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Elucidating Divine Atemporality

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Abstract: This article aims to provide a philosophical elucidation of the concept of divine atemporality (i.e. divine timelessness and immutability), found within the theological trajectory of Classical Theism, and a philosophical model – termed Aspectival Pluralism – that demonstrates its compatibility with the further notion of Divine Preservation. To achieve this end, an original interpretation of the concept is formulated within the Aspectival Account and the thesis of Theistic Ontological Pluralism, as extended by the temporal ontology of Priority Presentism, introduced by Sam Baron, and the Exdurantist view of persistence, introduced by Theodore Sider, which will ultimately enable the notion to be elucidated in a clear and consistent manner and help to answer an important conceptual question concerning it.

Keywords: atemporal; timelessness; immutability; fundamentality; persistence

1 Introduction

According to Davies (2004, 2), Classical Theism (hereafter, CT) is the specific view of God that was endorsed in the writings of the influential medieval philosophical theologians: Moses Maimonides (1138–1204 CE), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE) and Ibn Sīnā (980–1037 CE), and has deep roots in the intellectual history of the major theistic religions such that most, if not all, religious or ecclesial bodies – such as that of the Roman Catholic Church – and various theologians, from the time of St. Augustine, have worked on the assumption that belief in God *is* simply belief in CT. At a conceptual level, CT has been taken to be an extension of Theism (i.e. belief in the existence of God, identified as the perfect and ultimate source of created reality) – with a central element of this extension being the notion of *Divine Atemporality*.[1] Divine Atemporality (hereafter, DA) centres on two attributes taken

1 With the other central elements being Divine Simplicity and Divine Impassibility.

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to be possessed by God under CT: 'timelessness' and 'immutability', both of which can be defined succinctly as follows:

(1) (Atemporality)	(i)	*Timeless*: God lacks temporal succession, location and extension
	(ii)	*Immutable*: God is intrinsically and extrinsically unchangeable.

Theism, at a general level, affirms the fact of God's *eternality* (i.e. God existing without beginning and without end). CT, however, provides a specific interpretation of this eternality as that of *timelessness.* Within this perspective, eternality, according to Boethius, 'is the simultaneous and complete possession of infinite life' (*Consolation of Philosophy* V). Hence, by God being timeless, he does not experience one moment of time after another; rather, he experiences all of his life (in some sense) *all at once* (Mullins 2016). Thus, on the basis of this, God is timeless by him existing *without* temporal *succession* (i.e. God does *not* experience a succession of events within the divine life), *location* (i.e. God's existence is *not* datable), and *extension* (i.e. God's existence is not extended over distinct moments of time) (Mullins 2021, 87). Thus, in this specific view, God's existence is incompatible with time, such that God exists at no particular time, with solely God's activity being able to bring about 'datable events' without himself being part of any temporal process (Davies 2004, 6). Thus, as Aquinas writes, 'Nothing, therefore, prevents our saying that God's actions existed from all eternity, whereas its effect was not present from eternity, but existed at that time when, from all eternity, He ordained' (SCG, II. 35). Moreover, CT conceives of God as immutable in the sense that he cannot *intrinsically* or *extrinsically change* (Peckham 2019, 48). That is, within this view, all change is 'value laden', and thus, given this, God cannot *intrinsically* change – as if this were the case, then God could increase or decrease in his intrinsic value (i.e. become better or worse). Yet, if God could increase in his intrinsic value, then he was not perfect to begin with – which goes against the traditional conception of God as a perfect being. Moreover, if he could lessen in his intrinsic value, then he would not be perfect after changing – which also goes against the traditional conception of God as a perfect being. Hence, God cannot experience any intrinsic change (Dolezal 2017). In addition to this, CT also maintains the view that a perfect being cannot *extrinsically* change, as supposing that God is timeless, then God cannot change in his extrinsic relation to others, because any change of this sort would require temporal succession – where God at t_1 is not standing in relation to a given entity x, and at t_2 he is standing in that relation to x. Thus, God, according to CT, must be immutable in the strong sense of the term, which is to say that he cannot experience intrinsic or extrinsic change.

As an atemporal being, God is timeless (i.e. lacks temporal location, extension and succession) and immutable (i.e. does not undergo intrinsic and extrinsic change), and this has been an important aspect of the traditional conception of

God. However, some important issues have been raised concerning the intelligibility of this concept of God, given certain additional commitments concerning God's preservation of created reality. More specifically, philosophers such as Craig (2001), Pike (1970), and Mullins (2016, 2021),[2] have highlighted the fact of it seemingly being impossible for God, if he has DA, to be actively sustaining the world in existence.[3] More fully, it is essential to Christian Theism, as noted by Craig (2001, 56), 'that any reality extra *Deum* is the product of God's creative activity'. That is, it is central Christian (and, at a more general level, theistic) teaching that God is responsive to his creation and is creatively active in spatiotemporal reality. More specifically, God has traditionally been taken to be an entity that coexists with his creation and *actively sustains it in existence from moment to moment* (Mullins 2016). This sustenance of creation, which we can term *Divine Preservation* (hereafter, DP), has been conceptualised in a certain way by Aquinas, who writes: '[T]he being of every creature depends on God, so that not for a moment would it subsist, but would fall into nothingness were it not kept in being by the operation of the Divine power … The preservation of things by God is not through any new action but through a continuation of that action by which he gives being, which action is indeed without motion and time' (*ST*, I. q. 1 a. 104). In following Aquinas here, we can thus state the notion of DP more succinctly as follows:

(2) (Preservation)	A continuous agency by which God sustains in existence, at every moment, the things he has created, together with the properties and powers which he has endowed them.

DP is thus to be conceived of as a *continuous* sustaining action of all of the entities (e.g. objects, properties and relations etc.) that exist within reality.[4] Yet, if *this* is indeed the correct conception of the notion of DP – even if Aquinas (and other adherents of CT) might conceive of this action as being 'without motion and time' – there does seem to be an incompatibility between the notions of DP and DA. As if God is actively preserving his creation in such a way that it is indeed a continuous action, then, first, this action will have a temporal extension – as it will be an action

2 These philosophers also raise an issue concerning God's ability to create anything out of nothing. This issue will not be taken up in this article. However, for a brief response to this issue, see: (Sijuwade 2021b).

3 Throughout this article, there will be an interchanging of the referral term for the object of God's sustaining activity (such as that of 'creation', 'created reality', 'the universe', 'all other entities' etc.) without any change in meaning.

4 I will frequently be interchanging between the terms 'preservation' ('preserving') and 'sustenance' ('sustaining'), also without any change in meaning. Furthermore, I will throughout be using the term 'entity' in reference to objects, properties or relations etc., and I will be interchanging between these terms – with the same being done for the terms 'objects' and 'individuals'.

that exists at different instances of time (e.g. God is sustaining an individual x in existence at t_1 and is also sustaining x in existence at t_2). Second, one will be able to provide a temporal location for this action, in such a manner that one can date this activity (e.g. God is sustaining in existence x *at* t_1). Hence, specifically for this second point, as Craig (2001, 57) writes, 'unless there is some strange way in which one's acts can be divorced from one's being, it, therefore, follows that God has a temporal location, that is to say, He is temporal'. Third, as God will have temporal location and extension, then he would not be immutable, as he would have undergone some form of an extrinsic change – by him coming to possess a new (extrinsic) accidental property (e.g. if, at t_1, x is an individual located at spatial region r_1 and, at t_2, x is an individual located at spatial region r_2, then, in God sustaining in existence x at t_1 and at t_2, he would have had, at t_1, the accidental property of *sustaining* x at r_1 and, at t_2, he would no longer possess that property but now would have the (extrinsic) accidental property of *sustaining in existence* x at r_2) – which thus seems to make him mutable. Hence, at a more general level, it seems to be the case that the 'preservation relation' between God and all of created reality have *temporal* (and *mutable*) *implications* – which is explained well by Pike (1970, 117) when he writes:

> In ordinary cases where the preservation relation is clearly identifiable, a temporal relation between that which is preserved and that which does the preserving appears to be an essential part of the relation. I can see no way of eliminating the temporal elements in such cases without eliminating anything that could be counted as a preservation relation. It would thus appear that the temporal elements are not unnecessary sidelights of particular cases. They seem to be at the centre of our thinking about things that sustain or preserve the existence of something else.

On the basis of these implications, detractors such as Craig and Pike seem to believe that there is a high level of incompatibility between DP and DA, such that it is *unintelligible* to speak of an atemporal being sustaining created reality – let's term this issue the 'Compatibility Issue'. Thus, Classical Theists (hereafter, CTs) appear to be caught in a bind, as one wants to hold to God being able to preserve his creation in existence; however, by seeking to uphold this, one is thus forced to deny his atemporality. So, the question that is now presented to CTs is: is there a way for an atemporal God to be able to perform the continuous action of sustaining in existence all of created reality without being rendered as temporal? In short, is there a way for one to ward off the Compatibility Issue? I believe that this question can be answered in the affirmative. However, I will not be fully adopting two of the more popular options for CTs on the table: first, that of denying God's real relation to creation and, second, that of taking God's actions to be performed in eternity and the effects of these actions being realised in time. For the first option, CTs have focused on denying God's real relation to creation – which we can take to be (at a minimum)

a relation of cause to effect. This type of relation is negated of God by Aquinas when he writes, 'Consequently, since all creatures depend on God, but He does not depend on them, there are real relations in creatures, referring them to God. The opposite relations in God to creatures, however, are merely conceptual relations' (*De Veritate* 4.5). We further see Aquinas voicing this position when he writes:

> whatever receives something anew must be changed, either essentially or accidentally. Now certain relations are predicated of God anew; for example, that He is Lord or governor of this thing which begins to exist anew. Hence, if a relation were predicated of God as really existing in Him, it would follow that something accrues to God anew, and thus that He is changed either essentially or accidentally; the contrary of this having been proved (*SCG* 2. 12. 5).

CTs deny real relations between God and other entities (though maintaining a conceptual relation between them) on the basis of the fact that, in their thought, God cannot be really related to anything *ad extra* to the divine nature – as if he were able to be, then this would result in him exemplifying an accidental property that is associated with the relation, which he cannot possess due to his simplicity.[5] Hence, though other entities can be the *relata* of real relations, and thus exemplify certain accidental properties that correspond to them, God cannot be conceived of in this manner. Therefore, given the negation that is made here, *contra* the detractors of the DA, one is not caught in a bind – as though God is performing the action of continuously sustaining his creation in existence, one is not required to conceive of this in the fashion of him being really related to it – thus God can continue to be immutable and timeless, despite the issues raised. In response to this, however, Mullins (2021, 93) sees that a critic of CT would not accept this response to the Compatibility Issue,[6] as they would clearly deem it as a 'deeply *ad hoc*' move. Furthermore, Mullins (2021, 93) sees that a critic would raise the further issue that this specific response to the issue is unintuitive, as it is quite obvious that God's act of creating and sustaining the universe entails the fact of him being really related to creation. So, at face value, if God is performing the action of continuously preserving his creation in existence, then the preservation relation is indeed a *real* relation, and he is indeed really related to it (in a manner that would provide him with a temporal location and extension).

5 Which is that of God not being composed of proper parts, which would include that of properties (i.e. metaphysical parts) as well.

6 Similar to Craig and Pike, Mullins (2021) puts forward this response in reaction to one using this approach to deal with the issues raised against an atemporal God creating *ex nihilo*. However, as similar issues can be raised against an atemporal God sustaining this response, his response also applies to the issue faced here.

For the second option, one does not deny that God bears a real relation to creation; rather, one instead focuses on locating the actions of God in an eternal, atemporal mode of existence, with the result of these actions occurring in time – in short, God's actions are atemporal, but the effects are temporal. This, as noted previously,[7] is one of the traditional ways of understanding God's creative and sustaining activity. However, this seems to be presented with the same charge of unintelligibility, as Pike (1970, 104–105) notes through the following example:

> Let us suppose that yesterday a mountain, 17,000 feet high, came into existence on the flatlands of Illinois. One of the local theists explains this occurrence by reference to divine creative action. He claims that God produces (created, brought about) the mountain. Of course, if God is timeless, He could not have produced the mountain *yesterday*. This would require that God's creative-activity and thus the individual whose activity it is have position in time. The theist's claim is that God *timelessly* brought it about that yesterday, a 17,000 feet high mountain came into existence on the flatlands of Illinois … The claim that God *timelessly* produced a temporal object (such as the mountain) is absurd.

Though this example provided by Pike is focused on a creative action, rather than that of a sustaining action, the same issue is presented to the latter type of action – as if God were to sustain an entity in existence *that has a position in time*, then God's sustaining activity would have occurred at *some specific time* – and if God sustains that entity in existence over different times, then God's action would have *persisted over those different times*. Hence, in both cases, God would have a temporal location, and in the latter case, he would also have temporal extension and would have experienced extrinsic change. Thus, it seems to be the case that as the effects will be temporal, by having temporal location, extension and experiencing change, then so must the actions – unless one is to understand the terms 'effect' and 'action' in a different way than the standard way – which, again, raises the risk of one's speech being unintelligible. Thus, given these issues raised against the two more popular options for CTs, one needs to indeed find another option that can provide a means to ward off the Compatibility Issue. I believe that this option can be found, and is a variant of the first and second options noted above, which, in its first ('non-precisified') iteration, can be stated succinctly as follows:

(3) (Atemporal Preservation)	(i) *Nature*: God exists as an atemporal being (i.e. is timeless and immutable), and thus is not in a real relation to other entities. (ii) *Action*: God performs, within time, a continuous action in which he sustains in existence, at every moment, his effects – namely, the things he has created, together with the properties and powers which he has endowed them.

7 As expressed by Aquinas above.

Thus, as expressed by (3), it is the case here that rather than God's actions being atemporal – and his effects being temporal – one can instead take God's actions to be temporal, his effects to be temporal, and *God* being atemporal. That is, one can locate, as with other entities, the actions of God in time with their effects; however, one can indeed continue to maintain God, himself, as having an eternal, atemporal mode of existence, that thus is timeless (i.e. lacking temporal location, extension and succession) and immutable (i.e. not undergoing intrinsic and extrinsic change). How one can indeed achieve this seemingly challenging task is by seeking to 're-imagine' *atemporal preservation* through an employment of the concepts and tools from contemporary metaphysics and an application of them to the task at hand. Specifically, this article will focus on warding off the Compatibility Issue, by providing a further metaphysical precisification of the central tenets of (3) by, first, utilising a specific conceptualisation of the nature of God that can be formulated by employing the notion of an 'aspect' and the thesis of 'Ontological Pluralism'. And then second, it will seek to extend this conception by situating it within the current dialectal context of dealing with the Compatibility Issue by providing a model of DA that allows one to also affirm DP. This will be done by employing a specific temporal ontology: 'Priority Presentism', introduced by Sam Baron, and a particular view of persistence: 'Exdurantism', introduced by Theodore Sider – both of which, in combination with the notion of an aspect and the thesis of Ontological Pluralism, we can term *Aspectival Pluralism*. At the completion of the formulation of this 'model',[8] Aspectival Pluralism will provide a way to allow us to ward off the Compatibility Issue, and thus provide an elucidation of the conception of God as an atemporal being. To achieve this goal, we will proceed in a step-wise manner over two phases: phase-one focusing on introducing the central metaphysical notions of an aspect and the thesis of Ontological Pluralism, and applying them within a theistic context in order to provide a particular conception of God. And phase-two focusing on extending the conception of God introduced in the first phase by, first, detailing the central tenets of Priority Presentism and Exdurantism, and then, second, by explicating these tenets within the current metaphysical framework provided, which will then provide a way to ultimately deal with the Compatibility Issue (and thus demonstrate how the variant of the first and second options noted above is indeed cogent).

Thus, the plan is as follows: in section two ('Elucidating Atemporality: Phase One'), I provide an explication of the notion of an aspect provided by Donald L. M. Baxter, and the thesis of Ontological Pluralism, introduced by Kris McDaniel and

8 Where a model, following Plantinga (2000), is a collection of propositions that shows how it *could be* that another collection of target propositions are true or actual – with the target propositions here being expressed by DA and DP.

Jason Turner, and apply it to the task at hand. Then, in section three ('Elucidating Atemporality: Phase Two'), I provide an explication of the notions of Priority Presentism, provided by Sam Baron, and Exdurantism, introduced by Theodore Sider, re-situating these notions within the metaphysical framework detailed in the previous section, and then applying it to the task at hand, which will provide a means to ward off the Compatibility Issue. After this section, there will be a final section ('Conclusion') summarising the above results and concluding the article.

2 Elucidating Atemporality: Phase-One

The first phase of our constructive task focuses on the tenet of *Nature* within (3), which we can restate as follows:

(4) (Nature)	God exists as an atemporal being (i.e. is timeless and immutable), and thus is not in a real relation to other entities.

