

ally in just one of these states, and the modality is TL, no tree involving a non-actual divine initial state represents an actually possible set of worlds: as of God's timelessness, which necessarily is causally prior to the appearance of any time, these other trees are already ruled out. But all represent possibly possible worlds. An interesting question is how to represent in these terms the possibility that God not create, to which (as we've seen) Thomas is committed. The answer, I think, is that there must be some way to represent the initial state of things which is God alone, causally prior to creating: perhaps by a \emptyset between God and the first appearance of creatures. If there must, we can have a possible-possibility "tree" consisting of just God and the \emptyset .

32. For each possible divine initial state.
33. This will do if all trees begin from possible divine initial states. If there are trees representing only possible possibilities, it defines necessary necessity, and the *definiens* must instead be that at all points on all trees representing possibilities, *P*.
34. *ST* Ia 2, 1.
35. *Op. cit.*, 125–6.
36. A text Stump does not cite.
37. Aquinas, *In I de Interpretatione*, in *S. Thomae Aquinatis In Aristotelis Libros Peri Hermeneias et Posteriorum Analyticorum Expositio*, ed. R. Spiazzi (Marietti, 1964), l. 14, #197, 73–74.
38. Stump (2003), 125.
39. See Brian Leftow (2005).
40. *Op. cit.*, 113.
41. Stump (2003), 111–5.
42. *SCG* I, 74 *et* 80.
43. *SCG* I, 75–6.
44. *SCG* I, 75.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Jaegwon Kim (1976). It is not clear that Kim means his account to work cross-world, but it's hard to see why it would work only intra-world.
47. Brian Leftow (2001).

3 The Real Presence of an Eternal God

Thomas D. Senor

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 20th century, analytic philosophy of religion was born. In the 1960s and into the 1970s, philosophers such as Nelson Pike, Anthony Kenny, Basil Mitchell, Antony Flew, A. N. Prior, Kai Nielsen, William Alston, and Alvin Plantinga wrote on topics related to the serious, philosophical study of religious claims. Among the specific theological issues discussed was God's relationship to time. Should God be considered to be "outside of time" (whatever, precisely, that might mean)? This had been the view of nearly all influential Christian thinkers from the Patristics through the Reformers, and continues to be the dominant view in more traditional theological circles. Or should time be understood as a bedrock feature of reality which even a being than which none greater is possible must simply take as a given? It is fair to say that analytic philosophers of religion were in agreement: timelessness might be fine for Platonic forms but not for a being with genuine causal powers, much less for a being who interacts with the temporal world and reveals himself to human beings.

It was in this context that Eleonore Stump's and Norman Kretzmann's paper "Eternity" was published in the *Journal of Philosophy* in 1981. While it would be too much to claim that the paper reversed the consensus, it is no exaggeration to say that the burden of proof had been altered: whereas before "Eternity" the reasonable position in analytic philosophy of religion was that the doctrine of divine timelessness was likely incoherent, after Stump's and Kretzmann's paper appeared the major objections to the very possibility of an atemporal being had largely been answered. Naturally, their paper didn't convince everyone, but it made the philosophical theological community reconsider a doctrine that had long been thought hopeless. In the last twenty-five or so years, divine timelessness has had other able defenders: Brian Leftow, William Alston, Paul Helm, and Katherin Rogers among others. Yet while each differs with Stump and Kretzmann on certain points, all are doubtlessly in great debt to the pioneering work of the authors of "Eternity."

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the view of divine eternity developed by Stump and Kretzmann, and to consider a serious objection to it that has been presented in numerous places by William Hasker. As we will see, Hasker's challenge is serious but, in the end, can be answered by Stump and Kretzmann. Or so I will argue.

BOETHIAN ETERNITY

The Stump and Kretzmann (hereafter "S-K") account of eternity takes its primary inspiration from the work of Boethius, who defines eternity as "the complete possession all at once of illimitable life."¹ As S-K unpack this definition, they find four key features. An entity is eternal only if that being has life, is illimitable, has duration, and is atemporal.

Let's briefly explore these aspects of the Boethian account of eternity beginning with the last and then jumping back to the first.

To be *atemporal* is to be without temporal extension and duration; it is to be in a mode of existence that is neither locatable in time nor stretched out over a span of time. There can be no temporal succession in the life of an atemporal being; there is nothing before or after anything else. A timeless being exists in a tenseless present.

The having of *life* in this context is obviously not a condition that requires the subject to be biological and hence material; having a cognitive life and being capable of action is sufficient for being alive in the relevant sense. Because of the fourth condition, this life must not contain any temporal sequence: the entity cannot do anything before it does something else or perceive an effect after it perceives that event's cause. Yet because having life is a condition of the S-K account of eternity, abstracta are not eternal even if they are timeless.

To say that an eternal life is *illimitable* is to say that it is beginningless and endless; it is impossible that there be any limit on its life. But because of the fourth condition of eternity, the beginningless/endless life of the eternal being cannot be life that is spread out infinitely over all points on a timeline that is infinite in both directions. S-K distinguish two ways that a timeless life might be illimitable: either by failing to have extension (there can be no limitations on that which isn't had at all) or by having extension and unlimited, infinite duration.

Yet what kind of duration is an atemporal being capable of? This brings us to the final point in Boethius's definition that S-K illuminate. They believe that "any mode of existence that could be called a life must involve duration, and so there may seem to be no point in explicitly listing duration as an ingredient of Boethius's concept of eternality."² Whereas the temporal present is a "durationless instant, a present that cannot be extended conceptually without falling apart entirely into past and future interval," the eternal present is "an infinitely extended, pastless, futureless duration."³

This idea that eternity requires an atemporal extension and duration has been controversial. While Brian Leftow has substantially agreed with it, Paul Fitzgerald and Katherin Rogers have argued that atemporal eternity should be seen as unextended and durationless.⁴ Although these matters are important, I don't propose to get into them here. What we will do instead is briefly examine a nest of objections that, collectively, had been thought to be fatal to the doctrine of divine timelessness.

