

# ETERNAL GOD: DIVINE ATEMPORALITY IN THOMAS AQUINAS<sup>1</sup>

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The recent trend among many philosophers of religion has been to interpret divine eternity as an everlasting temporality in which an omnitemporal God exists in and throughout the whole of time. The fundamental distinction between the classical account of eternity as timelessness and the more recent, personalist account of eternity as unlimited temporality rests upon the question of God's immutability. Proponents of the classical view say God is timeless because he is immutable. If God were in time, he would be subject to change and thus would not be the first cause of motion or the creator of the world. Those adhering to divine temporalism assert that God cannot be atemporal because acts of creation and causation necessarily entail that the agent undergo some change and thus must be in time.

An influential classical account of divine eternity comes from St. Thomas Aquinas, who builds upon Boethius's famous definition of eternity: "the whole, perfect, and simultaneous possession of endless life."<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will examine Aquinas's account of God as timelessly eternal. First, I will look at how Aquinas derives the various parts of the Boethian definition of eternity from the concepts time and mutability. Second, I will consider a famous objection that posits Aquinas's account of a timeless God is incompatible with omniscience because God would not have knowledge of what is past, present and future at any time. I will explain how answering this objection correctly is necessary to avoid serious problems to theism. I will then propose a solution to this problem and attempt to show that Aquinas's notion of divine atemporality is not incoherent.

Before beginning, several disclaimers are necessary. Since this paper focuses on Aquinas's account, I will take as granted that his arguments for divine immutability are sound. In addition, I will also take the Aristotelian

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definition of time to be correct. I will not provide any direct critique of temporalist accounts, since by and large such arguments are reducible either to debates over immutability or treatments of time far too technical for my purposes.

In this first section, I will examine Aquinas's account of eternity. I will first show how Aquinas derives the definition of eternity from time and its connection with change. Second, I will explain what it means to call eternity a measure. Last, I will briefly show that God is eternal and is his own eternity.

Boethius defines eternity as "the whole, perfect, and simultaneous possession of endless life."<sup>2</sup> Aquinas explains that this definition is derived from the definition of time. Time, as Aristotle says, is the number or measure of motion according to the before and after.<sup>3</sup> Since mutable creatures, insofar as they undergo motion or change, have a certain measure of their motion, i.e. time, an immutable being, insofar as it does not undergo motion or change, will possess its own measure of its changeless existence. Just as Aquinas comes to the notion of immutability from mutability, he likewise derives his notion of eternity from time:

Just as it is fitting that we come to knowledge of the simple from the composite, so it is fitting that we come to knowledge of eternity from time, which is nothing other than the number of motion according to before and after.<sup>4</sup>

Aquinas considers two aspects of mutability and immutability in order to derive his account of eternity. First, and most importantly, he considers time as the measure of motion according to its succession, from which we see that eternity is *simultaneously whole and perfect*. This will be the essential aspect of eternity. Second, he considers time as the measure of motion insofar as motion is an activity which begins and ends, from which we see that eternity is *interminable life*.

Concerning the first aspect, eternity as simultaneously whole and perfect, Aquinas begins by noting that time is the measure of motion insofar as it consists of successive parts:

For since there is succession in any motion, and one part is after another, from this, that we number the before and after in motion, we apprehend time, which is nothing other than the number of before and after in motion.<sup>5</sup>

Time, as a property of motion, follows necessarily from the successive nature of motion. This succession, i.e. the order of the parts of motion as prior and posterior, allows us to measure motion by numbering its distinct, successive

stages. Before continuing, let us clarify what it means to call time the measure of motion.<sup>6</sup>

After giving his definition of time as the measure of motion in *Physics* IV.11, Aristotle provides an important qualification. We may speak of a number or measure in two ways: the number of what is numbered and the number by which we number. The former corresponds to numbers like five horses or twelve feet of fabric. The quantity “twelve feet” in “twelve feet of fabric” refers to the particular quantity of the fabric. It is an individual, as opposed to universal, accident which does not exist apart from the fabric. Aristotle calls it a numbered number because it is the numerable aspect of the fabric. Even if no one were to measure the fabric, it would still have this particular measurable quantity. We might say that a numbered number is properly distinguished as the number of some particular thing. On the other hand, the number by which we number is *not* the number of any particular thing. It is a purely logical being which exists apart from the particular quantity we are counting or measuring. The counting numbers one, two, three, etc. are not multitudes of any particular kind of units; they can be used to number any sort of numerable thing.

As the measure of motion, time is a numbered number. It does not exist apart from motion—it is not some separate independent entity like Newton’s reified Absolute Time or some accounts of space-time. Time is the quantifiable duration of motion. Thus, since eternity is analogously related to time as the immutable activity of an uncreated being is to the mutable activity of created being, eternity will be in an analogous sense the quantifiable duration of an immutable being.

Since time is the measure of motion according to the prior and posterior, we must turn to how priority and posteriority belong to or, rather, do not belong to an immutable being. From understanding the relation between temporal priority and posteriority and eternal uniformity, we can begin to understand eternity as the measure of immutable activity. Aquinas explains that we come to eternity by negating the succession of motion.