For *Nature*, God is an atemporal being in the sense of him being timeless (i.e. lacking temporal location, extension and succession) and immutable (i.e. does not undergo intrinsic and extrinsic change) – with him not being in a real relation with any other entity. To further precisify the central elements of this tenet, we will now turn our attention to detailing the important notion of an 'aspect' and the metaphysical position of 'Ontological Pluralism, which will thus provide a basis for further understanding God's nature, and provide grounds for further developing the account detailed above.

2.1 The Nature of Aspects and Pluralism

Baxter (2014, 2016, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) introduced the concept of an 'aspect' into the contemporary metaphysical literature in order to provide a coherent conceptual foundation for the notion of 'qualitative self-differing' – that is, the qualitative differing of numerically identical features of an entity. Whereas, according to McDaniel (2009, 2010, 2017) and Turner (2010, 2012, 2020), Ontological Pluralism is a historically rooted (though currently neglected) view that takes there to be *different fundamental* and *irreducible ways*, *kinds*, or *modes of being* of an entity.[9] We can construe both of these concepts succinctly as follows:

9 The notion of an aspect, posited by Baxter, was introduced into the contemporary philosophy of religion literature in the form of the 'Aspectival Account' in (Sijuwade 2021a), and extended in various ways in (Sijuwade 2022a, 2022b), and the thesis of Ontological Pluralism, proposed by McDaniel and Turner, was introduced into the contemporary philosophy of religion literature in the form of 'Theistic Ontological Pluralism' in (Sijuwade 2021b). The following explication of this

(5) (Aspect)	(6) (Ontological Pluralism)
An entity is an aspect if it is a qualitatively differing, numerically identical particular way that a complete individual is	The structure of reality is such that there is more than one domain of reality and way of being, which are expressed by elite (existential) quantifiers, without the negation of generic existence.

For the notion of an aspect, qualitative self-differing (hereafter, self-differing) is the qualitative differing of some entity in one way (or respect) from *itself* in another.[10] Self-differing is thus the qualitative differing of numerically identical aspects possessed by an individual (Baxter 2014). That is, the same individual can possess qualitatively differing aspects that are nevertheless *numerically identical* with the individual, and thus, given the transitivity of identity, with each other. To help motivate the existence of aspects within this context, we can consider a case in which an individual is torn about what to do (or how to feel) in a certain situation:

> Jane is an ambitious lawyer and a (volunteer) senior staff member of Humanists UK. Suppose Jane is on her way to an important meeting at her law firm. However, when she is walking, she observes an assault taking place in an alley. An inner struggle now ensues between her conscience, to stop and call for help, and her career ambitions which tell her she cannot miss this meeting.[11]

In this specific scenario, Jane is in a situation of self-differing as she knows that she has an important meeting that will lead to her becoming partner at her law firm – and has career ambitions that result in her wanting to go to her meeting to secure the promotion. So, the following proposition would be true: Jane '*does not want to stop and call for help for the stranger*'. However, being an ethically-minded humanist – who thus tries to live a life of empathy and compassion towards her fellow human beings – she wants to help the individual who has been attacked.

notion and thesis draws from the above works, and can be viewed as making a further extension to (and precisification of) these notions and theses.

10 Aspects are also further developed by Baxter in the different context of clarifying the instantiation relation between a particular and a universal. For this, see (Baxter 2001).

11 This example is based on a similar case provided by Kane (2009, 39) in a different context – namely, that of demonstrating the veracity of libertarian free will on the basis of self-forming actions, which helps to show the prevalence of the notion of self-differing in other areas of research. Moreover, in motivating aspects, Baxter believes that the clearest cases, as in the example in the main text, are those of the internal psychological conflict of a person. However, self-differing, according to Baxter, is not only confined to these psychological conflicts but, as Baxter writes, cases 'of being torn give us the experiences by which we know that there are numerically identical, qualitatively differing aspects. We feel them', (Baxter 2018b, 104). Thus, at a general level, as we will see, self-differing is present in any case where an entity has a property and lacks it at the same time, in the virtue of playing different roles.

So, the following conflicting proposition would also be true: Jane '*wants to stop and call for help for the stranger*'. Jane is torn. She is in conflict with herself. She thus *differs from herself*. Jane's struggle is between two a*spects* of her: Jane *insofar as* she is a lawyer *versus* Jane *insofar as* she is a humanist. This, and other cases of internal conflict, are cases of self-differing, where the subjects of what differs are the *aspects* of the individual that self-differs. Thus, for the case to be one of *differing*, one aspect must possess a quality that another aspect lacks. And for it to be a case of *self-differing*, the aspects must be numerically identical to the individual that bears them (Baxter 2018a, 907).[12] Off of this introduction to the notion of an aspect, we can further elucidate this notion at two levels: the *semantic level* and the *ontological level*.

At the semantic level, aspects are expressed through 'nominal qualifiers' such as 'insofar as' (or 'in some respect' and to a lesser extent 'as' and 'qua'). Nominal qualifiers serve a *special role* of referring to aspects – they are specifically present within self-differing cases, where the same entity can be discernible from itself. Furthermore, following Turner (2014, 227), the use of a nominal qualifier in these cases (and other cases like them) can be further precisified *via* formalisation – where one takes 'α' as a regular term and '$\varphi(y)$' as any formula open in y, and thus we can introduce a term to refer to aspects, namely an *aspect term*, written as such: '$\alpha_y[\varphi(y)]$'. From this semantic basis, and with the notion of an aspect term to hand, we can now progress onto the ontological level, which will allow us to further elucidate the nature of an aspect.

At the ontological level, according to Baxter, aspects are difficult to distinguish from other entities.[13] However, we can begin to acquire an understanding of their nature by describing their functional role and the relationship to the individuals that bear them. Primarily, the aspects of an individual function as the particular *ways of being* of that individual. A way of being is a conceptually primitive notion that, as noted previously, can be glossed in part by taking it to be the way or manner in which an entity exists. Thus, aspects function as the *particular ways in which*

12 One can ask the important question of whether aspects introduce additional entities into one's ontology? The answer to this is no, as an aspect is numerically identical to its bearer and thus – in a 'strict' sense of counting by numerically distinct entities – there is only one entity postulated – namely, the complete individual. Yet, as aspects qualitatively differ from their bearer and on another – in a 'loose' sense of counting by qualitative distinction – there are many qualitatively differing entities. Hence, in a specific 'numerical' sense, aspects allow one to have, what, as noted previously, Armstrong (1997, 13) has termed, an 'ontological free lunch' – where, in adopting the notion of supervenience for the moment, the supervenient (i.e. the aspect) is ontologically nothing more than its base (i.e. the bearer of the aspect), and thus 'you get the supervenient for free, but you do not really get an extra entity'.

13 As Baxter writes, 'aspects should not be confused with Casteneda's guises, or Fine's qua-objects, or other such attenuated entities' (Baxter 2018b, 103).

individuals are. However, as ways of being of an individual, aspects are *not* qualities (or properties) as they can, themselves, possess qualities (or properties) due to their numerical identity to the individuals that bear them.[14] Aspects, however, do not possess all of the qualities that the particular individuals that they are aspects of have. Moreover, in a similar manner to their bearers, they are particular entities, rather than universals, through Leibniz's Law (in an unrestricted sense) failing to hold for them. Secondly, despite the numerical identity between individuals and their aspects, aspects are *not* 'complete individuals' due to the fact that complete individuals are entities that can exist independently. Instead, according to Baxter, aspects are 'incomplete entities' due to them 'having fewer properties than it takes to exist on one's own' (Baxter 2018a, 916). Aspects are thus incomplete in the sense of them being dependent upon the complete individuals that they are numerically identical to.[15] The nature of a complete individual determines the aspects that they have, in that they depend entirely upon how that individual entity is – once we have the individual, we also have its ways of being (Giannotti 2019).[16] Thirdly,

14 In reference to aspects, there will be an interchanging of the term 'qualities' with the term 'properties'. However, the former term is preferable over the latter term, as it helps us to ward off mistaking the entities that are born by aspects needing always to be further entities that are ontologically different from them – as aspects can bear qualitied 'sub-aspects'.

15 In motivating aspects, Baxter believes that the clearest cases, as in the example in the main text, are those of the internal psychological conflict of a person. However, self-differing, according to Baxter, is not only confined to these psychological conflicts but, as Baxter writes, cases 'of being torn give us the experiences by which we know that there are numerically identical, qualitatively differing aspects. We feel them' (Baxter 2016, 99). Self-differing is present in any case where an entity has a property and lacks it at the same time, in the virtue of playing different roles (Baxter 2014).

16 One can ask the question of if aspects can vary over time? I believe that they can, and do, given that the paradigm examples of aspects – as noted above – are had in self-differing cases had within a psychological conflict situation. Given the modal variance of aspects, how could they be numerically identical to their bearers? I believe that one way in which one can hold to the numerical identity of an aspect with their bearer, despite their modal variance, is by assuming an account of 'temporary identity' (or 'occasional identity) – such as that found in the work of Gallois (1998), and which has been endorsed by Baxter (2018c) – in which something identical with itself at one time is at that time distinct from itself at another. That is, any case of identity is identity at a time, which, following (Baxter 2018c, 767) allows one to formalize temporary identity as follows:

> (Temporary) $(\exists x)(\exists y)(\exists t)(\exists t')(\text{at } t\text{: } x = y \ \& \ \text{at } t'\text{: } \sim(x = y))$
>
> *Informally*: For something x and something y and for some times t and t', x is numerically identical with y at t and x is numerically distinct from y at t'.

A good reason that motivates adopting this view of identity (as 'temporary' or 'occasional') is explained well by McDaniel (2014, 16), and thus deserves to be quoted in full:

aspects are *not* mereological parts of the individuals that they are aspects of, as, again, they are numerically identical to, rather than a 'part' of, these individuals (Baxter 2018a). Lastly, aspects are *not* mental abstractions. That is, even though a complete individual's aspects are abstract entities (through them failing to exhaust the content or plime that they are aspects of),[17] that can be considered by means of abstraction (where one abstracts a *way* that an individual is), it is important to note, as Baxter writes, that the difference between a complete individual and their aspects is 'a less-than-numerical distinction but more than a mere distinction of reason' (Baxter 2016, 99). Baxter terms this distinction, an *aspectival distinction*, which results in the aspects of an individual only ever being two (or more) in a 'loose' sense – when they are counted based on qualitative distinction. However, in a 'strict' sense – when the aspects are counted based on a numerical distinction – they are only ever one. Thus, aspects, as Baxter notes, provide a 'complexity to the simple, i.e. a qualitative complexity to the quantitatively simple' (Baxter 2016, 178).

From this basic construal of an aspect, we can now return to our example of self-differing and re-construe the notion of self-differing to be that of the qualitative differing of numerically identical *aspects* possessed by an individual (Baxter 2018b, 92). So, for example, 'Jane *insofar as* she is a lawyer' refers to one, numerically identical aspect of Jane and 'Jane *insofar as* she is a humanist' refers to another, numerically identical aspect of her. Aspects can thus differ in their qualities *without* the resultant differences indicating numerically distinct individuals (Baxter 2016, 175). More fully, we can apply some aspect terms to our self-differing example, where one aspect term of Jane would be: Jane_y[*y* is a lawyer], which is a name for

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> One reason to embrace 'temporary' identity is that it solves puzzles arising from fission and fusion. The left half of a worm is crushed by a boot. The worm is mutilated but endures. So a worm can survive the loss of half of its body. What if it had been the right half that had been crushed? The worm would have been mutilated but would have endured. Again, the worm can survive the loss of half of its body. Suppose we bisect a worm with a surgical knife. Two non-identical worms, Lefty and Righty, are the result. Which is the original worm? Let t' be the time of bisection, and t sometime shortly prior. It seems that, at t, Lefty is identical with the original worm, but so is Righty. And so at t, Lefty is identical with Righty. But it seems that at t', Lefty is not identical with Righty. According to the doctrine of temporary identity, things are exactly as they seem. (It is worthwhile to remember that many of our students find this response initially very attractive when they first consider the puzzle of fission.) Similar remarks apply to puzzles in which two things fuse into one.

Now, in adopting this view of identity, one is indeed required to make further restrictions to Leibniz's Law (i.e. there being a temporal analogue of Leibniz's Law) – which might indeed have some pushback. Nevertheless, for good reasons to make these further restrictions (and for a method on how to do this), see: (Baxter 2018c, 769–779; McDaniel 2014, 17–19).

17 Thus, the abstractness and particularity of an aspect fit neatly with that of a trope's abstractness and particularity that was noted above.

'Jane *insofar* as she is a lawyer'. And another aspect term of Jane would be Jane$_y$[*y* is a humanist] which is a name for 'Jane *insofar* she is a humanist'. Thus, re-construing the above situation as such: Jane$_y$[*y* is a lawyer] *does not want to stop and help the stranger* and ∼Jane$_y$[*y* is a humanist] *does want to stop and help the stranger*. It would seem as if one is affirming a contradiction. However, through the use of nominal qualifiers such as 'insofar as' (i.e. formally $a_y[\varphi(y)]$), it removes any explicit contradiction, as the above case does not say that it is Jane, *unqualified*, that does and does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend. Nor does it say that Jane, in one 'part', does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend. Either of those, as Baxter (2018b, 908) notes, would indeed be contradictory. Rather it is simply Jane$_y$[*y* is a humanist] (i.e. Jane *insofar* as she is a humanist) who wants to stop and help the stranger, and Jane$_y$[*y* is a lawyer] (i.e. Jane *insofar as* she is a lawyer) who does want to stop and help the stranger. So, at a 'coarse-grained' level, in our example, we have Jane being in a self-differing situation in which she has two aspects that qualitatively differ: Jane$_y$[*y* is lawyer] and Jane$_y$[*y* is a humanist]. Thus, what we have with the aspects of an individual is that of the negation, as Baxter (2016, 104) writes, being internal 'that is, has short-scope relative to the nominal qualifier and so there is no contradiction'. Thus, it is the aspects of Jane that have the conflicting qualities noted above, but not Jane (unqualified). That is, one can block the *secundum quid ad simpliciter inference*, which, following Baxter (2018a, 913), can be stated succinctly as follows:

(7) (Block)	It doesn't follow from the fact that an aspect of a complete individual x is F that x is F.

So, according to Baxter (2018a, 913), by the above being true, an individual *insofar as* they are a particular way *bearing a particular quality* does not entail that the individual *unqualified* bears that same quality. Yet, despite the distinct possession of a quality by an aspect, it is important to continue to maintain the fact that each of the aspects of an individual is *identical* to the individual. Hence, the position that has been reached here is that of the possibility same individual possessing *qualitatively differing* aspects that are nevertheless *numerically identical* to the individual that bears them and also with each other. Taking into account this basic construal, a further precisification can be made to the notion of an aspect by drawing a distinction between two different types of aspects:[18]

18 The following distinction between the different types of aspects is original to this article.

(8) (Attribute-Aspect)	(9) (Action-Aspect)
An aspect that is had by a complete individual in virtue of the (essential intrinsic and/or extrinsic) characteristics possessed by them.	An aspect that is had by a complete individual in virtue of the performance of a particular action.

As an individual will be charactered in a certain way, they will have certain aspects – termed 'attribute-aspects' – that are had in virtue of them possessing a certain character. And as an individual will also perform a variety of particular actions throughout their life, they will also have certain aspects – termed 'action-aspects' – that are had in virtue of them performing these actions. More specifically, given the various essential intrinsic and/or extrinsic characteristics possessed by an individual – with an essential characteristic being one that makes an individual what they are (i.e. it determines their identity), an intrinsic characteristic being one that is possessed by an individual independent of their surroundings (i.e. its independent of accompaniment), and an extrinsic characteristic being one that is not possessed by an individual independent of their surroundings (i.e. it is not independent of accompaniment) – then each individual can be taken to have a particular way in which they are that corresponds to these characteristics.[19] And, given the various particular actions performed throughout the life of an individual – with some of these actions being of more overall importance than others – each individual can also be taken to have a particular way in which they are that corresponds to the (overall important) actions performed by the individual. For example, given that Plato was born to Ariston of Athens and Perictione, he would have the attribute-aspect of Plato$_y$[y is son] (i.e. Plato *insofar as* he is the son of Ariston and Perictione). This aspect would plausibly be had in virtue of an essential extrinsic characteristic of Plato (one that makes Plato what he is – namely, *being the child of Ariston of Athens and Perictione*),[20] and it is extrinsic as it is not possessed by Plato independent of his surroundings (i.e. he would not have it if Ariston of Athens and Perictione did not exist). Whereas given that Plato was a wrestler, and thus he has performed the particular action of wrestling, he would have the action-aspect of Plato$_y$[y is wrestler] (i.e. Plato *insofar as* he is a wrestler). This aspect would be had in virtue of a particular action that has been performed by Plato at a certain time – that of wrestling – and would be an aspect (as with all other action-aspects) that would

19 Defining the terms 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' – and demarcating them – has proven to be a very challenging task within the field of contemporary metaphysics. Nevertheless, though nothing ultimately hangs upon which conception of intrinsicality and extrinsicality is the correct one, we can operate with the conception of these terms provided by the influential account of intrinsicality provided by Langton and Lewis (1998).

