

Book of Abstracts

GOD, TIME AND CHANGE

23rd Conference of the European Society for Philosophy of Religion



Oriel College, University of Oxford, UK
and Online

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Victoria Harrison
Mark Wynn



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Conference Committee
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for Philosophy of Religion

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Message from the ESPR President

Dear Members and Friends of the ESPR,

I am delighted to welcome you, at long last, to the 23rd conference of the European Society for Philosophy of Religion!

It has been an unexpectedly long time since our last conference, and much about the world has changed in the intervening four years. Thanks to all of you for bearing with us as this conference has been re-organized and then re-organized yet again.

For the first time, the ESPR conference is in hybrid format. This format is intended to accommodate the new realities around travel, allowing many who would otherwise be unable to attend to be present and make a contribution to the event. This arrangement can allow for deep engagement with the conference theme, both for those present in person and those attending virtually, especially if we reach out and initiate conversations with the virtual attendees as we would with those present in person.

This conference wouldn't have been possible without the collaboration of many people. Thanks are due to the Board of the ESPR, Professor Mark Wynn and the staff at Oriel College, all our presenters, and, last but not least, Jan Kahambing for his invaluable contribution to the organization of the event.

Please enjoy the conference and the beautiful environment of Oriel College.

Victoria S. Harrison
ESPR President
University of Macau, China

Message from the Convenor

Dear Conference Delegates,

Welcome to the conference! And welcome to Oxford!

I trust you will enjoy our discussions over the next few days, and also the opportunity to see at least a little of the city and university.

Professor Harrison and her team in Macao have undertaken all the preparatory work for the conference - and are to be congratulated on their heroic efforts to ensure that so far as possible everything is in readiness for our meeting.

Very sadly, Victoria cannot be here in person, of course, and I stand ready, therefore, to help so far as I can with any practical matters that arise in the course of the conference, where they cannot be resolved remotely.

If you have questions, do please feel free to address them to me!

I look forward to meeting you.

With all good wishes,

Mark Wynn
Oriol College, University of Oxford, UK

Conference Theme

GOD, TIME AND CHANGE

This hybrid conference investigates the impact of time and change, as two facets of human experience and cognition, on conceptions of God, the divine and ultimate reality.

While being a rich source for metaphysical speculation, questions about time and change also provoke discussion of what it means to be human, thereby having profound ethical and social implications.

Reflection on time and change in relation to God, the divine or ultimate reality forms the philosophical core of many religious traditions, both theistic and non-theistic. The question, for instance, of whether or not temporality and change should be conceived as inherent attributes of God has been a focus of debate within philosophy of religion since antiquity.

Time and change continue to be topics of ongoing research within many academic disciplines. The conference brings current philosophical and scientific theories of time and change into conversation

Sub-themes

Sub-theme 1

Time and Change in Philosophy and Science

In an attempt to provide a theory that fits with our actual experience of time, some philosophers and scientists have argued that only the present is real. Given such approaches, can we retain the view of ourselves as beings that persist through time? Might an understanding of persons influenced by Asian philosophy be a better fit with recent theories of time? Do some contemporary views of time or change/causation require us to alter traditional religious conceptions of God, the divine or ultimate reality? Can recent scientific or philosophical theories of time, or of change, help us to answer questions within philosophy of religion? Are some recent scientific or philosophical views of time or change incompatible with, or supportive of, established conceptions of God, the divine or ultimate reality? How might arguments about the existence of God, or concerning human persons, be affected by current thinking about time and change?

Sub-theme 2

Religio-Philosophical Questions concerning Time and Change

In what ways are conceptions of God, the divine or ultimate reality shaped by temporal experience structured by causality? How do philosophical ideas of ontological independence and necessary existence interact with religious perspectives concerning time and change (especially those involving the idea of creation)? Should temporality be conceived as an attribute of God, the divine or ultimate reality? Alternatively, can the view that God, the divine or ultimate reality, is non-temporal and unchanging be supported? Are understandings of time and change logically prior to conceptions of God, the divine or ultimate reality? What properties might something non-temporal and unchanging possess? What might it mean for something to exist necessarily and permanently? Is timelessness a perfection? Could a timeless being or ultimate reality be causally active? How can something eternal be related to something finite? What can be said about freedom, determinism and foreknowledge in relation to different theories of time or change?

Sub-theme 3
Religious Life, Language and Experience

In what ways does the experience of time and change impact religious life and understanding? Why might someone hold that to exist in time, and to experience change, is inferior to being timeless and unchanging? Might the opposite be true? Is it possible to have a meaningful relationship with a timeless and unchanging God, or with an undifferentiated changeless ultimate reality? How might eternity and human happiness be related? Might we experience temporality and change post-mortem? In what ways do religious philosophies address the existential problems posed by human finitude? How does belief in karma or rebirth affect understandings of the meaning of life and the significance of death? Is it possible to experience timelessness, and if so, what role does it play in religious experience? How do conceptions of time and change affect the language people use about God, the divine or ultimate reality? Can something which is timeless and changeless be adequately described without resorting to negative language?

Sub-theme 4
Ethics, Society and Politics

What are some of the ethical, social or political implications of different conceptions of God, or of ultimate reality, in relation to time? Does the view that God, the divine or ultimate reality, has causal powers impact ethical, social or political theories? Prophecy can be regarded as an attempt to relate the will of an eternal God to the ethical, social and political realm, what philosophical questions does this phenomenon raise? Are teleological linear conceptions of time linked to particular ethical, political or social theories? How might the idea of an end of time, found in some forms of theism, influence attitudes to social movements, for instance, environmentalism? Is there a theoretical connection between a cyclical conception of time and certain ethical, social or political perspectives? How do religious/liturgical calendars relate to secular time, and in what ways do they impact social organization?

Plenary Speakers



Robin Le Poidevin is Professor of Metaphysics at the University of Leeds, where he has taught since 1989. He took an MA at the University of Oxford and a PhD at the University of Cambridge. He gave the Stanton Lectures in the Philosophy of Religion at Cambridge in 2007, and was the Editor of Religious Studies from 2010 to 2015. His publications include *Arguing for Atheism* (1996), *Travels in Four dimensions* (2003), *The Images of Time* (2007), *Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction* (2010) and *Religious*

Fictionalism (2019). He is currently completing a book on contemporary metaphysics and the incarnation.



Carla Canullo is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Macerata, Italy. She graduated with a PhD in Philosophy and Human Sciences from the University of Perugia. Her research has focused on a number of French philosophers (Paul Ricoeur, F.P.G. Maine de Biran, Jean Nabert, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, René Le Senne, Louis Lavelle). Currently she works with the Italian philosophical community, and has participated in research projects with philosophical communities in Canada

(Montreal - McGill and Université de Montréal), Belgium (Louvain - La-Neuve), and France (Paris, Nice, Lille, Lyon). In addition to her continued research into phenomenology and hermeneutics, she has, in recent years, dealt with the philosophy of religion and interreligious dialogue, ethics and human rights, and currently, the possibility of thinking the ethos of Europe as a translated political and cultural identity.



Heiko Schulz is a Professor in the Department of Protestant Theology at Goethe-University Frankfurt. Dr. Schulz's specialty is in Kierkegaard studies. Dr. Schulz also has published on various problems in philosophy of religion and theology. His recent works include 'Changing one's mind: Reconsidering Fisch's idea of framework transitions in (partly) Kierkegaardian fashion' (*Open Philosophy*, 2020) and 'Suffering, Guilt—and Divine

Injustice? The Nature and Forms of Evil in Their Bearing on the Problem of Theodicy' (*Toronto Journal of Theology*, 2020).



Jayne Svenungsson is Professor of Systematic Theology at Lund University in Sweden. She is the author of *Divining History: Prophetism, Messianism and the Development of the Spirit* (Berghahn, 2016) and co-editor of *Jewish Thought, Utopia and Revolution* (Rodopi, 2014), *Heidegger's Black Notebooks and the Future of Theology* (Palgrave, 2017) and *The Ethos of History: Time and Responsibility* (Berghahn, 2018). Her main areas of research are political theology and philosophy of history. In recent years she has also been

working within the field of religion and aesthetics.



Lubos Rojka is Professor of Philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Prior to that, he taught the philosophy of religion at Trnava University (Slovakia, 2005-2012). Since 2009 he has been the coordinator of the Society of Christian Philosophy in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Lubos has been a member of various research groups in the field of philosophical theology and of the editorial board of *Gregorianum*. His main research interests are in the analytic philosophy of religion, and philosophy of mind and

consciousness. His doctoral research (Boston College, 2005) focused on the philosophy of B. Lonergan. Since then he continues to expand on this work in a broader variety of topics and authors in systematic philosophical theology. His publications include *The Eternity of God* (2005), *Who God is and Whether He Really Exists* (2010), *The Creation of the Universe Out of Nothing* (2012), *The Concept of God in the Analytical Philosophy of Religion* (2018).



Jessica Frazier is a Lecturer at the University of Oxford and the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Her work explores philosophies of self and Being in Indian thought and also Post-Heideggerian philosophy; her books include *Hindu Worldviews: Theories of Self, Ritual and Reality* (Bloomsbury 2017), *Categorisation in Indian Philosophy* (Ashgate 2014), and *Reality, Religion, and Passion* (Lexington, 2008). She is also the author of numerous chapters and articles on phenomenology, metaphysics, notions of self, and comparative philosophy. Forthcoming books include *Religion, Hinduism and the Sacred* (Cambridge) as well as a philosophical exploration of the sublime in Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought. She is also Managing Editor of the *Journal of Hindu Studies* (Oxford Journals), and an occasional contributor to BBC programmes.



Marcel Sarot is Professor of Fundamental Theology and Dean of the Tilburg School of Theology, University of Tilburg. He worked as an editor-in-chief of *NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion* and recently authored 'Keeping Theology and Religious Studies Together: On the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion' (2022). He published extensively on the doctrine of God (and especially on divine impassibility), models of the good life, methodological naturalism, the problem of evil and prayer. In the recent past he was Director of the Netherlands Research School for Theology and Religious Studies NOSTER (2005-2009), Head of the Department of Religious Studies and Theology of Utrecht University (2008-2012) and Professor for the History and Philosophy of Religious Studies and Theology at Utrecht University (2005-2012).



Marius Timmann Mjaaland is Professor for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Oslo and President of the Nordic Society for Philosophy of Religion. He is the author of *Autopsia* (De Gruyter, 2008) and *The Hidden God: Luther, Philosophy and Political Theology* (Indiana University Press, 2016). He has written numerous articles on phenomenology, theology, and political philosophy and has recently published the two volumes *Formatting Religion: Across Politics, Education, Media, and Law* (Routledge, 2019) and *The Reformation of Philosophy* (Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

Plenary Talks (Harris Lecture Theatre)

Saturday, September 3

3.15-4.45 pm

Plenary Session I:

Time and Change in Philosophy and Science

Robin Le Poidevin (Leeds):

'The Temporal Vacuum'

Lubos Rojka (Gregorian University, Rome):

'The Sempiternal Presence of God in a Relativistic World'

Sunday, September 4

11.15-12.45 am

Plenary Session II:

Religio-Philosophical Questions concerning Time and Change

Heiko Schulz (Goethe University, Frankfurt):

'Categorical Beings: Some Ontological Aspects of Human Temporality and their Religious Implications'

Marcel Sarot (Tilburg):

'Praying for Past Events'

2.00-3.30 pm

Plenary Session III:

Religious Life, Language and Experience

Marius Timmann Mjaaland (Oslo):

'God, Time and Climate Change: The question of time reconsidered within the Anthropocene'

Jessica Frazier (Oxford):

'Embracing Divine Transformation: Being, Causation, Powers, and Persons'

Monday, September 5

5:00-6:30 pm

Plenary Session IV:

Ethics, Society and Politics

Jayne Svenungsson (Lund):

'At the End of the World. On the "Apocalyptic Turn" in Recent Political Theology'

Carla Canullo (Macerata):

'Redeemed time and freed life: towards which politics?'

Abstracts

De-Anthropocentrism and Geological Time:
A Serious Tension in the Ethics of Ecological Theologies?

Aaron James Goldman

From a perspective sympathetic to environmentalist critiques of theology, this paper identifies and probes a tension internal to theologies that aim to de-anthropocentrize religion (usually Christianity) to pursue the moral ideal of global environmental sustainability. Such theologies include ecotheologies (such as Sallie McFague's), theocentrism (such as James Gustafson's), and other scientifically-informed posthumanist or posthumanism-adjacent theologies (such as Mary-Jane Rubenstein's critical pantheism) that find a point of departure in Lynn White's 1967 claim that dualisms associated with classical Christian theology and Enlightenment-era science have set the stage for mass environmental catastrophe. This tension, I will argue, emerges from these theologies' simultaneous commitments (a) to defend the theological relevance of empirical discoveries in physical cosmology, evolutionary history, and geology that decenter *Homo sapiens* in the context of God's creation, and (b) to reduce the environmental impact of human societies on non-human nature, including landforms, ecosystems, and natural processes. Despite each commitment ostensibly bolstering the other, my contention is that they undermine one another: To achieve its moral aims, these theologies recruit scientific insights that decenter human beings by contextualizing them within much older and farther-reaching ecological, geological, and evolutionary processes. But by decentering human beings and their interests in this way, the goal of sustaining non-human nature and natural processes as they currently exist paradoxically reveals itself to be a value indexical to human beings' desire to preserve a status quo.

To advance my argument, I draw from an essay by paleontologist and natural historian Stephen Jay Gould: "The Golden Rule: A Proper Scale for Our Environmental Crisis" (1990). In this piece, Gould claims that, from a perspective informed by geological time scales – the very time scales ecotheologies ask us to consider to remind us that human beings are not the focal point of the creation – the disruptions to natural processes that *Homo sapiens* is capable of prove to be infinitesimal and irrelevant. Even in the worst-case scenario of global nuclear winter and radical climate change, the Earth can bide its time before new, radically different, and presumably equally morally valuable forms of non-human life will flourish. Thus, there seems to be no clear morally relevant reason grounded in a theory of natural intrinsic value to favor Earth today over Earth as it might be after, e.g., climate catastrophe. Though Gould stops short of articulating the claim himself, his observation points toward a double-mindedness in de-anthropocentric environmentalist thinking. While I am not committed to Gould's conclusion that the only way forward is to embrace a theory of instrumental value for nature (rather than a non-instrumental account of nature's intrinsic value), Gould's critique needs to be taken seriously by ecotheologians and others concerned with the environmental results of anthropocentrism.

I conclude by suggesting two possible avenues for such theologies and their corresponding environmental ethics. One is to attempt to incorporate humanity into creation or salvation narratives in such a way as to lay the groundwork for

valuing certain configurations of nature over others (such as Holmes Rolston's theology) or for adopting certain virtuous postures toward a developing non-human creation (such as Catherine Keller's process theology). The second, which I favor, is to challenge claims such as White's or Rubenstein's that traditional Christian theologies or Enlightenment-era rationality are only at fault; I suggest that it is no longer possible to escape these traditions, and moreover, that they should be critically reckoned with from within to highlight that they may indeed contain the causes of environmental crises, but also resources to identify and confront them.

Short Paper Session 5

Can poetry redeem us from transience and finitude?
Emerson and Cavell on the human condition

Agnese Maria Fortuna

Despite his idealistic faith, Emerson honestly declares the reasons for skepticism towards the reachability of the aims of Idealism. Its ambition to grant us a wholly, all-purpose theory that would provide us with a perfect account of the nature of reality and with effective practical power, leaves us with our inanity both to reach reality as it is by means of knowledge and to ransom it from the inconsistency of appearances by means of our actions. Furthermore, Idealism leaves unaltered the transiency of us and of reality, removed only in principle but de facto increased up to the point of pervasive destabilisation.

In Nature Emerson ends in the recollection of the Ancient Testament's reliance on God's benevolent witness as the only way to overcome the risk of losing the meaningfulness of all world and bodily life since they are transient and due to death. Whilst in Nature the problem of transiency is resolved by means of his claim for an unearthly order of reason, in Experience even this appeal seems lost.

The preservation of the subjective self-sufficiency promised by Idealism, leads to the subject presumption of being "external" to the world as its creator and "internal" as the radiating centre of its meaningfulness. While the world disappears, reduced to be mere appearance as it is, the hypertrophy of the idealistic subject blocks his knowing as well as his moral acting. To overcome this situation the subject should regain the sense of his own limitations, withdrawing from the centre of reality to the centre of his own world, no more pretending that both are the same, but accepting it as just one of many.

The Romantic idea of finding ourselves as being in between worlds implies the presumption of a double distance that is at risk of alienating us from the humanized world of shared meanings and from nature. The question is how to find the harmonic condition where this ambivalent situation could be resolved in favour of the gain of an authentic relation with the truth of Spirit expressed in the living world to which we belong and that surrounds us. The question is how to redeem the world, and us in it, from the virtually deadly constraints of vision? Only poetry, Emerson says, can allow the epiphany of the living world that is the

substantial craving of all Romantics thinkers. Nevertheless, Cavell notices, «this quest of poetry for the recovery of the world (...), will look to poetry very like the quest for poetry, as if the cause of poetry has become its own survival» (S. Cavell, «Emerson, Coleridge, and Kant (Terms as Conditions)», in Emerson's Transcendental Etudes, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003, 59-82). Behind the Romantic attempt lurks a fear, the same that seems to be at the root of the stalemate ingenerated by the fantasy of the proliferation of the words, or of being between worlds. A fear that also advises us of the end of the Edenic age, since it is rooted in birth of knowledge that brings to us the sense of our intrinsic vulnerability.

Hence, if even poetry (and philosophy) cannot at last succeed in redeeming us and the world directly, it can indirectly do it by pointing out our vulnerability to the temptation of avoiding the acknowledgment – first of all, of the existence of the common world that we inhabit, where all our deficiencies are constantly put under light. It is however precisely in this condition, Auden recollects, that finally we can hear «the real Word which is our only *raison d'être*».

Short Paper Session 6

Divine Atemporal-Temporal Relations: Does Open Theism have a Better Option?

Aku Antombikums

Open theists argue that God's relationship to time, as conceived in classical theism, is erroneous. They explicate that it is contradictory for an atemporal being to act in a temporal universe, including experiencing its temporal successions. Contrary to the atemporalists, redemptive history has shown that God interacts with humans in time. This relational nature of God nullifies the classical notion of God as timelessly eternal. Therefore, it lacks a philosophical and theological basis. Because God is in time, He does not know all future contingencies and, therefore, changes. This study examines open theism's appropriation of the A and B theories of time to the divine-human relationship. The study argues that divine temporality does not solve the tension of divine-human relationships, especially in relation to the future. Further, if it is not logically and metaphysically contradictory for an omnipresent being to act in space, then it follows that an atemporal being can act in time. Whether time is understood from the metric or psychological point of view, it does not transcend God, and therefore, the limitation it places on human creatures with respect to the future does not apply to God. Lastly, although many classical philosophers reject the notion of eternity as timelessly eternal, the doctrine has a philosophical and theological basis in the Scripture.

God, Time and Change

Ciro De Florio & Aldo Frigerio

One of the most debated topics in philosophy of religion is the relationship between God and the temporal reality. Several theoretical intertwinings are possible between A and B-theories of time and timeless and temporal conceptions of God (for a systematic exploration, see De Florio, Frigerio 2019). The eternalist account, authoritatively carried out by, among others, Rogers (2007) and Helm (1988), resolves the dilemma through the adoption of a B-theoretic, block view of the universe. Clearly, it is possible to advance several criticisms to this particular metaphysics of time. However, here, we do not take this into account. Rather, we would like to explore a timeless model of God within an A-theoretic conception of time; in other terms, God is eternal but time has a substantial, dynamic nature. This combination of views has been the target of many criticisms: for instance, Kretzmann (1966), Craig (2001a), Mullins (2016). The argument is the following:

1. An omniscient entity knows what time it is [premise]
2. An entity that knows what time it is is subject to change [premise]
3. An omniscient entity is subject to change [1,2]
4. An entity that is subject to change is not timeless [premise]
5. An omniscient entity is not timeless [3,4]

In other words, if the A-theory of time holds, then the world is constituted by always changing tensional facts. An omniscient God must be able to track the succession of the tensional facts. But, to do that, His knowledge too must be changeable. Nevertheless, a God with a changeable knowledge cannot be timeless. We acknowledge the strength of this argument and we recognize that many views that aim to reconcile a timeless God with the A-theory of time (for instance Kvanvig 1986 and Wierenga 2000) end up embracing a B-theory of time (see Craig 2001b, 2004).

We think that not everything is lost for the advocates of this combination of views; however, we argue that a non-standard A-theory, such as Fragmentalism, must be accepted (Fine 2005, 2006, Lipman 2015). According to Fragmentalism, reality is not a coherent whole but a series of fragments, each of which is constituted by temporal facts. The present of every fragment is centered on an instant of time which is different from the present of the other fragments. Therefore, what is a future fact within a fragment is a present fact in another fragment and a past fact in an another fragment. We argue that, within this metaphysics of time, God can be timeless and know what time it is without being subject to change.

