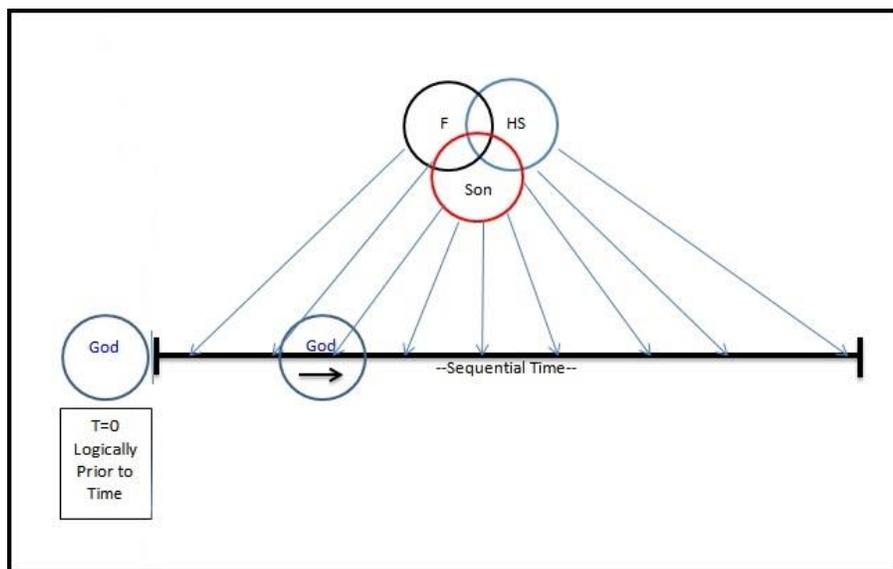
### An Eternal God's Relation to Our Sequential Reality: Addressing Objections 3 and 4

The next objections are less challenging to the Eternalist Compatibilist position, but thankfully highlight a few concepts that are very helpful in explaining this position. For the reader's convenience, I will restate objections (3) and (4):

Objection #3: Something outside of Time cannot relate to temporal objects. God could not exit or enter time while sustaining creation.

Objection #4: B-theory entails hard-deterministic foreknowledge, i.e. God's foreknowledge creates the future.

Taken together, these two objections have the potential of attributing to God the negative qualities of both Hyper-Calvinism and a cold and distant Deism. I reject both objections, but first, let us consider the following diagram:



**Figure 1:** This timeline is not meant to represent the entire block of time-space, but rather represents sequential time. The God marker on the timeline may be any Persons of the Trinity.

To answer the determinist objection (4), one may state that this Eternalist model simply does not depict God as binding fate by his own observation of events; rather, if the human being chose a different action at a specific point in sequential time, God simply views that action from the eternal perspective. Regarding this concept, Boethius writes,

Why, then, dost thou insist that the things which are surveyed by the Divine eye are involved in necessity, whereas clearly men impose no necessity on things which they see? Does the act of vision add any necessity to the things which thou seest before thy eyes? Assuredly not. And yet... just as ye see certain things in this your temporary present, so does He see all things in His eternal present.<sup>15</sup>

Zagzebski, writing for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, confirms the scope of the Boethian claim, though she seems to suggest that it was *atemporal* and epistemological in nature:

“The way Boethius describes God’s cognitive grasp of temporal reality, all temporal events are before the mind of God at once. To say “at once” or “simultaneously” is to use a temporal metaphor, but Boethius is clear that it does not make sense to think of the whole of temporal reality as being before God’s mind in a single *temporal* present. It is an *atemporal* present in which God has a single complete grasp of all events in the entire span of time.”<sup>16</sup>

If Zagzebski means to say that Boethius did not claim that God has ontological access to all moments, then I disagree with part of her assessment, as throughout Song V of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, we see Boethius using many ontological contrasts between humankind and God.