PROBLEMS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF TIMELESSNESS

As mentioned at the outset, the doctrine of timelessness has been objected to on a variety of grounds. For example, the events in an atemporal God's life cannot precede anything and yet it has often been thought to be a conceptual truth that causes precede their effects. If that is right, then God cannot be a cause and so cannot be a creator. Even if this claim about causation is rejected, there remains the difficulty that temporal events occur at times and so are presumably *brought about* at those times. For example, it looks as though the theist will claim that when the earth was formed roughly four billion years ago, it was God who did the forming, and hence that God brought the earth into existence four billion years ago. But if God acts at times, then there is a temporal location to God's action and God isn't timeless.

Furthermore, even if these difficulties have solutions, there are problems about how an atemporal being would ever interact with or respond to temporal beings. For example, how can an atemporal God's static, eternal action be a response to the prayer I prayed last night? Suppose, for example, I pray for a friend who will be having surgery tomorrow. If God's perception of the temporal world is timeless, then God's awareness of my prayer is, from the divine perspective, simultaneous with the birth of my friend, my prayer for my friend, my friend's surgery, and the two-year anniversary of my friend's surgery. How is it possible for God to respond to my prayer if all of this is happening *at once*? More problematic still is the matter of how a timeless being could be a person at all. For many features of personhood involve mental processes—willing, intentions, perceptions, deliberations, etc. are arguably necessarily temporal.⁵

Although all of the aforementioned difficulties are to a degree serious, none is as puzzling or potentially crushing for the doctrine of divine atemporality as what it seems to imply about time. The friend of divine timelessness will either have to say that time is real or illusory. The latter would entail that there is no genuine temporal succession or relations; despite appearances, nothing temporally precedes or follows anything else. Indeed, nothing happens *simultaneously* with anything else either since simultaneity is a temporal relationship. The bald implausibility of these claims has convinced most divine atemporalists to argue that time is real and not

illusory, but is simply not something that constrains God's existence. God has complete access to events that happen in time, but his knowledge of such events has itself no temporal succession. That is, although God knows what temporal events happen and knows all there is to know about them including the temporal relations between such events, his mode of knowing doesn't include any temporal succession; what God knows, God knows tenselessly. A natural, if not unavoidable, way of describing (at least initially) God's mode of knowing is to say that for God, there is no past or future; there is only an eternal present, a timeless now. It would seem that the best temporal beings can do to get a cognitive grasp on an atemporal being's mode of knowing is to compare it to our grasp of the present. In something like the same way that the book sitting on the table in front of me is present to my consciousness, so too are all temporal events timelessly before the mind of God. Put this way, it seems that all temporal events are perceived as simultaneous in the mind of God. But surely God perceives things as they are; his apprehension of facts is perfect. Yet this apparently implies that all events are really (somehow) simultaneous. The problem with this is made clear in Anthony Kenny's justly famous statement of an important objection to the timelessness doctrine:

The whole concept of a timeless eternity, the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically incoherent. For simultaneity as ordinarily understood is a transitive relation. If A happens at the same time as B and B happens at the same time as C, then A happens at the same time as C. If the BBC programme and the ITV program both start when Big Ben strikes ten, then they both start at the same time. But on [the atemporalist] view, my typing of this paper is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Therefore, while I type these very words, Nero fiddles heartlessly on.⁶

Clearly, something has gone wrong. For if all temporal events are somehow simultaneous, then there is no temporal succession among temporal events. And this implies that temporal events are not temporal after all. For while there is no difficulty in the idea of a set of temporal events amongst which there is no temporal succession (because they all happen at once), it would seem that the claim that the entire set of temporal events is this way is equivalent to the thesis that there are no temporal events and hence no time (since nothing ever comes before or after anything else). So it looks as though the atemporalist is committed to denying the reality of time after all.

The problem, then, is a big one. For it is one thing if the doctrine of timelessness requires the theist to say something deeply mysterious (like, for example, that an atemporal being is causally responsible for the temporal world); that is to be expected when trying to describe the metaphysical nature of the Being than which none greater can be conceived. But if there

is a quick and compelling argument from the atemporality of God to the unreality of time, then quite apart from whatever element of mystery is ascribed to the internal life of God, the theist is now saddled with as wildly an implausible thesis as one can imagine: that there is no temporal succession in the events of our lives. The big difficulty isn't what divine timelessness implies about God, but what it implies about us.

ET-SIMULTANEITY

Before "Eternity" no one had seriously addressed the simultaneity objection and what it entails about the nature of time. In their groundbreaking paper, S-K present a definition of what they dub "ET-simultaneity" that gives them the means for a serious reply to Kenny's objection.

Taking their cue from aspects of the special theory of relativity, S-K note that even temporal simultaneity is not as straightforward as one would naively suppose. In fact, no two events are ever simultaneous *simpliciter*. All simultaneity claims must be understood as implicitly relative to reference frames. Two lightning strikes on a train moving at 6/10ths the speed of light that are simultaneous from the reference frame of one standing by the track watching the train pass will not be simultaneous relative to the reference frame of one who is traveling on the train. In light of this, S-K offer the following definition of relative simultaneity.

(RT) RT-simultaneity = existence or occurrence at the same time within the reference frame of a given of a given observer.⁷

What is needed to respond to the simultaneity objection is an account of a type of simultaneity in which one of the relata is a temporal event and the other relatum is an atemporal event. Furthermore, to be of any use for resolving the problem, the relation so defined must not be transitive. That is, it must not imply that if temporal event A is simultaneous with atemporal event B and B is simultaneous with temporal event C, then A is simultaneous with C. To this end, S-K present their definition of ET-simultaneity (ET):

For every x and for every y , x and y are ET-simultaneous iff

- (i) either x is eternal and y is temporal or vice versa;
- (ii) for some observer, A, in the unique eternal reference frame, x and y are both present—i.e., either x is eternally present and y is observed as temporally present, or vice versa; and
- (iii) for some observer, B, in one of the infinitely many temporal reference frames, x and y are both present—i.e., either x is observed as eternally present and y is temporally present, or vice versa.⁸