To formalize the fragmentalist view, we develop a framework in which the truth value of propositions is indexed to two instants of time: one is the instant of evaluation; the other is the perspectival time, which can be variously construed, but which here indicates the present time of any fragment. In other words, the perspectival time is “the point at which the world is arrived so far” within a fragment. We assume, further, that the future of each fragment is open, that is, more than one possible history pass through the perspectival time of any

fragment. This guarantees the libertarian freedom of the agents. The past is, on the contrary, closed, so that in every fragment there is just one past history. In this framework, a proposition like “Ann is at the party at 9:00 p.m. of 13th December” can be indeterminate with respect to a certain perspectival time and true with respect to another perspectival time.

We have, thus, all the ingredients to account God’s omniscience, agents’ free will and the reality of temporal becoming.. Our knowledge is bounded to just one perspective, that given by the present of our fragment. By contrast, God sees all fragments within this framework God’s omniscience is characterized as omniperspectival knowledge: God eternally knows the truth value of every proposition at every instant of time and from any perspective.

Short Paper Session 1

On Rethinking Cognitive Limitations and the Scientific Progress: Three Indian Visions of Phenomenalisation

Alex Kostova

What does it mean to say that the Indian philosophy has a distinctive approach to the problem of phenomenalisation that backs metaphysical explanation and thus could shed important new light on our understanding of the nature of scientific progress? The aim of my text is threefold. First, I shall discuss the problem of phenomenalisation, namely, the (in)commensurability between how things are and how they appear to us, and shall show that it is closely related to two central problems in contemporary philosophy: the notorious hard problem of consciousness and the problem of a priori cognition of the structure of reality. Here I shall outline three crucial Indian visions, that is, the Jain mode of explaining the nature of partial truths of reality, the Vaisheshika realism that takes into account the unobservable objects in scientific explanation and Samkhya's phenomenological account of the relation between experience and the radical transformations of reality. Second, I will argue that the proposed solutions to the problem of phenomenalisation open the door for an entirely different from the Western account on how we think of our cognitive limitations and hence of scientific progress on the grounds of their well-developed explanations of the fact that phenomenal contents of experience both enable and limit our cognitive access to entities. Third, I will urge that realism has to embrace pluralism in order to coherently think of the scientific progress. Scientific revolutions and the radical changes they bring could be explained only on the basis of understanding why and how scientific truths are only partial. This is not the case only because some of the scientific propositions are true and others are false. Rather, scientific progress is not cumulative and needs deep conceptual transformations; revolutionary theories radically change the grounds of even the most successful sciences. They revise crucial notions such as those for time and space and install ruptures in scientific progress. This phenomena could be explained better if we examine further the idea that phenomenality not only help us see the nature of reality, but also hide aspects of it. In the end, realism without pluralism cannot explain the radical changes in our basic scientific notions. At the same time, pluralism without realism may become indistinguishable from relativism.

Neoclassical Approaches to God in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion

Amerigo Barzaghi

The aim of this paper is to explore some neoclassical approaches to God that can be found inside contemporary philosophy of religion. The so-called neoclassical school of philosophy of Milan originated, as a specific branch of twentieth-century neo-scholasticism, inside the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, thanks to the theoretical proposals of Amato Masnovo (1880-1955), professor of metaphysics and of medieval philosophy there, and of the best-known of his followers, Gustavo Bontadini (1903-1990). This school is still present in the contemporary philosophical scenario, thanks to some heirs of Bontadini's philosophy, such as Carmelo Vigna and Paolo Pagani of Ca' Foscari University, Alberto Peratoner of the Theological Faculty of Triveneto, as well as to some of their disciples. A neoclassical philosophy aims to be rigorous and essential, as it tries to revalue specific fundamental aspects of some ancient philosophies such as those of Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, and to harmonize them with the thought of classic philosophers from the Patristic Era and the Middle Ages. Neoclassical philosophers are convinced of the actual existence of a *philosophia perennis*, one which originates in ancient Greek thought, passes through the centuries, and is capable of assimilating new theoretical and methodological insights from many of the succeeding philosophical traditions, such as some idealist reflections on the transcendentality of thought. In natural theology, the neoclassical school tries to develop a stable path to God, i.e. a path which aims to demonstrate God's existence by showing the reasons why the denial of such an existence would imply a contradiction. In this attempt, the reflection of both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas on temporality and change as signs of contingency plays a crucial role to infer the existence of an all-powerful, atemporal Creator of the entire universe. In our paper we will explore the way in which a neoclassical path to God that builds upon the reflection of Masnovo, Bontadini, Vigna, and Pagani, utilizes temporality and change as springboards toward an atemporal God. This is accomplished by way of an ontological analysis of becoming.

This twofold aspect of the God-universe relationship, i.e. God's atemporality and the universe's temporality, can also play a key role in solving some thorny issues in the contemporary science-theology dialogue, as the Augustinian rumination of historian and philosopher of science Ernan McMullin (1924-2011) on evolutionary contingency, cosmic purpose, and the Christian idea of a divine providence clearly displays. Therefore, through McMullin's reflection, we will also try to integrate the neoclassical approach to God inside that area of philosophy of religion which focuses on the science-theology dialogue.

Religion, Time and Change

Andrea Aguti

Modernity has affected religion and religious institutions in many ways. One of the most relevant aspects of the impact of modernity on religion seems to be the emergence of what we might call the “imperative to change”. Modernity and social change are strictly intertwined since profound and rapid transformations characterize modern society. According to H. Rosa, technological acceleration, acceleration of social change, and acceleration of the pace of life are distinctive features of modernization. So, if religion wants to play a role in modern society, it must also change continuously. On the ecclesiological level, this means that *ecclesia semper reformanda est*. However, what does mean “change” in the religious context? To what extent should a religion change?

In this paper, I will first try to answer these questions by reflecting on the meaning of social change and assuming R. Nisbet’s thesis according to which change is secondary to persistence and fixity in social behavior. Secondly, I will consider the view of some sociologists of religion, such as Roger Finke, according to which change in the religious field succeeds only when it preserves religion’s core beliefs by favoring adaptive innovations on the organizational level.

Thirdly, I will try to verify this thesis on a strictly philosophical level, proposing an endurantist conception of change in religion, considered the only one that allows maintaining the identity of a religion over time. Finally, we will argue that this thesis is plausible by adopting a realist account of social ontology.

Pantheism, Omnisubjectivity, and the Feeling of Temporal Passage

Andrei A. Buckareff

By ‘pantheism’ I mean to pick out a model of God on which God is identical with the totality of existents constitutive of the universe. I have argued that if pantheism is true, then the universe must exhibit the sort of unity characteristic of a cognitive system (Buckareff 2019 and 2022). I take it that the following are implications of such a pantheistic model of God. First, the universe is the divine mind. Second, God is omnispatiotemporal, existing at every spacetime point (which is not to say that each spacetime point is itself God or divine). Third, if God knows everything that can be known in the universe, then God has knowledge of the contents of the minds of conscious creatures such as human persons. Furthermore, it is reasonable to hold that qua constituents of the divine mind, God’s access to the conscious minds of creatures is first-personal. Therefore, God has knowledge *de se* of the minds of every conscious creature. Finally, if God has

knowledge de se of the minds of every conscious creature, then divine omniscience implies omnisubjectivity.

Suppose that we live in a block universe and, hence, eternalism is true. If eternalism is true, then temporal passage is not real. But conscious creatures such as human persons experience temporal passage. A puzzle emerges at this juncture. If God has the attribute of omnisubjectivity, then God experiences temporal passage owing to God's having knowledge de se of the contents of the minds of conscious creatures. But God also has a unified experience of the entire spatiotemporal continuum. God's having these two perspectives creates a tension for pantheism given that God would seem to experience both temporal passage and an absence of temporal passage.

I compare two versions of pantheism: non-personal pantheism and personal pantheism and consider which one has better resources to answer the foregoing puzzle. On both, God is assumed to be identical with the universe and the universe is assumed to exhibit the sort of cognitive unity exhibited by a mind. The watershed difference between the two lies in whether God has a distinctive robust first-person perspective. Following, Lynne Rudder Baker (2013, 135), I take it that one has a robust first-person perspective only if one can consciously conceive of oneself as oneself.

Non-personal pantheism presents us with a conception of the divine mind on which there is no distinctive robust first-person perspective manifested by God. Hence, non-personal pantheism is a conception of God on the divine mind consists of undifferentiated conscious experiences that are in tension with one another, including both the experience of temporal passage and its absence. I argue that personal pantheism does not face this problem. Following Peter Forrest (2016; Buckareff 2022, 53 and 59), I present a personal pantheist model of God on which the conscious creatures that are within God are like holes in the divine mind. More specifically, where there is a conscious mind within the divine mind, the divine mind qua cognitive system exhibits less unity in that region than that exhibited by the discrete centers of consciousness that comprise sub-systems of the larger system. In those locations, the experience God has of each center of consciousness at each moment can be individuated from the overall experience of the divine mind. The upshot is a view of the divine mind as a unified whole that can adopt a metacognitive first-personal stance vis-à-vis the sub-systems that comprise it while also having knowledge de se of the contents of the mental states of the sub-systems (the "holes") including their experience of temporal passage at a moment.

The Spiritual Change of Being in Kierkegaard's Vision of Becoming a Christian

Andrzej Slowikowski

The main topic of Kierkegaard's entire body of work is the problem of becoming a Christian. In order to explain the difference between humankind's temporal existence and its Christian existence, Kierkegaard posits something that I would like to call the ontologization of spirit. This means that he treats the reality of spirit – one which is not directly experienced either by senses or by intellectual cognition of the world – as the actual core of who an individual is and how one understands the psychophysical reality of life. For Kierkegaard, the reality of spirit (transcendence) creates the entire reality of human being – it is something that reduplicates psychophysical reality and provides it with meaning.

Kierkegaard's concept of redoubling (or reduplication) is central to understanding the ontologization of spirit that emerges both from his pseudonymous and his signed works. The reality of spirit comes into being in the relation between a temporal person and an eternal God and requires existential involvement in actualizing the eternal (transcendent) spiritual good in the human (immanent) world. In Kierkegaard's opinion, someone who succeeds in fulfilling this task reduplicates temporal reality in the eternal one and confirms the primacy of the latter. Such an individual becomes an actual, eternal being in the temporal world – as Christ did – and this is why he becomes a follower of Christ and is contemporary with Him.

This reduplication has a critical impact on human being as it brings it about that human being is completely transformed in this event. It is not possible to explain this transformation by using classical metaphysical categories when matter under the influence of form transitions from one state of being into another. In Kierkegaard's account, the entire event occurs in the interiority of a person and therefore, while the externality of the psychophysical reality remains the same – simultaneously the person's being is internally turned into a new reality that completely changes her way of existing. This is why Kierkegaard uses many new categories that describe the situation of a person's entering into the reality of spirit, which itself is a person's transition from the state of despair into the state of faith. These categories are, among others, rebirth, leap, break, moment, paradox, reversal, death to oneself and to the world. All of them indicate that, in this situation, the being of a person changes ontologically – that this being becomes a qualitatively different (new) being.

What does it mean for being to transform because of eternity's entering into the temporal world? What is actually transformed if one speaks here about immaterial reality? How may immaterial (transcendent, spiritual) reality impact material (immanent, psychophysical) reality? And finally, is it possible to describe invisible reality in the categories or concepts that are taken from the visible world? I would like to address these questions in the light of Kierkegaard's Christian deliberations with the hope that I am able to delineate the nature of this invisible change of being, however, without being expected to be able to penetrate the mystery of this process – which in Kierkegaard's vision is possible only for someone who himself experiences this spiritual change of being.

Schelling's conception of messianic time

Ariën Voogt

In this paper I give a theological interpretation of Schelling's conception of time in his late philosophy. I thereby hope to show Schelling's significance for contemporary debates on messianic time (1991; 2005; 2003; 1994), and to make the bold suggestion that we can put Schelling among the ranks of messianic thinkers. I explore how we can understand Schelling's 'Positive Philosophy' as developing a conception of messianic time, which differs from teleological narratives of progress, and both secular and theological forms of eschatology. I explore how Schelling thinks of God's transformation of time itself, from empty chronos to messianic time of fulfillment. Lately, eschatological and theological themes in Schelling's late thought have received attention and have been brought in connection with contemporary debates (2021; 2016; 2021). Yet most scholars have focused on the relation of Schelling's thought to political eschatology. I argue why Schelling's understanding of messianic time fundamentally differs from both secular and traditional theological forms of eschatology. The significance of Schelling's idea of messianic time is still largely unexplored (an important exception is Appel 2008).

Schelling's late thought displays a deep awareness of how questions of human existence, God and meaning are intimately connected to time. The dominant understanding of time as chronos threatens to dissolve human existence in the abyss of a time that stretches out in infinity in endless repetition of the same. Here future and past are indistinguishable from the present, and genuine freedom and meaningful action are impossible. From the confrontation with the nihilistic abyss of time, Schelling aims to conceive of God's salvation. Salvation does not mean deliverance from time as such, entering the realm of timeless eternity. Time itself is transformed. In his Positive Philosophy, Schelling elaborates how we must reconceive time in the light of God's self-revelation.

The dimensions of time – past, present and future – are not three aspects of the arrow of time. They acquire a constitutive meaning as distinct dimensions of human life and divine revelation. The past becomes the absolute and unthinkable past of God's creation, still hinting at the hidden meaning of existence; the time of the present as chronos is the result of the fall; the dimension of the absolute future is opened up by God and promises a complete transformation. The dimensions of absolute past and future lie beyond the reach of rational thought and therefore have a mythological character. God's revelation in the dimensions of absolute past and future transforms the present into what we may call messianic time. Messianic time is not an eschaton, the end of the chronological time line. It is the dimension that opens up in the life of the present, transforming it. It gives back freedom and meaning to our lives, it gives us reason not to despair in regard of the wreckage of the historical past and the ecological apocalypse of the future. Messianic time remains tied to an absolute past and future, which means we cannot ever realize the messianic event in the present as a technological or political project.

Time and Responsibility. Hans Jonas and the Ethics of Contingency

Astrid Grell

Technical advances have expanded the human life-world - dissolving spatiotemporal limitations and allowing us to change the world to an extent previously not considered possible, ultimately altering the conditions for ethics and responsibility. So argues Hans Jonas in his 1979 opus *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*. In this presentation, I aim to outline the correlation between time and responsibility in Jonas' work. More specifically, I will show how the temporal ontology developed during his early and middle period (ranging from the early 30's to 1965) lays the foundation for his later ethical thinking.

New arguments for presentism

Atle Ottesen Søvik

A central debate in the philosophy of time is between eternalism and presentism (Callender 2011, 16). Due to the word limit for this proposal, I will assume that these views are known by the evaluators.

In my talk, I will offer a new argument for presentism, and a new rebuttal to the main argument for eternalism. If there is time, I will end with some comments on the relevance of the eternalism/presentism debate for philosophy of religion.

1 A new argument for presentism

I have not seen anyone else make the following argument favouring indeterminism and presentism over eternalism: The evolutionary selection effect makes sense if it is a selection between genuinely possible futures. We understand how evolution can select those who are best fit to survive over time, but if everything has always existed in a giant frozen now, how does evolution make sense? How should we understand the advantages that have selected some species if all have just existed forever anyway?

Craig Callender is a famous defender of eternalism. I have read his books to see if he has anything to say about how to understand evolution in light of eternalism, but without luck. I attended a conference with him in 2021 and asked him to explain how evolution makes sense in the block universe. He had no answer besides saying that he thought it should be no problem and that he needed to think about it.

2 A new response to the Rietdijk-Putnam-Penrose-argument

The main argument for eternalism is the Rietdijk-Putnam-Penrose-argument. It says that since simultaneity is relative, what is future to one person can be past to another person. But if one person's future is another person's past, the future must already be fixed (Callender 2017, 52);(Penrose 1989, 303). Callender finds the argument is "utterly convincing" (Callender 2017, 53).

The problem with the argument is equivocation: The argument fails in showing that the future is not open, since it does not follow from relative simultaneity in one sense that there cannot be global simultaneity in another sense. I am not the first to suggest this critique, but I have a new way of specifying the relevant meanings and answering objections (Søvik 2020);(Søvik 2022).

General relativity does not allow us to define a global simultaneity, but it is compatible with a metaphysical definition of global simultaneity, and I will suggest how it should be defined, using a thought experiment with synchronized cameras permeating the whole universe. Callender argues that even if we can define global time or global simultaneity, we have no reason to think that this is related to metaphysical time or to experienced time (Callender 2017, 75, 92-93). Against this, I argue that our conscious experience of now is caused by the universe at the present moment, and given presentism, only the present universe exists, which suggests that the metaphysical, physical and consciously experienced present moment coincide.

Short Paper Session 1

The Inverted Wish: Towards Walter Benjamin's Notion of Time

Bat Chen (Laila) Seri

Walter Benjamin's complex notion of time, permeating much of his historical, political, and cultural-critical thought, has been the subject of considerable discussion. In particular, the interaction between the two opposing categories of historical time and messianic time poses a great difficulty: how do messianic moments of cessation act within the homogeneous continuum of history? To propose one model of such interaction, I will turn to an often overlooked narrative found in Benjamin's major essay on Kafka: a tale whose focal point is a beggar's wish for reshaping his past. The inverted wish retains the potential of prayer in defying the activity/passivity polarity, yet reverses its direction from future to past. It therefore provides a key for reading messianic cessation as a transformative force directed towards the past. In keeping with Benjamin's intent, rather than addressing the problem of time from a theological perspective, this paper investigates time as a method of rethinking the theological: seen through the inverted wish narrative, Benjamin's notion of time will shed light on his 'inverse theology' in its subversion of oppressive, mythical forces of history.

From Trinity to Divine Temporality

Brian Ballard

In this essay, I present a way of employing the doctrine of the trinity to infer that God is temporal, that is, that he undergoes successive moments.

I'm not the first to argue this. In particular, some theologians say that God's temporality follows from the doctrine of eternal processions (e.g., the Father begets the Son). However, in *The End of the Timeless God*, Ryan Mullins lambasts this inference: He thinks it fails, and I agree.

In contrast, I want to show a different way of getting from the trinity to divine temporality. My approach begins with the assumption of a social trinitarianism. Obviously, that assumption will be unacceptable to some, and so I must admit from the outset that this is a drawback to my approach.

According to social trinitarianism, the persons of the trinity are distinct centers of consciousness who love each other perfectly. Well, if that's what you think, then it's natural to ask: this love within the trinity—what is it like? What can we say about it?

If God is timeless, then the love between the divine persons has to take some timeless form. Perhaps they are gazing at each other in eternal bliss (or whatever the divine equivalent of gazing would be).

On the other hand, perhaps the divine persons are performing acts of love for each other. These acts of love might be thought of as exuberant expressions of delight. They might call for some manner of response from the other members. Perhaps something akin to dancing or playing or singing occurs within the Godhead, as many theologians in the 20th c. have suggested. No doubt the literal truth will elude us. But if social trinitarianism is correct, something like this might be right.

The view that the persons of the trinity act out their love for each other I call the Enacted Love Model. In this essay, I offer a limited defense of the Enacted Love Model, and argue that it entails God is temporal. That is to say, if the trinitarian persons enact their love for each other, then God undergoes successive moments.

The main obstacle I need to overcome here arises from the possibility of timeless divine action. Even if the divine persons perform acts of love, must these acts be temporal? Could the divine persons, in a single timeless act, execute all of their acts of love at once? After all, defenders of God's timelessness argue that God's effects in creation result from a single timeless act. Why not say something similar about His acts within the Godhead?

Here is my response. I argue that temporal acts of love would better contribute to God's maximal greatness than would a single timeless act of love. The major reason is this: we cannot make sense of the members of the trinity responding to each other's acts, and acting cooperatively in love, apart from their acting temporally, one after the other.

In reply, one might suggest that the divine persons could respond to each other as long as certain of their acts have logical priority over others. The priority needn't be temporal. However, this notion of logical priority, I argue, cannot be spelled out in a compelling way so as to include all the valuable acts of response and cooperation we should expect from perfect love. That, in brief, is why the Enacted Love Model entails God's temporality: Responsive acts are more perfectly loving, and responsive acts require temporal priority. And that is how to get from the trinity to divine temporality.

Short Paper Session 3

Measuring Progress in Evolutionary Religion

Carl-Johan Palmqvist

In works like *Evolutionary Religion* and *Religion After Science*, John L. Schellenberg presses the point that it is a live possibility that we are just at the beginning of the evolution of religion, and that most significant religious developments still lie ahead of us, in the deep future. In response to this situation, Schellenberg calls for evolutionary religion, a religion adopted to our early stage.

Evolutionary religion is essentially about promoting religious progress. As noted by Robert McKim, religious progress can mean both practical progress and progress of understanding. Schellenberg is strongly focused on the latter. He envisions that the long-term goal is to find out if there is an ultimate reality and what properties it has.

According to Schellenberg, reaching the long-term goal of evolutionary religion might take millions of years. It might not even be completed by us but some future intelligent species (in this context, terms like "humanity" are to be understood broadly). For a truly massive project such as this, we need some way of measuring progress towards the long-term goal. Future generations will want to know if they are on the right track, or if they should make adjustments.