Now in that which lacks motion, and is always the same, there is no before and after. Just as the account of time consists in the numbering of prior and posterior in motion, so the account of eternity consists in the apprehension of the uniformity of that which is wholly outside motion.<sup>7</sup>

Time consists in apprehending the different successive parts in the totality of motion and numbering them. Motion is an imperfect being because its parts exist successively rather than simultaneously. Viewed as a whole composed of parts, motion consists of a plurality of states of a single kind of actuality.<sup>8</sup> For an immutable being wholly without motion, there is no succession in its

states of existence. Its existence, taken as a whole, is not composed from a plurality of states of some one species of actuality; since there are no differences in its act, there is no distinction of parts, for there are no parts. Put another way, it is like a whole composed of parts which all coincide simultaneously with one another and thus cannot be distinguished. Compared with temporal duration, which is composed of successive parts, eternal duration has no distinction of parts because there is no succession of parts in an immutable existence. Eternity is a whole simultaneously, not successively. Thus Aquinas, following Boethius, states that eternity is *simultaneously whole*.

One might object that this does not sufficiently distinguish an immutable being from mobile beings which are at rest. For what is at rest does not have different successive states present in it. Nevertheless, we can measure how long some object A is at rest. For example, Socrates sits from 10:00 am to 11:00 am. Even though there is no change in the truth of the proposition "Socrates is sitting" from 10 am to 11 am, "Socrates sitting at 10:00" is different from "Socrates sitting at 11:00." By considering these different states insofar as one comes before and the other after, we may measure the duration of Socrates's sitting. This is accomplished by relating the succession of different states of a motion occurring simultaneously with A's resting, such as the motion of a clock B. We mark off the different states in the motion of B and, insofar as A and B are simultaneous, we distinguish corresponding states in A.

This succession of temporal states in A (resting at time  $t$ , resting at  $t^1$ ) constitute what Peter Geach calls a "merely Cambridge change." These states are identified in A according to the changing relations of B to A. This change of relation consists in some real change in B considered independently of A and no real change in A considered independently of B. There is no succession of *really* distinct states in A considered on its own. It simply rests. But, in relation to B, the duration of this rest can be measured. Since we can measure the temporal duration of a resting body which has no succession of *really* distinct states in it, might we not do the same for an immutable being by merely Cambridge relations to the various parts of a motion? If so, it seems that we may likewise measure the duration of an immutable being. By doing so, even though, just like a resting being, it does not have a succession of really distinct states *per se*, an immutable being will nonetheless have a measurable temporal succession consisting of merely Cambridge changes.

However, this will not do. An immutable being has no actual or potential multiplicity of states which can be distinguished in any way. As Geach points out, it makes no sense to speak of distinguishing different states in a *wholly* immutable being:

Would a changeless being whose duration co-existed with that of changeable beings be anything more than a temporal being whose successive states were alike rather than variegated?—I deny the right to speak of ‘successive states’ in regard to such a being. For how would the states be differentiated? Perhaps it will be said: By relational properties; if a changing being has various states, then one state of the unchanging being will co-exist with one state of the changeable being and another with another state, and this will be enough to differentiate the states of the unchanging being. But once again, I deny that there are any ‘states’ of the unchanging being to be differentiated.<sup>9</sup>

While it is true that we can measure the rest of a mutable being, it is only measurable *per accidens*. Insofar as it is potentially movable, we can meaningfully distinguish different states which could be the beginning of a motion or change. While not actually distinct, these states are potentially distinct. A Cambridge change may refer to actually (*per se*) or potentially (*per accidens*) distinct states in some subject. Since the merely Cambridge changes of A’s relation to the simultaneous motion B are temporal relations, they constitute a measurable temporal succession in A, albeit a *per accidens* succession. However, Cambridge changes do not apply to God in this manner. In a wholly changeless being, there are no different states at all, either actually or potentially, because such a being has no potency. Thus, it has no parts which could be distinguished by these propositions.

If God is eternal, there is no time at which the proposition “God exists” is false, thus it seems that God’s existence runs parallel to time. This mistake can be traced to thinking of God’s simultaneously whole duration as having quasi-spatial extension. As Geach explains,

My imaginary opponent is held captive by a picture: some such picture as a uniform blue line with a graduated ruler laid against it, so that we can discriminate the successive bits in the blue line. But time-order (as I have argued elsewhere) is categorically different from spatial order; and any such picture is limited in usefulness and profoundly dangerous. Nothing is sillier than to think you can settle philosophical problems about time by drawing diagrams.<sup>10</sup>

Those who think there is a parallel between a resting mutable being and a perfect immutable being fail to distinguish the potentially changeable uniformity of rest from the changeless simplicity of the immutable. They conflate the uniformity of the two. A uniformly blue line which cannot be distinguished into different colors can still be distinguished into various spatial parts because its color is different from its extension. The latter’s composition from extended parts is in no way dependent upon the former’s

qualitative uniformity. Whether or not the line varies in color from segment to segment, it will still maintain its spatial composition. The eternity of an immutable being, on the other hand, does not have distinguishable parts. To continue the spatial metaphor, it is more like a point than a line.