What makes eternal event, E, and temporal event, T, ET-simultaneous is that there is an eternal perspective in which E occurs and from which T can be observed as present, and there is a temporal perspective in which T is occurring and E is observed as eternally present. That their definition preserves at least something of the common concept of simultaneity can be seen in the fact that E and T are “neither earlier nor later than, neither past nor future with respect to [each other].”⁹

So, as S-K have it, eternity is an atemporal mode of existence had by God. Every event that happens in eternity is eternity-simultaneous with every other event. That is, eternity is the unique reference frame in which there is no succession of events. In contrast to this, there are infinitely many temporal reference frames. What each temporal reference frame has in common is that every temporal event in every frame is ET-simultaneous with every atemporal event. Yet because ET-simultaneity as defined can hold only between a temporal event or entity and an atemporal event or entity, the fact that all temporal events are ET-simultaneous with every atemporal event doesn't entail that all temporal events are ET-simultaneous with each other. In fact, the definition of ET-simultaneity simply won't allow *any* two temporal events to be ET-simultaneous since that relation can hold only when one of the relata is temporal and one atemporal. So the apparent problem that Kenny so clearly articulated has been undercut: even if there is an atemporal being for whom all events in time are eternity-simultaneous in eternity, it doesn't follow that all temporal events are temporally simultaneous.

A PAIR OF RELATED PROBLEMS: COEXISTENCE AND PRESENCE

Let's pull back and look at the bigger picture. In fleshing out their account of eternity, S-K make it clear that they see an entity's relationship to time as a fundamental characteristic of that being's existence. Indeed, early on they write: “Eternality—the condition of having eternity as one's mode of existence . . .”¹⁰ and they use that locution (“mode of existence”) repeatedly throughout not only their original essay but in subsequent papers that clarify the concept, respond to objections, and (to an extent) modify their original position. Similarly, temporality is treated as a mode of existence. But exactly what qualifies something as a distinct mode of existence (as opposed to merely qualifying a given mode of existence) is unclear.

One thing S-K do say is that the two modes of existence that interest them are *irreducible*: eternal existence can't be reduced to temporal existence nor can temporal existence be reduced to eternal existence. So while S-K are never fully explicit about what precisely they mean by the phrase “mode of existence,” two things are reasonably clear. First, a mode of existence is a fundamental way of being at least in the sense that two entities with different modes of existence differ greatly in fundamental ways. Second,

and because of the first point, there is at least a *prima facie* problem in how entities that differ in their modes of existence are nevertheless able to be present to each other. Although in their initial article, S-K claim that “what is temporal and what is eternal can co-exist,”¹¹ they say virtually nothing there about what such coexistence comes to. Clearly, they intend for eternal beings and temporal beings (e.g., God and humans) to not only be able to coexist but to be present to each other (this becomes particularly apparent in a later paper¹²). And it is important for traditional Christian theology that temporal entities and events be present to atemporal entities and events (and vice versa). In order for God to have the perfect knowledge typically ascribed to him, God's knowing must be immediate; and for God to be the source of comfort and aid to the soul that Christian tradition emphasizes God to be, God must not only have the ability to produce effects in time but to be present to the afflicted.

In this section we will look at what coexistence and presence can come to on the view that God's mode of existence is eternity while ours is temporality.

Coexistence

S-K argue that ET-simultaneity can be used to show how an entity existing in the eternal mode of existence and an entity in the temporal mode of existence can “coexist.” What they don't say, however, is what coexistence comes to in this context. And it is far from clear what it might be since we don't typically talk of entity's not being able to coexist with another entity—at least not in philosophical contexts. While I might say of someone with whom I have personality conflict that I “just can't coexist with him,” I do not mean to imply that one or the other of us will have to stop existing.

What would it be to say of entities A and B that they couldn't coexist? Here's one possibility: we think about A and we think about B each under a description that cannot be conjoined without contradiction. So if A is “the largest of many objects in the room at *t*” and B is “the sole object in the room at *t*,” we can see that A and B can't coexist since, with respect to a single room, it can't contain (at the same time) many objects, one of which is the largest, and a single object. Since on this way of construing coexistence, failure to coexist entails logically inconsistent descriptions of the objects, coexistence between two objects must be simply that the description of each in isolation is logically consistent and that one can conjoin descriptions without producing a contradictory description.

Even if the preceding sense of coexistence is clear enough, it is easy to see that S-K want something more. Surely, when they say that an eternal God can coexist with temporal creatures they intend to say something more than that the description of God as eternal does not rule out the possibility of the existence of beings that can be truly described as temporal. Again, the sort of coexistence they clearly have in mind is one that either entails

some variety of significant *presence* or at least is strongly suggestive of it. So what are other, more helpful options for understanding what is meant by coexistence?

There are myriad ways of understanding what coexistence can come to other than what was sketched earlier. The problem, though, is that it isn't clear that any of them will do S-K any good. For instance, when we talk about a pair of temporal entities coexisting, we might mean a number of things: they exist spatially contiguously, they exist in (relatively) close spatial proximity, or they exist during overlapping temporal intervals. None of these ways of coexisting can be true of an immaterial, eternal being and a material, temporal entity.

What we need is a sense of coexistence that doesn't imply temporal or spatial relations. One way to abstract from space and time that might be helpful is to focus on modality. Perhaps we should think of coexistence as the inhabiting of the same possible world. So entity A and entity B coexist iff each actually exists. A and B *can* coexist iff there is a possible world in which A and B each exist. Finally, A and B *cannot* coexist iff there is no world in which A and B exist.¹³ While this modal account has some similarities with the 'consistent descriptions' account given previously, it is somewhat different because the present definitions concern the coexistence of objects and not simply the compatibility of descriptions of the objects. Put slightly differently, the present account allows that two objects coexist as long as their essential properties are both realizable in the same world; the former account implies nothing about essential properties of objects.