The debate on evolutionary religion has primarily concerned which religious view is the most appropriate to adopt at the present. Schellenberg's preference for simple ultimism has been contested by several other philosophers, myself included. Here, I am setting that question aside and instead I address the previously neglected issue of measuring progress in evolutionary religion, a topic overlooked even by Schellenberg himself.

As recently pointed out by Hans van Eyghen, if there is a transcendent reality, it is not far-fetched to think that we might evolve some faculty to put us in cognitive contact with it. We can call it religious extra-sensory perception ("RESP" for short). If reliable RESP is an evolutionary possibility, what should we expect if such a development was to take place? Given the problem of religious diversity, it seems safe to suppose that if RESP is already developing, it is currently highly unreliable. Assuming that a more reliable RESP would lead to greater coherence between religious traditions, I explore the possibility of measuring religious progress in terms of inter-religious consistency.

How could religious progress be measured if RESP never develops? From an evolutionary perspective, it is reasonable to suppose that if an organism is well-adapted to its environment, it will thrive. If there is a “divine environment” so to speak, it seems plausible to suggest that the more aligned humanity becomes with it, the more will humanity flourish. So perhaps religious progress can be measured in terms of human flourishing?

McKim has objected to this idea since a religious life might lead to human flourishing even if it is based on a false view. I argue that McKim’s objection is inconclusive, and overly focused on the present correlation between religion and human flourishing rather than future possibilities. I also argue that even if McKim is right, human flourishing might still be used as a negative criterion.

I conclude by addressing the tricky question of how we could measure progress in evolutionary religion if ultimate reality does not exist. Schellenberg is well aware that this might be the case and establishing the non-existence of the divine is one way of reaching the long-term goal. But proving the non-existence of non-empirical entities is a notoriously difficult task, and how could we tell if we are progressing towards such a result? What would be the difference from not making progress at all?

Short Paper Session 4

The logic of (doom) prophecy

Damiano Bondi

Following a simple notion of truth, one can say that a prophecy is “true” if the prophesied fact occurs, and that it is “false” if the fact does not. (The same goes for the prophets: they are “true prophets” if their prophecies came true). Therefore, the truth of a prophecy can be assessed only a posteriori. However, let’s take the example of a doom prophecy: in order to try to avoid a possible catastrophe, the prophecy must be considered as “true” a priori. But then, if the catastrophe is effectively avoided thanks to some human act, that same prophecy becomes “false” a posteriori. In other words, in the logic of prophecy “to be true” is different from “to become true”: a prophecy can be true and (exactly for this reason) becomes false; but becoming false is not a condition for being true, because a false prophecy could never become true. Given that, it may make sense to talk about the “truth” of a prophecy, or should we adopt the modal category of possibility? And if so, when and under what conditions? Which is the logical difference between a prophecy and a general proposition about the future? And between a prophecy and a general belief? Could a prophecy be considered as an imaginary time travel, as a message from a/one future? In my paper I will try to deal with and possibly answer to these questions. It is certainly a topic which concerns religious language, but it may also concern some modern examples of “prophecy”, such as those of environmentalism.

Avoiding Theological Determinism: Eternity as Infinite Temporal Density

Damiano Migliorini

Classical theists frequently distinguish between 'logical precedence' (natural order) and 'temporal precedence' (temporal order) aiming to solve some theoretical aporias. For example, Augustine explains that God comes 'logically' before the creation of the world, even if, 'temporally', the moment of creation is as eternal as God (because time begins with creation itself). Similarly, for the Trinity, the Father is 'logically' prior to the Son, even if not 'temporally'. The aforementioned distinction has also been used, by those who refer to Boethius' arguments, to solve the omniscience dilemmas. However, if it is true that God's knowledge is timeless, a fact of our temporal world comes by logical necessity "after" God's knowledge of it. So, theological determinism does not emerge from the so called 'necessity of the past', but from the 'necessity of eternity'. The distinction between 'logical' and 'temporal' precedence, therefore, does not solve the omniscience dilemmas. Nevertheless, maybe, the mysterious notion of 'eternity' could be understood - instead of as 'timelessness' - as 'infinite temporal density'. This would make it conceivable the presence, in God, of an infinity of past and future paths (a sort of 'gunky time'), neither totally actual nor totally potential. This dialectical outcome could be desirable and advantageous for theism in order to avoid theological determinism.

Emerson's Attempt to Reconcile Time and Eternity Through Coleridgean Reason

Daniel Dal Monte

The passage of time complicates religious absolutism. At the same time, divine revelation in particular calls for strict custodianship against any kind of innovation. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19th century American thinker, developed a progressive spirituality that nevertheless seeks to uphold objective standards in dogma. Emerson's thought represents a "transatlantic transcendentalism," since it evidences the European influence of Coleridge, as well as Kant. On the one hand, Emerson encourages the evolution of dogma, according to the needs of contemporary man. In his address to the Harvard Divinity School, he rejects the divinity of Christ. Instead of worshipping a historical figure, we should recognize our own divinity. We should not let the reports of miracles of the past obscure our own capacity for miraculous insight. At the same time, the encouragement in Emerson of the evolution of dogma is not supposed to be a vapid Liberalism. We do not get to pick our personal dogmas according to sentiment or fancy. Emerson imported the distinction between Reason and Understanding from Coleridge. Coleridge believed that Reason had the capacity for an intuition, or immediate contact, with supersensible objects. With this faculty giving us direct access to divine self-disclosure, Emerson attempted to establish absolute standards in religion while permitting evolution. Religious truth lies with the individual exercise of Reason. Reason gives us the higher standpoint by which we can reject dogmatic and static religion of the past. However, I view Emersonian spirituality in light of the specter of religious Modernism, diagnosed by great religious thinkers like Guiseppe Melchiorre Sarto, who became Pope Pius X of the Catholic

Church, and John Henry Newman. These thinkers rejected the idea that religious dogma could evolve with time. An absolute authority, for all time, exists, for these thinkers, in virtue of the external revelation, natural theology, and motives of credibility of the church. Modernism takes away any intellectual robustness from religion. The empirical sciences have a prerogative on knowledge in Modernism. Modernism turns religion into a matter of vague sentiment. The intellect has only a secondary role, of crafting symbols for this sentiment. I consider Emersonian spirituality in light of Modernism. I argue that Emerson runs into a problem of criterion with respect to the exercise of Reason. We need to ensure that we are really acquiring knowledge through our Reason, and not merely succumbing to superficial conformity. To know we have knowledge in religious matters, we need to have knowledge of a way to discriminate between knowledge and non-knowledge. But, we cannot be sure we have knowledge of a method of discrimination, if we cannot recognize knowledge in the first place. The only way, therefore, we can move forward in the exercise of Reason is through sentiment. A sentimental basis takes away all intellectual seriousness from religion. It becomes a matter of opinion. Dogma becomes a mere symbol of one's feelings, not vision of a supernatural order. Emerson does not appear to have succeeded in reconciling liberal and conservative impulses in religion.

Short Paper Session 6

Indivisible as to time and place: Aristotle on the first principle

Daniel Sung Yang

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle calls his first principle what is 'most of all one' and spells out oneness in terms of indivisibility. When we are thinking the essence of a thing which is most of all one, he says our thought is unable to divide it in terms of time and place. In other words, the oneness of the first principle is such that the mind is unable to conceive of it as changing temporally or locally. Our conception of this one, however, is in a sense conditioned by our conception of the material world. We come to know what it is to be unchanging by first observing things that do change, either temporally or locally or both. To elucidate what it means to say that thought and its correlative object are each indivisible, Aristotle draws a distinction between two levels of truth. In general, when thought combines things and this combination represents how the correlative object is in fact combined, there is truth. But while some objects that are combined can also be separated, there seem to be objects that are not separable. The former types of object for Aristotle are susceptible to contingent truth, affected by the time at which statements about them are uttered, while with the latter types of object, he says there is not truth or falsity but simply contact (or 'touching'). Moreover, there seems to be a close relationship between cognitive inseparability in time and cognitive inseparability in place. Mathematical truths are immune to temporal error because for Aristotle mathematical objects are 'immovable' or always of a certain character. We can make false statements about e.g. the triangle in other respects but not in respect of time. Aristotle further divides immovable entities and says that while mathematical objects are immune to temporal error, we still make errors in mathematics due to its material provenance. But with an immovable entity which is a single individual, he says there is no room for even such errors.

The Domain and Manifest of Omnisubjectivity

Djordje Lazarevic & Andjelija Milic

In recent times, there has been some discussion on the topic of God's knowledge of the first-person perspective of any conscious creature, which Linda Zagzebski has called 'omnisubjectivity' (Zagzebski, 2008). In this paper we are going to argue that God as we envision Him through the traditional religious legacy has to possess omnisubjectivity, which manifests as in effect preceding and encompassing other divine attributes that are generally considered to have ontological independence. This will be laid out through understanding the way in which omnisubjectivity presents itself as a modal attribute, as well as through the four instances we hold to be crucial for framing this God's capacity.

We posit omnisubjectivity as a modal attribute of God and argue on its modality in a twofold manner: 1) Firstly, this is not an attribute necessary for explaining the overall existence of God by Himself, nor for explaining the possibility for His creation, although, 2) it would be necessary for explaining the way His Creation unfolds. This means it is conceivable to have the absolute entity with the other divine attributes, but which remains unmoved by the state of its Creation. However, if we are going to contend for the omniscient, non-indifferent being, then omnisubjectivity becomes a necessary attribute.

Since discerning the quality of this peculiar attribute is vital for its understanding, here are the four instances we hold to be of primary concern for that. 1) Omnibenevolence and omniscience imply omnisubjectivity. The former points to the wish, reason and intensity with which God wants to interact with the Creation. Concerning the latter, we present a modification of the argument from omniscience, arguing that divine foreknowledge implies omnisubjectivity. We then proceed to argue for the coherence of omnisubjectivity with respect to the variety of models of foreknowledge, claiming that the Molinist account of foreknowledge opens a possibility for an even richer conception of omnisubjectivity. 2) God's temporal status doesn't depend on omnisubjectivity as long as it's understood as a modal property. Zagzebski's version of omnisubjectivity is subject to certain difficulties (Mullins, 2022), where in our account we will resolve both viewpoints. The question of when God possesses omnisubjectivity becomes crucial in arguing for its existence. 3) Omnisubjectivity sheds light on certain traditional Christian doctrines, as that of the Incarnation and the knowledge of Christ revealed in Scripture, where it says that He could "perceive with his spirit what happened in one's minds and hearts" (Mk. 2:6-8). 4) Finally, but essentially firstly, we are arguing for the divine energies as introduced by Gregory Palamas and other church fathers of the time. He clearly differentiates between those energies manifesting in time (foreknowledge), and out of time (goodness, His will), while also contrasting 'creation' and 'beginning' of the energies (Gregory Palamas, Triads; Maximus the Confessor, Cent. Gnost. I.48). In a sum, we see different notions of omnisubjectivity arising given these distinctions.

With all said, we intend to describe omnisubjectivity in the domain of omniscience, as the necessary quality of God for His complete access to the entire space of mental phenomena; parallelly in the domain of omnibenevolence which demarcates His non-indifference; temporality, as necessary for manifestation in this realm; and, Incarnation and divine energies necessary for bypassing the problem of different essences' interaction.

Causation Ex Nihilo of Temporal Facts

Edward Epsen

Critics of divine timelessness argue that it defeats the coherence of Christian theism, leads to fatalism, or is incompatible with presentism. The common arguments involve problems of omniscience or God's causal relation to temporal particulars. Defenses of timelessness typically deny libertarian freedom, abandon presentism, or reject the independent premises of these arguments and make divine knowledge dependent, limited or otherwise anthropomorphized. By contrast, I hold that the usual arguments for timelessness suffer not from false independent premises but from invalid inferences trading on the scope-ambiguity of modal operators, the ambiguity of modal categories, or a suppressed assumption of haecceitism. Lest such responses seem ad hoc, I extend Boethius's solution to the dilemma of foreknowledge and freedom to propose a model of simple divine action that systematically resolves the scope-ambiguity and appropriate modal categories for reasoning about divine action. Thomists often stumble on this point because Thomas's own account of concurrent divine action is in tension with his account of simplicity. On the model I propose, all divine action is causation ex nihilo, understood as the unbound completion of all creaturely pure perfections and action ex aliquo. As such, all potentiality is excluded from God's existence. While simple divine action is thus necessary in the sense of 'uncaused', it is not necessary in the sense of 'could not have been otherwise'. Such action is therefore compatible with the contingent product of divine action being plural and temporally successive. Being absolutely ex nihilo, God's timeless action has no problem causing temporal facts.

Kairos, History, Ethos: A relecture of Paul Tillich's and Karl Barth's debate about the relevance of history for theological ethics

Emil Lusser

'The term kairos means to me' Paul Tillich states in his confrontation with Karl Barth 'that one cannot say and do everything at every time, but that every time has the task of drawing anew the eternal meaning of all time from its life and in its words' (Tillich, 1987: 109). With the eternal meaning of all time, Tillich refers to the unconditioned. Therefore, kairos stands for the performance of a religious act. Besides the concept of kairos, Tillich understands chronos as 'the formal time' (Tillich, 2018: 10) which refers to cultural acts. Tillich's idea of the relationship between culture and religion is based on a speculative philosophy of history according to which history functions as a medium for the selfexplication of the unconditioned. Therefore, religious belief is tied back to the historical consciousness. But in this - and that's the caveat of Barth - there lies the danger of deriving a divine will from history and of justifying a religious ethics from it. Barth states against Tillich: Christology must not claim 'the qualification of all history by revelation' (Barth, 1987: 107). Barth's critique of Tillich's idea of historical revelation is to be understood against the background of the manifest

of the 93. The document, signed by 93 intellectuals from Germany, including influential academic teachers of Barth and Tillich, justifies German war objectives. Both Tillich and Barth want to distance themselves from their teachers and both do this by thinking of revelation as an ineligible act of self-reflection, but Tillich ties it to history (cf. Wittekind, 2011; Danz, 2011). In the light of the debate between Barth and Tillich, this paper addresses the following questions: What is the significance or function of history for theological ethics? What consequences arise from the consideration of history for the formation of theological-ethical judgment? How can the absolutization of a divine will deduced from history be avoided?

Short Paper Session 8

Christ's Ascension as God's Temporality

Eric Tuttle

In Christian theology, the doctrine of Christ's ascension traditionally marks the end of Christ's historic life and his transition to a spatial-temporal transcendence at the right hand of the Father. If God "has a history," as several modern theologians have claimed in their own ways (Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann), this history is limited to the historical life of Jesus and therefore ends with the ascension. That is to say, if God has a temporality or a moment of finitude, it is limited to Jesus' historical life that ends at the ascension, and so it is not proper to God as such. One way of making temporality proper to God, then, would be to reformulate the doctrine of Christ's ascension so that it does not end the historical life of Jesus but transitions his life into a new mode of historical and temporal existence.

My paper will take up this task of reformulating a doctrine of the ascension through offering an American pragmatist reading of Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, specifically the section from the 1827 lectures titled "The Death of Christ and the Transition to Spiritual Presence." In this section, Hegel makes Christ's resurrection and ascension a matter of "spiritual interpretation" through which a community becomes certain of God's appearance as a finite human being in Jesus (LPR, 3:326). This could sound as though Hegel is mythologizing Christ's resurrection and ascension so that it is no longer historical but a matter of one's "spirituality." But drawing on American neo-pragmatist readings of Hegel (Robert Brandom, Robert Pippin, Molly Farneth, and Kevin Hector), I read Hegel as claiming that Christ's ascension depends on the ongoing reciprocal recognition ("absolute spirit" in the Phenomenology) of the community (*gemeinschaft*). In other words, Christ's ascension is not a transition to a transcendent temporality, but a new spiritual relation to the Christian community, subject to temporal and finite modes of recognition. Christ petitions the Christian community for recognition as ascended—the confession that "Christ is Lord" or "Christ is risen"—through his temporal and spiritual presence in the community.

In this formulation, the ascension gives Christ an ongoing history and finitude through his need to be continually recognized as the ascended Christ. The ascension is not "historical" in the same sense that Jesus' earthly life was historical—as a series of temporal events comprising a person's life. The

ascension is historical, for Hegel, in that it depends on the temporal process of recognition in the Christian community. For Hegel, this makes finitude and temporality part of “the eternal divine history” which “has taken place in God himself” (LPR, 3:328). Most readings of Hegel confine this “moment of finitude” to Christ’s death alone, but my reading of the ascension extends this moment of finitude and temporality so that it becomes proper to the second person of the Trinity.

Short Paper Session 4

Kairos, Crisis and Critique:
The Subversive Potential of Religion in Giorgio Agamben’s Thinking

Erik Sporon Fiedler

How to think alternatives and counterstrategies to the present existing condition of Western politics and power is a recurrent theme in Giorgio Agamben’s writings. One of the ways this is done is through his reading of Christian theology and church history in order to search for elements that holds a potential for development in the way of emancipatory political and ethical thinking. Agamben localizes exactly this potential in the idea of messianism and the sense of time related to it. This task of localizing alternative ways of thinking and experiencing temporality in the cultural archive of the West is paramount to Giorgio Agamben’s positive political project. Something that is clear already in his early writings, where he writes: “every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience. The original task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to ‘change the world’, but also - and above all - to ‘change time’” (Agamben 1993a: 91).

To “change time” is thus “a genuine” revolutionary act as it overturns the chronology that structures individual lives and confines them to an experience of existence surrendered to the conditions of the market and the state. As an alternative Agamben presents a “kairology” that interrupts the capitalist societies attempts at making productive subjects (Agamben 1993a: 105). Scattered around his work, Agamben identifies several phenomena where this kairological experience of time that escapes the power of the state comes to expression: e.g. pleasure (Agamben 1993a), study (Agamben 1995), play (Agamben 2005b), profanation (Agamben 2007), and love (Agamben 1993b).

One of the strongest kairological phenomena though, is that of messianism. Agamben develops his understanding of messianism across several books and essays and in stark contrast to the idea of apocalypticism (e.g. Agamben 2005a). Kurt Appel neatly summarizes this difference as thus: “The former signifies the end of time, its transition into eternity. The latter, however, is marked by the time of the end, that is, by a kairos expressing the end of chronological time and its uniform progression without finality and sense.” (Appel 2020: 736). Messianic time, the time of the end, is thus a religious notion with the potential of having political and ethical implications. It is about living differently and being in the world differently.

In his later writings Agamben explicitly tries to capture the commonality in these various kairological phenomena in the idea of a destituent potential [potenza

destituente] (Agamben 2016). Interestingly, this notion of destituent potential was being developed in 2012-2014 while the sovereign debt-crisis of Southern Europe was raging. Thus, it marks one of the instances where Agamben most directly engages in a reflection on political resistance. But significantly this is done through a reflection on the abdication of pope Benedict XVI (Agamben 2017) and the trial of Jesus (Agamben 2015). Here, in the history of Christianity he finds exemplary instances of actions that can be used as to reflect on how to deactivate “the governmental machine” of power and thus models for resisting the global capitalist political-economic system. In this paper, I discuss this potential of religion in Agamben’s critique of the contemporary prevailing political-economic system and the alternative mode of being it holds. This is done through remarks on the essays Pilate and Jesus and *The Mystery of Evil: Benedict XVI and the End of Days* published during the European sovereign-debt crisis.

Short Paper Session 6

After Finitude Between 1936 and 1939
in the Religious Life and Experience of George Bataille

Ervik Cejvan

The paper explores the impact of experience of time and change in the religious life and understanding of the French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille between 1936 and 1939. The period is significant as the projects of the secret society Acéphale and Collège de sociologie mark Bataille’s last religious and political engagement in the social sphere. Of relevance for the theme on religious life, language and experience, the paper presents main ideas that occupied Bataille during that period, relating to “ferocious religiosity” involving the rituals and practices of sacrifice, ecstasy, transcending death and escaping the human condition as the expression of the desire for infinity, timelessness and even larger than divine aspirations. In this period, however, Bataille experiences the finitude in all areas of his personal life: chronic illness, the impending world war, the dissolution of the secret society and the Collège, the death of Colette Peignot, the ideologue who was decisive for Bataille and the circle of his collaborators. The following years, between 1939 and 1945, Bataille isolates himself from any social engagement and reflects on the aspirations and enthusiasms of Acéphale in a state of mind “waiting for death”. Bataille’s religious experience moves toward a mystical religiosity and the themes of inner experience, eroticism, non-knowledge and excess emerge in his writing and the way of life, revealing deeply intimate and personal conviction and confidence that time and change belong to the “work of death”, that God is present in the experiences of madness and distress, and that the irony of life is transcended only by being open to everything, thus entering the divine light. In the end, Bataille’s experiences of transcendence, timelessness and the divine are not the result of a religious life but of a philosophical way of life that reflects on the finitude in the aspirations beyond any limit.

