God and Time: Four Views, ed. **Gregory E. Ganssle;** contributors: William Lane Craig, Paul Helm, Alan Padgett, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). ISBN:0-8308-1551-1. Pp.247, $18.00 paper.

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This book packages somewhat popularly a scholarly debate previously available almost entirely in philosophy journals and hardcover monographs. Greg Ganssle's introduction covers the main issues in the fairly technical recent literature, a couple issues even in more detail than the contributors

The goal is to bring technical philosophical discussion to the average non-philosopher. Much of the book does this fairly well, though the so-called informed layperson will find some difficult parts. A few places are more technical than rigor requires. Symbolic notation or insufficiently explained technical jargon can hide reasoning rather than make it clear, and the untrained might skip these sections, thus missing profound reasoning or accepting a conclusion on authority. This undermines the book's purpose, since the fruits of philosophical research should be what we can say and why we think we can say it, not just who said what.

The contributors are Paul Helm, Alan Padgett, William Lane Craig, and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Helm defends the view that God does not experience time in any way, while Wolterstorff holds that God experiences time in an unqualified way, and Padgett and Craig try to offer intermediate views (i.e. with qualifications to the thesis that God is in time). Both Padgett and Craig want to say that God is in time in some sense with respect

to creation but not in time in some other sense not relative to creation. I will discuss their specific variations on this below.

Two imbalances in the book are so overpowering that they occupy most of what I say. The first involves what most of the contributors call the dynamic vs. static theories of time (or the A-theory and the B-theory, as philosophers more commonly call them). They say these terms are less loaded, but 'static' suggests no change, which most B-theorists (static view) will be surprised to hear about their view. The real issue is whether past, present, and future are objective. According to the dynamic view, there are objective facts about past, present, and future, facts not just derived from facts about before, after, or simultaneity. According to the dynamic view, knowing all the facts about before, after, or simultaneity would not give information about past, present, and future. One could know what happens before and after each other without knowing when now is along that line. The static view takes this to be a psychological fact about our perception of time, and facts about past, present, and future hold because of facts about before, after, and simultaneity. The dynamic view insists that a distinction in reality grounds this perception.

Helm alone of the contributors represents the static view, despite its place as the standard view among metaphysicians today, and he gives no argument for it. The other contributors give little argument for the dynamic view aside from appeals to intuition and supposedly obvious *a priori* truths that no static theorist would grant. Static theorists have two main arguments against the dynamic view that do not get their due in the book – the argument from physics and the truthmaker objection.

Within the dynamic view, presentists hold that the present is the only time that exists (in some way beyond just saying it is the only time that *now* exists). The alternatives are the growing block theory, according to which the present and the past exist, which means reality is growing, and the moving spotlight view, according to which all times exist but the present is like a spotlight moving across the whole block of times. The majority of dynamic theories reject these two alternative accounts in favor of presentism.

The growing block view is easy to distinguish from presentism and the static view. It differs on what exists. The future does not, but the past and present do. Some consider it to be an advantage of the view (for free will) that the future is not a part of what exists (since on presentism, oddly, the past seems open also if openness means not existing). However, many philosophers are uncomfortable with the resulting truth-value gaps, saying truth about the future does not require causal predetermination. Either way, the dynamic theorist intends to show what is privileged about the present. According to presentism, the present is what is special by existing. If the past exists also, the difference between the past and the present is no longer ontological. The present is just the edge of reality, no more real than the past. The growing block view gives no opportunity to rejoice that the past is not real, since it is just as real as the present. (The moving spotlight view, which holds that past, present, and future all exist, but something is special about the present, succumbs to both objections.)

Whatever the value of the reasons, presentism is the standard dynamic account of time, one that seems to be held by Padgett, Craig, and Wolterstorff (though pp.196-197 suggest Wolterstorff may hold a growing block view). The truthmaker problem is the

biggest difficulty presentists spend their time dealing with. If every truth has a truthmaker, and there are truths even about past events, then something in the present needs to ground that truth. Contemporary presentists spend much time seeking to overcome this objection, and the main solutions proposed to date are not fully satisfying even to many presentists.

The other argument static theorists give is the argument from physics. The majority consensus is that a dynamic theory is inconsistent with relativity theory. Presentism entails that things simultaneous with what I'm now doing have a privileged ontological status. The problem is that what is simultaneous with what I'm now doing is relative to one's frame of reference. The point of dynamic theories is that what is present (and past and future) is wholly objective. As a result, almost all metaphysicians and philosophers of physics hold the static theory.

Craig goes so far in the opposite direction as to suggest that relativity theory shows presentism to be true. Craig's views on this issue are not representative of the overwhelming consensus among philosophers, and no one in the book mentions this. Here the goal of bringing current academic work to the non-academic is short-circuited. A minority view is presented without suitable interaction with the majority view. Helm's responses are limited for such a central issue, and most static theorists are unmoved by the arguments given by the three dynamic theorists. A strong consensus among philosophers is severely misrepresented. Even if the consensus is wrong, this undermines the goals of the series.

My second main criticism has to do with balance of views. Wolterstorff, Craig, and Padgett all have views involving a temporal element in God, and Helm is the sole

defender of a truly timeless God, but Padgett and Craig try to describe themselves as holding intermediate views for the sake of balance. This balance is not so clear. Padgett's view is not much different from Wolterstorff's standard temporalist view but with two temporal series instead of one, and Craig's view is harder to place, so I will save that discussion for last. So the book is incomplete on the atemporal side and top-heavy on the temporalist side, though it does at first appear balanced from the contributors' own initial descriptions of their views.