While this account might be more metaphysically substantive than the aforementioned descriptions account, it doesn't come close to providing what S-K need. For on this understanding of coexistence, two entities may coexist even though it is not possible for them to have causal contact with or knowledge of each other. For example, suppose a given world contains a pair of universes that are not spatially/temporally connected to the other. Entities in each world coexist and yet they can have no causal influence on or knowledge of the other. The sense in which they coexist, then, clearly does not entail any nontrivial kind of presence.

I don't mean to make too much of the S-K claim of coexistence. For whatever precisely they had in mind in their use of that term, what matters much more to them is presence. Let's give a bit of thought to what the relevant sense of presence is for this discussion

Presence

However "coexistence" is best defined in this context, it is clearly not sufficient, on the theist's perspective, for God and humanity to merely coexist. A deistic divinity would coexist with its creation and yet would be wholly absent from it. By contrast, the theist insists that God's is present in creation. But what does such presence amount to?

Just as with our discussion of coexistence, we can see pretty quickly what presence comes to if it is spatial presence that is at issue. To be present in this sense is to be spatially near or contiguous. But as with coexistence, this kind of quick and easy definition isn't available when one of the relata is aspatial. Rather than fumble around trying to construct a set of enlightening necessary and sufficient conditions for aspatial presence, I think it is important to note a distinction between metaphysical and epistemic presence. We can say that X is *epistemically present* to Y just in case Y has direct awareness of X (or would have if X so directed her attention). Epistemic presence requires that there be no object that epistemically mediates between X and Y. In a parallel fashion, we might think of metaphysical presence as requiring that there be no causal intermediary between X and Y. There can be direct causal relations between X and Y. Now just what causal immediacy comes to here is not particularly clear. However, for our purposes we needn't worry too much about the specifics. I certainly don't want to limit causal directness to what action theorists call "basic actions." My moving my hand is a causally immediate act but so is my picking up the book. One reason that we needn't sweat the details here is that since we are primarily interested in applying these concepts of presence to God and, typically, God's actions do not have causal intermediaries, God will turn out to be metaphysically present.

Yet this metaphysical understanding of presence might very well not be strong enough, for metaphysical presence might not be enough to guarantee epistemic presence. And it is here that S-K have been subject to criticism in the literature. William Hasker has claimed that an implication of S-K's conception of eternity, and their definition of ET-simultaneity, is that there is an important gulf between God and humanity. In particular, Hasker has argued that to be directly aware of temporal facts requires the cognizer to be temporal; hence if God is eternal, God's knowledge of temporal events is indirect or mediated. In what follows, I will look at Hasker's objection, S-K's reply, and then finally at Hasker's counterreply. In the end, I will argue that Hasker's objection can be defeated.

HASKER'S OBJECTION, PART I

Hasker reports that after reading through the S-K account of ET-simultaneity, two questions come immediately to mind: What are we to make of the clause "x and y are both present" when one of the relata is temporal and other is eternal? And how can an eternal x be present in time?

Hasker thinks that S-K have a kind of answer to these questions: in their original formulation of ET-simultaneity, they require that if an eternal x and a temporal y are to present to one another, then from the eternal perspective, x is present and y is "observed as temporally present." Similarly, from the temporal reference frame that includes y, y is temporally present and x is "observed as eternally present." What the locution "is observed

as eternally/temporally present” must mean here, Hasker avers, is not “is observed as, and is in fact” but rather is observed as, but is not in literal fact.”¹⁴ That is, Hasker takes ET to imply that from the temporal view, eternal events *appear* as present in time even though they really aren’t present in time; and from the eternal view, temporal events *appear* as present in eternity even though they *really* aren’t present there.

Hasker thinks that the fact that eternal events are not themselves temporally present (but are only apparently so) need not be particularly problematic for the atemporalist. For she can maintain that the Christian tradition has always invoked the transcendental nature of God and the fact that we know him imperfectly (because we know him as he appears temporally rather than as he is in eternity). However, what *is* a difficulty is the implication for God’s knowledge of temporal events and of God’s lack of presence. If God’s knowledge is of the events not as they *are* but only as they *appear* to be in eternity, then haven’t we compromised God’s knowledge? In short, Hasker asks, “How is it possible that God, existing in eternity as a timeless being, has a full and accurate knowledge of temporal realities?”¹⁵

According to Hasker, the timelessness advocate has an answer to this question. The short of it is that she can say that God’s knowledge of temporal events is indirect. Hasker writes:

How then can a timeless God know temporal realities? The answer is, he knows them by knowing, in timeless representation, the content of each moment of temporal existence, as well as the order of the moments—an order that he knows to represent temporal sequence, though it cannot be such for him.¹⁶

Hasker is here claiming that the theory of perception known as representative realism is true for divine knowledge. God’s knowledge of temporal events is indirect; what God has immediate contact with, what is literally present to God, are not the temporal events themselves but rather atemporal representations of temporal events. Yet, unlike the representationalism of Isaac Newton and John Locke, according to which only some of the qualities of the representation resemble properties in the mind-independent, indirectly perceived object, the representations in the divine mind perfectly convey all and only those qualities had by the temporal objects. Naturally, the divine ideas are not themselves temporal but there is no reason that atemporal representations can’t represent all of the temporal content atemporally.

While Hasker believes that the defender of the traditional doctrine of eternity is able to explain how such a being could have complete knowledge of temporal reality, he nevertheless thinks that the only way an atemporal being could have such knowledge is via representationalism. What Hasker thinks is impossible is for an eternal being to have direct or intuitive knowledge of temporal events. His most straightforward expression of the argument comes in his paper “Yes, God Have Beliefs!”:

Just how is it . . . that temporal events are directly present to God? Temporal events exist in time as the medium of temporal succession, so it would seem that a being which experiences them directly must itself exist in time and experience temporal succession—but of course, this is just what a timeless being cannot do . . .