Perhaps most notably:

Since then all judgment apprehend the subjects of its thought according to its own nature, and **God has a condition of ever-present eternity**, His knowledge, which passes over every change of time, embracing infinite lengths of past and future, views in its own direct comprehension everything as though it were taking place in the present.<sup>17</sup>

In accordance with Boethius’ text, there are two concepts at work: *nature* and *knowledge*. It is reasonable to say that God, from eternity, may have *all knowledge* (omniscience) while also having direct access to *all moments* (omnitemporality), though I think that there is room, both biblically and philosophically, to think that Persons of the Trinity, for eternal reasoning, may condescend or acquiesce to temporality (see figure 1). Thus, we may have God calling out to

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<sup>15</sup> Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H.R. James (Oxford, 1897), Song V, Prose VI, (p. 141).

<sup>16</sup> Linda Zagzebski, "Foreknowledge and Free Will," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (summer 2017 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/free-will-foreknowledge/>.

<sup>17</sup> Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. W. V. Cooper (Ex-classics Project, 2009), Song V Prose VI.

Adam in the garden and so forth. The ultimate expression of this is, of course, the Incarnation, and as this version of Eternalism is flushed out, the charge of hard-determinism dissipates.

The answer to objection (3) is simply to deny that God, a transcendent creator of time, space, and matter, does not have the capacity to access the universe. It is completely reasonable to suggest that God's nature may know all of the space-time block *completely* from Eternity, and *intimately* from the Persons of the Trinity entering into the temporal manifold. Further, the concept of entering in or out of time adds a layer of relevance to much of the Biblical account. The positional (transcendent) **Superiority of the Father**, the **Incarnation**, the **Ascension of Christ**, and the **Procession of the Holy Spirit** make much more logistical sense<sup>18</sup> as they are eternal occurrences and processions, entering into *time and space* at a locale in history, and interacting with beings or objects. Thus, we have the *past* biblical account of Pentecost, and the promise of a *future* return of Christ, both of which are acknowledged by nearly all Christian traditions.

Therefore, it is likely that Christ's ascension is not a physical journey into outer space somewhere, but rather a removal to the outside of our linear existence. That is to say, Jesus, with his *resurrected body*, which according to the New Testament account is capable of traversing space and material objects, is not floating in outer space. Rather, when Jesus says in John's Gospel, "I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you," he means this in an otherworldly way. Since the procession or spiration of the Holy Spirit (according to systematic theology) is an eternal event not located within sequential reality, it is coherent to consider Christ's words as containing an "outside of time" and "inside of time" context.

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<sup>18</sup> If this type of Eternalism were true, it would have profound implications for eschatological frameworks as well, as the activities of John's Revelation (breaking of the seals, etc.) would occur in the eternal state. The War in Heaven could then be one eternal event that Jesus *sees* as the Logos, while the culmination of events may yet be futuristic for those of us within temporal sequence, or (in some cases) given past tenses. Accordingly, Eternalism favors *futurist* interpretations over *idealist* or *historicist* views, as long as a 'timeless' or tense-less language is used.

That is to say, if there is a logistical characteristic to Christ's *ascension*, namely that it is the key to the *procession* of the Holy Spirit, we may then reason that Christ's *advent*, wherein the Eternal Logos took to himself a human nature, has a similar meta-temporal characteristic. God the Father's positional superiority becomes much more comprehensible, as the Father's viewing of creation could be likened to a dad peeking into a child's intricate blanket-fort. The dad does not have his full life residing within the cloth structure with the child—yet the child's fort is lovingly set and supported within the father's house. Now that I have answered the objections of God's relation to time, I would like to discuss the implications for time if the Eternalist Compatibilist position is true.

