PHILOSOPHY

Pantheism

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Pantheism faces two main difficulties. First, making a logically secure identification of a whole or totality of all things. The existence of a universal set is challenged by Cantor's Paradox. The existence of one mereological whole of space is challenged by the possibility of distinct spaces with no spatial connection. Second, given a whole, there is the question whether it qualifies as God. The identification calls for showing the whole has features taken to be distinctive of God, such as being omnipotent, omniscient, the source of everything, and most of all, most worthy of worship. I argue that pantheism cannot overcome these difficulties and that traditional theism has a rational core which can.

1.

The term "pantheism" is commonly used as if it refers to a distinctive view about the nature of God. It is associated with a number of slogans, such as "God is identical with everything taken as a whole", "...with the universe as a whole", "...being as a whole", "... reality as a whole", "...nature as a whole", and the like. The value of some ideas does not depend on clarity and may even conflict with it, but clarity and precision can be achieved even about what is permanently obscure.

Traditional monotheism has provided inspiration and hope for many, often at the cost of suppressing critical examination and always confronting doubt as a main problem. Pantheism seems to offer relief from doubt about the existence of God. Is it not obvious that everything, as a whole, exists? The view that everything exists is opposed by meinongianism, according to which there are many things of which it is true to say there are no such things – Sherlock Holmes, the positive rational square root of 2, the solution to the general quintic, etc. Meinongians occasionally turn up in theology, holding

that God need not exist in order to be of great value to us, with Santa Claus offered as another example. Like the dialetheist who holds there are contradictions which are true (and at the same time not true), a meinongian can, to borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein, "reply like a rational person". But they do not represent a significant opponent to a religious apologist concerned with doubts about the existence of God. Pantheism is more relevant.

With a convincing candidate for existence, pantheism should then confront the question whether the candidate qualifies as God. Surely all powers are included in everything, so it is omnipotent. All knowledge is included in everything, so it is omniscient. The cause of anything must be included in everything, so it is the ultimate cause of everything. It cannot lack or be deficient in anything and so is perfect. As for being an appropriate object of worship, everything, taken as a whole, can inspire awe. It is most efficiently contemplated by scientific study, which Spinoza called the intellectual love of God. Popular science can be as accessible as scriptures. Contemplating the whole as eternal can cause an associated sense of eternity, which, in spite of the transience of the body, may be achieved in an intense weekend of science meditation.

By contrast, traditional monotheism is based on the idea that God is a person, perfectly good, who created us, loves us and will preserve us in our being. This idea is appropriately called "the gospel", the good news – if it is true. However, many scientifically informed thinkers find the view to be incredible. Science produces impressive theory about the history of things with no evidence of cosmic scale personal creation. Large multitudes of humans suffer unmitigated misery, which inspires bitter contempt for the idea that a loving creator is all powerful and yet leaves them to die without any intervention. Miraculous cures are questionable and in any case, are so unevenly distributed as to show no sign of divine justice. Prayers, however devout, go unanswered at least as often as not.

Pantheism is not simply a rejection of traditional monotheism on scientific grounds and a replacement of religious explanation with science. It offers to properly justify beliefs which sufficiently resemble those which made religion valuable to people – most of all, to identify the proper object of worship – the whole. This proposal faces two challenges, first, making

sense of its purported reference to a whole, of everything, or being, reality, the universe, etc. and second, of making it plausible that such a whole is the proper object of worship. I will argue that it cannot meet both these challenges. Traditional monotheism, once separated from many unfortunate doctrines connected with its name, is as rational in its existence assumptions as pantheism and identifies the best object of worship.

2.

Pantheism is strongly associated with the philosophy of Spinoza, who wrote of "Deus, sive Natura", often taken as "God, which is to say, Nature". A leading discussion of Spinoza's relation to pantheism is provided by Jonathan Bennett (1984, 32), who says:

> Spinoza was a pantheist, in that he identified God with the whole of reality. Thus he agreed with the atheist that reality cannot be divided into a portion which is God and one which is not.

"Part" and "whole" have clear uses. It is easy to recognize slices of pie as parts of the original whole, pages as parts of a book, etc. Easy examples could be multiplied indefinitely. Cloudy examples are also plentiful. A left little toenail is part of a right guard and the right guard is part of the defensive line. Whether the toenail is part of the line is not worth debating, any more than whether a hole is part of a Swiss cheese. A lake as a whole includes inlets but not rivers flowing in or out. How and when water flowing out ceases to be part of the lake is again, not an intrinsically valuable question. It could become important in a legal case about water rights and money could inspire ingenious arguments.