The same argument can be put in a slightly different way. Let us assume that some temporal reality is literally immediately present to a timeless God. But of course temporal realities are different from moment to moment, whereas a timeless God *cannot* experience things differently at different moments; in the life of such a being there *are no* different moments. So we may ask, *which* momentary aspect or “temporal cross-section” of the temporal entity is present to God? The answer, of course, is that *all* of the temporal aspects of the entity are present—literally present—to God, not successively but *simultaneously*. But for an entity to have a number of apparently temporally successive aspects present simultaneously is precisely what it is for that entity to be timeless rather than temporal. So if an apparently temporal entity is literally immediately present to a timeless God, that entity really is timeless rather than temporal.¹⁷

Later, we’ll have a look at Hasker’s argument in more detail (in fact, the argument we will examine was published some fourteen years after these quotations were written). For now it is enough to emphasize that Hasker’s view is that, in the end, S-K have an answer to the questions that he said leapt out at one upon reading their original account of ET-simultaneity. Yet that answer isn’t all one might have hoped for because it requires understanding God’s knowledge of the temporal world as mediated by atemporal representations. So while Hasker grants that the answer he proposes for S-K is coherent, he expresses “resistance” to the account because it seems to entail God’s inability to genuinely “see” (where, I guess, that means “directly see”) temporal events.

STUMP’S AND KRETZMANN’S REPLY

In “Eternity, Awareness, and Action,” S-K respond directly to Hasker’s claim that their earlier account of ET-simultaneity requires that God’s knowledge of temporal events is indirect. In short, they reject as a stone the offer Hasker intends as bread. S-K put Hasker’s objection like this:

The definition of E-T simultaneity suggests that an eternal God could “observe” human beings as present to him but couldn’t actually share their present. In general, Hasker thinks,

(H) To be directly aware of temporal beings requires being temporal oneself.¹⁸

S-K believe that the only support for (H) is another, more general principle

(GP): x can be directly aware of or epistemically present to y only if x and y share the same mode of existence.¹⁹

Yet S-K point out that (GP) entails that even if God were temporal but was, as virtually all theists claim, aspatial, then God would not be able to be directly aware of events in space/time. For aspatial beings (if some there be) have a different mode of existence than their spatial counterparts. So if God is aspatial and we are spatial, then (GP) implies that God cannot be present to us (nor us to him) and that God cannot be directly aware of events in space/time. Yet theists have traditionally thought that God is both aspatial and yet has direct knowledge of spatial events; hence the differing modes of existence provide no good reason to reject the possibility of an eternal God's having direct knowledge of temporal events—or if it does, then theists' belief about an aspatial God's having knowledge of spatial events is in the same boat.

S-K recognize that their formulation of ET-simultaneity might have been misleading in "suggesting a gap of presentness that is bridged by no more than 'observation.'" ²⁰ In light of this, they propose an amended definition of eternal-temporal simultaneity that they take to be less misleading. Here, then, is the revised definition:

(ET') For every x and every y , x and y are ET-simultaneous if and only if

- (i) either x is eternal and y is temporal, or vice versa (for convenience let x be eternal and y temporal); and
- (ii) with respect to some A in the unique eternal reference frame, x and y are both present—i.e., (a) x is in the eternal present with respect to A , (b) y is in the temporal present, and (c) both x and y are situated with respect to A in such a way that A can enter into direct and immediate causal relations with each of them and (if capable of awareness) can be directly aware of them; and
- (iii) with respect to some B in one of the infinitely many temporal reference frames, x and y are both present—i.e., (a) x is in the eternal present, (b) y is at the same time as B , and (c) both x and y are situated with respect to B in such a way that B can enter into direct and immediate causal relations with each of them (and if capable of awareness) can be directly aware of each of them.²¹

There are a couple points I'd like to make about ET' before we look more closely at Hasker's argument (as presented so far) and what S-K can say in response. Note that to this point, the only substantive reply to Hasker's charge is S-K's assertion that it is grounded in a broader metaphysical principle (GP) and that if that principle is true, then the very same issue

regarding difficulties of presence would apply regarding divine aspatiality. Their alteration of ET into ET' is intended to be more a stylistic than substantive change since it is motivated not by the belief that ET got something wrong but only that it was misleading.

As Hasker reports regarding ET, there are questions that ET' calls to mind immediately. First, can the problem that Hasker thinks he has found with ET be dealt with simply by *defining in* actual presence? Hasker thinks he has an argument (more on that following) to show that temporal events cannot be literally present to an eternal being and that events in eternity cannot be literally present to a temporal being. S-K claim that they see how their earlier definition might have made it seem that this was a problem, so they revise their definition by building into it that such literal presence is possible after all. But, obviously, if Hasker was onto something in his reaction to ET, then revising the definition as they do will not be a satisfactory way of dealing with the issue. The appearance of impropriety here is, however, itself misleading. S-K understand that Hasker's problem won't go away by adding real presence to their definition. As I noted earlier, the *substantive* response they make is the point about parallels between atemporality and spatiality. So their inclusion of the presence in ET' is not question-begging because it isn't intended to solve Hasker's worry.

This doesn't mean, however, that there is nothing critical to be said about ET'. One odd feature of ET' is the claim that ET simultaneity is realized only when there is an eternal entity and temporal entity each capable of entering into "direct and immediate causal relations" with both event relata. We have noted (and will later discuss further) the issues involving directness and immediacy, so let's now put them aside. I'm here interested in the requirement that both entities can enter into causal relations with both events. Now if it is the case that God is the only possible entity that can occupy the eternal mode of existence, then I suppose this condition will be satisfied trivially: as the creator and providential director of all that is other than Godself, God has causal control over all events in eternity and in time. However, let's consider temporal entity, B , and his relation to the eternal event x . Since every temporal event is ET-simultaneous with every eternal event, let's suppose that, in this case, the eternal event x is God's intention to create a universe and temporal event y is my getting a beer from my refrigerator on a given evening. Surely these two events will turn out to be ET-simultaneous since they are fairly typical events of their type, and the intention behind ET-simultaneity is that each temporal event is ET-simultaneous with all eternal events. So as I get the beer from my fridge, condition (iii) of ET' tells us the following must be true: (a) x is in the eternal present; (b) my getting the beer is at the same time as I am—i.e., I exist at the time I get the beer; and (c) both God's eternal intention to create and my getting the beer are situated with respect to me in such a way that I can enter into direct and immediate causal relations with each of them, and (since I am capable of awareness) I can be directly aware of each of them.