Die ewige Geschichte Gottes. Zur Aufhebung der Zeit in Hegel's Interpretation
des Christentums /

Fabian Brandt

Hegel verstand bekanntlich die christliche Religion als die ‚vollendete‘ oder ‚absolute Religion‘, die als solche allen übrigen von Hegel behandelten Religionen überlegen ist. Die Antwort der christlichen Religion auf die Frage: Was ist Gott? kommt der Wahrheit näher als die aller anderen Religion. Das wirft die Frage nach den Gründen auf, die Hegel zu dieser Auszeichnung des Christentums und des christlichen Gottes veranlasst haben. In meinem Vortrag werde ich zu zeigen versuchen, dass es insbesondere das Problem des Verhältnisses von Gott und Zeit ist, das zu Hegels Bevorzugung des Christentums führt. Unter Rückgriff auf Hegels Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion werde ich zeigen, wie Hegel den Prozess, der das menschliche Bewusstsein zum Nachdenken über Gott führt, mit der Erfahrung der Zeit und der Veränderung beginnen lässt. Die Erfahrung der Zeit ist die Erfahrung des Todes und der Endlichkeit überhaupt, die ihrerseits auf den Gedanken eines Unendlichen verweist. Doch eine dem zeitlichen Dasein bloß gegenübergestellte Ewigkeit befriedigt den unter seiner Endlichkeit leidenden Menschen nicht, sondern verschärft im Gegenteil den Schmerz über seine Trennung von dem, was ewig und vollkommen ist.

Der Vorzug des Christentums ist es, dass es in der Lehre von der Menschwerdung Gottes die absolute Trennung von Zeit und Ewigkeit aufhebt. Die christliche Religion ist die Artikulation des Bewusstseins, „daß das Menschliche, Endliche, Gebrechliche, die Schwäche, das Negative göttliches Moment selbst sind, daß es in Gott selbst ist, daß die Endlichkeit, das Negative, das Anderssein nicht außer Gott ist und als Anderssein die Einheit mit Gott nicht hindert.“ Die sich in der Zeitlichkeit manifestierende Negativität des menschlichen Daseins schließt ihn nicht von der Teilhabe an der göttlichen Vollkommenheit aus. Vielmehr führt die Geschichte von Kreuzestod und Auferstehung Christi vor Augen, daß das Negative „Moment der göttlichen Natur selbst“ ist. Sie stellt somit die unbedingte Geltung der Zeitlosigkeit als eines Kriteriums der Vollkommenheit in Frage. Hegels Deutung dieser Geschichte hat sowohl eine ontologische Dimension, die das Verhältnis des Allgemeinen und Einzelnen überhaupt betrifft, als auch eine existentielle, die auf die besondere Stellung des Menschen verweist. Dieser ist ein endliches, sterbliches Wesen, das aber auch und gerade als solches fähig ist, im Erkennen seine Endlichkeit zu transzendieren und so zum singulären Ort der Verschränkung von Zeit und Ewigkeit zu werden. In meinem Vortrag werde ich den einzelnen Schritten und Problemen von Hegels Deutung nachgehen und prüfen, mit welchem Recht diese Deutung beanspruchen kann, den authentischen Sinn der christlichen Religion zu artikulieren.

(See translation next page)

Translated from Google:

The eternal story of God.
On the Sublation of time in Hegel's Interpretation of Christianity

As is well known, Hegel understood the Christian religion as the 'perfect' or 'absolute religion', which as such is superior to all other religions treated by Hegel. The answer of the Christian religion to the question: What is God? comes closer to the truth than that of any other religion. This raises the question of the reasons that led Hegel to this distinction of Christianity and the Christian God. In my talk I will try to show that it is the problem of the relationship between God and time in particular that leads to Hegel's preference for Christianity. Drawing on Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion, I will show how Hegel begins the process that leads human consciousness to think about God with the experience of time and change. The experience of time is the experience of death and of finitude in general, which in turn points to the idea of an infinite. But an eternity that is merely contrasted with temporal existence does not satisfy the human suffering from his finitude, but on the contrary intensifies the pain of his separation from that which is eternal and perfect.

The advantage of Christianity is that it abolishes the absolute separation of time and eternity in the doctrine of God's incarnation. The Christian religion is the articulation of the consciousness "that the human, the finite, the frail, the weakness, the negative are divine moment itself, that it is in God himself, that the finitude, the negative, the otherness is not outside of God and as Being different does not prevent unity with God." The negativity of human existence that manifests itself in temporality does not exclude it from participating in divine perfection. Rather, the story of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection shows that the negative is "a moment of the divine nature itself". She thus questions the unconditional validity of timelessness as a criterion of perfection. Hegel's interpretation of this story has both an ontological dimension, which affects the relationship between the general and the individual in general, and an existential one, which refers to the special position of man. This is a finite, mortal being, which is also, and precisely as such, capable of transcending its finitude in recognition and thus becoming the singular place where time and eternity intertwine. In my lecture I will follow the individual steps and problems of Hegel's interpretation and examine the right this interpretation can claim to articulate the authentic meaning of the Christian religion.

The Cost of Freedom and the Fixity of the Past

Fabio Lampert

There seems to exist an important asymmetry between the past and the future. Perhaps you will order the pumpkin spice latte tomorrow at the coffee shop. Perhaps not. Regardless of what you will actually do, you can still choose which coffee you will drink tomorrow, if at all. You have genuine options ahead of you, future possibilities the realization of which are still up to you. This is not so with what has already happened. You did order the pumpkin spice latte last week, and now you regret it. Now you cannot do anything about the fact that last week you ordered the pumpkin spice latte. There are no past possibilities in the same sense as there are future possibilities. The past is ‘closed’ and there is nothing you can do to change it. In fact, if we consider the genuine future possibilities ahead of you, it seems they must all come with a certain baggage, namely, the past itself. For whatever you are able to do in the future, those seem to be circumstances that would only add to the given past. This intuition, namely, that the past is somehow ‘fixed’ and out of our control can and has been articulated more carefully in numerous ways. One way of doing so is by the following principle of the ‘fixity of the past’:

Fixity of the past: For every action A , agent S , times t and t^* (where $t \leq t^*$), and possible world w , S is able at t to A at t' in w only if there is a possible world w^* with the same past as that of w up to t in which S A -s at t^* .

This principle captures the relevant sense in which the past differs from the future. According to it, the past remains fixed in whatever circumstances witness one’s ability to do something. And although this principle is indeed intuitive, having been defended by many philosophers, it has disastrous and well known consequences when conjoined with the assumption that there is an omniscient being who infallibly believes in every truth. For such assumptions seem to entail that necessarily, no one is, or ever has been, able to do otherwise than what an omniscient being has foreknown, and thus believed, one would do. If, moreover, being able to do otherwise is required for having free will, this entails that no one has or ever had free will. Theological fatalism is true. In this talk, I will argue for a novel way out of theological fatalism. There are plausible assumptions about logic and language inspired by the works of Kripke and Kaplan which are widely accepted by philosophers, and when conjoined with other widely accepted principles about knowledge lead to the conclusion that there is a priori knowledge of contingent truths. One example is a priori knowledge of contingent trivialities such as p iff actually p , where p is a contingent truth and ‘actually’ gets formalized with a modal operator. But there are other relevant examples not involving the ‘actually’ operator. I will argue that some such instances of a priori knowledge are inconsistent with the principle of the Fixity of the past. If the theist should like to hold on to a traditional view of divine omniscience, in conjunction with the view that there is free will, she might do well in rejecting the Fixity of the past. There is an asymmetry between the future and the past, but the latter plays no role in constraining what free agents are able to do in a given situation — or so theists should believe.

Prophesied to be a prophet:
A special problem for open theism

Ferhat Yöney

Prophecy—God’s giving some information about the contingent future—is one of the problematic theological concepts for open theism. It is customary among open theists to suggest that prophecies in the Bible can be explained in one of the following three ways: They are (i) conditional prophecies; (ii) predictions based on actual trends and tendencies; (iii) God’s purposes to bring them about (Hasker 1989).[1] Based on these, William Hasker claims that “these categories enable one to deal with the phenomena of the biblical text”. [2] Moreover, assuming that open theism is successful in explaining prophecies literally, it is claimed that open theism has a superiority over non-open theist alternatives to be the correct interpretation of the Bible. Since non-open theist views need to interpret the contrary biblical data which implies God’s ignorance about the future non-literally as anthropomorphisms (2000).[3]

In this work, firstly, I will argue that there are prophecies in the Bible which are explicable in none of the three ways open theists suggest. In doing this, I will deal with the most challenging prophecy for open theists; e.g. Jer. 1: 5, which tells that Jeremiah is prophesied to be a prophet before birth. To that end, I will draw on the philosophical commitments of open theists on free will, character formation, and based on these present a model for one being elected as a prophet by God.

Secondly, I will provide two suggestions for open theism on how to deal with the problematic cases of prophecies. First suggestion will be renouncing interpreting any prophecy literally and withdrawing superiority claim over non-open theist views on biblical interpretation.

Second suggestion will rely on Hasker’s (2021) recent move on the truth value of future contingents according to which they have probabilities as truth values as opposed to truth values in the classical sense.[4] I will present this as a fourth way of understanding prophecies within open theistic framework. I will argue that this way is both congruent with open theists’ understanding of divine providence, and allows them to interpret problematic instances of prophecies in the Bible literally. My conclusion will be that, besides philosophical considerations Hasker (2021) offered, theological considerations concerning prophecies provide open theists another reason to give up principle of bivalence for future contingent propositions.

Jesus' experience of time and human's experience of time: liturgical possibilities
of an authentic temporality in the age of acceleration

Francesca Peruzzotti

With this paper I aim to address some issues related to the theme of spiritual experience starting from an analysis of the experience of time. It allows us to highlight both the embodied and sensitive quality of the spiritual dimension, marked by the dynamics of the age and the transformations of the living flow, and the specific contribution of Christianity, which, because of the Incarnation and the Easter event, implies a new declination of the classical conceptions relating to the link between time and eternity, history and eschatology. It implies both a consideration of human being as implying changes and transformations and a definition of the trinitarian God revealed by Jesus as eternally characterized by a vital dynamic and not by the immobility of a stillstand.

The consequences implied by the choice of characterising spiritual experience starting from the experience of time will allow to investigate some theoretical questions: an analysis of our spiritual era, characterized by "acceleration", will introduce a consideration of Christianity's core, starting from the temporal connotation of the Trinity shown by Jesus's relationship to temporality; the reflexion will end with an analysis of the form of Christian spirituality and its universal repercussions, through the reference to the symbolic liturgical temporality as a possibility to integrate Christ's time and the current, "accelerated" time.

First of all, a particular relevance is given to the cultural and religious reason that Hartmut Rosa identifies to explain the acceleration of the perception of time, that is, the secularisation that has affected Western societies in recent centuries, recognizing acceleration as the functional equivalent of the religious promise of eternal life. Spiritual consequences of this are highly significant: acceleration, in fact, distorts all temporal diastases: the present - no longer extended, the past - forgotten, given the impossibility of memory, the future - horizon lacking in expectation. The recognition of the direct correlation between acceleration and alienation proposed by Rosa is a significant confirmation of the existence of an inescapable relationship between temporality and the intersubjective nexus and it renews the aspiration to search for the forms that characterise the human being, making possible an authentically spiritual experience.

By referring to the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar, in the second part of the paper, I'll consider the role of temporality shown by a description of Jesus' temporality and its trinitarian consequences. We can recognise the time of Jesus marked by a particular dynamic, which associates a strong apocalyptic-eschatological characterisation with a sapiential insistence on the present and the everyday dimension. Jesus experiences time fully participating in the messianic expectation of Israel, but recognising that expectation as fulfilled in his own life. In particular, for him time can be defined as the specific opportunity to realising his bond of commitment to his Father, to the point of being able to establish that the Trinitarian bond maintains a living dynamic, an over-time that leads to the

recognition that time is not an obstacle to the full realisation of humanity, but a constitutive component of it.

The aim of the third part of the paper is to linking the two previous parts, establishing how it is possible to experience the authentic temporality lived by Jesus, the supra-time, in an age where time is characterised by acceleration and thus leads to alienation. I will try to show what resources are offered by an analysis of liturgical temporality, which, starting from the analyses of Jean-Yves Lacoste and Giorgio Agamben, can be considered as a useful phenomenon to define a symbolic and inoperative temporality, which offers the resources to build a fully realised relationship with oneself and at a community level.

Short Paper Session 6

Un/Changing Identities
God and the Persistence of Beliefs Through Impermanence

Francesco M. Catanzaro

Critical study of religion has since long demonstrated how God (or any other ultimate referent) is a cultural product and, as such, it is an evolving concept: the understanding of God changes in time. Nonetheless, the figure of God is still conceived by believers (as well as detractors) as unitary, identical, continuous. After presenting and discussing some recent perspectives about the relationship between God and the dialectic of identity/change (such as ontotheology and deconstructionism, postmodern theologies, paraconsistency, cognitive linguistics), I will argue that this apparently contradictory process is made possible by some rhetorical strategies that underlie our general belief-building – thus encompassing a wider semantic field than merely the religious. To conclude, I will highlight the similarities and differences between belief in God and beliefs in the phenomenology of everyday life, to see to which extent they can be understood by the same belief-building model.

Short Paper Session 3

Temporal Flow, Observer Relativity and the Logos of Creation

Gunnar Gjermundsen

According to the patristic tradition of θεωρία φυσική – the contemplation of nature – rigorous ascetical and contemplative training over the course of years will tend to lead the monk to a transfigured vision of the world he inhabits. Maximus the Confessor, who brought this tradition to great philosophical refinement in the 7th century, describes how the monk then will begin to perceive the logoi of creation. These are the creative and sustaining principles or essences of beings, which cohere together like individual rays in the one sun of the Logos animating all of reality.

The first part of this paper will engage with two major texts of Maximus, the *Ambigua ad Ioannem* and the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, to argue that the contemplative knowledge of the *logoi* of beings, which is not the result of speculation but rather of direct experience, turns our ordinary conception of time on its head. From this vantage point, time does not flow from past to present to future along a quasi-spatial axis. Instead, time flows from non-manifestation to manifestation, or alternatively, from uncreated to the created. This suggests an «ontological» re-interpretation of the *ἐν ἀρχῇ* of Jn 1:1 (and the Septuagint version of 1 Gen 1:1): the Word is «in the beginning» of creation, not preceding creation in a linear sense – by 6000 or 14.6 billion years, depending on who you ask – but by being the ground out of which creation unfolds moment by moment in our experience and in our world. As such, through the contemplative vision which the fathers claim unveils its true nature unobscured by fallen human perception, creation is seen to be ever new, ever fresh and completely alive. This interpretation will allow us to make sense of the relationship between the traditional creation account and Jn 5:17 – where the Father is said to be still at work in creation – an exegetical question that occupied some of the fathers.

The second part of the paper introduces two short vignettes from recent debates in the philosophy of physics on the question of time: the famous 1922 Einstein-Bergson debate on the relativity of time, and John Archibald Wheeler's delayed-choice double slit experiment in quantum physics. Both of these point to the intrinsic observer relativity of time (and space): with respect to inertial frame of reference in relativity theory, and with respect to instrument of measurement in quantum physics. Then a third kind of observer relativity is suggested, based on the contemplative vision of the fathers: different temporalities which open up for the human observer depend upon different degrees of attunement to the *logos* of creation, in that observer.

In conclusion, it is argued that the contemplative investigation of nature is a bona fide physics, but a physics of a «vertical» kind, i.e. interested in penetrating to the depth of what the phenomenon really is, its true nature, from the first person point of view. This realist impulse is also strongly present in many of the great empirical and theoretical physicists. But empirical physics is also animated by an interest to predict the future evolution of the phenomenon based on its past, which is a slightly different project. This «horizontal» physics works within the frame of linear time. The burgeoning dialogue between science and religion can be enriched by acknowledging that both of these approaches to the study of physics, nature, are valid.

Persistence, Existential Inertia, and Divine Conservation:
A Thomistic Analysis of a Recent Controversy

Harrison Jennings

The Existential Inertia Thesis (EIT) holds that there are at least some objects which persist in existence and yet do not require a continuously concurrent sustaining cause of their existence. EIT is incompatible with the Divine Conservation Thesis (DCT), which holds that every non-God object will cease to exist (by means of instantaneous annihilation) in the absence of God's continuously concurrent sustaining causal activity. In this paper, I present an argument that, given certain fundamental Thomistic metaphysical commitments, it follows that EIT is necessarily false. In particular, I argue that, if each non-God object exists by way of a distinct existential act, and if this existential act bears a causal relation by which it began to be or came to be, then the same causal relation remains, intrinsically and immutably, throughout the persistence of that existential act. As such, the existential act retains a relation of causal dependence at every point of its persistence, which is contrary to EIT and lends support for DCT.

Authority, Law, and Eternity: The Place of Eternalism in the 'New' Natural Law
Theory

Henry Fernando

In light of recent developments in eternalism, this paper will propose modifying the 'New' Natural Law Theory (NNLT) to accommodate a revised conception of an Eternal Law borrowed from Classical Natural Law Theory (CNLT).

Classical natural law theorists such as Cicero, Augustine, and Aquinas claimed that the authority of positive law rests on the eternal, unchangeable law that is the rational plan for the universe known only to God (2021). However, a series of devastating objections throughout the centuries—most notably Hume's Is-Ought Problem—led philosophers to abandon any jurisprudential view that derived normative conclusions from purely factual premises describing some esoteric divine order. It was not until the late twentieth century that new life was breathed into the natural law tradition with the inauguration of NNLT, whose proponents deny that positive law's authority was ever derived from some higher law "out there". Rather, they claim, it has always been derived from the self-evident principles of practical reason and basic goods that are already intrinsic to human nature (2011, 2019). Thus, they conclude, not only does NNLT escape Hume's objection, it also provides a more grounded and intelligible account of normativity than some unknowable transcendent law. In this respect, NNLT has been celebrated as a significant improvement over its classical formulation.

I argue that NNLT, contrary to popular belief, substantially deviates from CNLT in virtue of relinquishing its predecessor's distinct conception of the Eternal Law. To this end, I explain how contemporary theorists such as John Finnis and Robert George confuse the moral authority their classical predecessors associated with the Eternal Law with the practical authority they ascribe to the principles of practical reason, making the latter an inexact and incommensurate substitute for the former. Furthermore, I argue that even if NNLT escapes Hume's objection, it does so at a steep cost: by leaving no place for a morally authoritative Eternal Law in its doctrine, it loses valuable resources for explaining other legal phenomena such as the legal invalidity of unjust or immoral law and the law's ability to give genuine reasons for action.

Given this distinction, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at what exactly the Eternal Law is in terms of a more general eternalist ontology, the view that past, present, and future objects and events are equally real (2021). Scholars have increasingly converged on the view that God is an atemporal being outside of time to whom past, present, and future are simultaneously present. If this is correct, then it logically entails that some form of eternalism is true, even if humans, qua temporal beings, can only directly perceive the present. But then this would mean that the Eternal Law is not some mysterious, open plan yet to be realized, but a mind-independent state of affairs that is already occurring in accordance with divine reason.

The question thus becomes whether the morally authoritative Eternal Law thus conceived is compatible with NNLT. To answer this, I will draw from Aaron Griffith's recent theory that we have moral obligations in terms of correlative rights that future persons have against persons in the present (2017), as well as Mauro Dorato's argument that eternalism has ethical and practical consequences upon human action (2021), and explain how the principles of practical reason become more legally and morally forceful when supported by the eternalist view implicit in CNLT, whilst retaining NNLT's explanatory power and evasion of Hume's objection. I conclude that a revised conception of the Eternal Law is both compatible with and beneficial to NNLT.

Paths to God in Spinoza

Jacob Zellmer

Scholarship on Spinoza's Theological Political Treatise (TTP) generally focuses on the separation of philosophy and theology, often called the "separation thesis" (James 2012; Van Cauter 2020). The separation thesis is a primary goal of the TTP, so any overlap of philosophy and theology is often said to conflict with the separation thesis (Garber 2008). Yet Spinoza notes subtle ways that philosophy and theology overlap (xiv.24). My goal in this paper is to examine what Spinoza takes this overlap to be.

On the theological path, knowledge of God is achieved experientially by loving an anthropomorphic God through virtuous living. Spinoza repeatedly quotes 1 John 4:12-13, which reads, "if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us" (NRSV). On Spinoza's interpretation of this passage, "no one is aware of God or acknowledges God, except by loving-kindness toward his neighbor" (TTP xiv.17). Spinoza's presents theology as a path that starts with God and aims to become more aware of God and his law through the practice of loving-kindness.

Philosophy on Spinoza's view is also a path, or principle of living (*ratio vivendi*), that starts with God and leads to more awareness of God, albeit an unchanging God from whom the natural order flows necessarily. From the fact that our mind "contains God's nature objectively in itself" because we are modes of God, it "has the power to form certain notions which explain the nature of things" (TTP i.5). The more the mind knows the nature of things, which are all modes of God, the more perfectly it will thereby know God (TTP iv.11). Intellectual knowledge of the nature of things, i.e., of God, necessarily leads to good moral conduct (TTP i.5, iv.20).