20 As, given 'origin essentialism', Plato's origination from Ariston of Athens and Perictione play a part in forming his identity.

not be had by Plato had he not performed the action of wrestling. One could be presented with a case of self-differing here, such as that of Plato$_y$[*y* is son] *does not want to wrestle at the Isthmian Games* (due to his parents pleading with him to quit wrestling) and Plato$_y$[*y* is wrestler] *wants to wrestle at the Isthmian Games* (due to his wrestling coach pleading with him to participate). The subjects of this differing are the *aspects* of Plato, with each aspect possessing a 'quality' that each of the other aspects lacks – namely, that of wanting to wrestle at a certain competition and not wanting to wrestle at a certain competition. Individuals, in self-differing cases such as these (and more generally), thus have aspects relative to their character and aspects relative to their actions – with each of these aspects, though qualitatively differing, being numerically identical to their bearer. In leaving this distinction to the side for a moment, at a more general level, an aspect of an individual (i.e. the individual *insofar* as he is a *particular* way) in reality is *still the individual*. Moreover, taking into account the characteristics of the numerical identity relation, as noted before, will result in each of the aspects of an individual being numerically identical to one another. Thus, in this context, the same thing can be abstractedly considered in two ways, and in this discernment, it can differ from itself whilst still being that *same thing*. An individual is numerically identical to their aspect, and these aspects are all numerically identical to each other. The same individual can possess *qualitatively differing* aspects that are nevertheless *numerically identical* to the individual that bears them and also with each other. Taking all of these things into account, we can illustrate in Figure 1 the central features of aspects as follows:

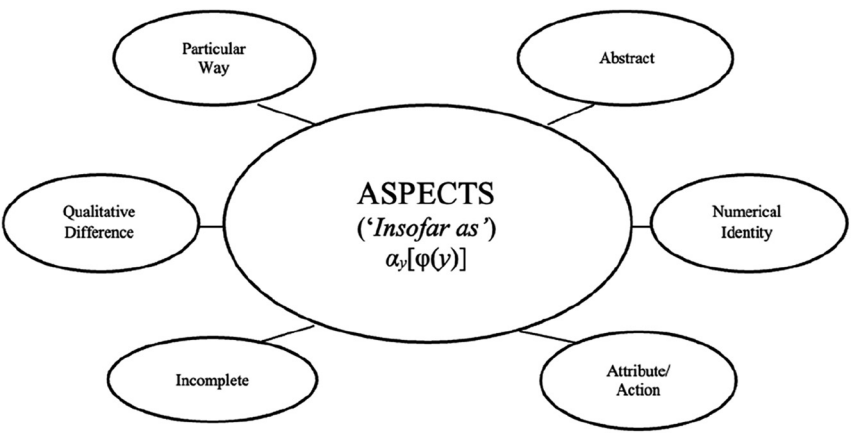

Figure 1: Aspects features.

On the basis of this conceptualisation of an aspect – and the distinction between the different types of aspects available – we seem to have a conceptually coherent way for one to affirm the veracity of qualitative self-differing; however, a pertinent issue appears to be in sight – namely, the potential transgression of *Leibniz's Law* (i.e. the Indiscernibility of Identicals), which can be construed succinctly as follows:

(10) (Leibniz's Law)	For any things *x* and *y*, if *x* is numerically identical with *y*, then for any quality *F*, *F* is had by *x* if and only if *F* is had by *y*.

At a *prima facie* level, Leibniz's Law seems to be transgressed within an aspectival framework, as the existence of aspects allows for there to be numerically identical entities that do *not* share the same qualities. Any violation of Leibniz's Law will certainly be problematic for most individuals. However, once this issue is further investigated, we can, in fact, see that there is no violation of Leibniz's Law within an aspectival framework as, according to Baxter (2016, 172), aspects allow 'contradictories to be predicated of the same thing in a way that Leibniz's Law is *silent* about'. We can begin to notice this 'silence' by asking the question of *why* Leibniz's Law should be taken to apply to *all entities*, without restriction? Baxter sees that the issue might revolve around the frequently raised worry,[21] that a relation that is not characterised by Leibniz's Law is *not* identity.[22] However, Baxter (2016, 908) sees that the only reason for this attitude is that the principle seems to express the truth that no entity both possesses and lacks a property – that contradictions cannot exist in reality. Thus, as Baxter (2018a, 907) writes, 'It may seem that the original Indiscernibility of Identicals [Leibniz's Law] is just another way of saying that nothing both has and lacks a property, which is just another way of saying that no contradictions are true'. It thus seems that individuals regularly accord Leibniz's Law (the Indiscernibility of Identicals) the same unassailable status that is regularly given to the Principle of Non-Contradiction. However, following Aristotle, Baxter (2018a, 908) sees that what is central to the latter principle is solely that of nothing both possessing and lacking a property in the same respect at the same time. Thus, this formulation leaves room to manoeuvre as it opens up the possibility that, as Baxter (2018b, 105) writes, 'something in one respect has a property

21 As Sider (2007, 51–91) notes (in a related mereological context), 'Defenders of strong composition as identity must accept this version of Leibniz's Law; to deny it would arouse suspicion that their use of 'is identical to' does not really express identity'.

22 One might still comment that it is inconceivable to *define* numerical identity without utilising Leibniz's Law, and thus Baxter's approach should be rejected. However, Baxter notes that he is *not* defining identity; but instead is taking it as primitive.

that it in another respect lacks'. However, that claim is not contradictory, as a contradictory claim here would be for one to say that some individual in one respect possesses a property that in no respect it possesses. Baxter's non-contradictory claim is thus simply that something *in one respect* is numerically identical to itself *in another respect*.[23] Thus, based on this claim, some numerically identical things can qualitatively differ without an entailment of a contradiction. Baxter (2018a, 907) thus believes that we lack any substantial reason to believe that Leibniz's Law applies to *every* entity without question, and states that 'Leibniz's Law should not be thought of as applying absolutely generally to anything that can be talked about; the argument that it must apply so generally, fails'. Rather it is important to consider the *domain of quantification* for Leibniz's Law. That is, according to Baxter, Leibniz's Law solely applies to individuals (i.e. complete/independent entities) and thus does not generalise over to aspects (i.e. incomplete/dependent entities). The non-applicability of Leibniz's Law here leads Baxter (2018a, 911) to propose a further distinction within Leibniz's Law between the *Indiscernibility of Identical Individuals* – which is an iteration of the original principle (i.e. the Indiscernibility of Identicals) – and the *Indiscernibility of Identical Aspects* – both of which we can construe formally as follows (where (II) stands for the Indiscernibility of Identical Individuals and (IA) stands for the Indiscernibility of Identical Aspects):

(11) (Leibniz's Law*)	(II): For any things *x* and *y*, if *x* is numerically identical with *y*, then for any quality *F*, *F* is had by *x* if and only if *F* is had by *y*. (IA): For any things x and y, if x is numerically identical with y, then, for any property z, any aspect numerically identical with x has it if and only if any aspect numerically identical with y has.

With this distinction in place, Baxter believes that the notion of an aspect does not present a counterexample to the Indiscernibility of Identical Individuals – as this principle is taken to be silent on aspects.[24] Instead, the issue that we have here is that of there being problems with the Indiscernibility of Identical Aspects, as an individual might be numerically identical with an aspect that differs from an aspect that another individual is numerically identical with, even in the situation in which the first and second individuals are identical (Baxter 2018a). That is, an individual can differ from itself by having aspects that differ, yet without this requiring that the individuals are numerically distinct. Identicals that are considered *unqualifiedly*

23 A single individual differs from itself by having two or more aspects.

24 Baxter notes that Leibniz's Law does not entail Indiscernibility of Identical Aspects, given that it could only do this if aspects were included within the domain of quantification for the principle, but as it is not, there is no entailment and the variables thus instead range only over individuals alone (Baxter 2018a).

are indiscernible, but identicals that are considered *qualifiedly* may be discernible – that is, something may qualitatively differ from itself (Baxter 2014). The non-contradictory internal negation in specific self-differing claims, such as Jane's and Plato's above, seems to suggest that Leibniz's Law properly so-called does not apply to aspects. Thus, there are certain cases in which identicals *are discernible*, yet do not falsify the principle – namely, when an individual possesses aspects that are numerically identical to it (and each other). The same thing cannot be true and false of the same individual, in the same respect, without entailing a contradiction (Baxter 2018a, 908). Yet, phrases such as 'Jane *insofar* as she is a lawyer' and 'Plato *insofar* as he is a wrestler' refer to aspects, which are incomplete entities, and not the complete individual that the aspect is numerically identical with. Thus, as Baxter (2018a, 907) notes, it is vital that one is sensitive to 'aspectival reference', which refers to aspects and is distinguishable from singular reference, which refers to complete entities. Singular reference, according to Baxter, is not sensitive to the aspectival distinction, whilst the former is. And once we are sensitive to this distinction, we can realise that the domain of quantification for Leibniz's Law, in its original sense, as Baxter (2018b, 104) writes, 'includes all the complete entities, but does not include the incomplete entities numerically identical to some of them'. Thus, it follows that Leibniz's Law does not preclude the numerically identical aspects of an individual from being qualitatively different from each other and the individual themselves.[25] Assuming the reality of aspects thus does not lead to a complete denial of Leibniz's Law. Instead, there is only a denial of an *unrestricted* understanding of Leibniz's Law that includes all complete and incomplete entities within its domain. That is, more precisely, there is only a denial of an *unrestricted* understanding of Leibniz's Law – which includes the two principles of the Indiscernibility of Identical Aspects and the Indiscernibility of Identical Individuals. In other words, Baxter is not seeking to provide counterexamples to Leibniz's Law, when it is simply understood as a principle concerning objects of singular reference (i.e. the Indiscernibility of Identical Individuals), instead he is proposing counterexamples solely to the principle that ranges over aspects (i.e. Indiscernibility of Identical Aspects), and so to the Indiscernibility of Identicals, when it is taken as the conjunction of the former *and* the Indiscernibility of Identical Individuals (i.e. unrestricted Leibniz's Law). More can indeed be said here. However, for the task at hand, we can conclude that

25 Baxter (2018a, 909) sees Leibniz's Law as being closely related to the further principle that co-referential terms are substitutable *salva veritate*. However, he notes that this specific principle concerns only singular reference, and thus the substitution of expressions only refers to single individuals. One would thus need to provide an argument for why it should be generalised to aspects.

Leibniz's Law (properly so-called) does not apply to aspects, and thus it is coherent to posit the existence of qualitatively differing, yet numerically identical aspects.

Turning our attention now onto the thesis of Ontological Pluralism (hereafter, OP), within this ontological picture, entities can (and do) exist in different domains of reality and in different ways from one another, which is represented by different *existential quantifiers* – without the denial of the fact of these entities existing in the univocal category of being – namely, these entities also possessing *generic existence*. More specifically, the notion of a 'way of being' finds its primary use in enabling one to account for the fact that the specific ontological kind (or category) that an entity is an instance of determines *the specific manne*r in which that entity exists. For example, numbers are of a different ontological kind (or category) than tables – the former is of the kind (or category) *abstracta*, and the latter is of the kind (or category) *concreta* – and thus, these entities exist in a different manner than one another. An adherent of OP thus posits the existence of multiple ways of being in order to account for the different types of entities that display distinct features from one another. In positing the existence of multiple ways of being, OP is to be contrasted with the standard view in contemporary metaphysics of *Ontological Monism* (hereafter, OM), which posits the existence of solely *one way of being*. We can thus state the distinction between OP and OM more precisely as follows:

(12) (Monist Structure)	(13) (Pluralist Structure)
There is one ontological structure (domain of reality), and there is one way of being had by entities.	There is more than one ontological structure (domain of reality), and there is more than one way of being had by entities.

The notion of a way of being, posited by OM and OP, corresponds to the notion of an ontological structure. Following Turner (2010, pp. 6–7), we can further elucidate the notion of an ontological structure by utilising an analogy of a pegboard, which can be understood as follows: at a general level, an ontological structure is represented by a pegboard covered with rubber bands. For the adherent of OM, the correct understanding of ontological structure is that of a large pegboard, where pegs represent entities, and rubber bands of various colours represent objects instantiating different properties and objects standing in different relations to one another (picture, for the former, a band wrapped around a peg, and, for the latter, a band stretching from one object to another). For the adherent of OP, the view of ontological structure that is proposed by the thesis of OM is taken to be misleading in that reality is instead best represented by *multiple pegboards* – with each pegboard representing a distinct kind of entity with their associated ways of being. In short, proponents of OM conceive of reality as having a single ontological structure – represented by a single pegboard – for example, abstract and concrete entities existing together on one pegboard.[12] However, for the proponent of

OP, reality has multiple ontological structures – represented by multiple, independent pegboards – with, for example, abstract entities existing on one and concrete entities existing on another (Turner 2010).[13] Thus, as is expressed by this particular analogy, the different ways of being featured within the framework of OP correspond to *different structures or domains of reality* – one can thus say that reality is indeed multi-faceted. This multi-faceted nature of reality is expressible through the use of the further notion of an 'elite quantifier' is grounded upon the Quinean association between existence and existential quantification – where ontology concerns what existential quantifiers range over. Given this association, the proponent of OP takes there to be several *semantically primitive* existential quantifiers that range over distinct domains of reality (where a quantifier is *semantically primitive* in the sense that it is not reducible to the unrestricted quantifier and a restricting predicate). More specifically, a central aspect of the contemporary iteration of OP, as expressed by McDaniel and Turner, is that of the denial of the fact of there being solely *one* existential quantifier. Rather, there are many – where, for example, there is one, '$\exists_a$', which ranges over the domain of abstract entities, and another, '$\exists_c$', which ranges over the domain of concrete entities (Turner 2010, p. 8). The contemporary project of OP is thus linked with *quantificational pluralism* – the view that there are multiple existential quantifiers, rather than a single generic quantifier (Turner 2020). However, multiple existential quantifiers can come on the cheap (i.e. one solely needs to introduce an existential quantifier and a restricting predicate to formulate more than one (restricted) existential quantifier). Hence, Caplan (2011, pp. 95–97), McDaniel (2009, pp. 305–10), and Turner (2020, p. 185) have emphasised the fact that, for the thesis of OP, only certain types of quantifiers are of concern to pluralists: *elite* quantifiers. Now, defining the notion of eliteness is indeed a challenging task, given that the notion seems to come in degrees. However, as noted by McDaniel (2017, pp. 27–28) and Turner (2020, p. 185), one can proceed to further elucidate the nature of this notion by adopting Sider's (2000) extension of Lewis' (1983) notion of *perfect naturalness*, which centres around that of the notion of 'carving nature at its joints'. Existential quantifier expressions that 'carve nature at its joints' are thus to be taken as elite (or 'more elite' than others that do not). So, taking into account the distinction between abstract and concrete entities, proponents of OP take these two kinds of entities to have different ways of being. These ways can be expressed, as noted previously, by two elite quantifiers: '$\exists_a$' meaning existing abstractly (i.e. the quantifier ranging over the domain of abstract entities) and '$\exists_c$' meaning existing concretely (i.e. the quantifier ranging over the domain of concrete entities). These two existential quantifiers (and the other multiple existential quantifiers posited by pluralists) are thus, as noted previously, taken as *semantically primitive* – through the notions that they express being irreducible – and *elite*, where these quantifiers ('$\exists_a$' and '$\exists_c$') seem to be 'fine-grained' and deeply 'joint

carving'. Thus, taking all this into account, as McDaniel (2010, p. 635) writes, OP is the view that there are possible languages with elite quantifiers 'that are at least as natural as the unrestricted quantifier'. At the heart of OP is thus the (surprising) claim that there are multiple ways of being and structures of reality and, most importantly, that there are multiple elite existential quantifiers that express these ways of being and structures of reality (Turner 2020). In other words, entities such as abstract entities and concrete entities are thus taken to have different fundamental ways of being – and are part of distinct fundamental structures of reality – that are ranged over by different elite existential quantifiers (e.g. '$\exists$a' and '$\exists$c'). In short, one must thus use *more than one existential quantifier* to represent the extra ways of being and structures of reality.

However, one is to do this without negating the reality of 'generic existence'. Generic existence expresses the fact that all entities share in the univocal category of being. Thus, in affirming the veracity of OP – the existence of multiple ways of being that are expressed by multiple elite existential quantifiers – one is not (necessarily) negating an entity's possession of generic existence. An adherent of OP is simply committed to the fact, as noted by McDaniel (2009, pp. 305–10), that the multiple elite quantifiers – that are taken to express the different ways of being of an entity (or entities) – are *more natural* than the generic unrestricted quantifier – in the sense that they express the various fundamental facets of reality in a more accurate manner. Thus, in continuing with our paradigm examples of abstract and concrete entities, the distinction made between the modes of being of abstract entities and concrete entities – with the elite quantifiers of $\exists_a$ and $\exists_c$ – are simply to be taken to be *more natural* than the generic unrestricted existential quantifier: $\exists$. That is, as Bernstein (2021, 2), in emphasising this point, writes,

> If one is taking an inventory of everything that there is, the pluralist's 'is' is ambiguous between $\exists_1$ and $\exists_2$, and the items in being must be sorted into either category. The pluralist's inventory is finer-grained than the list that falls in the domain of the single first-order existential quantifier, since it includes everything that there either is_1 or is_2.