What is most obviously missing is Brian Leftow's way of handling a wholly atemporal God. One key problem for those who hold God to be timeless is how God's actions can affect creation. God performs one big act that has its consequences throughout all time, but nothing in God is at any of those times. On a static view of time, this works out fine, as Helm argues, but some atemporal theorists hold a dynamic theory. All the contributors of this volume criticize the famous Stump/Kretzmann approach of having E-simultaneity and T-simultaneity (for being simultaneous in eternity and simultaneous in time), then saying that God is ET-simultaneous with things in creation. This relation is not really defined and seems to hold between God and anything in creation by default, which explains little.

Leftow tries another approach. God is just plain simultaneous with everything in creation. However, this is not so because of any relation in time. He is simultaneous with them in eternity, since they are also in eternity. So God and all temporal things are together in eternity, while temporal things are also in time. They have no temporal relations in eternity, but they have analogous relations. It is as if the whole block of time the static theorists believe in is there in eternity. In time there is only the present. The

relation between God and temporal things is then explained, and this solves other problems also. There are a number of issues still to deal with, but Leftow's view has its place in the range of views just as much as any view in this volume, and the book suffers without his responses to the objections raised against him (which take up at least as much room as the objections against Helm). In his closing comments, Craig says, "On this issue, significantly, all four contributors to this volume are one." I am not sure how significant that is, since Leftow's view was not given full place in this book.

As for the remaining actual contributors to the volume, Wolterstorff holds the standard temporal view. God is in time. God's fundamental properties include having thoughts in temporal succession. Craig and Padgett want to say something like this, but they qualify it. They both try to go for middle ground, which makes the book seem balanced, but further examination shows some real problems with placing Padgett in a middle position and some uncertainty where to place Craig.

In Padgett's responses to criticism he moves very close to Wolterstorff's view. He discusses two parallel series of time, one for creation and a separate one for God. Our time series has a metric with temporal distances, while God's does not. But God also has real relations to temporal things, so his time series gets infected with the metric once creation occurs, though beforehand it has no metric. So relative to his own being before creation, God's time is without metric, and relative to creation after creation occurs, God's actions and thoughts are subject to a kind of metric. Padgett concludes that God is timeless relative to his own being but temporal with respect to creation. This is a little odd, but he assumes duration without change is not time. In no other sense does Padgett admit atemporality for God. God existed before creation. That period is not considered

temporal, but it is considered earlier than creation. Therefore the atemporalist will consider it temporal. That leaves Wolterstorff and Padgett disagreeing mostly about the use of the word ‘time’. Wolterstorff says he takes no view on this issue and has little to say about Padgett. This is no in-between position but a more specific version of temporalism.

Craig is more complicated. He wants to be an atemporalist in some sense but also a temporalist, which might suggest putting him in the in-between category, but his view is not immediately clear. He denies the following incoherent claim: “God existed atemporally before time and then afterward entered time.” If God had been doing anything before anything else, then God must have been in time at the earlier point. So he says God is atemporal “without” creation and temporal “since” creation. I’m not sure what ‘since’ means. If it’s temporal, then the timeless state is before creation, but he officially denies that. One might look at his actual language and claim that he contradicts himself, but Craig insists there is another way to read this.

The most obvious way to make sense of it is in a way analogous to Leftow’s view. Tensed truths, which God cannot know without having temporal relations, are a problem for the atemporalist dynamic theorist. Leftow’s solution is to have everything in eternity, so God and all other things are genuinely related without infecting God with temporality. Craig’s solution might be the reverse. Instead of bringing temporal things into eternity while also in time, Craig brings God into time while also having him in eternity. This is like Padgett’s two series of time, except one is eternity with no duration, and that eternal point is not temporally related to any of the points in the time series. Leftow has temporal things in both and purely atemporal things just in eternity, while

Craig has God in both and purely temporal things just in time. God at this eternal time point can think atemporal thoughts and tenseless truths (e.g. before, after, simultaneity). These would be truths acceptable to the static theorist. There would be no irreducibly tensed truths known by God in the atemporal mode. Then in time God can know tensed truths. This rescues omniscience, since God does know all truths.

If this is Craig's view, it coherently rescues his starting intuition from its seeming incoherence. Still, he is forced to say strange things. God *qua* being in time knows all the tensed truths, and God *qua* being in eternity knows merely tenseless truths (with no terms involving past, present, or future). There are things true of God in eternity that are false of him in time, and vice versa. It is misguided to ask simply if God knows what I am doing. Craig seems to accept this.

However, is this his considered view? Craig's actual words contradict this view on p.186. He describes God's knowledge "without" creation, pointing out that God in eternity does not know any tensed propositions and hence no future-tense propositions. They are not true, so he does not know them. Then he goes on to discuss God in relation to creation. The hardest claim to reconcile with my attempted reconstruction of Craig's view is his claim that "at the moment of creation myriad future-tense propositions suddenly switch truth values, and God believes only those that are true." This seems to suggest that the point eternity that I had been envisioning as a separate time series with no duration is actually a point *before* the other time series, which requires it to be just a point on the same timeline. Perhaps Craig is being careless here, but his final summation in his response to his critics is the last place I would expect that. Usually less careful statements are earlier ones that get modified later as responses to objections clarify the

view. Also, he continues to use “since creation” instead of sticking with “without creation” when the former clearly involves a temporal sequence between eternity and time. I take all this as evidence that my reconstruction may not be Craig’s view and that what he has in mind is closer to the what he admits is incoherent, that God existed timelessly before time but then entered time and became temporal. If so, does he just want to have it both ways? He explicitly denies that he can hold both of those things, which suggests not. Then what?