Everyday questions about parts and wholes can thus acquire clear meanings and satisfactory resolutions without any requirement for an overall consistent theory of a "part-whole' relation. Alternately, there is mathematical treatment in solid geometry (see Tarski 1956), where the part-whole relation is clearly transitive. A metaphysical question such as Aristotle's view that a point is not a part can be treated precisely in such theory. A point may be a limit of nesting regions in such a way as to allow a reduction of its onto-

logical status. There will be an ultimate whole W which is the whole space. This beautiful system does not bog down in questions about matter. Whether a table's being a "mass of atoms" conflicts with being solid need be of no concern. It is simplest to assume the space is empty, for a pure mereology. Pure mereology can tolerate objects as mere solid figures. The table would be a spatial outline (boundary) plus the interior. Its atomic boundary would be of no concern to the geometer, who can wait for a decision about that, as with the outline of a block of Swiss cheese.

The key in pure mereology for tolerating material things is to ignore them as anything but markers for outlines, with metaphysical questions about outlines kept out of the picture. Application to the space (or space-time – this treatment of material things makes time less important) in which we live does not make that space into a whole, "the whole of space". It presumes the existence of that whole, W, which is then the mereological sum of all its parts. Not only does it not guarantee the wholeness of that space, it has no concern as to whether it is the only space. As geometry and the whole of a space, it is clear. As the whole of reality, it is not.

The noun "reality" need not be used to denote anything material. "Smith's novels lack reality" is about a property of Smith's novels (resisting taking "reality" in that use as a mass term), or their lack of one, and the property does not have parts, though we can go on to say, of the novels, "They lack vivacity, verisimilitude, precision and coherence". Those are not properly understood as parts of reality but as requirements or criteria for the property. Replacing "reality" with "the world" or "being" makes that property unlikely as a referent. We have "the material world" and also debate about whether the world is material.

3.

Spinoza is associated with the idea that "the whole of reality" denotes one substance – which is the only substance. Bennett emphasizes Spinoza's doctrine that the one substance cannot be divided into parts (see *Ethics* I, 13), and takes this as the claim that the whole does not even have parts or portions. Bennett's interpretation of Spinoza would not settle for making

him out as denying that the parts of space could be separated from it but granting that they are otherwise located in it. Rather, he takes "being in space" to be "being a property of space", so that Spinoza's grammatically substantival remarks about particular objects such as eyes, teeth, cereals, living creatures, the sun, the sea and fish, would be just misleading ways of attributing properties to space. And not just as in "Space contains the shining sun", which allows the inference "There is something, namely the sun, which is contained by space and shining". It has to be something which discourages existential quantification, such as "Space is sunshiny". Of course there are those who will not hesitate at "There is something which space is, namely sunshiny". Here Spinoza would have to have anticipated Quine's shunning of "second order" quantification. And we can't say where space is sunshiny because there are no such things as places.

In discussing the existence, for example, of a pebble, Bennett says "… the existence of the pebble … is space's containing a connected sequence of regions belonging to a string of place-times which satisfy certain conditions" (Bennett 1984, 95). He then confronts, with his characteristic clarity and candor, the objection that in interpreting "The pebble is spherical" as "There are regions which are G", "… we are now making substantival mention both of space and of regions, so that it is no longer clear why this 'field metaphysic' should be described as according a substantial status only to space". This seems to me a very well-taken objection. However, Bennett replies that we can avoid "quantifying over regions". One example is: "… we can replace 'Some regions are F' (which quantifies over regions) by 'Space is F somewhere' (which does not)".

I cannot understand the "somewhere" in the foregoing replacement except as quantifying over the same range as that of the sentence it is supposed to replace. It might be replied that "Space is F somewhere" does not have the logical form "There exists a place where space is F". Even this latter remark itself could not have that "logical form" and be a true remark. It would not really be claiming a relation between space and a region in it, and still less be claiming something "about" a region of space. The grammatical form would be misleading as to the logical form. To me, this reply does not provide any convincing account of such logical form.

It may be true that the part of the space in my office occupied by my desk cannot be spatially separated from surrounding space and it may be that this part cannot even be conceived except along with surrounding space. Furthermore, this part of space may not qualify for the honorific title of "substance". But to say that there is no such thing as that part of space is not, I think, justified by these considerations or by any others that have been offered.

One formidable argument that might be offered appeals for support from modern physics. Bennett says "... there is no one right way of dividing space into discrete regions" (Bennett 1984, 95), which raises the specter of relativity theory. But even though it is on a rotating sphere which in turn circles a star which in turn drifts with its galaxy, etc., I believe that there really is such a place as my office and that its space is part of a larger space, for one, the building it is in. And there is a place where the sun is (at a time). Could this be said in English with space as the subject and no grammatical substantives for anything other than space in a way which did not allow the introduction of such substantives by grammatical rules of revision? I do not know, but I have not seen it and doubt that it would establish that space is the only thing there is. Spinoza speaks freely of "things" in the plural, just as we all do. Dismissing references to a variety of things as mere grammatical appearances does not move the case for the field metaphysic beyond a preference for a peculiar style of speaking.

4.

My claim that my office is a discrete region of a larger space is not a claim to have found a way to divide space as a whole into discrete regions. It is not to claim the existence of space as a whole or express any claim about its geometric structure. It may be a great scientific achievement to make such claims and provide them with a clear meaning understandable to experts. That would not be a refutation of common sense claims about places and times.