OP thus affirms the fact that every entity – in addition to them having multiple ways of being – also enjoys the generic and univocal way of being that is expressed by the single, generic, unrestricted quantifier. Thus, what is disaffirmed by the thesis of OP is solely that of the latter quantifier being perfectly natural – in short, it does not 'carve nature at its joints'. This disaffirmation, however, does not mean that single, generic, unrestricted quantifier is to be conceived of as a mere disjunction of the multiple elite existential quantifiers – given that, as McDaniel (2010) has shown, the domain that is ranged over by the former quantifier is *unified by analogy*. That is, as McDaniel (2010, p. 696) notes, we are aware of 'something akin to disjunctive properties, but they aren't merely disjunctive. Analogous features enjoy a kind of

unity that merely disjunctive features lack: they are, to put it in medieval terms, unified by analogy'. This fact is evident, for example, in the concept of *being healthy* – which does not seem to be disjunctive, given the *different ways of being healthy* – as McDaniel writes (2010, p. 695), 'I am healthy, my circulatory system is healthy, and broccoli is healthy'. In each of these cases provided by McDaniel, there is a sense in which the generic ways of being healthy correspond to the particular ways of being healthy – that is, we are presented with a concept of generic healthiness *by analogy* with the particular ways of being healthy (Builes 2019, p. 4). Existence in its many particular forms and its singular generic form is akin to this – in that, for the adherent of OP, there is a fundamental (i.e. perfectly natural) way in which certain entities exist and *a non-fundamental (i.e. non-natural) and a non-disjunctive manner in which every entity generically exists*, each of which is represented by (a modified form) of Quinean quantification.

The central components of the notion of an aspect and the thesis of OP have been laid out. We will now turn our attention to applying this notion and thesis to the task at hand so as to provide a conception of God (when further extended) that will be shown later to be free of the Compatibility Issue.

2.2 Application of Aspects and Ontological Pluralism

As noted previously, the second stage of our constructive task focuses on the tenet of *Nature* within (3), which we can now re-state in a more philosophically elucidated form as follows:

(14) (Nature*)	God, in his transcendent way of being, is atemporal (i.e. timeless and immutable) through lacking aspects that are temporally located, extended and successive and intrinsically and extrinsically changeable, and thus is not in a real relation to other entities.

For *Nature**, God, *in a certain manner of existing*, is atemporal – by having aspects that lack the quality of being temporal. However, as will be further detailed below, and in another manner of existing, God is temporal – through having aspects that have the quality of being temporal. More precisely, God is taken – in what we can term the Aspectival Account – to be an entity that is numerically identical to an maximal power *module trope* (hereafter, m-power trope or simply M-Power).[26]

26 I will be frequently interchanging between each of these terms, as with the term 'God', without any change in meaning.

A module trope is an *abstract particular nature of a modular kind*.[27] In briefly unpacking this within a theistic context, God is, first, *abstract* in the sense of him having the trait of being 'less than the including whole' – in a Christian theistic context, God does not exhaust his 'content' or 'plime' (or is less than his 'content' or 'plime') – identified as the Trinity – as his content or plime also includes the possibility of other tropes being collocated with him (i.e. the Son and the Spirit), which results in him not exhausting either of these things – in short, wherever God is located there are other tropes that are located there with him. Second, God is *particular* by him failing to abide by Leibniz's Law (the Identity of Indiscernibles) – as again, within a Christian theistic context – there is the possibility of the existence of entities – duplicates, identified as the Son and the Spirit – that are exactly similar in their intrinsic properties (i.e. their nature) to him, yet are numerically distinct from him.[28] Third, God is *identical to his qualitative nature* – he is the specific character that he has, which is that of him being maximally powerful. God's nature is thus intrinsic to him, not in the sense of him possessing a further intrinsic 'property', but simply that of him being numerically identical to this nature. Fourth, God is a *trope of a modular kind*, which is that of him being a maximally-thinly charactered object – a property in an analogous sense (i.e. a property*) – that is self-exemplifying and – in assuming Christian Theism again – serves the role of bestowing this characteristic upon the Trinity which he constitutes. Moreover, since God is a trope of a modular kind, he plays a direct role in causation and is thus a basic term of a causal relation. We can illustrate this identification between God and a module trope in Figure 2.

Thus, as God is numerically identical to an m-power trope, he is a module trope that has the ability to perform any logically possible action. In short, God is thus an m-power trope, and his nature is best to be conceived of as one that centres on M-Power – namely, that he is a trope that has the ability to cause any event that it is logically possible that he could cause, and there is no event that he cannot bring about due to a lack of power.

Now, in the application of the thesis of OP within the present context – namely, the theistic context – which thus allows us to re-term this thesis Theistic Ontological Pluralism, we take it to be the case that, in reality, there are two ontological structures: an abstract ontological structure and a concrete ontological structure, each

27 The following is a very brief statement of the nature of a module trope, as elucidated within a theistic context. For a further explanation of the nature of a module trope (and that of a modifier trope) and a further explanation for why God must indeed be conceptualised as this type of entity, see (Sijuwade 2021a).

28 Leibniz's Law was previously conceived of here as the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals. However, now we are conceiving of it in this case as its converse – the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, which can be stated formally as such: $\forall\varphi(\varphi(x) \leftrightarrow \varphi(y) \rightarrow x = y)$.

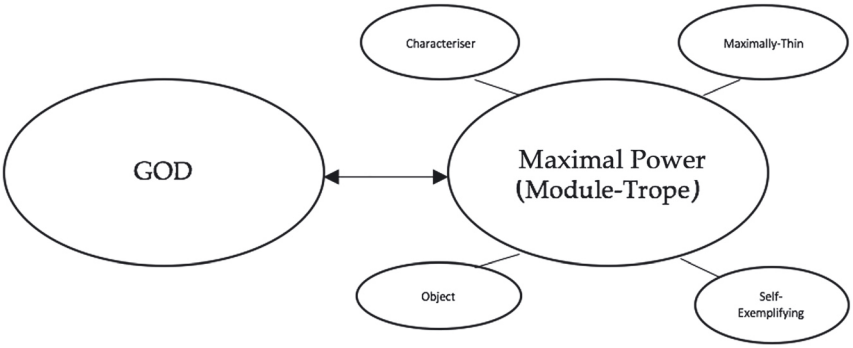

Figure 2: God and module trope identity.

of which can be represented by a specific pegboard – with each pegboard having pegs that represent the entities that exist within that given ontological structure. Each structure (and pegboard) would include within it a distinct kind of entity with a distinct *way of being* (or *mode of existence*): abstract entities that have an abstract way of being and concrete entities that have a concrete way of being. More precisely, abstract and concrete entities, though they are each a part of the univocal category of being, and thus possess generic existence (which is expressed by the single, generic, unrestricted existential quantifier ∃), are taken to have *different fundamental ways of being* that correspond to distinct fundamental structures of reality. Given the Quinean association between existence and existential quantification – where ontology concerns what existential quantifiers range over – these structures or domains, as noted previously, are taken to be ranged over by two different elite existential quantifiers: '$\exists_a$' meaning existing abstractly and '$\exists_c$' meaning existing concretely – each of which is perfectly natural by 'carving nature at its joints', and thus represent the distinct ways of being and structures of reality that are had by abstract entities and concrete entities. Within the framework provided by Theistic OP, we take God to be an entity that exists within *two* ontological structures: the abstract structure *and* the concrete structure. God is thus an entity (i.e. a trope) that has *two ways of being* (or manners of existence): by existing in the abstract structure, God has an abstract way of being,[29] represented by the quantifier '$\exists_a$', and by God existing in the concrete structure, God has a concrete way of being, represented by the quantifier '$\exists_c$'. God is thus an entity that exists within,

29 More specifically, God has the *same ontological status* as abstract entities – without, however, being like these objects in all respects. This is important as God is not identified in this framework *as* an abstract entity, but simply as an entity that has the *same status* as an abstract entity – namely, being timeless, immutable, impassible etc.

or overlaps, two ontological structures and domains of reality, and thus has two ways of being that correspond to these two structures and domains. God, *in one way of existing*, is thus an entity that has an abstract mode of being – which we can now re-term this his 'transcendent mode of being', due to him existing in a mode of being that transcends all of spatial and temporal reality. In this transcendent mode of being, expressed by the elite existential quantifier of '$\exists_t$', God is an atemporal being – in that he, firstly, exists as a timeless entity within this mode of being – that is, his transcendent manner of existence does not include within it experiences of temporal *succession* (i.e. in his transcendent way of being he does *not* experience a succession of events within the divine life), and the possession of temporal *location* (i.e. in his transcendent way of being his existence is *not* datable) and *extension* (i.e. in his transcendent way of being he does *not* exist across different moments of time). Secondly, God exists as an immutable entity within this mode of being – that is, within his transcendent way of being, he does not experience intrinsic or extrinsic change. Yet, God, *in another way of existing*, has a concrete mode of being – which we can now re-term this his 'immanent mode of being', due to him existing in a mode of being that is within time (and possibly space). In this immanent mode of being, expressed by the elite existential quantifier of '$\exists_i$', God is a temporal being – in that he, firstly, exists as a temporal entity within this mode of being – that is, his immanent manner of existence includes within it experiences of temporal *succession* (i.e. in his immanent way of being he experiences a succession of events within the divine life) and the possession of temporal *location* (i.e. in his immanent way of being his existence is datable) and *extension* (i.e. in his immanet way of being he exists across different moments of time). Secondly, God exists as a mutable entity within this mode of being – that is, within his immanent way of being, he experiences intrinsic and/or extrinsic change. God thus has two ways of being: a transcendent way of being, in which he is atemporal, and an immanent way of being, in which he is temporal.

Now, in bringing the Aspectival Account and the thesis of Theistic Ontological Pluralism together – which, in combination, we can now term *Aspectival Pluralism* (hereafter, AP),[30] we can understand that God is identified as an m-power trope that has two ways of being – where, in both modes of being: his transcendent and immanent modes of being, God possesses aspects. That is, instead of this m-power trope *entailing* the possession of properties such as the

30 Aspectival Pluralism is taken here to be a general thesis that combines the Aspectival Account and Theistic Ontological Pluralism – and can be extended to model some, if not all, of the classical attributes of God (i.e. atemporality, simplicity and impassibility). Thus, the specific strand of Aspectival Pluralism that is being utilised here is the atemporal strand – with there possibly being other strands corresponding to God's other attributes (e.g. a simplicity strand, impassibility strand etc.).

further *properties* of maximal knoweldge, presence, freedom and goodness (as is regularly taken to be so),[31] we can now take God to be an entity that *solely* possesses aspects (and lacks the possession of any properties). Given this assumption, we can now further understand the nature of these aspects of God by focusing on their functional role and the relationship that they have to him, which allows us to say that they are *not* properties, complete entities, or mereological parts. Rather, they are incomplete abstract particular entities that are numerically identical to a specific complete individual and function as his ways of being. More fully, each of the aspects of God is *numerically identical* to the m-power trope, yet they do not possess the same characteristics as it – they are *not* the ability to perform any logically possible action. Lacking this characteristic, the aspects of God are thus *incomplete entities*, in that they are dependent on the m-power trope, which exists as a *complete entity* (i.e. an independently existing entity). These aspects of God do not exhaust the content or plime that they are aspects of (i.e. they each do not exhaust the m-power trope), and they each function as *ways* that God (i.e. the m-power trope) exists, which we can consider through a process of abstraction. Now, as in more mundane cases, one can draw a distinction between the types of aspects that are had by God, *relative to his specific way of existing*. which within the present context, we can construe as follows:

(15) (Theistic Attribute-Aspect) An aspect that is had by a God, in his transcendent and immanent ways of being, in virtue of the (essential intrinsic) characteristics possessed by m-power.	(16) (Theistic Action-Aspect) An aspect that is had by God, in his immanent way of being, in virtue of the performance of an action, which is within the range of his m-power.

At a specific level – for both God's attribute-aspects and his action-aspects – the aspects of God are focused on the different *particular ways* in which the m-power trope is. That is, by this module trope having (or, more specifically, being) the singular-character of m-power, it would exist in a particular manner and have certain limitless abilities that enable it to fulfil different roles. This functional role fulfilled by the m-power trope allows one to establish an aspectival distinction that takes these ways to be aspects of this specific trope. However, given that God has two ways of being (and exists within two domains of reality), we can *relativise* the aspects according to a specific way of being where, first, in *both* his

31 For a detailed explanation of why there is this entailment of the other divine properties from m-power, see (Swinburne 2016, 174–75). Furthermore, the construal of m-power above is a basic construal provided by (Swinburne 2016), which is subject to certain counterexamples (such as the 'McEar' objection). For these counterexamples and a more refined definition of m-power that does not face these counterexamples, see (Swinburne 2016, 150–74).

transcendent and immanent ways of being, God will possess a range of attribute-aspects, as the intrinsic character that he has would be had in *both* of the domains of reality that he is part of. In other words, in the abstract domain of reality, God would be m-power and thus also be maximally knowledgeable, free and good etc., and, in the concrete domain of reality, God would still be maximally powerful and thus also be maximally knowledgeable, free and good etc. Thus, for example, the aspect of maximal knowledge, which can be understood as M-Power$_y$[*y* is knowledge] (i.e. M-Power *insofar as* it is the ability to know of all true propositions and believe no false proposition [i.e. be maximally knowledgeable]), would plausibly be an *essential intrinsic* characteristic of m-power – one that makes m-power *what it is* and is possessed by m-power *independent of its surroundings*.[32] And thus, given that it is an essential intrinsic characteristic of God to be maximally knowledgeable, he would have this nature in both domains of reality (and under both ways of being). Second, it is now only in his immanent way of being that God will possess a range of action-aspects, as these types of aspects are had on the basis of the performance of a particular action, which would not be possible for an entity existing within the abstract domain. Hence, within the abstract domain of reality, God would only have attribute-aspects and no action-aspects, but in the concrete domain of reality, God would have both attribute-aspects *and* action-aspects. Thus, for example, one action-aspect of God is the creator-aspect, which can be understood as M-Power$_y$[*y* is creator] (i.e. M-Power *insofar as* it is the performance of the action of creating and sustaining the universe [i.e. Creator]). This aspect would be had in virtue of a particular action that is performed by God – and one that would not be had if God had not performed the action of creating the universe and/or is not performing the continual action of sustaining it in existence – hence, this type of aspect is not essential to God.

On the basis of the distinction that can be drawn concerning which way of being of God has which specific type of aspect, for all of the aspects of God taken as a collection, one can see that there is a case of self-differing here, such as that, for example, of M-Power$_y$[*y* is knowledge] *enables its bearer to know whether it snowed in New York on January 1st 2 A.D.* (as it is the ability to know of all truths) and M-Power$_y$[*y* is creator] *does not enable its bearer to know whether it snowed in New York on January 1st 2 A.D.* (as it is not the ability to know of anything [but simply the performance of the action of creating and sustaining the universe]). The subjects of this differing are the *aspects of God*, with each aspect possessing a 'quality' that each of the other aspects lacks – namely, that of enabling its bearer to know

32 As an entity cannot perform any logical action without knowing which action is indeed possible (Swinburne 2016). Moreover, an entity would be maximally knowledgeable irrespective of its environment.

the truth of a certain proposition and not enabling its bearer to know the truth of a certain proposition. God thus has aspects relative to *one* manner of existence – namely, action-aspects that are relative to God's immanent way of being. And God has aspects relative to *both* manners of existence – namely. attribute-aspects that are relative to God's transcendent and immanent ways of being – with these aspects, though qualitatively differing, each being numerically identical to God (i.e. M-Power).[33] In other words, as God exists within the abstract domain with a corresponding transcendent way of being, and the concrete domain with a corresponding immanent way of being, the attribute-aspects of God are had by him *relative* to his *transcendent and immanent way of beings*. Whereas the action-aspects of God are had by him only *relative to his immanent way of being*. Thus, by utilising the notion of an aspect, and making the distinction between God's transcendent and immanent ways of being, one is able to uphold the first option noted previously of God not being really related to created reality. As, on the one hand, in his transcendent way of being, God does not stand in any relation to other entities – and thus, God only has attribute-aspects, which are his essential and intrinsic features – and, therefore, he is able to remain immutable and timeless within the specific domain and structure in which he exists. Whereas, on the one hand, God, in his immanent way of being, *does* stand in a real relation to creation, by him having not only attribute-aspects, but action-aspects that are had by him on the basis of him standing in a preservation relation to all of created reality – that is, he is (the initiating and) sustaining cause of all other created reality.

Thus, with first phase of our formulation of AP completed, one thus has a clearer understanding concerning the nature of God that is in play – namely, that of God being an m-power trope that exists within two domains of reality, and thus has two ways of being that have certain aspects had by him in that specific way of being. This conceptualisation of the nature of God thus provides the basis for moving on to our next phase of analysis, which will finally provide a response to the Compatibility Issue.