Clauses (a) and (b) are unproblematic. But I can satisfy (c) only if I can enter into causal relations with, and become aware of, God's eternal intention to create. Now I'm not altogether sure how to understand this, but whatever it means it surely isn't right. The claim, as best I can make it out, is that simply in virtue of (i) the temporality of both the event of my getting the beer and my own existence, and (ii) the eternality of God's intention to create the universe, I am thereby able to come into causal and epistemic contact with God's eternal intention. My reactions to this are two: first, I have no such causal or epistemic contact with God's atemporal intentions, and second, it seems absolutely unnecessary that I have such contact in order for my temporal action and God's eternal intention to be ET-simultaneous. S-K have developed their account of simultaneity on the model of temporal simultaneity. Here is the definition of relativized temporal simultaneity glossed in their original paper on this topic:

RT: RT-simultaneity = existence or occurrence at the same time within the reference frame of a given observer.²²

The requirement that there be perceivers who have the ability to causally interact with each pair of simultaneous events has no part in this definition. What is crucial to the concept of simultaneity is that there be a pair of events that are in some sense co-present in a way that is at least analogous to temporal co-presence; there is no strong connection between such a concept and the existence of entities that can interact causally with these events.

Having said all this, I don't mean to suggest that I can see how to give an account of ET-simultaneity that gets around this difficulty. Perhaps one could make some headway not by appealing to actual observers/causal agents but rather to possible observers/causal agents. For example, maybe we could replace (iii) with:

(iii)' with respect to a possible observer B in one of the many temporal reference frames, x and y are both present—i.e., (a) x is in the eternal present, (b) y is at the same time as B, (c) both x and y are situated with respect to B in such a way that B can enter into direct and immediate causal relations with each of them, and (d) B can be directly aware of each.

This gets the requirement of an actual causal agent out of the story, and in that way is an improvement over the ET' condition. Yet it still seems too strong. For it requires that it is possible for there to be a temporal being who has causal relations with any eternal event, and that it is possible that there is a temporal being who is capable of awareness of every eternal event. Yet both of these requirements seem to me to be too strong for ET-simultaneity. Might it not be possible that eternal events are simply unobservable by temporal beings even though temporal events are ET-simultaneous with eternal events?

To be clear: I'm not denying that there are philosophical or (more likely) theological reasons for wanting to insist on the possibility of literal presence of each kind of event to beings in each mode of existence. My main point here is just that such considerations seem extrinsic to the concept of ET-simultaneity. I would think that if there is an eternal being, then a good definition of ET-simultaneity should imply that every temporal event is ET-simultaneous with every eternal event even if there is no temporal entity that has (or even can have) causal relations with any (much less every) eternal event.

HASKER'S OBJECTION, PART II

In a paper that is in part a response to S-K's reply to his earlier objection, William Hasker offers a two-pronged reply to S-K.²³ First, Hasker directly addresses their claim that the problem he elucidates would be equally problematic for aspatiality, but since aspatiality isn't thought to have this difficulty, then it must not be a problem for atemporality. Second, he presents a more detailed and formal argument for the conclusion that an eternal being cannot be directly aware of temporal events. In the present section of this paper, I look at each of Hasker's responses and defend the claim that an atemporal being could have direct awareness of events and entities that are in time. Let's look at each prong in order of appearance.

S-K claim that if one is committed to the conclusion of Hasker's argument, then one should also be committed to the following (I'll leave the claim with the numeric designation it has in Hasker's paper):

(9') If God is nonspatial, God is not directly aware of spatial beings.

Hasker objects on a few grounds. First, he says, a traditional theist might happily accept (9'). Hasker believes that no less a traditional theist than Thomas Aquinas might well have held a representationalist thesis and that, Hasker thinks, would require him to accept (9'). Second, Hasker says the theist might accept that (9') but think that the way in which God is nonspatial is importantly different from the way in which he is nontemporal.

God is not spatially bounded or spatially divisible . . . nor is he essentially spatial, all of which distinguishes him sharply from ordinary spatial things. But it might be true all the same that, as suggested by the traditional doctrine of divine omniscience, God is present in space in such a way as to make direct awareness of spatial beings possible.²⁴

Finally, Hasker thinks that S-K haven't really offered a compelling reason for thinking the relevant parity between direct awareness/timelessness and direct awareness/aspatiality exists. Hasker notes that he has offered

an argument for thinking that atemporality and the direct awareness of temporal events is impossible while no parallel argument for the incompatibility of aspatiality and direct awareness of spatial events has been given.

Taken as a unit, these replies are not without force. However, it can scarcely be denied that there is a *prima facie* case for thinking that any potential difficulty for a timeless being's interacting with the temporal world will have a parallel potential difficulty in the relationship between an aspatial being and the spatial world. And while Hasker may have said enough to defeat the *prima facie* reasonability of the parity claim, that is surely a judgment call. Better, I think, to look more carefully at his more detailed argument to see if he makes his case. If the argument appears to be very strong, then perhaps we can take the *prima facie* reasonability of the parity claim to have been defeated. So it is to his explicit argument that we must now turn.

HASKER'S ARGUMENT

The argument Hasker gives is somewhat complex. After presenting it, I will go through it step by step and argue that it is unsound.