Spinoza says "Whatever is, is in God" (*Ethics* I, 15), which strongly implies there are things that are in God. On Bennett's account, God does not have parts. If x is in God, what is its relation to God? Bennett's discussion

suggests a traditional style of answer: x would be a "mode" of the one substance, God. A mode of a substance is not something distinct from the substance, but just one arrangement of that substance, like the crouching or stretching or walking modes of a cat. Modes of fashion or transportation are not like that. A mode of a thing is presumed not to be a part of the thing. The cat's paw is a part, its crouch is a mode. This useful "mode-substance" terminology wavers under metaphysical pressure (like many other terms). Is a mode of a substance always an arrangement of the whole substance, or could it be an arrangement of a part? We have been over parts and wholes. With the elephant, the blind men were perceiving different parts. But if the elephant is part of a circus act featuring a bear, a gorilla and an alpaca, the elephant is part of the cast and doing better about the nature of the elephant could still be getting a poor perspective on the cast (as a whole).

Distinguishing "mode-substance" from "part-whole" does not settle whether a mode is always of a whole rather than a part. A mass of water as liquid, steam or ice, is in different modes. Whether the mass is a substance is not a well-founded question. The mass could be part liquid, part steam and part ice. Whether the liquid part is a mode of the whole mass or of a certain part is best answered by noting that usage here is flexible. Attempting to make this flexible term precise is like trying to make a rubber band into a yardstick.

The term "panentheism" has been associated with the idea that the world is in God somehow, rather than being identical to God. The alleged distinction is just further weight on already overburdened terminology. Bennett's interpretation resists having Spinoza say that the Sun is in God, saying rather, that there is no such thing as the Sun. It could not be allowed that Spinoza intended the Sun to be a value of the variable X in "For all X, if X exists, then X is in God". But it is plausible to take Spinoza to have intended that the sun would qualify as an example of one of the things that is "in God". This does not fit well with the saying that everything there is, is either God or a predicate of God, since the Sun is not a predicate. (In such as "The world is Sun-featuring", the term "Sun" is part of a predicate.) Even if these locutions are accepted as ways of conveying that the Sun is in God, such verbal devices are a poor basis for claiming there is no such thing as the Sun.

Another version of the attempt to distinguish the whole from every other thing is to somehow deny it is a thing at all, as in the saying that "God is not a being – God is Being". Denying that being is a being or that existing is an existent is a view related to the old issue as to whether properties are proper logical subjects. I favor the platonist side that takes such as "Being is a property common to all things" as a proper reference to one special thing (rather as the concept horse is a concept). To say that God is that Totality of all things which does not have to add up to a thing, is that One that is not a thing – but watch out! – not a nothing either, is in my opinion, logically irresponsible. To respond to our earlier problem as to whether there is any such thing as the whole of reality, any such being, with the refrain: "of course not! – it's not a thing" is using a singular substantive as if it is a referring use while insisting it is not a referring use. I say that for all X, if X is not a being, then X does not exist. This goes for numbers, clouds, breezes, properties, pains, sakes, moods, for Being (collectively or distributively), and yes, for water, wood, sand, salt and other "substances" designated by mass terms. Of course that generalization is not about anything that does not exist (contrary to meinongians). There are no such things.

I do not mean to undervalue Bennett's interpretation of Spinoza. It is a bold and insightful effort to make explicit and coherent the complex and puzzling things Spinoza says and formulate a clear statement of a version of pantheism by a philosopher classed among its greatest advocates. However, I do find it unbelievable. That does not mean that Spinoza would not have accepted Bennett's exposition as a good account of what he was saying. It is a (respectful) complaint about what he was saying.

5.

Taking the whole to be the whole of space does not require materialism. Spinoza went further and claimed that the whole of extension was also the whole of thought – one whole under different "attributes". The claim that the whole is space and the claim that the whole is thought seem to differ in sense, except that neither has a clear sense. But slogans do not have to be fully meaningful to conflict or to have logical relations to other slogans. Pan-

theists who feel that there is a conflict between being thought and being extension might be attracted by absolute idealism, according to which the one whole is the absolute mind. Anything not identical to this mind would be an idea in it. Rather than giving equal billing to space, space would be put down as some sort of idea.

6.

If there is a whole of space or space-time, it is in one clear sense, neither everything nor everything as a whole. It is, for example, not the Washington Monument, or Bennett's pebble or a symphony or a pain, etc. Even if it qualifies as space as a whole, only a very extreme materialism could take it as a candidate for the whole of reality. Speaking of everything has been a problem for modern logic. The popular lower predicate calculus (LPC) is not, in my opinion, a genuine language in which anything can be said, but the pretense to the contrary is based on "interpretations" of the formalism and an interpretation begins with a non-empty set. The set theory behind the idea is, somewhat incestuously, a first order theory such as ZF or NBG. Advocates of those theories advertise that they do not acknowledge the existence of a set E of everything, the universal set (though NBG has the universal "class" – that is not a move to a clear referent). So LPC ideology conflicts with the idea of speaking of everything.