I argue that the TTP describes philosophy and theology as both paths to gaining awareness of God and to the concomitant ethical behavior that flows from each of these paths. The first path, philosophy, comes by intellectual understanding of God, i.e., nature. The second path, theology, relies on an anthropomorphic conception of God and moral teachings that lead to good actions when accepted from the heart. Both paths are derived from the same source, God (TTP i.3), and lead in distinct ways to virtuous living. Each has its own representation of God and of the divine law yet both result in functionally equivalent virtuous behavior. They both lead to a "true life" for Spinoza (TTP v.1, xiii.23).

A Limetic Account of the Doxastic Evolution

Janusz Salamon

The paper introduces an innovative interpretation of religious belief as a species of agathological beliefs according to which the decisive aspect of both conceptualisation and justification of a belief or a web of interrelated beliefs is agathological in nature, i.e., referring to human good ('to agathon' - in Attic Greek, hence 'agathological'). It is argued that agathological concepts and beliefs (unlike concepts and beliefs in formal sciences or natural sciences) are essentially limetic in nature concept' (from Latin 'limes' - limit, frontier) and theology is a domain of limetic concepts.

For example, I take the concept of God as 'Agatheos' (the Ultimate Good) to be a limetic concept by metaphorising the concept of a limes of a mathematical function as indicating a point towards which something tends in an asymptotic manner without ever reaching it. I stipulate that in the case of the concept of God as Agatheos, the reality to which the concept refers is only pointed to as the ultimate horizon that is of its nature unreachable for a human subject, although present as the background against which we perceive values that make their claim on us and are yet to be realised, as horizon is always 'present' when we perceive distant points on a trail that are yet to be reached. On such interpretation of religious belief, various religious belief systems are historically developed and culturally codified expressions of diverse visions of the highest human good and/or of different ways of realising it. Such an account of religious belief needs not be positively anti-realist, even though its primary focus is not on the truth-claims about the Divine, but on the human agathological hopes and aspirations.

The 'agatheological' principles that 'theology is agathology' or 'Credo quia bonum' entail only as much as that there is no path to existentially relevant conception of the Divine that does not begin with the human conception(s) of the good (thus defining as the point of departure of all theological thinking the human agathological consciousness, rather than some 'scriptural revelation' or 'natural revelation' which are themselves products of agatheological thinking). In that agatheology recognizes that theology is irreducibly anthropocentric and anthropomorphic (since it cannot dispense entirely with projecting on the Divine the human conceptions of the good), but it does not in any way imply the impossibility of the human agathological aspirations being matched by the metaphysical reality of the Divine. So understood, agatheology provides a conceptual context for an innovative account of religious doxastic change and also for doxastic religious pluralism.

Coherence of Divine Action: A Powers Ontology View

Jason Hyde

Metaphysical problems in the philosophy of religion center on the coherence of religious language and the coherence of divine attributes or God's nature. One problem has to do with divine causation or mental causation in a physical world. According to Hume and neo-Humeist metaphysical notion of causation is always temporally prior to its effect. So that any form of causation requires a temporal effect in order to instantiate a causal physical effect. However, such a temporal view of causation need not be required especially for the instantiation of agentive causality. Further, if God is not pure act but static and cannot initiate free causal actions without changing His essential nature (not immutable nor eternal thus no necessarily existent being capable of free causal acts) then the classical conception of God is undermined and human persons have no real ontological grounding of being and free will.

This paper will argue from a powerist perspective that the notion of God's causal actions prior to the existence of physical time and causal effects in the physical universe is not unintelligible, especially given the view of powers ontology and agentive causation. Powers are properties and are non-reductive. The essence of a thing and its dispositional capacities are bounded up in the powers. So that a deep fact about reality must take into account powers and dispositional properties. The self is a non-material primitive substance that has basic faculties to exemplify mental properties. One of the faculties of the mind is the instantiation of active agency.

An agent (Farrer, 1963, O'Connor, 1996) is one that exercises their active powers exemplifying genuine volitional activity and purposive actions. Persons or minds are intrinsic agents capable of the exercising of causal power. Acts of free will are caused by inner mental states of the agent-the actor enacts agency. Despite the fixity of the laws of nature, persons are intrinsic causal initiators. This paper concludes then that a coherent notion of the enduring self-thru time that unifies a diachronic state(s) of consciousness, powers and dispositional properties is a primitive substantive agent. An appeal to psychological or bodily criteria of persistence will not suffice.

The postulation of Gods existence, having a metaphysical internal structure and powers, is grounds for the existence of a soul with its own metaphysical, unified structure in which the dispositional properties of consciousness are located and exemplified. This paper concludes that mental causation is a coherent notion especially in light of the active powers of agent causation.

So that a divine mind, such as God, retains His essential nature while still capable of actualizing and sustaining a physical universe in time. A divine causal agent, such as God, is coherent and that de facto objections to theistic realism are not

successful. Thus, one is within their epistemic rights to hold to belief in God and divine causation.

Short Paper Session 3

Can God change the Past?

Jeremiah Joven Joaquin

In *Summa Theologica* (par. 1, q. 25, art. 4), Aquinas asked whether an all-powerful God can make the past not have been; i.e., whether an omnipotent God can change the past. He answered this question negatively. He argued that God cannot make the past not have been because that implies a contradiction, and anything that implies a contradiction does not fall under the scope of God's omnipotence. Recently, however, analytic theologians like Jc Beall and AJ Cotnoir argued that "limit" sentences about God's omnipotence, of the form "God cannot do X," are either false or are in the gap. From this, it follows that the sentence "God cannot change the past" must be either false or in the gap. That is, it is false or neither true nor false that God cannot change the past. In this paper, I explore this gappy response to Aquinas's question.

Short Paper Session 8

Naturalism Revisited: A Minimalist-Realist Conception of God

Jessica Eastwood

The aim of the paper is to defend a form of theistic expansive naturalism as a spiritually satisfying and epistemically humble approach to the reality of God, by drawing on a form of mathematical realism, and its approach to apprehending the reality of abstract mathematical objects. To do this, I will first present what it means to expand naturalism in a theistic direction, and how such a move can positively attend to contemporary interest in alternative conceptions of God (2016, 2017) and the recent resurgence in the re-enchantment thesis (2021).[1] Next, I will offer a minimalist conception of God, which might satisfy the religious realist who believes in the reality of God, but is hesitant to commit to a fuller, traditional conception. I will then suggest where God (qua this minimalist conception) might exist, that being somewhere between a scientific form of naturalism and a classical realist conceptual space. To help reduce any skepticism surrounding the possibility of this "thin" realist space, I will draw an analogy with a similar kind of ontology proposed by some realist mathematicians when describing the type of reality that numbers, sets and functions have.

It has been common practice in philosophy of religion to define "naturalism" in a way that limits reality to the natural world, in a way that is amenable to the categories of science alone. However, in the last decade the standard rubric of what constitutes "supernatural" has evolved, largely to appropriately accommodate "value". The demand for a fundamental ontology that is able to accommodate for the richness of human experience has seen the expansion of scientific naturalism to include moral entities. A worldview that has expanded its ontology to permit morality admits of a 'theistic gloss', says Fiona Ellis, and as a

result grants us the right to talk about a divinely enchanted world.[2] It is the position of this paper that making room for a minimalist conception of God within a partly enchanted world is a worthwhile project.

How might we describe a suitably minimalist conception of God, so that it genuinely encapsulates the objective nature of God, whilst not committing the minimalist religious realist to additional claims about the nature of God? I will use a bare, apophatic interpretation of Anselm's formula: 'that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-conceived' as a popular monotheistic understanding of God, without defending the entirety of Anselm's theological system.

Where might this minimalist conception of God exist? If a classical realist conceptual space can be described as wholly independent (that is not to say, God does not depend in any way on the existence of us, human beings) and unconditionally necessary (that is to say, God is not in any way conditioned by the way that the world actually is), I will ascribe the minimalist conception of God (qua the suitably qualified Anselmian formula) a conceptual space that is semi-independent (that is to say, God's existence is distinctly tethered to us, human beings), and conditionally necessary (that is to say, God supervenes on something that is contained in this world and all other possible worlds like this world).

To help to ease any major resistance towards the legitimacy of such a "thin" account of realism, and in light of Victoria Harrison's paper (2017),[3] I will draw on two types of realism found in the philosophy of mathematics used to describe the ontology of abstract mathematical objects. I suggest that an analogy can be drawn between the classical religious realism ascribed to God (traditionally conceived), and the "thick" mathematical realism ascribed to abstract objects (known as mathematical platonism). I argue that an analogy can also be drawn between a minimalist religious realism ascribed to God (qua the suitably qualified Anselmian formula), and the "thin" mathematical realism ascribed to abstract objects (known as mathematical object realism). The analogy can be strengthened by highlighting the similarity of how the religious minimalist realist describes God, and how the mathematical minimalist realist describes their object(s) of attention, where both are inaccessible to the senses, acausal, and lack spatial or temporal location. As with any analogy, it has its limitations, but I argue that it can go some way to supporting the project of theistic expansive naturalism.

Short Paper Session 4

The Eternity of God: Richard Swinburne versus Thomas Aquinas

Johnson Uchenna Ozioko

One of the fundamental properties which theism has always attributed to God is eternity. However, when it comes to spelling out what it effectively means to claim that God is eternal, different theists seem to part ways in their construal of this essential divine attribute. Whereas the classical Christian view which goes back to Origen, Augustine, Boethius, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas has interpreted God's eternity in terms of timelessness, that is, His being outside time, a contrary view which understands God's eternity in terms of His being everlasting has been tenaciously espoused in more recent time by the renowned contemporary natural theologian, Richard Swinburne. By this, Swinburne implies that God is not outside

time but is rather in every time that ever was, is and will be; He is backwardly and forwardly everlasting. Inasmuch as both views seem persuasive, this paper wishes to evaluate the position of Swinburne vis-a-vis the classical view more critically as represented in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. Through a critical analysis of both positions and an exposition of their fundamental differences, strengths and weaknesses, it will examine which interpretation helps better in clearing the shadow enshrouding the question of God's eternity.

Short Paper Session 1

Khoraim Investigation: Role of Wonder and Hope in Spatiotemporality

Jueun Moon

Representation is a constitutive element of concrete human selfhood. However, a sense of spatiotemporality precedes any such representation, since the dimensions of past, present, and future are constitutive of the very way in which the representation occurs. In the Platonic cosmogony, the primordial Khora is where this constitution of space and time takes place prior to representation. Compared to a woman's womb, a sieve, or a mirror, Plato describes Khora in *Timaeus* as a primordial matrix that receives the intelligible and produces the sensible while having no place of its own in either noumenal or phenomenal world. Neither excluding nor participating, Plato is puzzled by how Khora eludes the binary category of being and non-being and yet sustains the whole of cosmos as its substratum. The ambiguous location of Khora marks both the border and the contact zone between the realm of Being and that of Becoming[1]. It stands between what is timeless and static and what is temporal and dynamic. Having a temporal perspective of practical concern and living towards future possibilities that have axiological meaning within that perspective - something to be hoped or feared for - is part of what it is to be the kind of subject that human persons are.

The aim of this paper is to explore the possibility of seeing Khora as that in which one's inner spatiotemporality is created in interaction with what I call a desire-movement of wonder and hope. I will propose that it is the pre-reflective, non-symbolic, il-logical, and sub-liminal space of Khora in which the unrepresentable, constantly shifting, and yet actively motivating desire-movement is at work in its purest force. Wonder and hope, most inchoate of these conatus-like desire-movements, allow the proto-subject to bear the risk of auto-deconstructibility to take a leap of faith amidst uncertainty towards what is beyond. Through unmediated interactions with one's milieu, wonder and hope induce a spatiotemporal direction in one's proto-subjectivity which gives rise to the sense of retention and protention and eventually a continuous mineness of one's own spatiotemporal lived experience of the world.

I believe that thinking of Khora as a generatrix of the spatiotemporality in one's subjective lived experience will lead us to fruitful discussions on demystifying the a priori nature of the Kantian spatiotemporal intuition. Throughout the paper, I plan to expand my ideas alongside and against Jacques Derrida's view on Khora with a theoretical framework of Edmund Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology. For Derrida, Khora is a space-in-the-making, the archi-spacing that is omnipresent and older than any constructed narrative. The Derridean Khora is *différance* itself, a chasm and neutral undecidability, as that which always "alternates between the

logic of exclusion and that of participation”[2]. With infinite resistance against any organizing gestures, Derrida’s deconstructionist Khora reminds us that all things contain their own auto-deconstructibility. While agreeing with Derrida’s articulation that Khora is archi-spacing, I will attempt to challenge his view that Khora necessarily results in disjointedness, subversion, random chance, and barrenness. In my view, it is in the silent night of Khora where we can observe a pure appearing of the spatiotemporal sense-making in the process. Edmund Husserl in his text *Phenomenology of Inner Time-Consciousness* distinguishes what he calls retention and protention in individuals’ experience of time[3]. I will rework the notions of retention and protention with Derrida’s notions of trace and spectre. In doing so, I will investigate how the affirmative power of wonder and hope, as vector and magnitude, are involved in the presentation of a spatiotemporally extended movement of Khora.

Short Paper Session 2

Eternal Present and Christian mysticism

Luca Siniscalco

It is commonly accepted that Christian – but generally monotheistic – tradition is characterised by a linear conception of time, seen as speeded up towards the future. At the contrary the pagan and polytheistic tradition is understood as based on a cyclical conception of time, in which present life is lived as the time of recognition and reproduction of authoritative models from the past (in order to restore the *illud tempus* analysed by the historian of religion Mircea Eliade).

Although this perspective is mainly correct and based on pivotal studies, we would like to investigate the significant role of the present in the very religious experience. As example and case study of this centrality we would like to discuss the religious experience of the eternal present into the Rhenish-Flemish mystics tradition: Johannes Tauler, Henry Suso and Meister Eckhart above all show that the experience of transcendence can authentically take place only in the instant (*Augenblick*), which is immanent into the present.

Trough this perspective we will try to show how much present dimension could be perceived as the fundamental time also in the Christian tradition, and how much this view can be fruitful in the dialogue with Eastern religions and contemporary science.

Short Paper Session 8

The Changeable Image of the Unchangeable God

Magdalena Marunová

The aim of this contribution is to point out the relationship between uncreated God and created human beings in the anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa (cca 335–394), one of the three Cappadocian theologians. Especially in his work *De hominis opificio*, Gregory pursues the discrepancy between human beings’ present misery and mortality and their being made in the image of the immortal Creator. He asks how can humans, who are mortal, short-lived, subject to passions and change, be

an image of a nature that is immortal, pure, unchangeable, and everlasting. He finds the answer in the Scripture, which says: “Let us make humans in our image,” and continues with “and God created humans; in the image of God created He them; male and female created He them”. Human beings created “in the image of God” are one thing and humans in their present poor state are another.

Boethius, Aquinas and Analytical Thomists on the Temporality of God

Marco Damonte

The intelligibility of what the eternity of God really is, has absorbed the attentions of the most part of analytics philosophers of religions in the last decades. Their efforts have been directed in various and even opposite directions that I propose to map in the first part of my paper. As I will show, the debate is polarized between Richard Swinburne and Charles Hartshorne. While Swinburne notices a tension between the philosophical theory of an everlasting God and the revealed doctrine of a loving God, Hartshorne attempts to fill this gap arguing that God is within time, acting and responding, loving rejecting and suffering as humans do, giving up to the traditional notion of God’s eternity without any hesitancy.

Both these authors report a notion of eternity as it is a synonymous of (1) being timeless (as numbers and tautologies may be) or of (2) existing without beginning and end throughout time. In any case the notion of eternity is not questioned, but it is considered a feature of God among others, one of his possible attributes. Following a more historical perspective, I will pay attention to the pioneering paper of Normann Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, originally published in 1981 on “The Journal of Philosophy”. They stated conceiving the eternity as one’s mode of existence, starting from the formula of Boethius according to which eternity is the complete possession all at once of illimitable life (*aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*). From their original and -at any rate- questionable interpretation of this saying, it is possible to deduce four features about what they call “eternality”: (1) whatever has eternality has a sort of life of consciousness (this authorize to distinguish timeless from eternity); (2) eternality involves infinite duration, beginningless as well as endless in contrast to pointlike and unextended; (3) eternality involves duration; finally, (4) eternality implies atemporality.

Three years later Stump and Kretzmann’s notion of ET-simultaneity was further developed by John Zeis who was inspired by Peter Geach’s analysis of the relation between thought and language. Zeis’s contribution is essential to shift the attention from Aquinas’ illustration of God’s eternal vision of the world towards parallelism taken from contemporary philosophy of mind, even if it is too much involved to the question of God’s foreknowledge.

The third stage of this historical trend lies in the most recent studies of Aquinas’ notion of being which are applied to understand his philosophical theology (with particular reference to the notion of *ipsum esse subsistens*). After analytical thomists as Geach, Anthony Kenny and Barry Miller, Giovanni Ventimiglia refers himself directly to Aquinas’ texts and he maintains that the identity between God’s essence and His existence have to be interpreted as the harmony between

His essence and His proper activities, giving value to the notion of God's action and so of temporality.

I will conclude underlying a meta-philosophical advantage that this historical reconstruction offers. From the modern era classical Christian philosophy has to deal with an epistemological problem based on the ontological issue of temporality: in particular Martin Heidegger charges that talking about classical Christian philosophy is like talking about wooden iron precisely because one cannot impose a supposedly eternal and immutable standard upon a word which is intrinsically forever shifting and unstable in time. Paying attention to the notion of God's eternity conceived by the Analytical Thomists urge us to an updated evaluation of the medieval tradition and to appreciate the rehabilitation of natural theology due to the analytical philosophy of religion.

Short Paper Session 4

Evangelical Ecotheology: how resurrection implies change, not destruction

Martin Jakobsen

This paper tries to motivate evangelical environmental care. Ecotheology tends to be based on the doctrine of creation. I suggest that ecotheology would appeal more to evangelicals if it is based on key themes within evangelical theology, such as Christ, the cross, and salvation.

First, I argue that the resurrection of Jesus implies that it is not destruction that awaits at the end of time, but renewal. Second, I argue that Paul's reasoning in 1 Corinthians 15 - namely that the continuity between the earthly body and the resurrected body entails that humans should take care of their bodies - can also be applied to creation as such: If creation is not going to be destroyed at the end of time, but renewed, there is a theological reason in favour of taking care of creation. Lastly, I consider a possible objection, namely that this argument that appeals to continuity can only apply to things that can maintain identity not only through time but also through death - which holds exclusively for persons.

Weber, time and the economics of the eucharist

Michaël Bauwens

This paper revisits Max Weber's thesis on the relation between protestantism and capitalism, by exploring an underlying theological and metaphysical dimension of his thesis in relation to time. Giving an economic reading to Anselm's definition, God is that more valuable than which nothing can be thought (IQM). Assuming a metaphysics of participation, every single human action as valued by the agent shares in or receives value imputation from IQM. The question where and especially when the encounter with and hence fruition of IQM is expected to happen thereby becomes a crucial determining factor in the entire temporal orientation of economic life on an individual as well as societal level.

Weber notes the importance of Calvin's double predestination theory, but that eschatological dimension of encountering IQM is arguably not a strongly varying factor in itself. However, what does crucially change relative to catholicism is the metaphysics of the transubstantiation whereby IQM can be substantially encountered in the presence of the eucharist in a way that is not, or gradually less possible for protestantism. The economic logic of monasticism to devote one's life entirely to the fruition of IQM in the eucharistic present thereby migrates to the eschatological future, since the relative importance of one's predestination increases in proportion to the decreased substantial encounter with IQM in the present.

Moreover, the metaphysics of the eucharist can itself be linked to the temporality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. If the sacrifice of the mass is numerically identical with the one at Calvary, namely the total self-gift of IQM, there is economically speaking no difference in time between Calvary and every single mass. Time is money, but since the presence of IQM arguably obliterates all relative differences in monetary value, it also removes all temporal differences relative to IQM. Absent this link between the past self-gift of IQM at Calvary and the present self-gift of IQM in every eucharist, the encounter with and fruition of IQM shifts to the hoped for future. Congenial to this observation, Bruno Colmant has noted that an opposite arrow of time is operative in catholic versus protestant economic thinking, whereby a past-to-present logic of capitalisation dominates in catholicism, but a future-to-present logic of actualisation in protestantism.

The economic infrastructure of a society thereby also gradually (or drastically) shifts from monasticism as the focal point of economic rationality, to other economic activities whose value partially participates in IQM. A diachronic increase in economic success then becomes a step along the earthly pilgrimage towards the hoped for future eschatological encounter with, and fruition of, IQM, thereby motivating the typical work ethic and frugality relative to money and its future-directed potential for the acquisition of valuables. But since mankind's restless heart will not find rest in any such partial value, it risks building up an unsustainable economic infrastructure in a pelagian effort towards an ever increasing participation of earthly goods (and ultimately mankind itself) in IQM. Capitalism as an ideology can then be understood as a shared faith and hope in the viability of that project, with transhumanism as an immanentization of human divinization as its logical endpoint.