Here's the argument:

- (1) If God is directly aware of a thing, that thing is metaphysically present to God. (Premise)
- (2) If God knows temporal beings, God knows all of their temporal stages. (Premise)
- (3) If God is directly aware of temporal beings, all of their temporal stages are metaphysically present to God. (From 1–2)
- (4) If the temporal stages of a temporal being are metaphysically present to God, they are present either sequentially or simultaneously. (Premise)
- (5) If God is timeless nothing is present to God sequentially. (Premise)
- (6) If God is timeless and is directly aware of temporal beings, all their temporal stages are simultaneously metaphysically present to God. (From 3–5)
- (7) If the temporal stages of a temporal being are simultaneously metaphysically present to God, those stages exist simultaneously. (Premise)
- (8) The temporal stages of a temporal being do not exist simultaneously. (Premise)
- (9) If God is timeless, God is not directly aware of temporal beings. (From 6–8)²⁵

Let's now have a look at the argument to see what should be said about the premises. Step (1) is in no way obvious and, depending on the sense of 'direct' meant in the antecedent, isn't necessarily true. For if 'direct' here means *epistemically* direct, it is by no means obvious that epistemic directness implies metaphysical directness. It seems imaginable that there be an

epistemic agent who has a connection with an object such that the person has direct knowledge of that object's properties even though the object is not metaphysically present. Perhaps God just builds an epistemically direct mechanism between subject S and object O such that S has perfect knowledge of O at all times that both exist. We might suppose that O is at a great spatial distance from S. Suppose both O and S are in our universe and are billions of light-years from each other. There is, I take it, no good sense in which there is metaphysical directness but, as the case is described, there is epistemic directness.

Be that as it may, one might respond, (1) doesn't make a claim about every possible epistemic agent (that is, it isn't a conceptual claim about epistemic agency) but is instead a restricted claim about divine epistemic agency.²⁶ That may be so, but one wants to know why it would be true of God but not true of God *in virtue of being an epistemic agent*. Of course, one could claim that (1) is simply a material conditional and hence true so long as the consequent turns out to be true. Yet surely Hasker has a stronger relationship in mind than that between the parts of (1).

So there is good reason for thinking that (1) isn't a conceptual or even necessary truth. However, the traditional theist will surely want to say that God's relationship with creation is suitably intimate; in traditional theological terms, God is not only transcendent, but immanent as well. Such an indwelling in creation requires that temporal entities must not only be epistemically direct but metaphysically direct as well. There must be real, literal presence. So we should grant that, according to standard theism, (1) is at least contingently true.²⁷

Step (2) can sensibly be denied by the open theist—that is, by the theist who thinks that divine foreknowledge is inconsistent with free will, and who therefore doesn't think God has knowledge of what such creatures will freely choose to do in the future. Of course, for any present or past stage of a temporal being, God will have perfect knowledge; but of their future free actions, even God doesn't genuinely know what they will do.

Even though (2) will thus be denied by some relatively traditional theists, it presumably will not be denied by the atemporalist. For according to her, all of time is eternally present to God; therefore, there are no temporal acts yet to be shown on the divine stage: all temporal events are eternally before God. Therefore, anyone who cares to defend divine timelessness will grant (2).

Step (3) follows from the first two premises which I have granted, so it can't be reasonably resisted.

Problems begin to arise at step (4). The claim here is that there are two ways that the temporal stages of a temporal being can be metaphysically present to God: either they are present sequentially or simultaneously. Now it seems to me that there are two ways of understanding this premise. One might emphasize how they are present *to God* or how *they are* in their presence to God. The former emphasizes their mode of metaphysical presence to God and the latter the way the entities are themselves even as they

are metaphysically present to God. Let's take the first interpretation first. On this way of seeing the matter, there should be three options, not two: temporal things may be metaphysically present to God sequentially, simultaneously, or atemporally. To claim that temporal things could be present to God in only temporal modes would be to beg the question against the atemporalist. So inasmuch as the emphasis here is on how things are present to God, the atemporalist will insist that temporal things are present atemporally. So on this interpretation, (4) is false.

Now it might be thought that the claim that there are two ways of understanding step (4) is to obscure a claim that is really pretty clear. For since the relevant kind of presence here is metaphysical, what's important is not the way temporal entities are experienced but is instead the way they *actually are* in themselves. And, qua temporal entities, their stages must either exist sequentially or simultaneously—that exhausts the options for temporal beings. Understood as a claim about the mode of existence of the entities that are metaphysically present to God, step (4) is correct. However, while this reading saves (4), it causes problems at step (5).

Step (5) is true provided that it is understood as follows: "If God is timeless nothing in God's awareness is present sequentially." That is, God's timelessness rules out a temporal succession in God's awareness. However, if (5) is understood as ruling out the possibility that nothing can be sequential and in God's presence, then the question has been begged, since what is at issue is precisely the question of the consistency of claiming that God is atemporal yet directly aware of temporal objects. Yet it is this second, question-begging understanding of (5) that is required to generate the conclusion of (6). Furthermore, while an atemporal being's *awareness* of temporal events will be atemporal, there is no reason for S-K to concede that all temporal stages are simultaneously *metaphysically present* to God; indeed, S-K will insist that the temporal stages of temporal beings are metaphysically present to God just as they are—sequentially.

But with step (6) shown to not follow from (3)–(5) and to be in fact false, step (7) might be regarded as true but irrelevant (although its truth is by no means obvious). For the atemporalist will deny that anything is simultaneously present to an eternal God. Similarly, (8) is certainly true but again not to the point since the timelessness advocate thinks that the stages are eternally present to God, not that they are simultaneous. Finally, step (9) doesn't follow from (6)–(8) once (6) is understood as a disjunction.

So Hasker's argument against the possibility of real, metaphysical presence of temporal entities to a timeless being fails.

WHY HASKER'S ARGUMENT FAILS

Having argued that Hasker's more formal argument fails, I want now to have a look back at what seems to me to be the heart of his conviction that

an atemporal God can't be directly aware of a temporal being. The passage quoted earlier from "Yes, God has Beliefs!" seems to offer the following thought: if something is metaphysically present to God, then that thing is present before God *as it is*. Temporal things have their careers in successive stages. So if temporal things are metaphysically present to God, then they are present to God in successive stages. But if God is timeless, there are no successive stages to God's awareness. So God's awareness of temporal things is not an awareness of those things *as they are*. That is, God's awareness must be an awareness of *representations* of temporal objects and not of the objects themselves. Therefore, temporal objects are not metaphysically present to God. So there is metaphysical presence in this case only if there is direct awareness. But there can't be direct awareness because God is not aware of temporal objects *as they are*.