Cantor's Theorem, provable in the main first order set theories, shows that every set S is of lower cardinality than the set of all subsets of S, the power set, PS, of S. If there is a set E of everything, then PE would have to be of greater cardinality, which is absurd. The popular response is that there is no such set as E. That should be a blow to one candidate for everything as a whole.

I do not appeal to that difficulty, because, while the wfs called "Cantor's Theorem" are indeed provable in the relevant first order theories, that does not license going beyond those formal systems to say there is no universal set. I believe there is a universal set E, the extension of the property of being, and that Cantor's Theorem does not hold without restriction. (This does not require argument here because in this context the existence of E is a

concession for sake of argument.) E can be divided into two "parts": {E}, the class whose sole member is E, and E-{E}, and E is the union of those two classes. Taking E to be the whole of reality, the position Bennett attributes to Spinoza, that reality cannot be divided into a portion which is God and one which is not, would be false. It is reasonable to deny that E is what Spinoza had in mind.

7.

The most plausible candidate for Spinoza's one substance is our space (and time) taken as a mereological whole W in the style of geometry. Accounting for matter and material objects in this space is a problem about the candidate, which was confronted in Bennett's account. I have argued that the things Spinoza says about it are not plausible. W does have the advantage of being formed by a very simple part-whole relation with no trouble over consistency. By contrast, E, based on member-set, is generally regarded as inconsistent and is acceptable only to eccentrics such as this author. The mereological sum of all parts of W is simply W. The set of all subsets of E cannot be E and its relation to E is a significant logical problem.

Member-set inclusion would appear to considerably outdo part-whole inclusion in inclusiveness (if we can find a meaning of "inclusive" that includes both). W will be a member of E and of infinitely many subsets of E. However, a heroic nominalist effort could depict E as a part of W. After all, word tokens would clearly be parts of W. Dismissing set theory as mere verbiage rather than proper empirical science and then taking the verbiage as marks on paper (and thus like other physical things) could be a way of preferring W over E.

8.

The idea of our space as a whole is a question for empirical science. That question must not be confused with the question whether this whole W is the whole of reality, which is not empirical. Even if it were a contingent matter of fact that there is only one space-time, we could not have an empir-

ical argument for that. The only possible basis for claiming the uniqueness of W would be *a priori*, claiming it as a necessary truth. Some philosophers do this, and Spinoza is an example. The claim is unwarranted.

There is no mathematical contradiction in postulating any number of "spaces" that share no spatial connections. One might deny that these common objects of mathematical discussion could be real in the style of the space in which we live, but this would at least be difficult to argue in a non-question-begging way. Jonathan Bennett (1966, 65) says:

> ...one could alternately inhabit two distinct worlds which had equal claims to reality. Furthermore, it could be the case that there was no reason for saying that the two worlds were spatially related to one another – or no reason except the prejudice that there can only be one complete space.

He does not grant that times could be separate this way, at least for one person. But the inhabitability of the separate worlds by one person is not required for the possibility of there being separate worlds, but only for making the idea vivid. And the idea is one that undercuts the Spinozistic picture Bennett has presented so forcefully.

One might just lump all the "worlds" into "the whole of reality". But in what sense are they a whole? They do have various common properties. But that makes for membership in one class. The class of all cats can be distinguished from the whole of all cats; the latter is a "scattered object" strewn around space-time. It is only a ring of familiarity that makes this sound meaningful. The ring is muffled when the "parts" are "strewn" non-spatially. Pure mereology presupposes that a part is a spatial part. That is not available for these non-spatially related worlds. There is no relation of mere temporal parthood sufficient to unite otherwise distinct worlds.

It may be replied that surely reality forms a whole whether or not it is "divided" into distinct worlds. They are, of course, all worlds, and all real, and all F for lots of common properties F, and for some F's they are not merely all of them F's but all the F's there are. But this is forming a totality in the style of the extension of a property, that is, as a class. It is unjustified to pretend that these worlds could be a "scattered object" when there is manifestly no place for them to be scattered in. One can of course claim that the

worlds would still form a totality, the class of all of them, but this is to abandon the mereological line of solution to the problems Cantor's Paradox poses for pantheism. It would certainly not be acceptable to Spinoza.

9.

Another alternative would be to give up on space and turn to the Absolute Mind for W. Perhaps it could be argued that absolute perfection would make it impossible to distinguish perfect minds. Both would be all-knowing and thus equally up on what they are thinking. And they would never disagree or disapprove of each other. This line of thinking may avoid the problem about the uniqueness of God. In this respect, absolute idealism is superior to the materialist pantheism (Spinoza's view is a blend). The materialist version is usually thought to be attractively unproblematic as far as proving existence is concerned. The problem about uniqueness shows that the existence of a material whole is not so simple after all. The idealist version faces the natural inclination to assume many things are not mental.