Short Paper Session 7

God as Time in the Bhagavad Gītā

Mikel Burley

The classic Hindu text known as the Bhagavad Gītā ('Song of the Lord') comprises a dialogue in the middle of a battlefield between the warrior-prince Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna. Having become painfully aware of the socially destructive implications of the impending battle, Arjuna turns to Krishna for advice on what to do. As the dialogue unfolds, Krishna's identity as an incarnation or avatāra of the god Vishnu becomes increasingly evident. In the theophany of Chapter 11, he discloses to Arjuna his terrifying divine form, replete with multiple limbs and

flaming mouths. Krishna declares himself to be Kāla – which can be translated either as ‘time’ or as ‘death’ – ‘the mighty cause of world destruction’ (11.32, trans. Sargeant 1984: 484). So striking is this image of the divine as the great destroyer that Robert Oppenheimer famously invoked it to describe his experience of witnessing the first atomic bomb detonation in 1945. But what, philosophically, can be said about this identification of God and Time? This paper addresses this question by examining the concept of kāla both in the Bhagavad Gītā itself and in Hindu traditions more broadly. Incorporating a comparative philosophical dimension, the paper also draws upon ideas from Western philosophy, such as the notion of time as ‘something terrible, awesome: like a wall of water moving forward and carrying all before it’ (which Nichterlein and Morss (2017: 15) attribute to Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze), and from Rudolf Otto’s analysis of the theophany of Krishna as embodying an experience of ‘terror, majesty, and sublimity’ (Otto 1936: 191). While concurring with the view that the purpose – or one of the purposes – of the Bhagavad Gītā is ‘to engender and consolidate certain attitudes in its audience’ (Johnson 1994: vii), the paper takes issue with the assumption that the text is therefore religious rather than philosophical. On the contrary, by engendering and consolidating the attitudes in question, the Gītā is not only characterizing divinity but also drawing attention to an important feature of the human experience of time itself.

Short Paper Session 3

Maimonides and Kierkegaard on Aging and its Promise

Nehama Verbin

Contemporary Western culture views old age as an undesirable interim phase, devoid of meaning in-and-of itself that precedes dying. Old age is referred to as the "winter of our life," an unfortunate phase, characterized by withering, deterioration and decline. We do not wish to age, although we prefer aging to the alternative. Jean Amery goes as far as to view aging itself as a sickness: "[A]ging is no more of a normal process than rheumatism ... Actually, it is quite definitely a sickness, indeed a form of suffering from which there is no hope of recovery." (Amery 1968, 33)

The purpose of my paper is to explore the manners in which our attitude toward aging is "theory laden" by reflecting on Maimonides' and Kierkegaard's conceptions of happiness and its relation to sickness, suffering and pain. I shall argue that contrary to our modern and post-modern attitude toward aging, Maimonides and Kierkegaard provide challenging construals of aging. For Kierkegaard, aging, sickness and suffering are compatible with true happiness and joy; moreover, while happiness and joy do not undo suffering and sickness, they nevertheless defeat them. For Maimonides, it is particularly in aging that we can realize both selfhood and happiness in their fullest forms.

My paper has three parts. The first part focuses on our modern and post-modern relation to aging through Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Amery's reflections on the phenomenology of aging, particularly emphasizing the similarities that Amery draws between aging and torture. The second part construes a Kierkegaardian

conception of aging from his conceptions of happiness, suffering and sorrow and their manner of being defeated by faith. The third part construes a Maimonidean conception of aging from Maimonides' conception of human perfection and the body's predominantly negative contribution to its realization.

Although one's relation to God, whether in Kierkegaardian love or in Maimonidean loving comprehension, plays a key role in their conceptions of aging, their challenging construals of aging are relevant for both believers and non-believers, in elucidating the relation between the blessings and curses of aging (as we understand them) and our conceptions of happiness and the good life. Appreciating the existence of serious alternatives to them, we may come to view aging and old age, even when characterized by poor health, physical and mental deterioration, as a significant phase of human life, which may allow for love, passionate or intellectual, to be fully realized in the aged, as well as in those who care for them.

Short Paper Session 7

Transcending Time:
Semantic and Metaphysical Time in Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.

Nirali Patel & Hershini Soneji

Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, also known as Swaminarayan theology, was first propagated by the eighteenth-century figure, Sahajananda Svami in Gujarat, India. Providing its own unique commentary on the prasthānatrayī (three central texts of Vedānta), Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana established itself as an independent school of Vedānta by 2012.

The school propagates the existence of five ontological entities, namely, jīva, īśvara, māyā, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. (Paramtattvadas, 2017, p. 69) Whilst jīva and īśvara are bound by māyā, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are argued to transcend māyā. Each entity is posited as eternal, ananta (without end) and anādi (without beginning), thus transcending time.

Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana divides time into its semantic and ontological characterisations. A semantic characterisation of time refers to ascriptions such as 'simultaneity', 'slowly', 'quickly', and 'succession', as well as the measures of time such as kṣṇas, lavas, and nimeśas. A metaphysical characterisation of time, on the other hand, refers to the description of Parabrahman as kālaḥ (time), a destructive force that is most notably presented in Bhagavadgītā 11.32 (trans. Sargeant 1984, p. 484).

Analysing the semantic notion of time, with the contextual framework of McTaggart's A Series (McTaggart, 1908), this paper seeks to understand how Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana challenges the independence of time from the flow of events and the soteriological implication of this argument on religious praxis. Whilst time has been analysed in the context of Hindu theological texts (Hudson, 2012, p. 177), and other schools of Vedānta (Deutsch, 2021, p. 48), no such study has been conducted for Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.

Through both the semantic and metaphysical characterisations that Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana provides, this paper attempts to map out the contours of the transcendence of time, examining how an entity that logically has no temporal attributes and whose ‘actions cannot be located in time...can bring about effects in time.’ (Stump & Kretzmann, 1981).

Crucially, by answering such questions, this paper investigates how Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana can hold the semantic and metaphysical characterisations of time in tandem. If time is to be considered in exclusively a semantic sense, in other words, as merely a categorisation of the flow of events, how can this reconcile with the manifestation of Parabrahman as an agent of time (kālaḥ-puruṣa), and, more broadly, the transcendence of time?

Short Paper Session 5

Overcoming evil in the future - a processtheistic perspective

Oliver Li

One of the central metaphysical assumptions in Whiteheadian process-theism is that self-determinism goes all the way down and that the world is made of ever-changing processes. One consequence of this self-determinism is that God’s power is construed as persuasive and not coercive. Thus concerning the future of the universe, it is often claimed that process-theism does not provide a satisfactory answer to what happens to the universe in the future since it seems that, given an infinite future, God not having coercive power, ever-changing processes, God cannot ensure that the good finally may be victorious over the evil. As Alan Rhoda claims, the future in process-theism seems to “[...] be causally, epistemically, providentially, ontically, and alethically open.”(Rhoda, 2013) Indeed, this openness of the future needs to be adequately addressed within process-theism.

In this article, I firstly summarize two previous responses by David Ray Griffin and Marjorie Suchocki to the problem pertaining to an infinite future and the possibility that the entire world may end in an evil process rather than a state of eternal bliss. I show that while their solutions provide the possibility that the world can overcome evil, they cannot guarantee a positive outcome. I then present a novel approach based on an analogy to certain mathematical objects and processes in the theory of dynamic systems. I argue and claim that dynamical states, which infinitely extend into the future, are ever-changing and yet stable are fully conceivable. Subsequently, I discuss two possible objections (a) that there nevertheless is no guarantee that a dynamical eschatological state in which the good prevails can ever be reached and (b) that this dynamical eschaton contradicts the assumption of indeterminism within process-theism. I conclude that neither of these objections is convincing and that thus process-theism based on this analogy can provide a satisfactory answer to the question of whether evil in the universe will finally be overcome.

Omnipotence revised.
A temporal logic-based solution
to the paradox of the stone.

Pablo Dopico Fernandez

The consistency of the divine attribute of omnipotence has long been questioned by different versions of the so-called 'paradox of the stone'. In its simplest form, the paradox is presented as a question: can God create a stone so heavy that even He cannot lift it? Many responses to the paradox have appealed, more or less explicitly, to logic; and most of these solutions seem to take one of two sides. Thus, following Aquinas (ST I, q.25, a.3), some believe that the task in question (creating a stone too heavy for God to lift) is logically impossible, a contradiction in terms, and hence not a failure of omnipotence.

However, the other tradition, which seemingly originated with Descartes (1991), rejects Aquinas' solution, arguing that God is not and cannot be hindered by any limitation, not even logical. Instead, they defend that God should be able to perform logically impossible actions. In this line, and motivated by the similarities with the semantic paradoxes, A.J Cotnoir (2017) has shown how paraconsistent logic (i.e. a logic allowing contradictions) can formalise the Cartesian proposal. The price to pay, however, is that this proposal turns omnipotence into an inconsistent property, i.e. that God is and is not omnipotent at the same time.

Now, building on some remarks by Frankfurt (1964), in this paper we propose a novel approach to the paradox, formalizing it with the tools of temporal logic, in such a way that we can distinguish between the time before God creates the stone and the time after God creates it. Moreover, equally influenced by solutions to the semantic paradoxes, we incorporate a revision rule in the style of the revision theory of truth (Gupta and Belnap, 1993) that helps us deal with inconsistencies.

The result is a temporal sequence in which God's omnipotence comes out true, and necessarily so, and in which we can still assert that, at all time-instants before God creates the stone, the stone maintains its God-unliftable character. More importantly, we claim that our proposal overcomes the objection to the Aquinian solution, namely that God can do even what is logically impossible, while avoiding the inconsistency of the property of omnipotence. We close by defending our proposal from other possible objections, both technical and philosophical, including the fact that we have to assume some form of divine temporality, i.e. His existence in time.

The Temporalspatiality of Revelation as Giving Time and Giving Space

Patrick Ebert

Looking at the theology of the 20th and 21st century, a significant way to think about the connection of God, time, and space is via God's revelation. Authors like Tillich, Barth, Bultmann, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Ebeling, Jüngel, and Dalferth can be mentioned here. If theological statements about God are bound to the event that God shows himself, that he reveals himself, then also statements about his relation to time and space can only be made regarding God's revelation. This being a feasible way of argumentation, it is yet far from clear how exactly this connection of time, space, and revelation (temporalspatiality of revelation) is to be grasped. Thus, the approaches mentioned are characterized by the fact that, on the one hand, their theology of revelation is based on a primacy of presence, presentness, and synchronicity (deus praesens, self-presence of religious self-consciousness, self-transparency, teleological eschatology as 'already now', dualism of presentation and representation), which is mostly founded in a dualism that contrasts the time of God as proper time (eternity) with the improper, fallen, elapsing and fragmented time of man. On the other hand, there is mostly a superordination of time over space. Now, according to Waldenfels, both are classical coping strategies of the encounter of time (Waldenfels 2009: 129-131), which, from a (religio)philosophical perspective, are dedicated to a primacy of presence, synchronicity, and gathering, and thus, with Derrida, to a self-sufficient metaphysics of presence (Derrida 1997: 12-13). This becomes theologically problematic in that such a thinking of revelation or its temporality, ultimately can't take seriously the significant moment of hiddenness (Isa 45:15) or withdrawal and dissolves it in favor of the mentioned presence-metaphysical motifs. This paper intends to confront this problematic in the name of a theology of revelation conceived as 'showing oneself in withdrawing oneself' (Ebert 2020), which is based on the phenomenologies of Levinas, Derrida, and Waldenfels and thereby relies on the motifs of diachrony/diatopy, différance, chōra, diastasis, temporal displacement, event, alterity, and encounter. Based on these considerations, a way of thinking the temporalspatiality of God's revelation will be developed that, first, reflects the considerations of hiddenness/withdrawing from the perspective of temporalspatiality, that, second, takes these considerations of temporalspatiality from the event of revelation itself, as it is witnessed in the testimony of Scripture, instead of imposing them from the exterior, and which, thirdly, critically considers the subordination of space to time regarding the entanglement of time and space in the corporeality and mediality of the 'showing oneself', as it can be elaborated with Derrida in the motifs of différance as spatialization of time and temporalization of space, as well as the motif of chōra, understood here on the basis of God as makom. Fourth, the widespread use of the motif of 'God's eternity' as a gathering and coping variable will be critically questioned and, regarding the reflections on the temporalspatiality of the event which always already comes irretrievably too early and to which we can always only respond irretrievably delayed - via the motif of the irretrievability of a past that was never present and a future that will never be present (Derrida 1997: 70) -, reinterpreted as the radical infinity of God (Levinas 2008: 76-77) in terms of the irretrievable alpha and omega.

God as the “power of the future”

Paula Neven Du Mont

The aim of this paper is an examination of the understanding of God's action and temporality as an infinite, eternal being in a finite world. Thus, the central question is: How can the eternal God act in time? How much temporality can an eternal being tolerate? The starting point of my discussion will be Wolfhart Pannenberg's approach.

First, I want to look at the nature of God and how he can act. The essence of God is determined by Pannenberg as truly infinite, indefinitely alive and accordingly imperishable. God in his eternity does not have no time, but is present to every time and keeps himself present to every time. Pannenberg therefore emphasizes that talk of purposes or means of divine action is actually inappropriate to the omnipotent God, since he is not a needy being but can realize his purposes immediately. But since God creates finite beings and wills them as such, the objects of his action are under the conditions of temporal processes, which again in some sense justifies an application of the ends-means structure of action to God himself, according to Pannenberg.

But one could ask: Can different actions of a God transcending time really be distinguished if they are all simultaneously present to him? This will be considered on the basis of creation as an eternal act of God.

Then, in a second part of my paper, I will further discuss the relationship between God and time - past, present and future. Pannenberg emphasizes that God is completely free in his actions. This means that he is not bound to any circumstances and can react creatively. God alone completely determines his own future and the future of the world. Therefore, he is described as the “power of the future”. This is important for Pannenberg, since he assumes that God's reign will be clearly revealed in the future when it comes to the ‘wholeness’ of history. His reign comes from the future towards every present. With this, however, God is not supposed to be timeless in his ‘futureness’. Pannenberg thinks time as belonging to the essence of God. Does then also the change, which comes from the future to the world, belong to the essence of God? Is God as the power of the future also the power of change? And furthermore, if our present is always understood as the action of God coming toward us from the future, how much room for action is there? Does the idea that God is the power of the future lead to a deterministic understanding of the course of the world?

I will explore these questions to illustrate how Pannenberg thinks the temporality and agency of God without giving up his eternity.

God, Time and Change. Jacobi's Critique of Rational Theology.

Peter Jonkers

By accusing rational theology of being a form of nihilism, Jacobi contributed substantially to the outbreak of its already looming crisis. The origin of nihilism is the propensity of the understanding for logical enthusiasm, in particular the conviction that God's existence and attributes, e.g. that he is atemporal and unchanging, could be demonstrated rationally. When the understanding yields to the temptation of its own enthusiasm, this results, paradoxically, in annihilating the personal, living God and substituting him with an anonymous, purely conceptual idol. Against this nihilistic tendency of rational theology, Jacobi develops his own, alternative philosophical theology, which has the immediate awareness of God as an objective, personal being as its starting point. In particular, his approach focuses on individual experiences and stories of God's living presence, and only then reflects on them conceptually. By taking this approach, Jacobi makes clear that philosophical theology should refrain from demonstrating God's existence and attributes, and should confine itself to hinting at the truth of God's existence as a personal being. Whether this means that God's existence includes time and change is a purely conceptual question that philosophy should not want to answer.

The time of the witness. Testimony and Messianic Time in Giorgio Agamben

Rafael Martínez Rivas

In his book *Remnants of Auschwitz*, one of the volumes that make up his archaeological project *Homo Sacer*, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben not only devotes a large part of his reflection to the problem of testimony, but the witness even appears in the title. After a reading of the concentration camp and after situating testimony, in dialogue with the work of Foucault, between the language and the archive, Agamben turns to the concept of remnant and relates it to messianic time. Through an analogy he writes that "in the concept of remnant, the aporia of testimony coincides with the aporia of messianism", thus linking the concepts of testimony and messianic time. In the same way that messianic time has neither foundation nor end, but only remnant, so testimony consists in the possibility of speaking in the name of not being able to say. From this perspective, the subject who testifies has the condition of remnant, in the same way as messianic time.

Agamben's analyses of messianic time have been further developed in the book *The Time that Remains*, based on a seminar on the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans. In that book, Agamben again links messianic time to many of the concepts he had used in his analysis of testimony, such as infancy, but this link reappears strongly in the small book entitled *Pilate and Jesus*, in which he writes that "to testify, here and now, to the truth of the kingdom that is not here means accepting that what we want to save will judge us".

This paper sets out to study the concepts of messianism and testimony in the work of Giorgio Agamben, with the aim of understanding how the two concepts

are linked and what place they occupy in Agamben's work. Just as Erik Peterson, through his reading of the Book of Revelation, had affirmed that the Church is built on the bones of the martyrs, the witnesses, and had also affirmed the eschatological character of this martyrdom, so this paper aims to study the relationship between testimony and messianic time in Agamben's work, delving into the understanding of the historical character of testimony and the ethical/political character of messianic time.

Short Paper Session 7

The more divine you think, the more humane you act
- Karl Barth's Christologically constricted concept of time in CD IV/3 and its universalist practical consequences in his late ethics of reconciliation

Raffael Sommerhalder

Karl Barth is well-known for his concept of the Christological constriction. Liberal critics like Trutz Rendtorff asserted that this forces Christians to retreat into an ecclesiastical ghetto without relation to the modern, plural society as a whole and without any global impact. However, this paper scrutinizes Barth's concept of time and proves that the opposite is true.

For Barth time is the "form of existence" of the covenantal history between God and humanity revealed in Jesus Christ and therefore shapes divine and human reality. Thus, time plays a fundamental role in Barth's opus magnum, the "Church Dogmatics". This paper will focus on Barth's concept of time in CD IV/3 which turns out to be the basic model of his ethics of reconciliation called "The Christian Life". Then it will sketch out three coordinate axes defining the practical consequences of such a concept of time and apply them to contemporary examples.

In CD IV/3 Barth conceives a - what I call - double-elliptic concept of time being the form of existence of the history of revelation biblically shaped as Christ's prophecy and conceptually outlined as a dramatic battle, where Christ actualizes himself within the anthropological domain - the event called Parousia - to cause existential cognition of God. This implies a total reorientation of human life. Barth conceives three forms of Parousia, namely resurrection as the beginning, impartation of the Holy Spirit as continuation, which forms the presence of humanity, and the final return of Christ as the end of the prophetic drama. They differ in their range of people concerned, starting with the disciples, continuing with the Christian community and aiming at the universal humanity. These three forms of Parousia are conceived as two elliptical relations of anticipation and recapitulation (past-presence and presence-future), combining a perichoretic temporality of God defined in Christ's resurrection as eternally self-actualizing himself to each period of time and a linear, teleological temporality of the human subject aiming at integral and universal change of existence caused by the cognition of God.

Barth's ethics of reconciliation is conceived as the practical consequence of the double-elliptical concept of time, what means human action as reaction to God's

redemptive action. Throughout this work, three coordinate axes of human action can be reconstructed.

Firstly, human action strives for social integration. As being integrated into the covenant with God humanity finds itself participating in the community of people linked to each other through the covenant with God striving for universality. Hence, human action will build up social cohesion and participation especially concerning new members of society (e.g., refugees) and avert fission (e.g., hermetic milieus and filter bubbles).

Secondly, human action strives for global responsibility. Human beings becoming aware of their future as the universal community of God's people develop a cosmopolitical view aiming at the welfare of even the most remotely living member of humanity even in the latest future, so e.g., they will establish human rights and environmental standards not only to themselves but expanding them to the whole world and in favour of upcoming generations.

Thirdly, human action aims at humanitarian engagement. In this concept of time humanity is conceived as it is found by God. It is humanity without all faith entangled in ideologies and powers it caused itself. So human action struggles for general liberation and justice through human rights and liberties in favour and together with all people regardless of faith and opinion but keeps those flexible for changing situations.

In conclusion, liberal critics are wrong, because - as paradox as it sounds - for Barth the more divine you think, the more humane you act.

Short Paper Session 2

Klossowski on Nietzsche's Eternal Return, Heidegger on 'Ecstatic Temporality' and the Temporalization of the Preexistent Logos and Jesus's Anticipation of Death in the Gospels

Rajesh Sampath

This paper will challenge the notion that atheistic philosophies of religion and faith-based dogmatic and systematic Christian theologies require a separation of human time and divine eternity; and furthermore, a deeper, more primordial sense of non-spatialized temporality is linked to the Christological substance of Jesus's Preexistent Logos and post-death resurrection. Our philosophical point of departure will be from Pierre Klossowski's enigmatic work on Nietzsche, particularly his idea of the 'Eternal Return,' in his eccentric work, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (originally published in French in 1969). Although not as well-known as other major French thinkers of the twentieth century, who were influenced by Nietzsche, for example Bataille, Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, Klossowski's work gives us a glimpse in to an idea of temporality that is not incompatible with an idea of the divine; one that is not derived from a linear conception of endless time as flowing now-points akin to Heidegger's original critique of the Western metaphysical conception of time in *Being and Time* (1927).