3 Elucidating Atemporality: Phase-Two

The second phase of our constructive task focuses on the tenet of *Action* within (3), which we can restate as follows:

33 Thus, by making an aspectival distinction here, in a 'loose' sense, focused on qualitative distinctiveness, we can indeed count a multiplicity of attribute and action-aspects within God. Yet, in a strict sense, focused on numerical distinctiveness, there is solely one self-same property*, the m-power trope, which is *differently considered*.

(17) (Action)	God performs, within time, a continuous action in which he sustains in existence, at every moment, his effects – namely, the things he has created, together with the properties and powers which he has endowed them.

For *Action*, God performs a continuous action of preserving in existence each of the created entities within the universe – an action which takes place 'in time'. To further precisify the central elements of this tenet, we will now turn our attention to explicating some of the key concepts found within the temporal ontology of Priority Presentism and the Exdurantist view of persistence, which will thus provide a basis for further understanding God's sustaining action of all reality, and a means to finally deal with the Compatibility Issue.

3.1 The Nature of Time and Persistence

To understand Priority Presentism, it's useful to consider it alongside two significant temporal ontologies: Presentism and Eternalism. According to Miller (2013), these can be defined as follows:

(18) (Presentism)	(19) (Eternalism)
The temporal and ontic structure of reality is such that only the present moment (objects and events) exists and the present moves (which moment is the present moment changes).	The temporal and ontic structure of reality is such that past, present, and future moments (objects and events) exist, and the present does not move (which moment is the present moment does not change).

For Presentism, only the present moment (and thus only present objects and events) exist – where 'exists' refers unrestrictedly to the domain of everything. For example, if the present moment is 12:00 PM on May 15th, 2024, then Donald Trump exists, the event of the Ukrainian war exists, and computers exist; however, dinosaurs do not exist, the Black Death does not exist, and future sentient robots do not exist – the only things that exist now exist simpliciter. Moreover, temporal passage is an inherent feature of reality, so the moment at which Julius Caesar existed is not present – and hence he does not exist – yet the moment at which he did exist was once present, and the moment at which sentient robots will be created will become present in the future. Thus, a Presentist world dynamically changes over time such that the totality of events that exist changes as each new present moment comes into existence, and those events then pass out of existence. In addition to this ontological scheme, presentists typically affirm the 'A-theory' of time, where time is dynamic and events have properties of presentness, pastness, and futurity at different times. Turning our attention now to Eternalism, according to this view objects and events at other times are analogous to objects at different locations. For

example, dinosaurs exist, but they do not exist now in 2024, just as Paris exists, but it is not in London. The present moment does not move; instead, all moments (or events) are located in a four-dimensional block of spacetime, where temporal passage is not an inherent feature of reality. Events are ordered by relations of being earlier than, later than, or simultaneous with each other. For example, the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event is earlier than the Black Death, which is earlier than the creation of sentient robots. These relations are unchanging; if the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction is earlier than the Black Death, it will always be true. It is also important to note that the terms 'Present' and 'now' do not pick out a metaphysically special feature of the world; rather, they are indexical terms, meaning each moment is present to individuals at that moment. On the basis of this, eternalists are committed to the 'B-theory' of time, where time is static, and events are ordered by temporal relations without temporal passage.

Now, despite the popularity of these temporal ontologies, each of these ontologies has its own issues. Presentism faces the Truthmaker Issue because it only acknowledges the existence of present entities, making it challenging to find truthmakers for past and future truths. For example, there are no past or future entities to serve as truthmakers for statements like "Hitler was the Chancellor of Germany" or "sentient robots will exist." Eternalism avoids this issue by affirming the existence of past and future entities, providing truthmakers located in different regions of spacetime. On the other hand, Eternalism encounters the Phenomenological Issue. This issue arises because Eternalism denies temporal passage, yet our experience suggests that time flows and events change. This raises the question of why we have this phenomenological experience if reality is, in fact, static. Presentism, unlike Eternalism, naturally accounts for the experience of temporal flow and change, as it includes temporal passage as a core feature of its model.[34]

One can thus ask if there is another model or temporal ontology that allows one to acquire the benefits of both and also ward of the issues faced by them? A potential model that can achieve this end is that of *Priority Presentism*, which was introduced by Baron (2013, 2015), and seeks to serve as a middle way between these two models. And so, given the philosophical benefits had by this model, this specific temporal ontology will be employed in the next sub-section to deal with the Compatibility Issue. We can now state the model succinctly as follows:

34 This is not to say that there have not been responses to these issues. For responses to the issues raised against Presentism, see: (Bourne 2002; Crisp 2007). And for responses to the issues raised against Eternalism, see: (Dainton 2013; Dyke and Maclaurin 2013; Goswick 2013). Interestingly, the response to the Truthmaker Issue that will be provided below within the Priority Presentist framework, is also one that can, and has been, utilised by Presentists to ward off this challenge.

(20) (Priority Presentism)	The temporal and ontic structure of reality is such that only present entities exist diachronically fundamentally, no present entities are diachronically derivative, and all past and future entities exist and are grounded in the present (which accounts for the privileging of the present).

Priority Presentism, according to Baron (2013), is a model of the temporal and ontic structure of reality that is a 'hybrid' of Presentism and Eternalism, in the sense that, like the former, (certain types of) present entities only exist, and like the latter, the past, present and future exist. How this model seeks to hold these two contrasting positions together is by employing the notion of *grounding* and *fundamentality*. More specifically, within the framework provided by Priority Presentism, as Baron (2015, 1–3) notes, 'only present entities exist fundamentally, and past and future entities exist, but they are grounded in the present'. To understand this further, it will be helpful to further flesh out the nature of grounding and fundamentality.[35] Focusing first on the former notion, grounding is regularly characterised as a primitive expression of dependence, determination or explanation. This expression has been championed by 'grounders' (i.e. grounding theorists) such as Fine (2012), Schaffer (2009, 2016), and Rosen (2010), amongst others.[36] In following Schaffer, we can construe the notion of grounding as such:

(21) (Grounding)	A primitive directed-dependency relation that is category neutral and necessarily links the more fundamental entities to the less fundamental entities, in a manner that is analogous to causation.

Within the framework under analysis, grounding is taken to be a *primitive relation* that is 'category neutral' and thus connects entities from *any* ontological category – in other words, entities such as objects, propositions and facts etc., are thus able to be the input of a grounding relation. Furthermore, grounding is taken to be a relation that has the formal and modal features of transitivity, irreflexivity, asymmetry, necessity and hyperintensionality and thus induces a strict partial

35 The following elucidation of the notion of grounding will go beyond Baron (2015) on certain points – in order to take into account certain developments within the literature concerning Jonathan Schaffer's theory of grounding (such as the analogy between grounding and causation). However, Baron (2015) would plausibly affirm the conception of grounding detailed here as he also operates within a Schafferian grounding context in putting forward the model of Priority Presentism. Moreover, Baron et al. (2020) have also provided another means for one interpreting the analogy between grounding and causation – which seems to correspond well with Schaffer's views on this.

36 For a historical explanation of these individuals' roles in developing the notion of ground, see (Raven 2020).

order over the entities that are in its domain (Trogdon 2013).[37] That is, grounding gives rise to a hierarchy of grounds, in which the grounds of a fact (or entity), as Johannes Korbmacher notes, 'rank 'strictly below' the fact (or entity) itself' (Korbmacher 2018, 161, parenthesis added). And, it does so necessarily, given the fact that grounding entails a necessary dependence of the grounded on the grounds, in that the existence of the latter entails the existence of the former. Thus, as proposed by Schaffer (2016), the notion of grounding can be best modelled as a *primitive 'directed-dependency' relation* associated with the notion of ontological priority. That is, the primary function of this directed-dependency relation is to link a *more fundamental input* to a *less fundamental output* (Schaffer 2016). Hence, according to Schaffer (2009), there is an ontological ordering within reality, in that some entities are derivative of other, more fundamental entities. The fundamental entities of reality ontologically undergird the derivative entities, and grounding is the relation that connects the undergirding entity to entities that are at a higher level in the structure of reality. Thus, within this perspective, there is a hierarchical view of reality that is ordered by priority in nature. Once one distinguishes more from less fundamental entities, it is natural to posit a relation linking certain more fundamental entities to certain less fundamental entities which derive their existence from them (Schaffer 2016, 145). Grounding is thus the name of this direct 'linkage', which is governed by the above formal and modal principles, connects the more to the less fundamental entities and thereby imposes a *hierarchical structure* over what there is (Schaffer 2009). This imposing of a hierarchical structure can be achieved in an *immediate* manner or in a *mediate* manner. That is, as Fine notes (2012, 50–51), a more fundamental entity can be the *immediate grounds* of a less fundamental entity, if the more fundamental entity grounds the less fundamental entity, not in virtue of grounding some other entity which acts as an intermediary. And it can also be the *mediate grounds* of a less fundamental entity, if the more fundamental entity grounds the less fundamental entity in virtue of grounding some other entity which acts as an intermediary. Grounding thus provides the direction and linkage needed for metaphysical explanation and generation in a manner that is *similar* to the way in which causation provides the direction and linkage needed for causal explanation and generation. More specifically, as a directed-dependency relation, grounding is a 'generative' relation that has many important features in common with causation, which leads one to infer that the best explanation of this striking, systematic similarity is that of grounding being *analogous to causation*.[38] Grounding and causation

37 For arguments against ground being a 'strict' order, see (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2015). For a defense of ground as a 'strict' order, see (Raven 2015).

38 The following conception of grounding as a relation that is analogous to causation, and the use of Structural Equation Modelling, is a development made by Schaffer to his concept of grounding,

can thus be taken to simply be *different ways* for the causal relation to be mediated and thus obtain (i.e. through the laws of metaphysics for the former, or through the laws of nature for the latter) (Wilson 2018).[39] The species similarity between grounding and causation can be further elucidated, in Schaffer's (2016) thought, through the use of the prominent formal framework of Structural Equation Models, which were developed within a causal context by individuals such as Pearl (2009) and Woodward (2003).[40] The primary advantage of Structural Equation Models, according to Schaffer (2016, 60), is that of them providing the most precise method for detailing directed-dependency relationships between entities. Hence, in a directed-dependency relationship, we have the *sources* (i.e. causes, grounds) *via* a *link* (i.e. causal law, grounding principle) generating a *result* (i.e. effect, derivative) which can be aptly modelled by the input-function-output structure of Structural Equation Modelling (Schaffer 2021, 176). Thus, as an example, we can take the existence of Socrates' singleton set (Singleton) being grounded by the existence of Socrates as a grounding test case: in the first stage, a Structural Equation Model starts with a representation of the system under study, which is then divided into sets of independent and dependent variables. The independent and dependent variables (in this case, Socrates and Singleton) are then mapped to a specific range of allotted values as such:

> *Variables*: <Independents = {(Socrates)}, Dependents = {(Singleton)}, Range = {(Singleton) → {0,1}, (Socrates) → {0,1}}.

In the second stage, one then implements the functions given the 'dynamics' of the system, where, according to Schaffer (2021, 177), there is a linking of the dependent variables by the function that maps the values of the input variables to their output value (where '≤' is to be read as 'is the output of' (i.e. 'Singleton is the output of the set-formation function on Socrates'):

> *Functions*: {(Singleton) ≤ set-formation(Socrates)}.

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which postdates the publication of Baron's work. Thus, the detailing of this development, and its application to the thesis of Priority Presentism below is an original extension made here to Baron's work.

39 For a different interpretation of this striking similarity between grounding and causation that takes the two to be identical (i.e. grounding is a type of causation: metaphysical causation), see: (Wilson 2018).

40 Though more limited than Structural Equation Models, directed graphs are also helpful in modelling directed-dependency relations. For an explanation of this, see (Schaffer 2016, 63).

Finally, in the last stage, one simply needs to evaluate the 'fundamentality conditions',[41] by assigning values to the independent variables according to what actually happened in reality:

Assignment: {(Socrates) = 1}.

By {(Socrates) = 1} being the case in reality, one can derive the result of {(Singleton) = 1} for the respective model. Utilising a Structural Equation Model in this way enables one to ascertain a viable synchronic metaphysical explanation for *why* Singleton Socrates exists, from the existence of Socrates, *via* the dependence function that captures the grounding principles (or more specifically, the set-formation principle).[42] That is, given that Socrates exists (Socrates = 1) and the principles of grounding (set-formation) are at work, it is no coincidence that the Singleton-Socrates exists as well (Singleton = 1). Singleton-Socrates is the output of this principle on the input of Singleton ((Singleton) ≤ set-formation(Socrates)), leading to an explanation for Singleton Socrates' existence (Schaffer 2021). Thus, a Structural Equation Model expresses how grounding, as a relation that is analogous to causation, provides the directed connection needed for explanation and induces a hierarchical structural relationship that stems from a *more fundamental source* (e.g. Socrates's existence) *via* a *link* (e.g. the set-formation principle) to a generated, *less fundamental result* (Singleton-Socrates' existence). Therefore, in a grounding relationship, the more fundamental input generates and provides an explanation for the less fundamental output *analogous*ly to how a (nomological) cause generates an effect and provides an explanation for its occurrence. Grounding is thus taken here to be a primitive directed dependence relation that is has the formal/modal features of being transitive, irreflexive, asymmetric, necessitating and hyperintensional, and fulfils the role of linking less fundamental entities (from any ontological category) to more fundamental entities (also from any ontological category), and it does so in a way that is analogous to causation. On the basis of the characterisation of grounding provided, and in following Schaffer (2009) again,[43] one can use this notion to further construe the twin notions of fundamental and derivative as follows:

41 In a causal model these conditions would be the initial conditions, rather than the fundamentality conditions that are featured in a grounding model.

42 The set-formation principle would be a specific application of the grounding principles within a set-theoretic context.

43 With Baron (2015) explicitly affirming this application of grounding to the notion of fundamentality.

(22) (Fundamental)	(23) (Derivative)
An entity is fundamental if nothing grounds it.	An entity is derivative if something grounds it.

An entity is fundamental, if it is ungrounded and thus is an entity that is basic, primitive or rock-bottom in the layered structure of reality. Whereas an entity is derivative, that is, non-fundamental (i.e. dependent), if something grounds them, and thus is not located at the lowest level of the layered structure of reality. A fundamental entity is thus one that is not an output of a grounding relation; rather, it ultimately serves as the ground of everything else. For a fundamental entity, nothing presses upwards on it; instead, it serves the role of pressing upwards on all other (non-fundamental) entities – it is a basic feature of the hierarchical structure of reality (Bennett 2017, 111).

Now, according to Baron (2015, 4),[44] a further fine-tuning of this conceptualisation of the grounding relation can be made by focusing on the temporal axis of grounding, which allows us to draw a distinction between two different types of grounding relations: *synchronic grounding* and *diachronic grounding*, both of which can be construed succinctly as follows:

(24) (Synchronic Grounding)	(25) (Diachronic Grounding)
An entity is synchronically grounded if another entity grounds it at a particular time.	An entity is diachronically grounded if that entity exists at a particular time and is grounded by another entity that exists at a different time.

An entity that provides the ontological basis for another entity, at the time in which the latter entity is located, is thus synchronically grounded by it. Whereas, if an entity provides the ontological basis for another entity, by the former being connected to the latter by a directed dependence relation that *extends across time*, then there what is present is a case of diachronic grounding. Two further assumptions, according to Baron (2015), can be made concerning the distinction between fundamental and derivative entities: first, that fundamental entities are more 'real' than derivative entities – not in the sense that derivative entities do not exist – but in the sense that these entities do not exist in the same 'way' as fundamental entities – that is, the latter are taken to have a greater 'degree' of reality than the former.[45] Second, that derivative entities are – what has come to be termed by Armstrong (1997, 13) 'an ontological free-lunch' – such that the derivative entities are no 'addition of being'. That is, grounding is taken to be a 'super-internal' relation in the sense

44 This distinction is original to Baron (2015) and has not been proposed or endorsed in writing by Schaffer.

45 Baron conceives of this view in light of McDaniel's (2017) work on degrees of being.

that the existence and intrinsic nature of one of the relatum ensure that, firstly, the grounding relation obtains and, secondly, that the other relatum (or relata) exists with the intrinsic nature that it has (Schaffer 2016).[46] Thus, once there is a fixing of the intrinsic nature of the grounds, one then necessarily has the grounded entity coming along with it as well – in other words, the existence of the derivative entities 'come for free' with the existence of the fundamental entities.[47]

Now, in assuming the distinction between synchronic and diachronic grounding, Baron (2015, 5) posits a further distinction that can be drawn between how an entity is fundamental and derivative – namely, *synchronic fundamentality* and *derivativeness* and *diachronic fundamentality* and *derivativeness*, each of which can be construed succinctly as follows:

	(26) (Synchronic F&D)		(27) (Diachronic F&D)
(Fundamental$_S$)	An entity is synchronically fundamental if it is located at a particular time and there is nothing at that time that synchronically grounds it.	(Fundamental$_D$)	An entity is diachronically fundamental if it is located at a particular time, and (i) it is synchronically fundamental and/or (ii) there is nothing at any other particular time that diachronically grounds it.
(Derivative$_S$)	An entity is synchronically derivative if it is located at a particular time and there is something at that time that synchronically grounds it.	(Derivative$_D$)	An entity is diachronically derivative if it is located at a particular time and there is something at another particular time that diachronically grounds it.