Furthermore, the logical problems of totality formation would require careful attention to the psychology of the Absolute. Being the objects of a single mental act of attention is one of the interpretations offered for the formation of a set or totality. Suppose the Absolute thinks of a and b together, forming the pair set {a,b}. "Then" (time being a problem too) the Absolute thinks about a and b in relation to {a,b}. Does this give us a new thing, the triple {a,b,{a,b}}, distinct from {a,b}? If so, we are giving up mereology and risking losing its protective powers against Cantor's paradox. Invocation of an absolutely inclusive mind does not resolve that logical problem.

The pantheist's craving for a totality to worship (or a whole, set, class, aggregate, collection, entirety, etc.) raises logical questions about totality formation. Totality formation is not restricted to classes and mereological sums. Sums can be formed by various different kinds of summing, which I do not claim to have summed up. Collection by mental acts of attention calls for details about the laws of attention. Other collecting raises other problems. The problems discussed here may serve as a reminder that totality formation is not as simple as is sometimes supposed.

10.

Spinoza's pantheism was influenced by dissatisfaction with Descartes' response to a problem for traditional theism – its doctrine that everything other than God depends on God. Descartes held that the existence of the world and its persistence from one instant to a later one, depend on the will of God. This dependence is taken to imply creation. If the existence of x depends on God's exercise of will, then in that sense, to that extent, God created x. It is hard to understand how God could have created time when creation seems to be a temporal process. And how could the eternal truths be created? One might try to move away from a purely temporal idea of creation, to avoid the idea that for every created thing there must have been a time when it did not exist. One might move to a broader notion of "dependence". That still leaves a problem in giving sense to the saying that things that exist necessarily somehow depend on God. Descartes held that everything is in the power of God and faced these questions and repeatedly answered firmly, if not very clearly, as in Replies to Gassendi (Descartes 1984/1641, 261):

> ... just as the poets suppose that the Fates were originally established by Jupiter, but that after they were established he bound himself to abide by them, so do I not think that the essences of things, and the mathematical truths which we know concerning them, are independent of God. Nevertheless, I do think that they are immutable and eternal, since the will and decree of God willed and decreed that they should be so. Whether you think this is hard or easy to accept, it is enough for me that it is true.

This combination of temporal language "God willed ..." with an eternal result "that it be true from all eternity that ..." is hard to make sense of, and Descartes always says that we can't understand these things he is saying, though they are true. Absolutely everything is subject to God's will, including, it would seem, God's will itself. This seemed indefensible to Ralph Cudworth (1731, Book I, chapt.III.5):

> And as to the Being or not Being of Particular Essences, as that God might, if he pleased, have Willed that there should be no such thing as a Triangle or

> Circle, and therefore nothing Demonstrable or Knowable of either of them; which is likewise asserted by Cartesius, and those that make the Essences of things dependent upon an Arbitrary Will in God: This is all as if one should say, that God could have Willed if he had pleased, that neither his own Power or Knowledge, should be Infinite.

Descartes did not, I believe, address the question whether it is in the power of God to become powerless and suffer crucifixion and to cry out to God for help and receive no immediate reply. It follows from the formula he endorses and would be helpful in defending a literal interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Cudworth showed signs of discomfort at having to say things like "God himself cannot supply the Place of a formal Cause" (chapt.II.1). He tries to soften these sayings: "that which implies a Contradiction is a Non-Entity, and therefore cannot be the Object of Divine Power" (chapt.III.4). That is not a successful answer. As a fellow platonist, Cudworth should have to agree that the proposition that there is a rational root of two exists and is not a "nonentity". And yet that proposition implies a contradiction.

It might be replied that, while there are contradictory propositions, it is contradictory tasks that are "nonentities". But there are contradictory task descriptions and contradictory action types, such as squaring the circle. These exist just like contradictory propositions. They just can't have instances, can't be accomplished.

11.

One may insist that being unable to make 2+2 equal nine is not a limitation on power, in spite of fitting a standard grammatical form for describing limitations. It might be said that:

> LF: X is a limitation on the power of an agent Y if and only if it is logically possible to do Y but X cannot do Y.

But is it logically possible to be something other than God? A pantheist can speak as if it is not possible. I have argued this is not successfully clear, but it gives pantheism a verbal advantage in this discussion. If it is pos-

sible, then LF entails it is a limitation on God not to be able to be something other than God. It is tricky to characterize "power" so that it is possible that God should have all powers, given our tendency to interchange "A cannot do X" with "A does not have the power to do X". (I offered a definition of "omnipotent" which avoids some of these problems in: Cargile 1967, 201-5.) An average human has the power to lose power, by self-injury. If that counts as a power which God cannot have then God does not have all powers. The term "power" is subject to conflicting usage. By contrast, Descartes implies a simple formula:

> SF: Any task description whatever, consistent or not, describes something within the power of God. For any such X, It is in God's power to do X.

Unfortunately, Descartes does not make clear how we might be allowed to use SF in reasoning about God's powers.

Would Descartes have to accept this argument?