My assumption is that there are moments ripe for appropriation: where Klossowski discusses an idea of 'God' as the 'epoch' and 'spiritualization of power' that is buried in the 'ecstasy' that Nietzsche felt when the first thought of the 'Eternal Return' dawned on him (Klossowski, 1997, p. 113). For Klossowski, the question is how did this thought occur on the threshold of Nietzsche's descent into madness (Klossowski, 1997, p. 95). Attempting to creatively interpret Klossowski's in more speculative philosophical terms, I aim to bring Heidegger's *Being and Time*, particularly section 65 on 'ecstatic temporality' in Chapter III of Division Two, into the discussion, which Klossowski did not reference directly. I will contrast these two major philosophical attempts at a non-linear sense of time, whereby dogmatic assumptions of 'origin' and 'end' are questioned, while renewing a philosophically speculative engagement with the New Testament Gospels, particularly the Gospel of John. My thesis is that the complexity of time and temporality from the Prologue to the Gospel of John on the Preexistent Logos to Jesus's anticipation of his death before his arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and the proclamation of his return (Parousia) dwarfs the philosophical articulations we find in both Klossowski on Nietzsche and Heidegger's attempt to do something different from the entire Western metaphysical tradition, including Nietzsche, in *Being and Time*. From this vantage point, we can attempt to raise new questions about time as compatible with divine transcendence above human intuition and experience; but one that is radically other to the Western metaphysical tradition of time construed as three axes of past as no longer now, present as now, and future as yet to be now. Rather, at stake is a four-dimensional sense of time, in non-linear and non-circular modalities, which is also irreducible to mainstream dogmatic and systemic Christian theology; the consequences of such a heterodox move speaks to some of the main questions for philosophers of religion (unconstrained by any faith commitment) to see new relations between temporality, change, and God in terms that are necessarily compatible rather than incommensurable. This is not some wild departure from the Western traditions of religion and philosophy, but rather speaks deeply to what is buried but remains secret in its Judeo-Christian heritage. The motivation for this paper is to think about the ethical consequences of such an ontological venture so that one gets a sense of responsibility towards these great philosophical texts while attesting to the depths and mysteries of Christianity and its future.

Berkeley on Time and Soul

Roomet Jakapi

George Berkeley's major philosophical work, *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), includes a peculiar theory of time, according to which each human soul has its own time understood as a continuous succession of ideas in that soul (sect. 98). In a dreamless sleep or during a blackout, the soul does not perceive ideas, and therefore no time passes. Public time is merely conventional. Berkeley's treatise also includes a fairly standard argument for the natural immortality of the soul. Immortality follows from the indivisibility and immateriality of the soul (sect. 141). Typically, arguments like that imply that during the interval between bodily death and resurrection souls exist in a separate, disembodied state. I shall argue that, according to Berkeley's theory of time, souls can continuously exist and perceive ideas — from this life to the general resurrection — even if there is no separate state after death. In other words, I claim that Berkeley's argument for immortality is compatible with a special form of Christian mortalism. While my interpretation is somewhat unorthodox, it is in line with Berkeley's remark, in his correspondence with Samuel Johnson, that his early reflections on time led him to the puzzling conclusion "that the resurrection follows the next moment to death."

Metaphysical Doctrines of the Anlo of Ghana and Process Philosophy

Roseline Elorm Adzogble

Concepts of mutual interdependence, process, change, creative advance and God occupy key areas in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Process metaphysics lays emphasis on a naturalism of rigorous rational and empirical methodology with far-reaching implications. Process thinkers have compared Whiteheadian thought to Buddhism, Christianity, and several others. However, African religious beliefs have not been considered in this area of study. Based on the gap in the literature, this article attempts to reconcile such seemingly different spheres. I discuss process philosophy in the framework of Anlo traditional thought. The objective is to initiate a comparative discussion of the metaphysical doctrines of African societies, specifically the Anlo people of Ghana, on the one hand, and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy, on the other.

First, I offer an account of Whitehead's process metaphysics as regards the aforementioned concepts. Second, I argue that nonconventional sources of African philosophy offer conceptual understandings of philosophies of African groups and their place in the metaphysical debate. Third, I discuss these key areas of process thought in Anlo traditional pragmatic philosophy. I illustrate their like-mindedness with process metaphysics through language, religious rites, and historical accounts. I conclude that, although process philosophy overlaps in prominent areas with Anlo belief systems, questions regarding the causal nature of God distinguish the Anlo conception of divinity from that of process philosophy.

Anlo refers to a relatively small Ewe ethnic group currently largely located in the southeastern corner of Ghana in West Africa. As a group, they trace their ancestry to the land of Notsie. The Anlo ethnic division possesses distinguishing features from the rest of the Ewes, although they share common ancestral lineage.

First, the dialect of Ewe they speak has noticeable conceptual variances from others like Fon, Tonu, and Hwedome, indicating the wealth of their metaphysical belief systems. In addition, the rites and ritual practices of the Anlo-Ewe are rich portrayals of their convictions of a peculiar kind of spirituality distinct from these other groups.

Second, the conceptions of personhood among the Anlo reject notions of strict determinism. They believe in self-determination and mutual interaction of “communicative things” in the cosmos. On this basis, they hold a non-anthropocentric outlook of the universe while akin tribes emphasize a human-centered cosmos.

Finally, through historical accounts of their traditional religious sects, it appears that the Anlo were not polytheistic, as explained by Christian missionaries. Unlike most precolonial African religious beliefs that worshipped multiple deities, the Anlo held that the supreme authority was both Mawu and Se, which were aspects of the same God. Drawing from their hierarchical cosmology, it has often been argued that these names were either interchangeable or represented two distinct entities. I will here offer an alternative interpretation of a dual-aspect deity and show this position as reasonably coherent with the socio-politico-cultural practices of the Anlo.

The choice of process philosophy is methodologically advantageous for such an endeavor because African precolonial theories are often couched in ethnophilosophical sources such as folklore, songs, language, rites, rituals, and so forth. Consequently, any comparative analysis necessitates that both systems of thought be compatible in content and structure. Engaging with process philosophy, being speculative, as well as embracing a strong empirical yet rational methodology, offers a good illustration of a philosophical tradition that is unrestrictive and undogmatic. These qualities support effective dialectical exchange between two culturally distinct traditions without imposing normative chauvinism.

Clocks of Eternity: The Christian Incarnational Acceleration of Time

Ryan Haecker

Abstract: Time is an essential moment of knowledge of God in Christian theology. For the Son of God is, in the Gospels, both the eternal creator of the world of time, who has, nevertheless, been shown to have ‘become flesh’ (Jn 1:14), to paradoxically enter time, and, on the Cross, to recreate and restore the world in God. The divine creative Logos communicates from God to the world the universal ideas, in the discovery of mathematical forms, and in the invention of technological artefacts. With the invention of simple machines, the natural movement of terrestrial mechanics can be formally redirected across the space of geometrical proportions to accelerate in time. With the invention of the digital computer, this accelerating momentum of analog motion can be reciprocally calculated to programme its own mechanical motion and virtually produce any machine. And with the development of the internet, the grammar of technical communications can be radically transformed by this continuous acceleration of calculating reason. In the liturgy of the Eucharist, the Church recalls both the absolute acceleration of God who has emptied himself of eternity to become man in time, and the absolute deceleration of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ from time to eternity. The sacraments can thus be received to both cancel and yet preserve this incarnational acceleration of the motion of time in digital computing and media. Since, as this essay will show, the recreation of the world in Christ is a gift of God, this incarnational acceleration of time is essential to the knowledge of God.

Counterfactual Dependence is Sufficient for Divine Causation

Ryan Kulesa

Evan Fales (1997) and Quentin Smith (1996) have rejected a counterfactual analysis of divine causation, iterations of which are similar to Lewis’ (1973) original analysis causation, due to cases of reverse dependence. Smith (1996) argues: “Let c be the divine willing of the big bang and let e be the big bang. If e had not occurred, then c would not have occurred. But this implies the false proposition that e is the cause of c , since c is counterfactually dependent on e .” This does seem problematic for the theist, since she would probably deny the Big Bang’s coming about is the cause of God’s willing it or causing it to come about. The problematic counterfactuals which express a reverse dependence are also known as backtracking counterfactuals.

In order to address this concern, I will argue that recent advancements in structural equation models can solve this objection, and conclude that such backtracking counterfactuals are not an effective objection against a counterfactual account of divine causation. I draw from recent published work by Schaffer (2016) and Wilson (2018a, 2018b) by applying an interventionist procedure to determine whether or not backtracking counterfactuals are true. Since this objection is an objection targeted at the sufficiency of counterfactual

dependence for causation, not its necessity, my conclusion will be limited to the claim that the present objection does not entail that such dependence is insufficient for causation. I then note two consequences my view. First, like Schaffer and Wilson, I am committed to tolerating non-trivially true or false counterfactuals concerning counterpossible scenarios. Second, the view presented here gives the theist machinery to clearly articulate the arrow of dependence between God spatiotemporal events, a consequence which, given the interventionalist procedure outlined in the paper, requires that the theist posit non-trivially true or false counterpossible counterfactuals.

Short Paper Session 3

Philosophy of what? The perils of globalizing philosophy of religion

Sebastian Gäb

Most philosophers of religion today agree that the discipline needs to change. Traditionally, philosophy of religion has been understood more or less as philosophy of the Christian religion (minus specifics like revelation or incarnation), or, a little more inclusively, as philosophy of theism. In accordance with this understanding, the standard curriculum in philosophy of religion was organized around the concept of God, comprising subfields like: arguments for and against the existence of God, debates about the divine attributes, or the rationality of faith in God. But this conception of philosophy of religion has been challenged in recent years, most notably by Nagasawa (2017) and Harrison (2020), who make a case for globalizing the philosophy of religion. Instead of narrowly confining themselves to Western theism, philosophers of religion should reorganize their field and include all the world's religious traditions. A global philosophy of religion, they argue, should focus on common problems in different traditions and draw on resources from all of them to solve these problems. For example, discussions on the problem of evil shouldn't merely ask why an omnipotent and perfectly good God allows evil but should also include philosophical discussions about the origin of evil and suffering from, say, Buddhist philosophies.

While I agree with the idea that philosophy of religion needs to open up, I will argue that its advocates have overlooked one serious problem hidden within the call for globalization: what is philosophy of religion about? One important benefit of the traditional focus on theism is that demarcation issues become fairly easy to solve: if it has something to do with God, it's philosophy of religion. Once we drop this fixation on theism, philosophy of religion on the one hand becomes open to a multitude of different traditions - but at the price of lacking a clear criterion to demarcate its subject matter on the other. In my talk, I will address this problem and propound two theses:

(1) Philosophy of religion requires a clear concept of religion. Despite e.g. Harrison claiming that philosophy of religion is not about religion in general, we need an idea of what religion in general is. Substituting 'traditions' for 'religions' will not help, since (a) 'tradition' suggests that only religious ideas from socially established and historically stable communities count, and (b) there is no criterion

to distinguish religious from non-religious traditions. Is, for example, Epicureanism a tradition which global philosophy of religion should include? When we speak of global philosophy of religion, a general concept of religion is already employed under the surface and needs to be brought out in the open.

(2) A concept of religion that fits global philosophy of religion needs to be based in religious experience (broadly understood). Harrison proposes that global philosophy of religion should focus on ‘the big philosophical questions that typically arise wherever there are reflective human beings’ (2020: 27) – but this essentially means that philosophy of religion becomes indistinguishable from philosophy per se. Instead, I shall argue that the best way to capture this interpretation of philosophy of religion is to understand religion as a specific way of experiencing human existence (similar to William James’ notion of religious experience), which has occasionally been dubbed ‘spirituality’. Philosophy of religion should study the answers that have been given to questions about the meaning and value of human existence, the responses to the challenges of our own finitude, or the place we occupy in the universe.

Short Paper Session 7

I-centre Constitutive of Time-Space in Edith Stein and Gerda Walther

Shahid Mobeen

Temporality and space are a measure of change occurring in the experienced and living perception of the human being in his body-psyche-spirit dimensions. Husserlian phenomenological method is applied by Edith Stein and Gerda Walther to investigate the constitution of essential structure of human subject as an individual and as a community in ones physical, psychic and spiritual experiences. In particular the definition of an originary being as I-centre who is the medium of the flow of living experiences (Erlebnisse) is the originary consciousness which, through free will and in it’s individuality, constitutes the sense of the transcendent appearing to the originary perception. The originary constitution of sense of the transcendent phaenomanon delineates the path to bring out or to put in front of the cognizing individual the very gnoseological structure which belongs to oneself.

The philosophical anthropology delineated by Edith Stein and Gerda Walther poses the very metaphysical question of the sense of the Truth lived in the human interiority. Both the philosophers reply to this query phenomenologically. Stein analyses the essential nature of the human being and individuates the experiential core of the human singularity as “soul of the soul” through deeper/higher levels of soul. Gerda Walther remains at the experiential level in particular through a detailed analyses of the personal telepathic and parapsychological experiences in which the living-body is not only conscious of the experience of the other but at the level of sensations/feeling lives it originarily and remains transcendent to the other at the same time. Historical period, geographical distance and cultural identity are secondary characteristics or details of the lived-experience when it is narrated or expressed.

The I-centre discovered in both the philosophers is the originary-conscious-individual which essentially is psychic and spiritual (Geistlich) but it is present in the living body. This very presence of I-centre in the living body makes it manifest and evident to the perception of the other who looks at the human being as the alter-ego but at the same time I-centre of the other is in contact and relates through the physical dimension. The succession of the material and non-material phenomena needs to be measured qualitatively and quantitatively even if qualitative measurement is at risk of illusions and even if the quantitative measurement is at the risk of quantitative-error. The definition of possible-pasts and projection of possible-futures originates from the "present-moment/instant" in the living experience of the originary I-centre. At this point the question arises if the finite being can experience infinite Being which is Eternal?

Short Paper Session 6

Bramhall versus Hobbes:
the rhetoric of religion against the rhetoric of philosophy

Shai Frogel

The paper suggests a rhetorical analysis of the controversy on the issue of liberty between the philosopher Thomas Hobbes and Archbishop John Bramhall. It was a long controversy that began as an oral one and continued in books for thirteen years. The paper considers only two books from this controversy to examine the conflict between the rhetoric of philosophy and the rhetoric of religion: Hobbes' *Of liberty and necessity* (1654) and Bramhall's *A vindication of true liberty* (1655).

The first part of the paper introduces initial definitions of these two types of rhetoric. The following three parts deal with three distinct parts of the controversy, as Hobbes and Bramhall define them: to the reader, arguments from scripture, and arguments from reason. The fact that Hobbes and Bramhall themselves divide the arguments into those from scripture and those from reason makes this controversy a good illustration of the conflict between rhetoric of philosophy and rhetoric of religion that is many times fused in Western ethical discourse.

Hobbes addresses his text to the "sober and discreet reader" whereas Bramhall, who is interested in theological discussion, addresses his text to "the Christian reader". Surely, this can be the same person, but whereas Hobbes asks the readers to consider the issue at hand as an autonomous thinker, Bramhall reminds them that they are firstly Christian believers.

The part of "arguments from scripture" is Bramhall's land. Bramhall brings many quotations from scripture to support his view on the liberty of human beings, whereas Hobbes is in defense and only attempts showing that the scripture does not exclude the possibility of his view and that it is not destructive to religious

practice The roles in the part of "arguments from reason" turn over. Now it is Hobbes that leads the controversy by introducing a new definition to liberty and supports it by conceptual arguments, while Bramhall is in defense and mainly warns against the dangerous religious and social implications of Hobbes' view.

A philosophical view does not need a religious cachet, nor, on the other hand, does religious truth need philosophical validation. The controversy forces the readers to ask themselves if the question of human liberty is a philosophical one, and therefore a subject to "arguments from reason", or theological one, and therefore a subject to "arguments from scripture". Are they firstly religious believers or sober and discreet readers?

Short Paper Session 1

“Necessarily Did Exist but not Necessarily Continuing to Exist:
A Zizioulasian Trinity”

Slater Simek

John D. Zizioulas' doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most significant, if not controversial, conceptions of the Trinity of the 20th century. While Zizioulas, as a Trinitarian, affirms the equality of the differing persons of the Trinity, Zizioulas ultimately contends that the Sovereign Aseity Conviction (SAC) - the conviction that God is the one reality that exists a se (from and of himself) and is dependent upon nothing outside of himself for his essence and his existence - should be predicated not of God the Trinity, but of the person of the Father specifically. Amongst other philosophical challenges, this would entail a radical reconception of necessary existence. That is to say, per Zizioulas, the Father necessarily did exist, but the Father, having SAC and thus not being constrained by necessity, does not necessarily exist continually, absent of Him "affirming His existence" through an act of communion by begetting the Son and spirating the Spirit. Where this ultimately damns Zizioulas' proposal is not that his conception of necessity is untenable, but that his view entails the persons of the Trinity having differing essential properties. With that said, I will propose a reformulated version of Zizioulas' Trinity, which predicates the SAC of each of the Trinitarian members, while also defending this reformulation, which entails, amongst other things, a defence of Zizioulas' reconceived understanding of necessary existence as tenable, so long as it is applied to all of the members of the Trinity.

Time and Change for the Fulfillment of the Rational Creature
according to Anselm of Canterbury

Stefano Marchionni

The perennial question - as relevant as ever in our time - about time and change with reference to the dynamism of the human being, of his relationship with God and of his own fulfillment can find interesting stimulus in listening to authoritative voices of the past that have offered promising perspectives on such issues. One of these voices is undoubtedly that of Anselm of Canterbury (an author that our contemporary sensibility has rediscovered and is rediscovering as a possible interlocutor), inasmuch it indicates in love the fulfillment of what the human being is called to be in conformity with his own being.

Placing himself “at the beginning of the European adventure of reason” (according to a clever expression of A. Cantin), he engages in an attempt to understand of rational and universally proposable understanding of themes that his time (the eleventh century) read within hermeneutical perspectives and languages mainly derived from biblical revelation and from patristic and monastic sapiential theology. It is precisely the novelty and “modernity” of his approach that seem to us capable of offering contemporary man a possible and stimulating interlocution in his questioning of the meaning of time and change for the human being, in relation to the dynamism of love in the perspective of the fulfillment of the rational creature, seen from the perspective of a rationally and existentially committed investigation.

In the framework of Anselm’s original consideration of the theme of righteousness, time and change appear fundamental elements of the rational creature, and are decisive hermeneutic keys for the understanding of its fulfillment in the dynamism of love in a number of important aspects: in the very anthropological constitution of the rational creature, which questions and reveals its ontological foundation; in its dynamics and cognitive possibilities; in the movements and potentials for the fulfillment of its desire; in its intrinsic openness and pro-tension towards transcendence; in the dynamism of its journey towards beatitudo recognizing limits and wounds as well as the source available for its free fulfillment while progressing along its earthly itinerary and possible eschatological fullness; in the educational approaches that can accompany the process of maturation and conscious realization of the rational creature’s humanity according to its rectitudo.

This speculative horizon has found in Anselm’s biographical experience a concrete daily application, which combines the clarity of vision with the credibility of testimony, thus making it even more promising to listen to his voice for men and women of our time.

The immanence of revelation.
Michel Henry and the phenomenology of religion

Stefano Santasilia

The reflection elaborated by Michel Henry in relation to Christian revelation considers, in its last part, the question of language as a fundamental moment of revelation. The text dedicated to the "word of Christ" presents itself, on the one hand, as an attempt to develop a precise philosophical exegesis of the Gospel of John, on the other as the possibility of presenting the question of religious experience as something fundamental in human existence itself. In fact, the relationship that the French phenomenologist establishes between revelation and the authentic form of expression of truth shows revelation not as a possible experience but as the constitutive necessity of subjectivity itself. The modality of the flesh, as a modality of existence, is then already absorbed in the authentic dynamics of revelation.

In the light of this condition, this intervention aims to show the development of Michel Henry's fundamental articulation, trying to let two fundamental questions come to light:

- a) the placement of the position of the French phenomenologist in the context of a binary reading of the religious question;
- b) the problematic cancellation of the historical, and therefore temporal, dimension. In fact, with regard to the first point, it is a question of understanding whether Henry's reflection dedicated to the question of Christian revelation can really admit the possibility of being a non-believer.

This considering that, the consideration of revelation as constitutive of the dynamics of subjectivity, rather implies the reading of existence according to the believer-idolatrous contrast. Regarding the second point, it will be a question of understanding how a constitutive revelation of subjectivity can assume a historical modality, fulfilling according to Henry in the context of a complete and radical immanence.

These reflections will be able to reveal the complexity of the question of revelation in the context of phenomena such as that of conversion - in which the novelty of the existential dynamic is structured in the form of recognition - but also, and above all, in relation to the temporality of existence in its relation to the eternity of the divine dimension.