On the basis of the distinction made here, if an entity is grounded by an entity in either of these senses, then it is not *absolutely* fundamental – though it might be *more fundamental* than another entity (i.e. be *relatively* fundamental in the hierarchical structure of reality) – and a given entity can be fundamental in the synchronic sense (by it lacking grounds at the time that it is located) though it is not fundamental in the diachronic sense (through it having a ground for at a time that it is not located). Thus, as noted by Baron (2015, 5), a given entity 'can – at the time at which it is located – be at the 'bottom' of the synchronic chain of

46 That grounding is super-internal was first posited by (Bennett 2017, 32–33). Furthermore, grounding's super-internality is not to be confused with the internality of other relations. As the former type of internality, and not the latter, requires that only one of the *relatum* exists in order for the relation to hold between the *relata*.

47 Again, an extension of Baron's thought has been provided here by tying the notion of an ontological free lunch to the super-internality of grounding (rather than that of David Armstrong's supervenience conception of it).

grounding, even though it is diachronically grounded'. Hence, as an entity that is merely synchronically fundamental and is not also diachronically fundamental, is still diachronically grounded, it is derivative in a *certain sense* – namely, that of it being derivatively fundamental – and thus, it follows from this that only entities that are diachronically fundamental are absolutely fundamental.

On the basis of this further refining of the notion of grounding and fundamentality, one can thus understand the model of Priority Presentism to be one that involves the diachronic grounding of past and future entities in the present – such that there exists one fundamental moment: the present moment that includes within it the ontological grounds for all past entities and all future entities (Baron 2013).[48] One can now ask what the ontological grounds that exist within the present moment are? According to Baron (2015, 9–10), one can freely put forward a number of candidates for this grounds. However, one specific option is that of taking the ontological grounds for the past and the future to be *presently existing instantiated tensed properties that are possessed by the world* (hereafter, tensed properties). That is, as noted by Baron (2015, 7), these are 'primitive properties that, in some unanalysable sense, 'point toward' the past'. Hence, according to Priority Presentism, the past and future are diachronically grounded in tensed properties possessed by the world in the present moment. Thus, for example, dinosaurs (which exist in the past) and sentient robots (which exist in the future) are synchronically grounded in whatever entities (e.g. particles, fields, strings etc.) that exist in the past and future, but are both diachronically grounded in the tensed properties that are presently instantiated by the world – namely, the properties of it having *been such that there were dinosaurs* or *being such that there will be sentient robots* (Baron 2015). This view, as noted by Baron (2015), does not take the truth of <dinosaurs existed> or <sentient robots will exist> to be grounded in the present tensed properties possessed by the world – as is found in the 'Lucretian' view posited by Bigelow (1996) – rather it is that of the dinosaurs *themselves* being grounded, and, supposing that in the future there will be sentient robots, it is that of the devices *themselves* being grounded by the tensed properties possessed by the world itself (Baron 2015). To further emphasise this, one can now focus on the systematic analogy between grounding and causation, and the possibility for one to utilise Structural Equation Models to map grounding cases – which will help to further express the role that the world, and the tensed properties instantiated by it, play in grounding past and future entities. One can thus formulate an apt Structural Equation Model for this case as follows (where 'World-P' represents 'the world instantiating tensed

48 Baron (2015, 4) thus sees that there is an analogy that can be drawn between Schaffer's Priority Monism and Priority Presentism.

properties' 'Dinosaur' representing 'dinosaurs', 'Robot' represents 'sentient robots' and 'temporal' represents 'a grounding relation/principle'):

> *Variables*: <Independents = {(World-P)}, Dependents = {(Dinosaur, Robot)}, Range = {(Dinosaur, Robot) → {0,1}, (World-P) → {0,1}}.
>
> *Functions*: {(Dinosaur, Robot) ≤ temporal(World-P)}.
>
> *Assignment*: {(World-P = 1)}.

By {(World-P = 1)} being the case in present reality, one can derive the result of {(Dinosaur, Robot = 1)} for this specific model. We thus have, as in the more mundane grounding example above, an explanation of a *more fundamental source* (the world's existence and instantiation of tensed properties) *via* a *link* (temporal principle) generating a *less fundamental result* (the existence of dinosaurs [in the past] and sentient robots [in the future]), which has been aptly modelled by the input-function-output structure of a Structural Equation Model. There is a viable metaphysical explanation here for *why* dinosaurs (in the past) and sentient robots (in the future) exist (Dinosaur, Robot = 1), from the existence of the world, instantiating tensed properties (World-P = 1), *via* grounding, or more specifically, the temporal principle (≤temporal).[49] That is, given that the world exists and instantiates tensed properties, and the principles of grounding are at work, it is no coincidence that past and future entities (e.g. dinosaurs and sentient robots) exist too. Past and future entities are the output of this principle on the input of world (and its properties) and thus are the necessary grounded 'effects' it in a manner analogous to causation.

On the basis of all of this, and the fact of the diachronic grounding of the existence of the past and future entities in the presently existing temporal properties possessed by the world,[50] one now has a conceptual basis for understanding the nature of temporal passage in this view, which can be stated succinctly as follows:

(28) (Temporal Passage*)	An inherent feature of reality is that of there being (i) a global shift in the status of the entities composing the world from that of diachronic derivativeness, when past or future, to diachronic fundamentality, when present, and (ii) the possession of the temporal properties by the world.

49 The 'temporal principle' would be a specific application of the grounding principles within a temporal ontological context.

50 Though Baron does also leave it open for what could indeed be the bearer of these properties. This will be an important point for the next sub-section – when God is taken to be this entity within the theistic construal of this temporal ontology.

More precisely, in Priority Presentism, *time passes*, which, according to Baron (2015, 9, parenthesis in text), can be understood minimally as 'the 'movement' of a metaphysically privileged present 'away' from the past, and into the future (this movement is not a literal movement, it is a metaphorical description of a movement-like feature of the metaphysics)'. Priority presentism does not take the metaphysical privilege that is had by the past to be ontological – in the sense that Presentism takes only present entities to exist – rather, the metaphysical privileging of the present is that of it consisting in the fact that *only present entities exist with diachronic fundamentality* (Baron 2015). Hence, on this view, temporal passage is taken to have two components: first, temporal passage is taken to involve a global shift in what entities exist with diachronic fundamentality, such that, as noted by Baron (2015, 10), as time passes, 'future derivative [diachronic derivative] entities become fundamental [diachronic fundamental] as they become present, and then cease being fundamental [diachronic fundamental] as they become past'. And, second, temporal passage is taken here to involve the tensed properties (possessed by the world) that ground past and future entities. These properties, as Baron (2015, 10) notes, are properties are taken to have two important features:

> First, the tensed properties are always present. No matter which time is present, the same tensed properties exist at that time. This ensures that the same [diachronic derivative] past/future entities always exist. Second, the tensed properties do not exist at any past/future times. If they did, then they would ground another time series at each such time, potentially leading to an infinite hierarchy of meta-times connected by grounding relations.

Thus, on the basis of the constancy of tensed properties, as some entity becomes present, it *gains* the tense properties that enable it to ground the diachronically derivative past and future, and thus when that entity ceases to be present (and thus becomes past) it *loses* these properties (Baron 2015). Taking all of these things into account, we can illustrate this model in Figure 3: (with 'E_n' representing a particular event, the 'star shape', engulfing the circular shape, representing 'diachronic fundamental existence', 'TP' representing 'Temporal Properties', the 'oval shape' representing 'the world', the 'dashed oval shape' representing the 'past/present state of the world' and the 'singular head arrow' representing a 'synchronic/diachronic grounding relation').

So, in comparing Priority Presentism with the other two models of temporal ontology: Presentism and Eternalism, one can see, according to Baron, that one dimension of differentiation between these models concerns *what they take to exist*. And thus, if Priority Presentism is compared along these lines, then it is most similar to Eternalism by taking the past, present and future to exist. This can be helpfully illustrated through in Table 1.

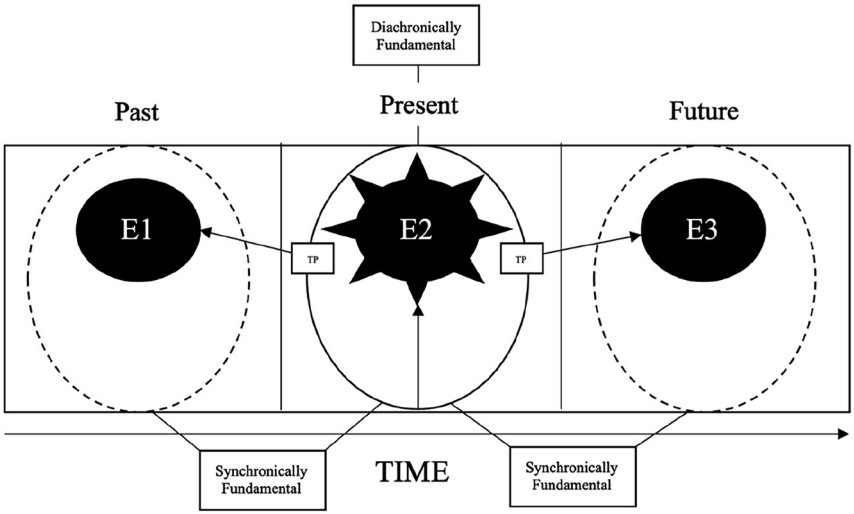

Figure 3: Priority presentism.

Table 1: Existence.

(Diachronic) fundamental	Presentism	Eternalism	Priority presentism
Past		✓	
Present	✓	✓	✓
Future		✓	

However, on another dimension of differentiation between the models, one can compare these models concerning *what they take to be diachronically fundamental*, and thus compared in this way, Priority Presentism is most similar to Presentism by taking only presently existing entities to be diachronically fundamental, as expressed in Table 2.[51]

Thus, by taking into account each of these dimensions of comparison, as noted before, Priority Presentism is to be conceived of as a hybrid of Presentism and Eternalism, as, like Eternalism, the past, present and future exist, but like Presentism, only present entities are taken to exist with diachronic fundamentality. This

51 As Presentism takes only present entities to exist, there would not be any other entities at non-present moments that can diachronically ground these entities – hence, they will be diachronically fundamental.

Table 2: Diachronic fundamentality.

Existence	Presentism	Eternalism	Priority presentism
Past		✓	✓
Present	✓	✓	✓
Future		✓	✓

hybrid position thus provides grounds for one to ward off the Truthmaker Issue that plagues Presentism, by taking past and future entities to exist (and thus truths concerning them to hold) in virtue of the present. And it can also ward off the Phenomenological Issue that is presented to Eternalism, by affirming the reality of temporal passage in the sense of there being a global shift of what entities are diachronically fundamental, and, thus, which entities and moments are, in fact, present. One thus has good philosophical motivation to adopt this approach, over that of the more prominent temporal ontologies, in helping us to complete the theological task at hand.[52] Before we turn our attention to doing this, it will be important to now further detail the second important thesis that will serve us in achieving this task – namely, that of Exdurantism.

As with Priority Presentism, in order to best understand the thesis of Exdurantism, it will be helpful to explicate it within the framework of two other important theses within the metaphysics of persistence. At a general level, according to Lewis (1986, 202), an entity persists through time if it exist at various times. Two prominent theses in the contemporary metaphysical literature that capture the manner in which an entity persists through time have been termed *Endurantism* and *Perdurantism*, both of which, following Lewis (1986, 202), can be stated succinctly as follows:[53]

(29) (Endurantism)	(30) (Perdurantism)
An object persists through time by enduring (i.e. being a three-dimensional entity that is wholly present at different times).	An entity persists through time by perduring (i.e. being a four-dimensional entity that possesses different temporal parts at different times).

52 This is not to say that Priority Presentism is without its own issues – for these and responses to some of them, see: (Baron 2015, 16–21). However, given that it provides a solution to the issues that plague Presentism and Eternalism – whilst still providing their benefits – one has good, *prima facie* philosophical motivation for utilising this approach in the present theological context.

53 Lewis (1986) stated that this terminology came from Mark Johnston.

Endurantists believe an object is wholly present at each moment of time, without being spread out through time, thus subscribing to a three-dimensionalist view of persistence (Effingham 2012).

On the other hand, perdurantists hold that an entity persists by having different 'temporal parts' at different moments. Sider (2001, 59) describes a temporal part of an entity *x* as existing solely at an instant, being part of *x* at that instant, and overlapping everything that is part of *x* at that instant. For example, an individual's current temporal part is a part of that individual existing only now and overlapping all current parts. Hence, perduring entities persist through time by being spread out through time- by them possessing numerically distinct temporal parts existing at each moment of time (Effingham 2012). Objects are thus extended in four dimensions – three spatial and one temporal. Temporal parts are like spatial parts, located at different times, such that a 22-year-old in 2024 has temporal parts of a 5-year-old in 2007 and a 15-year-old in 2017. A person is thus an aggregate of temporal parts, forming a spacetime worm extending from their origin to their end. However, both Endurantism and Perdurantism face the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic, which is the problem of how objects can persist through changes in their intrinsic properties, despite the fact that an object cannot have incompatible properties at the same time. For instance, an object can be straight at one time and bent at another, which presents the dilemma of the object being both straight and bent. For Endurantists, change involves an object having different properties at different times. However, this view struggles to explain how intrinsic properties (properties that an object has independently of other things) change over time without the object being different at each moment. This raises the challenge of explaining how the same object can possess different intrinsic properties at different times while remaining the same objec. Whereas perdurantism posits that change involves different temporal parts possessing different properties at different times, the problem with perdurantism lies in the fact that it implies objects do not possess properties simpliciter (in themselves) but rather derivatively through their temporal parts. This view thus undermines the notion of objects having intrinsic properties, as it suggests that properties are only held by parts of the object at specific times, not by the whole object itself. This, therefore, raises concerns about how objects maintain their identity and properties through time. This leads to the question of whether there is another account of persistence that better explains intrinsic change. This account is that of Exdu ranitsm.

More precisely, Exdurantism (or Stage View/Theory), introduced by Sider (1996, 2001) and defended by Hawley (2001) and Varzi (2003), offers a middle ground between Endurantism and Perdurantism. Exdurantism posits that an object persists by being a three-dimensional entity identical to an instantaneous stage related to different counterpart stages at different times. This is that, Exdurantism holds

that objects are identical to instantaneous stages, with persistence defined by the relationships between these stages over time. Unlike Perdurantism, which views objects as extended space-time entities, Exdurantism sees each momentary stage as the *object itself*. For example, a statue or a coin is not viewed as a continuous entity over time but rather as a series of individual, instantaneous stages (that is a series of objects that each exist for an instant). Similarly, Exdurantism suggests that terms like 'banana' describes a sequence of momentary stages, each capturing the banana at a specific point in time - with it displaying properties such as being yellow or curved in that instant. Hence, everyday objects are stages, and their persistence is understood can be further precisified through temporal counterpart theory, where identity over time is analogous to identity across possible worlds (Lewis 1986). This is that, instantaneous stages of an object are not isolated, as an object can persist through time by having preceding and succeeding 'counterpart stages.' These counterpart stages allow the object to maintain its identity over time, and thus an object manifests temporal properties through its relationship with these stages, thus creating a continuous sequence of stages that collectively represent the object's persistence and change over time. This interconnectedness of stages thus ensures that the object can be understood as a persistent entity, despite the object also being discrete, momentary stages. Hence, the central concept of Exdurantism is the counterpart relation, which distinguishes it from the main views of Perdurance and Endurance. However, there is some overlap between Exdurantism and the main views of Perdurance and Endurance. Balashov (2011, 14) notes that stage theory, like Perdurantism, supports the existence of temporal parts or stages, but unlike Perdurantism and similar to Endurantism, it identifies ordinary objects as three-dimensional entities that are entirely located at momentary regions without temporal extension.

Unpacking this now from a different angle, Exdurantism can be compared to Endurantism and Perdurantism based on dimensions and location. Like Perdurantism, Exdurantism endorses temporal parts or stages but identifies ordinary objects as three-dimensional entities wholly located at momentary regions as expressed in Table 3.

However, if one were to compare Exdurantism to Endurantism and Perdurantism according to *the location of the objects* that are taken to persist within these

Table 3: Dimensions.

Location	Endurantism	Perdurantism	Exdurantism
Wholly present	✓		✓
Scattered		✓	

Table 4: Temporal location.

Dimensions	Endurantism	Perdurantism	Exdurantism
3D	✓		
4D		✓	✓

views, then Exdurantism would be more similar to Endurantism, as it takes the persisting objects to be stages – rather than spacetime worms that extend through time by being aggregates of these stages – and thus these objects are wholly present at each of the instants that they are located at, as expressed in Table 4.