> PW: If God wills that 2+2=9, then 2+2=9.
> PF: It is possible for God to will that 2+2=9.
> FP: If it is possible for God to do X, then it is possible that God should do X.
> .∴. It is possible that 2+2=9

If so, then he is committed to asserting a contradiction, because he also says that it is not possible that 2+2=9. All we can get explicitly from his various firm statements is that making such as 2+2=9 true is within the power of God. He does not ever admit that being in the power of God entails being logically possible. He does not ever make clear whether he would accept PF, or would say just that "before" God made it impossible that 2+2=9 it was possible for God to will it possible, but nowadays it is too late for that, so that PF is false. And he does not make clear whether he would grant that anything which is possible for God to do is something which it is possible that God should do.

Descartes has three options. Conceding the argument is sound leaves him endorsing contradictions. Contemporary Dialetheism might offer a refuge. Saying it is not valid would call for a drastically odd modal logic. Drastic oddity is easy to achieve with the semantic options for modern modal logic.

Either of those options should be awkward for a professed rationalist. Finally, admitting that the argument is valid but unsound would leave him "limiting" God's power after all. The one thing that can be said for the first two, drastic, courses, is that they preserve a respectful tone about God. The third course seems to entail disrespectful pronouncements. (This will be called "the DP problem".) SF solves the DP problem only when it is interpreted as calling for questionable logical maneuvers.

12.

Contemporary advocates of "Divine Conceptualism" hold that eternal truths are thoughts in the mind of God. This might be taken to be a sort of compromise step in the direction of pantheism while holding contingent things to be created by God and distinct from God. Whatever virtues this position might have (and to a platonist it sounds pretty bad) it is no help with the DP problem. Even if time and the eternal truths are somehow parts of God (an unclear matter in itself) this does not eliminate questions about whether they are subject to God's will. Even if the proposition that 2+2=4 does not exist independently of God and is just a thought in God's mind, the question still arises whether God could have changed this state of mind. There is the "Euthyphro (type) question", whether it is true because God accepts it, or God accepts it because it is true.

Mere inclusion in God does not help with the DP problem about the extent of God's will and power. Newton held that space (with time) is God's "sensorium", rather like an improved version of the "inner stage" on which we present imaginary dramas to amuse ourselves, only that God's imaginings constitute our world of matter. Space on this conception is not independent of God's being. Panentheists might be attracted to Newton as a champion. The conception makes it mysterious how God could consider alternate possible worlds, if imagining the world is creating it. This would be a "reality" version of the Midas touch! No wonder Newton disagreed with Leibniz. In any case, it does nothing to leave God's will utterly without limits. That what is part of God is not independent of God's being does not license the conclusion that it is not independent of God's power.

13.

Spinoza held that God is omnipotent, all-powerful, but he did not regard power as ever a matter of exercising free will, denying that there was any such thing. For him, power is entirely a matter of being a complete cause, of not being influenced by external causes. If a thing is such that there is nothing external to it, then it is bound to be causally complete, with no external causal influences. Nothing can be spatially external to space as a whole so that space as a whole might look good as a candidate for the all-powerful thing.

That is a fallacious inference. The exercise of a power is a cause. The fact that the cause is internal to something does not entail that the power is a characteristic of that thing. If a shed is caused to collapse by a heavy tool leaning against the wall, the fact that the tool was internal to the shed does not make the shed the active party in the collapse. A weight lifter can train and increase their power. That is not increasing the power of the Whole that contains the lifter. Increasing the power in the universe is not increasing the power of the universe. Qualifying as causally complete does not qualify as being all-powerful. I believe that Spinoza should have agreed with this. While he says that God is omnipotent, he rejects the everyday notion of power. He would have been clearer to just dismiss the notion of power as confused.

Pantheism does no better than theism at establishing that everything is in the power of God. There exist things which it is not in the power of God to change. Pantheism provides no basis for denying that and thus a desire to deny it is not a good motive for pantheism.

14.

The fact that x is somehow included in y is no basis for concluding that y is better than x. A set including a Stradivarius and a cheap ukulele is not better than the Strad. Nor is a room containing the Strad. Evaluating such wholes in comparison with the things they include does not in general even make sense.

Still, the pantheist may reply that it is reasonable to believe in the existence of the whole of nature and to experience a reverence in contemplating it which rises to worship and that this is better than engaging in worshipful practices which may not be directed at an existent thing. If we grant the existence of some "whole of nature", we may ask what would qualify as worship of this whole and also ask about what it is to be worthy of worship.

To worship x entails regarding x as good and to worship rightly requires that x is good. Though regarding x as good is not sufficient for worship, the best object of worship would be the supreme, highest good. Some philosophers hold that there is no objective property of goodness and that calling x good or better or best is expressing your own preference, with which others may disagree. There is no higher truth about who is right, though social science might show that a large majority of people prefer x, so that there could be objective facts of that kind, reflecting general statistics about patterns of desire. These philosophers may fail to articulate their true feelings, but insofar as they do, their feelings are less worshipful than those who believe in the existence of objective goodness.