That there is something seductive about this argument cannot be denied. And it is a general line of reasoning that should sound familiar to someone with even a modest background in modern philosophy or epistemology. The mug I'm looking at appears to be red and, from my perceptual angle, to have an elliptically shaped mouth. However, the phenomenal redness that I see and the apparent shape of the mug's mouth are not, in fact, qualities of the mug at all. Yet (or so it's been claimed) I can't deny that the most immediate object of my perceptual awareness is phenomenally red with an elliptical mouth. Therefore, the object that I directly perceive is distinct from the physical mug; it is, rather, the representational mug that is the direct object of my awareness.

While tempting, the conclusion that the object of my direct awareness is a representation rather than the mug itself can and should be resisted. From the premise that the object genuinely appears to be different than it actually is (no matter how hard I attend to my experience, the mug really does look phenomenally red and its mouth elliptical), it simply does not follow that it is not that object that I am directly seeing. Direct perception doesn't entail accurate (much less perfect) perception; it requires only that perception not be mediated by another perceived object. So one can have metaphysical directness and epistemic directness even when one's awareness *is not of the object as it really is*.

Suppose for a moment that, contrary to an assumption of the mug case, colors of objects are not secondary properties but are instead primary (i.e., mind-independent) properties of physical objects. (This assumption is needed for the case I'm about to describe but is otherwise irrelevant to the use I want to put the case to.) Now suppose we have a person, Mike, who is completely color blind; Mike sees the world monochromatically. He is, then, not seeing objects as they are (they are colored but he sees them in monochrome). However, it is clear that the objects are metaphysically present to him if they ever are to those of us who see in color; furthermore, there is no reason to posit a representational realm of objects as intermediaries between the colored external objects and his direct awareness.

The same lesson applies to the case of a timeless God and temporal objects. From the fact that the temporal objects are metaphysically present to, and within the direct awareness of, an atemporal being, it doesn't follow that a timeless God's awareness of them must be temporal (i.e., in successive stages) as well. Granted, God's awareness of temporal objects is not an awareness of them *as they are*. And if God were not to know *how* they are, were God not to know that they are temporal and the ordering of their various stages, then God could not be omniscient. But, as Hasker himself grants when explicating the representationalist view, God's inability to experience temporal beings temporally doesn't stop him from knowing everything there is to know about them. The problem, as Hasker sees it, is the epistemic and metaphysical distance that the representationalist view puts between God and the temporal world. Yet the atemporalist need not take the representationalist approach. Temporal objects can be metaphysically present to God and the objects of God's direct awareness even though that awareness is atemporal.

One final note. It might be thought that although what was said earlier does show that an atemporal God and a temporal creation can be both metaphysically and epistemically present to one another, God's inability to be aware of *things as they are* entails that God's mode of knowledge is not all it could be. Wouldn't the greatest possible knower have an awareness that is appropriate to the mode of existence of the object known?²⁸ The answer to this query is: Yes, where it is possible. But what our discussion of Hasker's objection strongly suggests is that it is simply impossible that an atemporal being have a temporal (i.e., sequential) awareness. God is the being with the greatest array of compossible great-making properties. Being capable of an awareness of temporal beings *as they are* is not a property that could be instantiated by an atemporal God. So provided that there are good reasons for thinking that, on the whole, atemporal existence is greater than temporal existence, the fact that God can't be aware of temporal beings as they are is not an imperfection.

CONCLUSION

The work of Stump and Kretzmann on the subject of atemporal eternity is truly of first importance for the philosophical theology. Their writing clarified the doctrine as it had never been clarified before; and their responses to the standard objections are ingenious and compelling. Yet in making vivid the contours of the eternal mode of existence, one objection to the doctrine was made somewhat more forceful: the idea that an atemporal God would be a remote God. No one has given voice to this concern more forcefully than William Hasker and we've seen that his development of it is detailed and subtle. However, in the end it can be seen to rest on a principle that not only can but should be rejected: objects that are metaphysically present and of which one can have direct awareness need not appear as they really

are. Epistemic immediacy requires only that the object not be perceived in virtue of the perception of a distinct object. And we've not been given a reason to think that a divine eternal being cannot be directly and eternally aware of temporal objects.

NOTES

1. Boethius (1999), book V, prose 6.
2. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (1981), 433.
3. *Ibid.*, 435.
4. See Paul Fitzgerald (1985), Brian Leftow (1991a), Leftow (1991b), and Kath-
erine Rogers (1994).
5. While it is not in the agenda of this paper to get into these matters, part of
the genius of the original S-K article is their response to these problems of the
last couple paragraphs. For example, they reply to the objection about how
God can be the cause of temporally locatable events by making a distinction
between God's eternal, timeless act and the temporal consequences of that
act. God timelessly acts and one effect is that Earth comes into existence
approximately four billion years ago. Furthermore, S-K argue that while
some mental states are necessarily temporal, there are others for which this
isn't clear; for example, knowledge is not obviously dependent on a tempo-
ral process nor is it always done *at a time* for humans. Willings and desires
would also seem to be compatible with a tenseless existence—or at least
arguably so. Each of these claims remains controversial, but S-K certainly
deserve credit for giving voice to these plausible lines of reply to these objec-
tions and others in Stump and Kretzmann (1981).
6. Anthony Kenny (1969), 264.
7. Stump and Kretzmann (1981), 438.
8. *Ibid.*, 439.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 430.
11. *Ibid.*, 436.
12. Stump and Kretzmann (1992).
13. Strictly speaking, this condition and the one that follows probably should be
couched in terms of creaturely essences and the possibility of mutual instan-
tiation.
14. William Hasker (1989), 165.
15. *Ibid.*, 166.
16. *Ibid.*, 169.
17. Hasker (1988), 389.
18. Stump and Kretzmann (1992), 475.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, 476.
21. *Ibid.*, 477–478.
22. Stump and Kretzmann (1981), 438.
23. See Hasker (2002).
24. *Ibid.*, 189.
25. *Ibid.*, 186.
26. This point was raised by Kevin Timpe.
27. Of course, if it is a necessary truth that God is immanent in any creation he
brings about, then (1) will be necessary too.
28. This objection was raised by Kevin Timpe.