Despite these similarities, differences between Exdurantism and the other views centre on their semantics and ontological commitments. Exdurantism identifies everyday objects with instantaneous stages, while Perdurantism identifies them with four-dimensional spacetime worms. Exdurantism's persistence is understood through temporal counterpart relations rather than enduring or perduring, which allows Exdurantism to avoid the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic by positing that objects themselves, not their relations, instantiate intrinsic properties - as an object is identical to a stage, and thus directly (rather than derivatively) instantiates these properties. Thus, Exdurantism provides a plausible explanation for persistence without requiring non-intuitive accounts of change, making it philosophically appealing for application in theological contexts as well. To this task, we now turn.

3.2 Application of Time and Persistence

As detailed previously, the second phase of our constructive task focuses on the tenet of *Action* within (3), which we can now restate in a more philosophically elucidated form as follows:

(31) (Action*)	God, in his immanent way of being, is identified as an instantaneous (aspectival) stage, and performs, at each present moment within time, a continuous diachronic and synchronic grounding action in which he sustains in existence each derivative entity – namely, all past, present and future entities.

For *Action**, temporal reality is such that there is a *four-dimensional* block of spacetime where all past, present and future entities exist. Yet, there is a distinction to be made between *the manner in which these entities exist* – with past and future entities being grounded in the present. In locating God within this ontological framework, one can take God to be the entity that serves as the *ontological ground for all present and non-present entities*. That is, what is taken to be the case

concerning God, is that of him being the *present* entity that exists with absolute fundamentality, and thus the present entities existing with him and the non-present entities – namely, that of past and future entities – are all grounded (in some manner) in God. Hence, non-present entities exist, yet to a *lesser degree* than God (and the other entities existing within the present moment) as the non-present entities are taken to be an 'ontological free lunch' that have derivative existence – and, therefore, it is only in the present that one finds the entity that is most real – that of God. Thus, by the present moment containing the ontological grounds for the non-present entities, there is an ontological asymmetry between the present and past and future entities – the present is thus metaphysically privileged in a way that the past and present are not. Stating this all again more precisely, there is a diachronic grounding of all non-present entities in God, who is taken to be absolutely fundamental and thus one of the present entities. That is, God is located in the present moment by being absolutely fundamental, which is that of him, first, being synchronically fundamental in the sense that at each time in which he is located, there is no entity that synchronically grounds him – at each moment of time he is at the bottom of the synchronic chain of grounding. And, second, him being diachronically fundamental in the sense that at no other time than which he is located, there is an entity that diachronically grounds him – at each moment of time, he does not rely on another entity, located at another time, for his existence. All other entities are either synchronically derivative, which will be that of the present entities that are synchronically grounded by God in the present moment, or, more importantly, diachronically derivative, which will be that of all other non-present entities that are diachronically grounded, in the past and future moments that they exist in, by God who is located in the ever-changing present moment. However, even though God is the present entity that diachronically grounds past and future entities, at a more specific level, one can take it to be the case that these entities are grounded in *presently existing instantiated tensed* properties that are possessed by God himself. For example, dinosaurs (which exist in the past) and sentient robots (which exist in the future) are synchronically grounded in God at each of the past and future moments that exist; however, both entities are also taken to be diachronically grounded in the presently instantiated properties possessed by God, such as *it having being such that there were dinosaurs created by God* or it *being such that there will be sentient robots created by God*.[54] The dinosaurs *themselves* are thus grounded by these tensed properties of God, and, supposing that in the future there will be sentient robots, it is that of the devices *themselves* also being grounded by the tensed properties possessed by God. As before, we can now draw on the

54 Indirectly, of course.

systematic link between grounding and causation, and the possibility for one to utilise Structural Equation Models to map grounding cases, to further express the role that God, and the tensed properties that he instantiates, play in grounding past and future entities. That is, one can thus formulate an apt Structural Equation Model for this case as follows (where 'God-P' represents 'the God instantiating tensed properties' 'Dinosaur' representing 'dinosaurs', 'Robot' represents 'sentient robots' and 'temporal' represents 'a grounding relation/principle'):

Variables: <Independents = {(God-P)}, Dependents = {(Dinosaur, Robot)}, Range = {(Dinosaur, Robot) → {0,1}, (God-P) → {0,1}}.

Functions: {(Dinosaur, Robot) ≤ temporal(Good-P)}.

Assignment: {(God-P = 1)}.

By {(God-P = 1)} being the case in present reality, one can derive the result of {(Dinosaur, Robot = 1)} for this specific model. We thus have, as in the more mundane grounding example above, an explanation of a *more fundamental source* (God's existence and instantiation of tensed properties) *via* a *link* (temporal principle) generating a *less fundamental result* (the existence of dinosaurs [in the past] and sentient robots [in the future]), which has been aptly modelled by the input-function-output structure of a Structural Equation Model. There is a viable metaphysical explanation here for *why* dinosaurs (in the past) and sentient robots (in the future) exist (Dinosaur, Robot = 1), from the existence of God, instantiating tensed properties (God-P = 1), *via* grounding, or more specifically, the temporal principle (≤temporal). That is, given that God exists and instantiates tensed properties, and the principles of grounding are at work, it is no coincidence that past and future entities (e.g. dinosaurs and sentient robots) exist too. Past and future entities are the output of this principle on the input of God (and his properties) and thus are the necessary grounded 'effects' of him in a manner analogous to causation. God is thus continuously creatively active within reality by him being located in the present and serving as the synchronic and diachronic ground of all entities: past, present and future – with the presently instantiated properties possessed by him (the possession of which stemming from his creative activity) serving as the grounds for all non-present entities.[55] We can now illustrate in Figure 4: the picture of reality that is proposed by Priority Presentism (with 'E_n' representing a particular event, the 'star shape', engulfing the circular shape, representing 'diachronic fundamental

55 And by God being connected to all past, present and future entities by a grounding relation, one can take God, as tradition has, to be the cause of all things – in an analogous sense – due to the fact that grounding is analogous to causation.

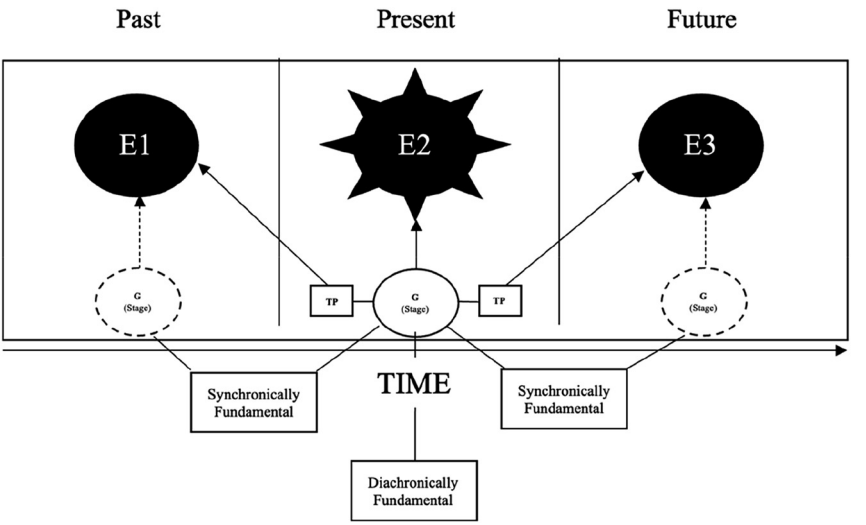

Figure 4: Theistic priority presentism.

existence', 'TP' representing 'Temporal Properties', the oval shape with 'G' representing 'present God (identified as an instantaneous stage)' and the dashed oval shape with 'G' representing 'past/future God (identified as an instantaneous stage) and the 'singular head arrow' representing a 'synchronic/diachronic grounding relation').

Now, given the diachronic grounding of the existence of the past and future entities in the presently existing temporal properties possessed by God,[56] one can now, however, ask the question of how temporal passage can indeed occur within this account? It is taken to be the case within this temporal ontology that time passes in the minimal sense that there is a movement of the metaphysically privileged present 'away' from the past and into the future that can be understood to primarily involve a constancy of tensed properties – such that these properties are always present no matter what moment of time it is – and, more importantly, a global shift in what entities exist with diachronic fundamentality – such that future diachronic derivative entities become fundamental, as they become present, and then cease to become fundamental, and thus return to being diachronically fundamental. However, by taking God – rather than that of the 'world' – to be the diachronically fundamental entity that possesses the tensed properties that ground all non-present entities, one cannot have this global shift – as God always is taken to

56 Though Baron does also leave it open for what could indeed be the bearer of these properties, this will be an important point for the next sub-section.

be an entity that remains absolutely fundamental: synchronically in that he is never grounded at a given time, and, more importantly, diachronically, in that there is never a time where another entity located at another time grounds him – thus, it is never the case that God is, at a certain moment, diachronically derivative, and then, as he becomes present, he becomes diachronically fundamental, and then after this moment passes he becomes diachronically derivative again. Hence, there seems to be a lack of temporal passage here, and thus the question now presented is: is there any way to deal with this issue, and thus secure the reality of temporal passage within this account? I believe that there is, through now utilising the Exdurantist view of persistence.

More specifically, as previously noted, in Exdurantism, objects are identical to instantaneous stages – rather than that of spacetime worms that are aggregates of these stages – and persist through time by exduring – being wholly present at the time in which it is located and being included in a series of stages rightly related to it – namely, that of it standing in a counterpart relation with antecedent and successor stages. More specifically, within an Exdurantist framework, an ordinary object is numerically identical to a single stage, and its temporal counterpart is numerically identical to another distinct stage, with the former entity being wholly present at exactly one instant of time and then, subsequent to this instant of time, it does not exist and is replaced by its temporal counterpart. Applying this view of persistence now within a theistic context, one can thus take God, as with all other objects, to be identical to an instantaneous stage – for the lack of a better term, let's term this stage: Stage_1. Stage_1 is wholly present at an exact instant of time, and thus God persists through time by being a stage: Stage_1, which is a member of a series of stages that are 'rightly related' – that is, Stage_1 has counterpart stages that are antecedent to him and successors to him. Hence, subsequent to the instant of time in which Stage_1 is wholly present at, it ceases to exist and is replaced by a temporal counterpart stage – which is then itself replaced by a successor temporal counterpart. Restating this now within the framework of Priority Presentism: God, conceived of now as an entity that is identical to an instantaneous stage: Stage_1, in combination with its antecedent and successor temporal counterparts, is the ontological grounds for all non-present entities. That is, it is Stage_1 (and each of the other temporal counterparts) that is the *present* entity that exists with absolute fundamentality – such that Stage_1 is never grounded at a given instant of time (and thus exists with synchronic fundamentality), and there is never a time where another entity, located at another time, grounds Stage_1. Hence, all of the other entities are either synchronically derivative – by being synchronically grounded by Stage_1 in the present moment – or, are diachronically derivative, by being diachronically grounded, in the past and future moments that they exist in, by Stage_1 that is located in the present instant. We can now state the re-construal of the nature of the notion of temporal passage within the present framework succinctly as follows:

(32) (Temporal Passage*)	An inherent feature of reality is that of there being (i) a global shift in the status of the stages of an object from that of diachronic derivativeness, when past or future, to diachronic fundamentality, when present, and (ii) the possession of the temporal properties by the present stage of an object.

More fully, how one can understand the manner in which temporal passage is secured within the present framework is by highlighting the fact that $Stage_1$ is an entity that is only wholly present at a given instant, and thus is replaced by a temporal counterpart of it at a subsequent instant. Yet, in re-interpreting this within the current context, we do not take a stage to be one that *exists* for an instant and then is gone after this instant – as all past, present and future entities are taken to exist – rather, one can take a stage to be one that *exists fundamentally* for an instant, and thus after this instant it ceases to possess this fundamentality. Thus, what there is here is that of there being a global shift in what stages exist with diachronic fundamentality – such that $Stage_1$ exists as a diachronic fundamental entity for an instant, and then subsequent to this, its temporal counterpart exists as a diachronic fundamental entity. More precisely, $Stage_1$, in the present instant, is diachronically fundamental, and then, after this instant passes, it becomes diachronically derivative – with the future temporal counterpart stages of $Stage_1$, that were diachronically derivative, now become fundamental as they become present, and then, again, cease to be fundamental once that present instant has also passed. Thus, on the basis of this, and the constancy of tensed properties, as $Stage_1$ becomes present, it gains the tense properties that enable it to ground the diachronically derivative past and future, and then when $Stage_1$ ceases to be present (and thus becomes past) it loses these properties, and these properties are then gained by $Stage_1$'s temporal counterpart – with this process continuing on. As such temporal passage consists in a global shift in what $Stage_1$ temporal counterpart is diachronically fundamental: future successor counterparts to $Stage_1$ shift from being diachronically derivative to fundamental, and back again after the instant in which they are wholly present ceases to be present. God is a stage that is continuously active in sustaining all entities within time by *grounding all entities in existence*: present entities synchronically, and past and future entities diachronically and synchronically. God can thus be the sustainer of all entities by possessing the tensed properties at each moment of his existence, which then directly diachronically ground all other non-present entities. That is, God, through the possession of the tensed properties, is the *immediate ground* of all derivate entities – in the sense that he grounds all of these entities not in virtue of grounding some other entity which acts as an intermediary. And then, on the basis of this, he is the *mediate ground* of their causal activity – in the sense that the entities that are brought about by the derivative entities are

themselves grounded by God in virtue of him grounding the derivate entities that act as intermediaries. Hence, God is able to actively preserve his all of creation through his grounding activity.

In providing this account, however, it seems that we are presented with two important issues: first, by conceiving of God's sustaining activity through Priority Presentism, it seems to be the case that we have not demonstrated a means for one to ward off the Compatibility Issue as one has, in fact, *lost* God's atemporality, rather than secured it – given the fact that God is now taken to be *located within time* – due to him being located at each present moment, as the grounds for the existence of all entities at that present moment, and at all past and future moments. God thus has a temporal location – namely that of each moment of time. However, as one is seeking to provide a means for God to be atemporal and still be the sustaining cause of the universe, it appears as if the present proposal is of no help in achieving this end. Second, by utilising an Exdurantist view of persistence, it is clearly the case that, firstly, one will have to affirm the existence of 'multiple divine stages' – as God is taken to be identical to one stage *and* then there are a multitude of successor stages to him that are his temporal counterparts – secondly, one will also have to deny God's immutability, as he experiences an intrinsic or extrinsic change: from being a stage that is diachronically fundamental to being one that is then diachronically derivative. Yet, again, as it is highly plausible that one would not want to affirm the existence of a near-infinite number of divine stages, and also, more importantly for the present task, one would not want to affirm the fact of us having negated God's immutability. Thus, it seems to be the case that the present proposal is again not helpful in providing a means of understanding how an atemporal entity can sustain in existence entities that are located within the temporal world. So, one is now faced with the option of either abandoning the account that has been painstakingly formulated here, or provide a further means of dealing with these issues – so as to allow one to ward off the Compatibility Issue. In taking the second option, one can now deal with these issues, and complete our constructive task, by utilising the thesis of AP detailed previously, and applying and extending it within a new context. To do this, we will now need to focus on one of God's ways of being: his immanent way of being – and the action-aspects that correspond to it – and take it to be the case that the nature of the present entity that grounds all past, present and future entities – namely, that of Stage_1 (and its temporal counterparts) – is *not* that of God himself (unqualified), but is an *aspect* of God (i.e. the creator-aspect).[57] That

57 Hence, from this point on, the notion of an attribute-aspect will not play a role in our discussion, and so, unless indicated, when the term 'aspect' is used, this should be taken to be referring to the category of action-aspects.

is, in taking into account the notion of an instantaneous stage within the framework of AP, one must convert an instantaneous *object-stage* into an instantaneous *aspect-stage*. In normal cases, an object will persist through time by being identical to a stage – without this stage being conceptualised as an aspect of the object – and being rightly related to the temporal counterparts of this stage. However, in the theistic case, God persists through time by being identical to a stage: Stage_1, which is then, in turn, to be conceived of as an aspect of him. In short, Stage_1 is an aspect – a particular way in which God is that is numerically identical to him. Secondly, and most importantly, in taking Stage_1 to now be correctly understood as an aspect, we can also take the temporal counterpart stages that are related to him to also be aspects as well – which provides us with grounds to re-construe our previous statements concerning the view of Exdurantism and the notion of a temporal counterpart within an aspectival framework as follows:

(33) (Aspectival Exdurantism)	(34) (Aspectival Temporal Counterpart)
An object located at a certain time persists through time if it has an aspectival temporal counterpart stage (i.e. aspectival stage) that is located at a successive time.	A temporal aspectival counterpart, that is located at an instant t, is one that is (i) is itself an aspect (ii) is qualitatively distinct from x (iii) is located at another instant t^*, where $t \neq t^*$, and (iii) resembles x at t^* more closely than anything else that is located at t^*.