Polytheists could believe in objective good and their attitude of mind shows that being regarded as sufficiently good will suffice for worship; but worship of an x you concede to be inferior to y is inferior worship. A tie is more difficult, but to rationally worship x and y equally requires regarding x and y as equal in value. Worshippers of the Greek gods could have favorites. To worship as supreme and highest more than one creates pressure for amalgamation, as in worshipping the Trinity. The highest worship requires regarding the object of worship as highest.

Someone may worship mistakenly, regarding some evil tyrant as supremely good. To revere x as supremely good, rightly or wrongly, requires regarding x as a person. The worship of money may seem to count against this. But "money" as a mass term does not identify a coherent object of worship. "Reverence for money" is usually just a loose and misleading characterization of greed. People may have worshipped Mammon, or thought they were, by believing in a personal god of money. A monetary theorist may regard the institution of money with intense admiration and interest. That could qualify as part of the intellectual love of God in Spinoza's meaning – a

deep scientific study leading to constantly increasing understanding. Deep study in pursuit of Aristotelean *scientia* may be called love or worship of nature. A life spent in such study may be good, an excellent life history. Calling the activity worship blurs an important distinction. Science does not require regarding what it studies as good.

15.

Traditional theism, properly understood, requires the existence of the form of the good, goodness – a point most profoundly recognized by Plato. Spinoza, following in the tradition of Aristotle, denies there is any such form, following the line discussed above which ties goodness to desire satisfaction which is relative to desire, which varies among people. He says that when people call something good they are merely expressing their tendency to "endeavor, will, seek after, and desire it" (Ethics III, 9s). Again, "Knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than the emotion of pleasure or pain insofar as we are conscious of it" (Ethics IV, 8). Like Aristotle, he tries to salvage objectivity from this thoroughly subjective start, by appeal to what is best to desire – the idea that a person has natural needs that can best be fulfilled by a wisely chosen course of action. Hence his objective good: "By good I understand that which we certainly know to be useful to us." (Ethics IV, def. 1) People may foolishly desire what is harmful to them and in that sense be mistaken about what is good.

This is part of a "naturalist" tradition in ethics according to which humans have similar conditions for "flourishing" – living as long as their constitutions allow and having the maximum pleasure in that time, and when these interests are pursued wisely, scientifically, they converge on objective standards of orderly society. Spinoza says:

> Men … can wish for nothing more excellent for preserving their own being, than that they should be in such harmony in all respects that their minds and bodies should compose, as it were, one mind and one body, and that all together should endeavor as best they can to preserve their own being, and that all together they should aim at the common advantage of all. (Ethics IV, 18s)

This ideal of everyone being essentially one with society as a whole fits nicely with the spirit of pantheism. But naturalists, rejecting the form of the good, are not in a position to say that this ideal is good. They can only allege that it is in everyone's best interest, where that "best" is optimizing pleasure. To explain optimizing without appeal to what is truly good is difficult. Long life and pleasant life may not coincide. This may be resolved so that some optimization is held up as the purpose of a healthy person's life. This can be contrasted with the religious sense that God created us for a purpose and realizing that purpose should be our purpose. Both these views have been targets of an "existentialist" complaint – that an ideal person is autonomous and chooses their own individual purpose as they live, not following some rule in effect before they were born, some "essence" common to all people or to all good ones. Both views can answer this objection. A general purpose for all autonomous persons is compatible with a distinct specific purpose to be determined by each such person. It can be part of the proper general purpose to determine one's specific purpose.

Pantheism does not entail naturalism, but they fit well together, and recognition of the form of the good conflicts, not with holding there is some whole W of nature, but with making W an object of worship as distinct from admiring contemplation. Naturalism encourages nature worship as a safe alternative to religious zealotry, leading to the irony of secular humanism dismissing traditional theism as "anthropomorphic".

While it is logically possible that there should be a society where everyone's efficient pursuit of their natural interests leads to happiness for all, that has never happened in a large society. A cruel monster may live a long life of pleasure, getting what they desire while causing great suffering to others. Spinoza himself would recognize and stress that, in nature, interests conflict severely. Predators and prey have opposing interests. The balance of nature does not balance the interests of individuals, prey that is eaten or predators who starve. There are human predators whose prey is other humans. Platonists can note that these humans are evil because we are not bound to reduce that verdict to their being frustrated in optimizing their (evil) desire satisfaction. Spinoza has to say there is no good or bad in these struggles in nature beyond what we happen to like or dislike.

Plato is standardly presented as holding that the unjust man inevitably suffers from a soul that is not in harmony. I do not pretend to be able to offer an authoritative scholarly answer as to what he thought. An unjust man can have as much harmony as any man eating tiger or shark. They just cannot have a soul with a rational part which recognizes what is truly good, that is, instantiates goodness. I mean the unjust humans. The tigers and sharks (or their lawyers) can fairly ask what they are expected to do for food with the means available to them. We can only urge them to try to restrain feeding frenzies.