### **Implications for Time within the Eternalist Relativity Schema**

When one surveys the growing tide of Molinist literature, one inevitably runs into Dr. Craig's work, not only his, but also Freddoso, Flint, and others who have made a very eloquent case for God's middle knowledge in creation. Notre Dame Scholar, Thomas Flint, refers to "knowledge of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom," of which he says, "Can hardly be denied that such counterfactuals comprise the part of middle knowledge most important for God's providential activity." Yet Flint describes this more accurately, "If creaturely essence P were instantiated in nondetermining complete circumstances C at time *t*, the instantiation of P would (freely) do A."<sup>19</sup> Our own Dr. Craig suggests that middle knowledge is: "God's knowledge of what every possible free creature would do under any possible set of circumstances and, hence, knowledge of those possible worlds which God can make actual."<sup>20</sup>

These are skillful and eloquent definitions. If counterfactual knowledge exists then God knows what every human being will do in any circumstance with complete certainty, and I may

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas P. Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 46- 47

<sup>20</sup> William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 131.

then bolster my claim that Eternalism entails compatibilism. Consider the following scenario:

I am in a mountain cabin. One afternoon, I lit a fire in the fireplace. I then open the door and step into the crisp mountain air. The idea of a hike occurs to me, so I take off down a trail. That trail splits, one going down by the creek, and another going up to a rocky area. I go down to the creek, where I see another fork in the trail; one trail crosses over the creek and goes along up the stream, and the other dead-ends on the cabin's side. I go across the creek and after following the trail, I run into a **deer** drinking water.<sup>21</sup>

If counterfactual knowledge is true, God knows from eternity, with complete certainty, every move that I will make in this scenario. It is therefore my contention, that *if* time were a substance that may be *rewound*,<sup>22</sup> human beings, in the exact same situation, environment, psychology, disposition, etc., will *always* freely choose to do the exact same thing.

That is to say, similar to rewinding of time, the viewing of a sequence from outside of time would reveal that I would always light that fire too large. I being Jason at (or in) that moment would always put too much wood on the fire. I would always step outside to cool off because I love the cool mountain air and love the outdoors. I would always choose to walk by the stream because I being Jason at (in) that moment would always not want to commit to an arduous hike late in the day. I would always cross over the stream because I being Jason at that moment would always wax a bit adventurous and explore the trail on the other side. Therefore, I being Jason in that sequence will always run into a deer, as I would always *freely* choose these things. Therefore, if Eternalism is true, **free will** may be true *within time* and **determinism** may be true *outside of time*, and therefore, compatibilism may be considered true. The only difference with this type of methodology is that God need not impose determinism from *outside of time*, he simply allows us to impose it upon ourselves in real-time, and we do this through our creaturely freedom.

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<sup>21</sup> This illustration is mine.

<sup>22</sup> I reasoned to this idea alone but note that Neil Levy and Michael McKenna use the phrase "roll back history" in the same context within their article, "Recent Work on Free Will and Moral Responsibility" (p. 120).

## Conclusion

There are many metaphysical mysteries within the Universe; the nature of time, God's relation to time, and the details of providence rank as some of the most exciting and provocative topics among them. Within this paper, I suggest an *Eternalist Relativity* as a form of *Compatibilism*-- a position that suggests libertarian *free will* exists within time and that *determinism*, by default, exists only from the eternal perspective. This position makes for an interesting conversation as it assumes a realist view of tensed time while also assuming that there is a greater reality beyond which is not static or timeless but which contains the glory of sequential reality plus more. Perhaps it is better to say that we enjoy a sequential reality that exists to a lesser degree than the eternal state.

To argue for this position, I have examined what we may know (a priori) about dimensions lower than our three-dimensional perspective and then applied that same concept 'upward' toward the fourth dimension. I grant that this view is likely unsatisfactory to some, while others may find it provocative and worthy of rejection. However, the Eternalist position and methodology are philosophically and theologically rich. I maintain that if considered without the constraints of philosophical presuppositions or theological dogmatism, it has the potential for considerable benefits. This view: (1) preserves the notion of agent-causal powers within incompatibilism, (2) solves both sides of the providence debate, and (3) as far as I can tell, it gives an account of every controversial biblical text on the topic of sovereignty. Lastly, it is in accordance with what we observe regarding the Universe. Thus (I fear), most rejections have the danger of seeming more like adherence to an obsolete debate, much like Luther attacking the idea of a heliocentric planetary system. Yet, like Luther's better moments, I say this: Here I stand with my metaphysics; I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.

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