Agnosticism, Hope, and Beliefs about the Future

Sylvia Wilczewska

Within religious epistemology, it has sometimes been suggested that agnosticism about the existence of God is, directly or indirectly, connected to hope in the way theism and atheism are not – even though a certain kind of hope seems also to be involved in theism. While some have stated that some or all varieties of agnosticism entail epistemic hope (cf. e.g. Le Poidevin 2010: 9-10) – an idea consistent with the claim that suspension of judgement is tied to the non-doxastic attitude of inquiry (cf. Friedman 2017), and that spiritual inquiry may be essential for the general existential outlook of the agnostic (cf. Draper 2002) – others point out that being agnostic about God’s existence involves, or can involve, a kind of practically motivated hope that God exists or that there is no God (cf. e.g. Kenny 2004: 19-20). Both kinds of hope entail specific assumptions about what will or may be the case in the future. As shown by the complexities involved in Kant’s “hopeful agnosticism” (Wood 1992: 405), from which the agnostic tradition in the philosophy of religion originates, there is no obvious connection or correlation between epistemic and practical hope in relation to God’s existence. In my presentation, I want to (1) briefly analyse the relation between epistemic and practical hope in connection to agnosticism, (2) discuss the possibility of agnosticism which would be “hopeless”, and (3) explain in what sense the hopefulness of agnosticism makes the existential and spiritual position of the agnostic intrinsically future-oriented.

Dwelling in Improper Eternity:
Rethinking Eschatology based on Stein’s Phenomenology and Mysticism

Tareq Ayoub

In Roman Catholic theology, eschatology has been traditionally understood as the study of “the last things.” This is specifically why no branch of theology confronts the soul’s immortality as powerfully as eschatology. Thus, in rethinking traditional approaches and notions associated with eschatology, detailing Stein’s phenomenological mysticism becomes indispensable. For Stein, the life of finite beings is framed not by death in its capacity as life’s inscrutable yet constitutive boundary-marker, but rather by its ontological dependence on, and participation in, the infinite source of life itself. Stein’s analysis of death and dying draws attention to deep metaphysical and phenomenological questions surrounding the nature of time and experience. For Stein, death opens up a new temporal dimension whereby our earthly finitude is transformed into a divinely-appropriated temporality that lacks any sort of finite limitations. As long as our souls lack any ‘dark night’ – to borrow John of the Cross’ spiritual term – and have been rendered clear and possible by divine light, then our deaths signify the possibility of dwelling in the divine. However, this does not mean that we share in the proper eternity of God, but that we share in the divine quality of timelessness. This timelessness places the blessed and sanctified dead in eternity

while preserving their finite pasts as constitutive moments in their eternal lives with the divine. Hence, they are not divinely transformed towards eternity in death but dwell in an improper eternity situated in-between the time of eternity and finite temporality, forever mystified in-between the eternity of God and the temporal experience of material beings.

Short Paper Session 2

Emergence in Time

Teoman Kenn Küçük

Physically speaking, both time and space are considered dimensions of reality, with neither holding precedence. Indeed, their merging in the concept of “spacetime” is key to the relativity which underlies much of the confusion regarding the reality of time with regards to perspective.

I shall argue, however, that there is a curious connection of concepts that, when extended from its more commonplace usage in spatial thinking to temporal thinking, promises us greater understanding of the demands of such mind-bending physical theories, and how they may be applied to questions outside of immediately empirical purviews. These concepts are reduction and emergence. It is the interplay between these two, and the relationship we set them into ontologically, which determines the truth-demands time can make of us- and those we can make of it.

To see the relevance of these concepts, let us return to the example of presentism- that the truest of reality is found in the moment, and that other stretches of time, be they the past, the present, or the ongoing, can only ever be echoes or reflections, the luminosity of the Moon compared to the rays of the Sun. This view, often times, does not deny the happening of past moments, but rather their present existence- as such, their existence is contained within the echoes they leave in the present, meaning the flow of reality is here inverse to that of causality- of time even. In other words, if all existence is in the present, then the existence of the past, influencing the present through some understanding of causality, is provided it by the present (not the future, to be sure).

What this reflects upon us is a temporal reductionism- not as in a reduction of temporal phenomena to another base, but their reduction within time. The easiest analogy is to be made with spatial reductionism. This type of reductionism requires us to view the components of any given structure in space, so long as it is divisible into such components, as being more proximate to reality than the structure itself, which is at best a summary of the components and their interactions, lumped together for practical use or due to an inability to divide. Though the spatial example can suggest the often-paired physicalism or materialism, no such combination is necessary for strict reductionism- all that is necessary is the commitment to finding greater degrees of truth in descriptions of phenomena or concepts through their components than through their composites.

Yet as is perhaps clear by this description, to explain reductionism with reduction alone is insufficient, as this is merely one mechanism in this web of intellectual

commitment. The other is emergence, which if defined as neutrally as possible, is the combination of elements into a structure which is defined, at least in part, by their pattern of combination. Taken within this dual process, reductionism believes that the reduced hold information which the emergent do not; emergentism would be committed to the inverse. These concepts are, however, very often considered in spatial terms- even when speaking conceptually, the metaphors of “bigger picture” and “smaller detail” are spatial ones. What happens when we fully, purely commit these processes to time?

In this essay, I propose to delve into temporal reductionism and emergentism, which will require us to understand the difference between truth in a moment and truth of a moment, the uneven overlap of spatial and temporal emergence, the emergence of sequences in stretches of time, and the possibility of probability within such a temporal understanding. The result will be a revision of the grounding of persistence, causality, and temporal existence.

Short Paper Session 4

The Notion of Experience in the Framework Model of Religion

Tomasz Laskowski

The framework model (FM) theory claims that religions typically represent different ways of looking at the world or provide competing organizing schemes for the experience. This approach, as simple to grasp and prevalent in philosophy of religion, in its many interpretations took the notion of experience for granted. I consider three distinct ways of understanding experience in a religious context and present an overview of the relationship between these three types and religion treated as a framework. It contributes to comprehension and applicability of FM, hence creates a more nuanced ground for understanding the relation between the dynamic nature of life (with personal faith inevitably altering one's view of it) and the comparatively stable characteristics of religious traditions and doctrines.

Donald Davidson's rejection of scheme/content dualism had profound implications throughout this area. Some well-known representatives of FM or similar approaches - most notably Clifford Geertz - were criticized for their alleged assumption of this distinction, which acquired the status of illegitimate epistemological claim. Although these critical remarks are at least partially accurate, they often miss a crucial point differentiating framework approach from aforementioned dualism - namely that religions do not necessary aspire to be models of noumenal world or one's stream of unstructured experiential data, but could be more likely seen as schemes for already conceptualized experience - which they describe, organize and enrich. This point was made e.g. by Kevin Schillbrack in his response to criticisms of Geertz.

However, there is still a question left to be answered - what might be meant by „already conceptualized experience” in the context of this theory? In other words - what is the content that religion (as framework/scheme) works on? There are two basic steps towards supplementing FM with a satisfying understanding of its experiential content. First, a clear typology is necessary to differentiate between numerous conceptions of religious experience established in philosophy of religion. I propose a rough distinction between the following notions:

1. religious experience sui generis (putting aside the validity of such conceptions),
2. experience deemed religious,
3. experience deemed non-religious („already conceptualized „outside of religion”), but treated under religious framework.

Second, the relation between experience in the third sense and religious framework should be clarified. There are two main roles that might be taken up:

1. decorative - wrapping the experience and giving it additional meaning, lifting its status or providing necessary context,
2. connective - joining atomic experiences and producing or enhancing convictions, narratives about self and the world.

Short Paper Session 8

Between Time and Eternity. Eric Voegelin's Concept of Metaxy

Tomasz Niezgodą

It remains an open question what exactly the words *ehye 'āšer 'ehye*. However, according to the prevailing interpretation in the history of western theology and philosophy, the book of Exodus contains an account of the self-revelation of God as an eternal being. Such an approach raises some persistent philosophical questions: how can man, i.e. temporal being, experience or comprehend or simply relate to eternal, and therefore radically other? From a different perspective, perhaps a more phenomenological, one may ask: how can an eternal being enter spatiotemporal and immanent reality and how can it manifest to man so as to appear precisely as eternal?

Eric Voegelin thought these were the wrong questions. Yes, there is a continuous, measurable, and divisible worldtime, maybe we can also distinguish Husserl's inner-time consciousness; and there is certainly an eternal being - but, Voegelin argues, the primordial and original sphere of human existence and experience should be found elsewhere. Inspired by Plato, Augustine, and Max Scheler, Voegelin developed the notion of the metaxy of consciousness and existence. Human existence is equal to transcending and transcending occurs at the intersection of time and eternity, between the poles of the world-immanence and the transcendence of the divine ground. Such an approach to man and God, time and eternity required a reformulation of the concepts of consciousness and experience and also of phenomenality - for the divine (and man as well) cannot appear in the manner of objects of spatiotemporal reality.

In my paper, I would like to present Voegelin's concepts of immanent time, eternity and event-like quasi-temporality of the metaxy. Then, I would like to discuss how, in connection with the question of temporality, Voegelin develops the notion of non-objective experience - the main characteristics of which are mutuality and event-character. Finally, by referring to selected examples of religious experiences, I would like to see whether Voegelin's theoretical considerations grasp the meaning and phenomenality of the experiences of divine.

The Logic of Eternal Existence

Ulrich Meyer

This paper considers the notion of eternal existence from the perspective of modern quantified tense and modal logic. It considers two attempts at making sense of the idea that some objects—such as God or numbers—exist without existing at any time, and argues that both attempts lead to failure.

The first attempt is Brian Leftow's eternal tense proposal (*Time and Eternity*, p. 61f), that tries to locate eternal objects at an eternal point that (i) is "a locus logically like a time" but subject to the stipulation that (ii) "what is true in eternity is true at no time." An eternal tense would allow us to speak of what is true at this eternal point in the same way in which, say, the past tense allows us to speak of what is true at past times.

It is not clear that this is a coherent proposal. To facilitate reasoning about temporal and eternal objects, logical truths would have to be both sempiternally and eternally true, and (ii) does not permit this. Nor can this problem be avoided by restricting (ii) to existence claims. In a nutshell, we cannot first claim that some objects are non-temporal entities, and then try to place them at a time-like position.

The second attempt is modeled on the way abstract objects are treated in David Lewis' modal realism (*On the Plurality of Worlds*). Lewis thinks that numbers and other mathematical objects exist without being in any possible world. Rather than follow the eternal tense proposal and postulate an "unworldly" modal operator, Lewis characterizes his position in terms of an unrestricted notion of quantification. He admits numbers into the range of his quantifiers, but without placing them in any possible world. Translated to the temporal case, the idea would be to include God or numbers in the range of temporally unrestricted quantifiers without placing them at any time.

This might look promising, but it glosses over an important issue: there are two different ways of thinking about the relation between temporally unrestricted quantifiers and existence. If existence is what the existential quantifiers expresses then we end up with the view that, as a matter of logic, all objects are sempiternal and exist at all times. (Timothy Williamson advocates a view like this in the modal case.)

We can avoid this conclusion if we separate quantification and existence, and introduce an independent existence predicate to express existence claims. But, in that case, we could only make sense of eternal existence if we had an eternal tense operator, which we don't.

Gersonides on nature of time

Valeriya Sleptsova

In the modern polemics between theism and atheism both sides are trying to generalize the opponent's position as much as possible. And while there are certainly common challenges to both theism in general and atheism in general, there are also arguments that can often be refuted within the framework of one concept or another. One example of this situation is the assertion that only atheism is consistent with the modern scientific picture of the world, while theism is fundamentally unscientific. As a counter-example, I want to cite the concept of time created by R. Levi ben Gershon (1288-1344), who was Provençal philosopher, mathematician and astronomer.

Gersonides reveals the theme of time in the chapters 10-11 of the 6th book of his opus magnum «Wars of the Lord». Gersonides talks about time within the framework of the question of the existence of many worlds and the creation of the universe. In the 10th chapter, he considers the very nature of time and its main characteristics. Following Aristotle, he shows that time is quantitative, it is continuously (continuos). Its limit is the moment, which is not only the limit, but also the beginning; the moment itself is indivisible. On the one hand, time is associated with the subject, on the other hand, it is separated from any subject. The subject with which it is associated is movement. The connection of movement with time is similar to the connection of a number with a countable things. Time is, on the one hand, actual (past time), on the other hand, it is potential (future time). Time is not many, neither in the sense of succession nor in the sense of coexistence, however it is one in actuality, but many in potentiality. Having considered the main characteristics of time, Gersonides proceeds to the question of the creation or eternity of time in the 11th chapter. Quantity is finite. Time is quantified, ergo it is finite. However the act of division itself has potentially no limit. Thus, time has no limit in its potential nature, i.e., in its sequence, although each successive period of time that is actualized is itself finite in quantity. Therefore, time is created, since, if it were not so, it would be infinite in quantity, but it cannot be finite in quantity, since quantity is finite. Time is a property of bodies, because it is associated with movement or with what is moving. Bodies and all their properties are essentially finite, unless they reveal the absence of a limit, which is accidental. Hence, if this is so, then time is essentially finite; if it reveals some absence of a limit, it is only by chance. Further Gersonides deals with the issue of the nature of time in chapters 20 and 21, when he analyzes the arguments of Aristotle related to the issue of creation. Gersonides refutes Aristotle's thesis that "everything that is generated, to be generated in time". He shows that time is not generated and is not passing away in time. It is wrong to believe, argues Gersonides, that time arises from the time that was before it. The hour does not start an hour earlier, but when it starts. And the hour is not passing away in the hour following it.

In addition to the fact that the concept of time proposed by Gersonides is not characteristic of the Jewish philosophical thought of his time, it may well be correlated with the modern generally accepted cosmological model of the Big Bang.

Memory, Duration and the *Distensio Animi**Victoria Gross*

This paper draws upon a comparative study of two historically disparate thinkers: Saint Augustine (354-430) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941). Both Augustine and Bergson lucubrate a unique theory of memory as the guarantor of continuous conscious experience in the face of temporal becoming, uncovering the memory as the concrete meeting point between the physical body and the immaterial soul. It is commonly held today that memory no longer reveals something about the spiritual reality of the human person, but rather that it can be encapsulated in the complex dance of cerebral neurons. Augustine and Bergson had respectively argued against this “storage model” in favour of a view which takes memory to be an immaterial manifestation of the soul in time, and which is therefore not localisable within space. The Bergsonian here speaks of duration, while Augustine invokes a strikingly similar notion in his idea of the *distensio animi*. Both conceptions of memory depend upon a theory of time as the fundamentally irreducible medium of conscious experience and worldly change. On the other hand, the storage paradigm lacks the notion of temporal being and thus is incapable of explaining qualitative time as it is lived and experienced by the human person. Consequently, if duration exists, then memory must be its creature, and therefore cannot be an epiphenomenon of extensity.

A careful study of the memory illumines the essential ontological distinction between God and man precisely because the memory brings us into direct contact with our existence within and subjection to time. As soon as we perpend the phenomenon of recollection, we enter into a contemplation of the reality of time which is the essence of the human condition. Conversely, to examine the memory is also perhaps to come closest to attaining an experiential notion of eternity. We are invited, as it were, to overcome the ontological boundary between temporality and eternity, only ever partially and incompletely, in and through the memory, for it is here that we can unite the successions of past and future into a singular whole. While we are unable to seize upon the flow of time through physical measurement, we are able to seize upon it by our mind, soul or spirit in the act of revivifying the past, such that we are able to liberate ourselves, only ever briefly, from the ceaseless constancy of temporal succession. In this way, the memory carries a significant meaning with regard to the traditional religious notions of eternity, immortality, sin, salvation and the *imago Dei*, which we will adumbrate throughout this paper.

The Link between Temporality and Eternity: Thomas Aquinas' Perspective on Nunc

Vincenzo Serpe

The purpose of this proposal is to show how the theme of temporality, in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, can have an important impact on today's philosophical speculation. We want to outline how the human condition, linked in an existential way to time, can have a metaphysical perspective that leads it back to the reality of eternity. To do this, it is necessary to start with the Angelic Doctor's consideration of time as rooted in the philosophy of nature. In this philosophical context it is possible to grasp how the foundation of time is found primarily in natural reality in connection with movement. Taking Aristotle's teaching as his own, Thomas outlines the well-known definition of time as the «number of the movement according to the before and after»[1]. However, Thomas also incorporates the neoplatonic legacy into his philosophical speculation, a legacy that, from Augustine onwards profoundly changed the conception of time even to the point of denying its real existence [2].

At the heart of Thomas's thought on time is his definition of the instant (nunc) in his Commentary on the Physics: «Necesse est in tempore aliquid indivisibile»[3]. This definition inseparably (necesse est) links time and its mutability, which is subject to change, to an indivisible and immovable yet nonetheless real element: the nunc.

What implications flow from this account? And what further reflection can it bring to a consideration of the human being? Time, in Thomas's view, acquires reality through the instant, as it is precisely the nunc that gives time the dimension of being[4]. The time-being link through the nunc is inserted into the physical dynamics of change and brings with it the nexus of material realities to eternity and therefore ultimately to eternal realities. This relationship, deepened through the contribution of neoplatonic philosophy in the Commentary on the Liber de Causis, allows us to broaden the horizon of temporality and conceive of it as dependent on divine reality. Divine reality does not use up time, but rather determines time by being its *causa prima*[5]. The human being, therefore, lives in time subject to change but in time he can find the key to a strong link to eternal and immutable realities: the instant. In this way, eternity is grasped as a prefiguration of time[6], but the Thomistic proposal allows us to understand the relationship of participation between time and eternity. The temporal instant defines the limits of time (in a strictly natural consideration), but equally the instant is the opening of creatures to transcendence. This dynamic has a final and fundamental connection in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. The distinction he makes between *esse* and *actus essendi* can be placed in parallel with the relationship between eternity and time. In this dynamic, human life is perceived as dependent on the reception of being yet at the same time oriented towards a fullness that it will obtain with participation in the ultimate realities. Human actions oriented to the good in metaphysical terms, therefore constitute a bridge between time and eternity. Though marked by contingency and possibility, once they are fulfilled, human actions are immersed in the dimension of being proper to eternity. The human being, in his daily living and acting, is operative over time,

but open to the transcendence of eternity towards which he is oriented[7]. The connection occurs once again through the nunc, the critical ontological link between the perfection of God's eternal being and the ever perfectible being of the human creature.

Short Paper Session 7

Is it true that God cannot exist outside Time?
A few comments to a big dilemma and On intercultural philosophy

Vladimir Shokhin

My goal is to gain insight into some knots in a very persistent discussion in the contemporary analytic metaphysics on the dilemma of Divine atemporality/temporality wherein more or less persuasive arguments from both sides are offered as also from a compromise position like that of Alan Padjett and William Craig. In my opinion, both sides in spite of their principal disagreements with each other share the common assurance that they can have real access to the very Divine nature while my ambition is more modest, that is to make sure which position is more coherent in the context of a concrete religious world outlook, i.e. traditional theism. In this context three main arguments of the theistic temporalists are countered, namely from incompatibility between Divine atemporality and Divine actions and interrelations with human beings, from its incompatibility with Divine personality and compatibility of Divine perfection with changeability. The last view is being supported, in my view, by nouveau attempts at merging theistic and panentheistic world views while the basic difference between them can be emphasized in such a manner that while panentheistic changeable Divinity should be temporal by nature, theistic God can assume temporality only according to his intentions and projects in the world. The paper is concluded with parallels from the three Indian versions of philosophical theism (*īśvaravāda*) to make sure that in all of them as distant from panentheism Divine nature is regarded as both unchanging and atemporal.

Short Paper Session 2

The Smell of Mortality

Zoltán Balázs

Mortality is a concern of everyone, but it has a peculiar significance for political leaders. King Lear thought to have overcome the difficulty of time by procuring for a peaceful succession. His idea was to remain king but no longer rule. What unfolded then was, however, the lesson that sovereignty and rule cannot be separated. Historically, it was just Shakespeare's time when the concept of artificial eternity, mortal immortality was born in political thinking. But Hobbes himself warned that securing succession by transferring artificial eternity between natural persons will always be a troublesome issue. I wish to argue, by analyzing this problem via succession plays (Calderón, Shakespeare, von Kleist, von Hofmannstahl), that there are two theological concepts of prominence here: obedience and love. Both St Paul and the Gospel of John discuss, in their own ways, the incorporation of Christ's earthly life and death into God's eternity, suggesting that it is complete obedience motivated by absolute love by which mortality, and hence time, can be overcome. Is this model applicable to political succession, the creation of artificial eternity? Or will the smell of mortality, the fear of death, always compromise political succession, and make obedience and love part of the problem, rather than that of solution?

Organizing Team

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The Society was founded in 1976 with the aim to arrange regular biennial European conferences on the philosophy of religion. These conferences are intended to further the study of the philosophy of religion and the cooperation between philosophers of religion in Europe. Originally the conferences were set up as joint meetings of the British Christian Philosophers Group (later to become the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion), the GermanScandinavian Society for Philosophy of Religion and the Netherlands Society for Philosophy of Religion. However, from the very beginning, philosophers of religion who were not members of these organizations, also from outside Europe, were always welcome.

At the 9th conference in Aarhus, it was decided to have official statutes drawn up for the Society and to have the Society officially registered as such. The draft statutes were approved by the general meeting of the Society in Swansea in September 1994 and officially registered before a notary on the 24th of June 1996 by professors Vincent Brümmer and Henk Vroom, who at the time were president and treasurer of the Society. The official statutes of the Society are entered in the Register of Societies at the Utrecht Chamber of Commerce [Kamer van Koophandel en Fabrieken] with an English translation for use.