Given this understanding of Exdurantism and temporal counterparts, Stage_1 – which we can now construe as an *aspectival stage* – is now *not* taken to be a member of a series that includes *numerically distinct* antecedent and successor temporal counterpart stages. Rather, as an *aspectival* temporal counterpart of Stage_1 is *itself* an aspect and it will be a member of a series that includes *numerically identical* antecedent, and successor aspectival temporal counterpart stages. The aspectival temporal counterparts of Stage_1 are indeed distinct from it; however, this distinction or difference is one of a *qualitative distinction* or *difference* between them – rather than that of a numerical one – given the fact that aspects qualitatively differ from one another, yet are still numerically identical. That is, Stage_1 is an aspect that is related to a series of qualitatively differing, yet numerically identical entities – namely, each of the other aspectival temporal counterparts. Moreover, though there is a qualitative distinction that can be drawn between each of the aspectival temporal counterparts of Stage_1, nevertheless they are numerically identical to Stage_1 and one another. For example, $\text{M-Power}_y[y \text{ is stage}^1]$ (M-Power *insofar as* it is stage one (i.e. Stage_1) is *diachronically fundamental and possesses the tensed properties* at t_1. Whereas $\text{M-Power}_y[y \text{ is stage}^2]$ (M-Power *insofar as* it is stage two (i.e. one of the aspectival temporal counterparts) *is diachronically fundamental and possesses the tensed properties* at t_2. Yet, each of these aspects is identical to one another

and ultimately to God. We can thus now illustrate in Figure 5 the notion of aspectival exdurance within a theistic context (where the 'double-headed arrows' represent an 'identity relation', 'G' represents 'God', the 'boxed shaded circles' represent 'instantaneous qualitatively differing aspectival counterparts of God' and the 'unboxed circle representing 'God existing as an object outside of time').

Hence, it is these aspects of God that are stages – with each of these being numerically identical to God. And thus, as an aspectival stage, God persists through time by exduring, which is that of him having aspectival temporal counterpart stages that are located at successive times. $Stage_1$ is an aspectival stage that is wholly present at a particular instant, and then is replaced by another aspectival stage – its aspectival temporal counterpart – at a subsequent instant. $Stage_1$, as an aspectival stage, thus fulfils the role of preserving in existence all created entities by synchronically grounding all present entities and possessing tensed properties that diachronically ground all past and present entities. Thus, within the framework provided by AP, temporal passage remains a reality as there is a global shift in what is diachronically fundamental: $Stage_1$ in the present instant is diachronically fundamental and gains the tensed properties that enable it to ground the diachronically

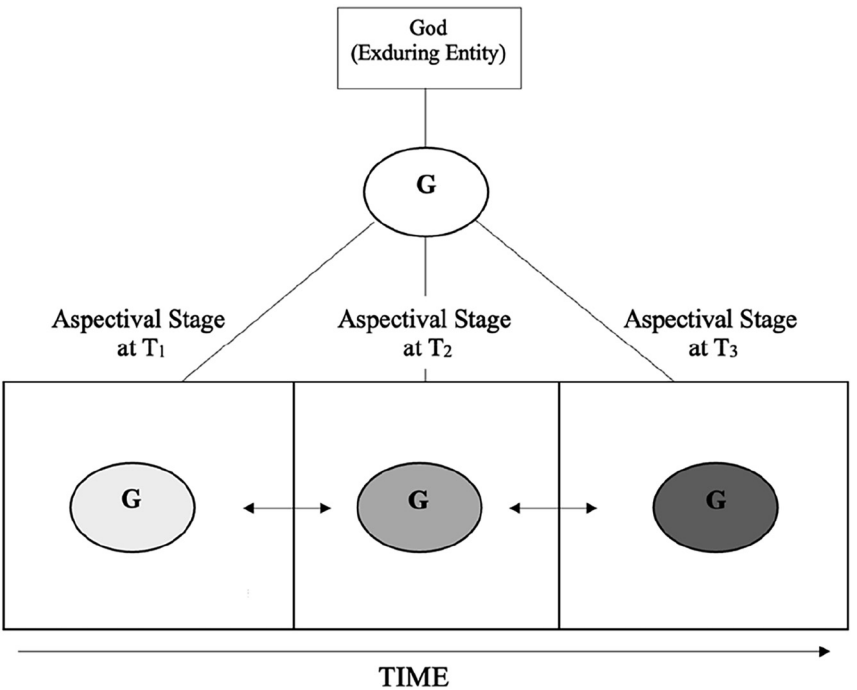

Figure 5: Theistic aspectival exdurantism.

derivative past and future, then after this instant, it becomes diachronically derivative, and loses these tensed properties, and then a future aspectival stage (i.e. $Stage_2$: an aspectival temporal counterpart of $Stage_1$) that was diachronically derivative but now, in the present moment, becomes fundamental and gains these tensed properties, which they will then lose, and return again to being diachronically derivative, once this instant has passed. On the basis of this global shift, and the constancy of tensed properties, we thus have grounds for God to be able to perform his continuous action of preservation within time by having an immanent way of being with aspects (i.e. aspectival stages) located at each instant of time that ground all entities in existence: present entities synchronically, and past and future entities diachronically and synchronically.

Hence, we thus have an answer to the issues raised above, as by us now resituating the temporal ontology of Priority Presentism and the view of Exdurantism in the framework of AP, there is no need to be committed to God having a temporal location and there being multiple divine stages, given that each of the stages affirmed are now to be conceived of as aspects (and thus each is numerically identical, though qualitatively distinct from one another). That is, an affirmation of God's location at each moment of time is that of an affirmation of the location of an aspectival stage of God at each moment of time. And the affirmation of multiple divine stages that enable God to exdure is, in fact, the affirmation of many qualitatively differing, yet numerically identical aspectival stages. Thus, by utilising an aspectival distinction here, in a 'loose' sense, focused on qualitative distinctiveness, we can indeed count a multiplicity of divine stages. Yet, in a strict sense, focused on numerical distinctiveness, there is solely one self-same object, God, who, at each instant, as a stage, is *differently considered*.[58] On the basis of this, one now has a means of dealing with the Compatibility Issue, which can be done in two ways: the first way of dealing with the Compatibility Issue can be provided by one empathising the *aspectival* part of the AP framework. As stated previously, according to the principle of (Block), which holds within an *aspectival* context, it doesn't follow from the fact that an aspect of an individual has a certain quality that the individual that bears that aspect also has that quality. Hence, in the theistic case under question, at t_1 (the present moment), M-$Power_y$[*y* is a-$stage^1$] (M-Power *insofar as* it is aspectival stage one has the qualities of *being located at* t_1, and *being diachronically fundamental and possessing the tensed properties* and then, at t_2 (the present moment), M-$Power_y$[*y* is a-$stage^1$] (M-Power *insofar as* it is aspectival stage one has the qualities of *being located at* t_2, and *being diachronically derivative and lacking the tensed properties*

58 Despite the numerical identity between God's aspects, this does not mean, however, that God is taken to persist through time by enduring, as each of the aspects is taken to exist only for an instant.

(with the aspect M-Power$_y$[y is a-stage^2] (M-Power *insofar as* it is aspectival stage two now having the qualities of *being located at* t_2, and *being diachronically fundamental and possessing the tensed properties*). However, given that one can block the *secundum quid ad simpliciter inference*, 'God (unqualified)' – or, more specifically, God, in his transcendent way of being, which we can take to be his 'unqualified' state – is not required to have any of these qualities (or change from having one quality to having the other). God can thus continue to exist atemporally, whilst having aspects that have a temporal location and are mutable. Thus, the second way of dealing with the Compatibility Issue can be provided by one empathising the *Ontological Pluralism* part of the AP framework. That is, given the plurality of domains and ways of being that are affirmed here, one can relativise the apparently problematic attributes (i.e. being atemporal and being temporal), rather than making the assumption that they are had by God in a singular and generic fashion. Thus, as God exists within two domains of reality and has two ways of being, the temporal location and mutability that is had by God's aspects is relative to one way of being and is not has by him relative to the other way of being. More precisely, God, in his *transcendent way of being*, exists atemporally, and thus does not perform the continuous action of sustaining all of reality. However, it is in God's *immanent way of being* – in which God is temporal – that God *is* performing the continuous action of sustaining all of reality. One can thus ward the charge of God's sustaining action temporalizing him, as was raised by Pike (1970), by one making a distinction between the different ways of being in which God exists: his transcendent way of being ($\exists_t$) and immanent way of being ($\exists_i$). With, on the one hand, God, in his transcendent way of being, *not* sustaining creation in existence – and thus, God is able to remain atemporal (i.e. timeless and immutable) within the specific domain and structure in which he exists. Yet, on the other hand, God, in his immanent way of being, *does* sustain creation by him being the initiating and sustaining cause of all other created reality. So, on the basis of this, even though the aspectival stages of God have a temporal location and experience the global shift in diachronic fundamentality (and the gaining and losing of the tensed properties), this does not mean that God (unqualified) is so located, and experiences this change. Hence, God can, in fact, continue to lack temporal location and remain immutable by not undergoing any intrinsic or extrinsic change – whilst the aspectival stages that are numerically identical to him can indeed have temporal location and undergo the necessary changes to uphold temporal passage and enable God to be creatively active in reality. Thus, for each of the ways of dealing with the Compatibility Issue, one has a means of warding off the problems raised by it by either emphasising the manner in which the aspect of an individual *can have a quality* (e.g. being temporally located) *that the individual lacks* (e.g. lacking temporal location) or emphasising the *relativisation of the qualities* under question (i.e. God in his immanent way of being

has a temporal location and in his transcendent way of being he lacks temporal location). And thus, given these two ways, one can finally understand the compatibility of God being atemporal (i.e. DA) and him preserving all of reality in existence, through a continuing action (i.e. DP). Taking these things all into account, we can now finally bring together the results of our constructive task and restate (AP) in its more philosophical elucidate form as follows:

(35) (Atemporal Preservation*)	(i) *Nature*: God, in his transcendent way of being, is atemporal (i.e. timeless and immutable) through lacking aspects that are temporally located, extended and successive and intrinsically and extrinsically changeable, and thus is not in a real (i.e. grounding) relation to other entities. (ii) *Action*: God, in his immanent way of being, is identified as an instantaneous (aspectival) stage, and performs, at each present moment within time, a continuous diachronic and synchronic grounding action in which he sustains in existence each derivative entity – namely, all past, present and future entities.

For the CT, one can thus affirm, within (35), the cogency of God being atemporal in the sense of being timeless (i.e. lacking temporal location, extension and succession) and immutable (i.e. not undergoing intrinsic and extrinsic change), despite him performing a continuing action of sustaining all of reality. God, in his transcendent way of being, is atemporal and does not stand in a real relation to other entities. And so, more specifically, now within the temporal ontology of Priority Presentism – which affirms the existence of a four-dimensional block of spacetime – we can take God, in his transcendent way of being, to not be located, extended or persisting through this block, and to not be in any synchronic or diachronic grounding relation. What we can take God to be, in this specific way of being, is that of him, firstly, be *wholly present* outside of this block of spacetime, and, secondly, all moments of time within this block are *under his direct gaze* – in other words, they are 'eternally present' to him. Thus, within God's transcendent way of being, we can affirm what Augustine states about God's eternality when he writes:

> God's mind does not pass from one thought to another. His vision is utterly unchangeable. Thus, He comprehends all that takes place in time – the not-yet-existing future, the existing present, and the no-longer-existing past – in an immutable and eternal present (*City of God* XI. 21).

In more contemporary parlance within our specific ontological framework, the whole of the four-dimensional block is able to be simultaneously perceived by God, in his transcendent way of being – that is, for example, the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event, which is earlier than the event of the Black Death within the

spacetime block and the event of the creation of sentient robots, which is later within the block, are able to be simultaneously perceived by God. Yet, this observation of all the moments of reality is without there being any temporal passage (of entities gaining and losing the characteristic of being diachronically fundamental). Rather, instead, all things, from God's perspective within his transcendent way of being, are static – without any change – though within the block itself, things are dynamic and do change. Moreover, as God does not stand in a real (grounding) relation to other entities, he does not, *within this specific way of being*, fulfil the role of sustaining the existence of entities within this block – namely, by being their synchronic and diachronic grounds.

Instead, God's sustaining action, as explicated within the temporal ontology of Priority Presentism, is thus now to be understood as him, *in his immanent way of being*, being the immediate (synchronic and diachronic) ground of the existence of all other (past, present and future) – and thus the mediate ground of their own activity. God, in his immanent way of being, is thus the one fundamentality entity that is 'contained' in the one fundamental moment – namely, the present – that is thus the ontological grounds for all past, present and future entities. More precisely, in fulfilling this role, God (unqualified) is not located within time; rather, what is so located are that of his aspectival stages. The manner in which God persists through time is by having a way of being: the immanent way of being, where he is an instantaneous stage, conceived of as an aspect (i.e. a qualitatively differing, and numerically identical, particular way in which God is) that is wholly present at different instances of time. Each aspectival stage is numerically identical to God and is a member of a series by them each being aspectival temporal counterparts of one another. Now, though these instantaneous aspectival stages are numerically identical to God, and are temporally located and undergo change (in their state of diachronic fundamentality), one cannot make the further inference – based on the relativity of ways of being and the fact of the one being able to block the *secundum quid ad simpliciter inference* - that God (unqualified) (God in his transcendent way of being) has this location and experiences this change. Instead, as these are aspects of God, they are entities that qualitatively differ from him (and each other), and thus God, in one way of being: his immanent way of being, can perform his continuous action of preserving reality, through them, without, as Craig stated previously, God becoming temporal (e.g. being located temporally). Taking all of these things into account, we can thus provide a final illustration in Figure 6 of the picture of reality that has been sketched within AP (with 'E_n' representing a particular event, the 'star shape', engulfing the circular shape, representing 'diachronic fundamental existence', 'TP' representing 'Temporal Properties', the circular shape with 'G' representing 'God', the shaded oval shape with 'G' representing 'present God (identified as an aspectival instantaneous stage)' and the dashed oval shaded shapes

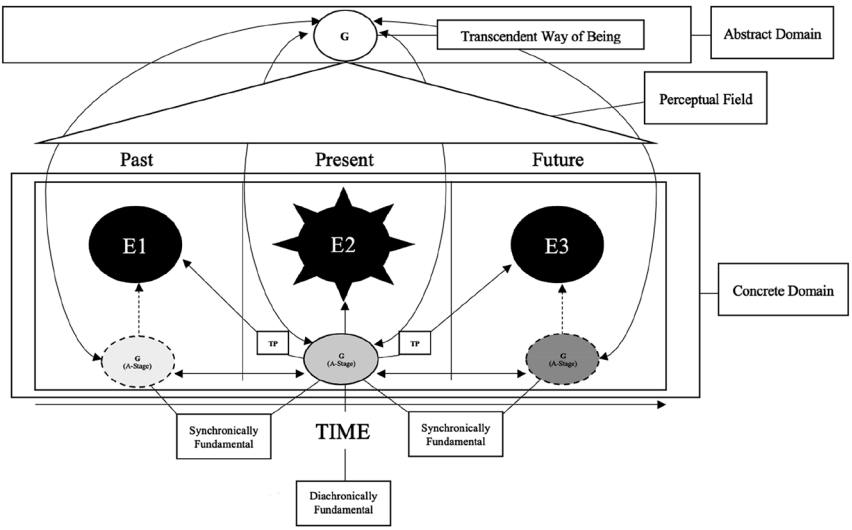

Figure 6: Aspectival pluralism (atemporality).

with 'G' representing 'past/future God' (identified as an instantaneous aspectival stage), the 'singular head arrow' representing a 'synchronic/diachronic grounding relation', and the 'double head arrows' representing 'relations of numerical identity') Figure 6.

Thus, on the basis of the assumed veracity of the AP, and *contra* Pike, a timeless (and overall atemporal) being can indeed perform a *continuous* sustaining action of all of the entities (e.g. objects, properties and relations etc.) that exist within reality, *through* having two ways of being: a transcendent way of being and an immanent way of being, with the latter having *aspectival stages*. And an atemporal God can do this, *contra* Craig, as the notion of an aspect and the thesis of TP, applied within an Exdurantist context, does provide a way for one's acts (identified as an aspect of God had in one way of being) from one's being (identified as God [unqualified]), which allows God, in his transcendent way of being, to lack temporal location, extension and succession, and be intrinsically and extrinsically unchangeable. Thus, by God being construed in this way, God is able to still, in fact, be atemporal, whilst still being sustaining ground of all temporal reality.

4 Conclusions

The central focus of this article was to provide a philosophical elucidation of the concept of divine atemporality (i.e. divine timelessness and immutability), which

is a central tenet of Classical Theism. How this end was achieved was by re-formulating this concept within an Aspectival and Ontological Pluralist framework, as extended through the use of the temporal ontology of Priority Presentism, and the Exdurantist view of persistence – termed Aspectival Pluralism. This provided a conceptual basis for further elucidating the notion and dealing with the Compatibility Issue, ultimately leading to the conclusion that an atemporal God can indeed be active within temporal reality, without, however, ceasing to be atemporal.

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