Most humans are also predators. Predation can be justified as an alternative to starvation if balanced against the conflicting interests of the prey. Such justification can be found for some cases of cannibalism. But there can be unjustified imbalance, where prey suffers beyond the justified needs of the predators. Platonists can note that this is not good. That does not depend on the idea that the unjust must suffer discomfort simply as an essential aspect of being unjust. The pantheist naturalist does not have the resources to consistently acknowledge that an unjust life is less good than a just one, not being able to appeal to what is good.

16.

Acknowledging involves believing and "belief", like "pantheism" is a term associated with conflicting ideas. The distinction between what a person says and what they believe is not simple, but is important. Someone may sincerely assert that all A's are B's but encounter A's and reliably fail to treat them as B's. Or they may reliably treat A's as B's while sincerely denying that all A's are B's. This is a common feature with racial and other prejudices. A philosopher may sincerely argue that there is no such property as goodness and nonetheless recognize the goodness of some person or course of action or institution as well as or better than a philosopher who argues that goodness is the most important universal. Someone may assert that being as a whole is perfectly good. I have argued that would not fit Spinoza's pantheism but it could be consistently asserted by a pantheist who grants the form of the good. This raises a question as to what they could mean in saying they

worship the whole. Words can be important in worship, as the great poets have made clear. But genuine worship must be driven by an emotion distinct from words.

Someone may risk their life running into a burning house to save a violin, leaving family members to perish. They might be described as loving or worshipping the instrument. That is natural, but misrepresents their state of mind. Love of a person includes a hope for mutuality which makes no sense with the non-personal. One may love a helpless person incapable of loving but the love includes the hope that the beloved could come to reciprocate. This hope is not a matter of what words are said by the lover. The idea of loving an instrument can be a mixture including personal love and admiration for the creator of the instrument. Something similar can happen with a pantheist naturalist preaching the scientific contemplation of the whole of nature as a form of worship. They may have a sense of nature as created by a person and thus approach genuine worship, even if they do not put this sense into words and in fact reject it verbally. The verbal preaching, with or without the denial of the property, goodness, is compatible with worship. The verbiage just badly fails to correctly describe the experience.

17.

It is a necessary condition of being the best possible thing to be maximally powerful for promotion of goodness (which should not be confused with the dubious idea of possessing all powers) and be perfectly loving and caring. That requires a person – God. But what if there is no such person? A version of the Ontological Argument purports to answer. It purports to consider the supremely perfect being and the idea that this being may not exist. If it did not exist, then it could not be perfect. It is a contradiction to say the perfect being is not perfect. It is concluded that this refutes the hypothesis the perfect being does not exist. This is fallacious, based in meinongianism. Existence is not a perfection. It does not distinguish anything from any other thing, since everything has that property.

The ontological argument grew out of Plato's idea that the form of the good is a perfect instance of itself. This profound and difficult idea became

tangled in meinongianism (which even seems to occasionally influence Plato). The proper direction is to recognize the form of the good through its universality. It can be recognized by people only by seeing its instances. Excessive emphasis on the variety of instances led to Aristotle's rejection of the form. To properly recognize what is common to good things leads to reverence which is a trigger for the deepest worship. The power of the drive to worship goodness itself leads us to personify, to see the instances as manifestations of God. This is good for our souls. The reality of goodness and then the reality of the goodness of our recognition of this is the path of true worship and genuine recognition within ourselves, beyond words, of the reality of God, a recognition not complete in this life. Tracing the multiply instantiated universal, goodness, to the essential individuality of personhood, is beyond intellectual comprehension. But it does not require inconsistency, and appeal to faith can mislead, because "faith" is often applied to a kind of belief. What is important is not belief, but response to goodness.

If anything is supremely perfect then it loves us and has the will to preserve us in our being and to bring goodness out of all the evils we face. What many people perceive as a failure to achieve this and thus a proof there is no such perfection is due rather to the necessity that good only triumphs when there is evil to vanquish, and the greater the evil and extent of random absurdity, the greater the triumph of good and sense. It is hard to resist saying that even almighty God is bound by this necessity as by the laws of logic, is in fact uniquely bound as no other being is, by not falling at all short of these infinite "limits".

My argument is based on appeal to the objective goodness of properly religious sentiment or the religious sense. This resembles "moral sense" theories which are prominently (though not necessarily) associated with the rejection of the form of the good, Hume being a leading, profound, example. Recognizing the goodness of the religious impulse is greatly complicated by the difficulty of distinguishing emotions. While organized religious have been great, perhaps crucial sources of inspiration, they have a record marred by atrocities and mingling zeal with vicious impulses of every kind. The spirit of crusades is not one pure strain of good impulse. Atheism can seem a highly desirable alternative in many cases. But rather than simply trying to re-

strain inspiration, we must recognize that the term does not reliably identify one emotion. We must struggle to escape the bounds of words while remembering that we cannot dispense with them. The basis of good humility is modesty about whether we know what is good in many cases. We must not allow that to lead us to think there is no such thing.

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