This image of a partless point may lead us to think we should not call eternity a whole at all. For “what has parts is called a whole. But this does not belong to eternity, since it is simple. Therefore it is improperly said to be a whole.”<sup>11</sup> Above I spoke of a whole whose parts are identical and unable to be distinguished to express that there is no succession in eternity. The lack of distinct states follows from removing the imperfect states of successive existence. Aquinas tells us that we properly call eternity a whole “not because it has parts, but insofar as it lacks nothing.”<sup>12</sup> It lacks nothing because succession implies imperfection. If motion were not a succession of imperfect actualities, then, at each and every moment of a motion, the mobile would possess the full actuality of the motion’s *terminus ad quem*. In fact, this would correspond to rest. However, as I just noted, even what is at rest has a succession of different states in potency. But eternity does not have different states in act or potency, for it lacks nothing. Thus, because eternity lacks any imperfection, Aquinas adds ‘perfect’ to ‘simultaneous whole’ in the definition of eternity.

From motion’s succession, Aquinas considers the second aspect of time and mutation: possessing a beginning and an end. The negation of this yields the other aspect found in Boethius’s definition eternity: interminable life. Aquinas, again following Aristotle, tells us that time measures motion insofar the total duration of motion is limited, i.e. insofar as motion has a beginning and an end.<sup>13</sup>

Motion is a limited whole because it is the actuality of what exists in potency *as* potential. Motion, considered as a whole, is an imperfect state existing between a state of potency to some actuality and the actuality of this potency. Considered according to its whole duration, something is terminated or limited which has a beginning and an end.<sup>14</sup> This follows from being composed of successive parts. In a finite whole, since the parts cannot exist together, the whole will have a beginning which differs from its end. Even if we suppose some motion to be everlasting, any part of this motion, considered as a whole in itself, will have a beginning and an end. What is wholly immutable will not.<sup>15</sup> What wholly lacks succession possesses its act as a simultaneous whole. It neither has a starting point from which it begins to be actualized nor a term toward which it proceeds to full act. It is interminable and not able to be limited.

But note that we say interminable *life* rather than interminable *existence*. As said above, we come to eternity from time as we come to immutability

from mutability; because motion itself is a terminable *operation* or *activity*, so immutable existence is also an activity. In fact, it causes mutable activity<sup>16</sup> and thus must be an activity itself, for an agent cannot cause what it does not have in the same way or in a more excellent way. Thus, we say eternity is interminable *life*, because life is a kind of activity. In fact, it is the highest activity.<sup>17</sup>

In replying to an objection, Aquinas explains the last part of the definition: possession. Eternity is the possession of interminable life because possession implies “that what is possessed is held firmly and quietly. Therefore the word possession is used to designate the immutability and permanence of eternity.”<sup>18</sup>

From this derivation of eternity, it is short work for Aquinas to show that God is eternal. Having established in ST I, q. 9 that God alone is immutable, Aquinas concludes that God is eternal because he is immutable:

The idea of eternity follows upon immutability, just as the idea of time follows upon motion, as was said above. Hence, since God is most immutable, it most properly belongs to him to be eternal. Not only is he eternal, he is his eternity, since whereas no other thing is its own duration, because nothing else is its own existence. God however is his own uniform existence, whence, just as he is his essence, so he is his own eternity.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen throughout the derivation of the Boethian definition of eternity, immutability is the foundation for understanding eternity. God is eternal because he is immutable.<sup>20</sup> A number of additional conclusions follow. God is identical with his own eternity, that is, his uniform existence without succession does not differ from his essence because of his simplicity. Furthermore, only God is eternal since only God is truly immutable.<sup>21</sup>

Last of all, and most importantly, God as eternal is *timeless*. Aquinas explains that the distinction of time from eternity is fundamentally based on succession or the lack thereof: “But still these differences follow upon that first and *per se* difference, that eternity is wholly simultaneous and time is not.”<sup>22</sup> Aquinas gives two ways to distinguish eternity from time. First, eternity has no potentially or actually distinguishable beginning or end.<sup>23</sup> Since only God is eternal and immutable, both the eternal and eternity itself have no beginning or end. Time does have a beginning and end, both in its subject—motion—and in itself. However, this is not the most fundamental difference between time and eternity. For if we suppose motion to be everlasting, the totality of motion would be without beginning or end. The same applies to time. Thus, time and eternity, taken as wholes, will not be distinct. Nevertheless, even if they are everlasting, motion and time still have succession. We can always distinguish the beginning and the end of any one

part of motion. The same applies to time. Even if the totality of time is without beginning or end, any particular period of time will have a beginning or an end. This does not apply to eternity. As a whole, it has no beginning or end; as a simultaneous and perfect whole, it has no succession because it has no parts whose limits we could mark out.

Nevertheless, one may still think that time and eternity as measures are related as part to whole, for measures of duration cannot co-exist without one containing the other, as a day contains an hour. But eternity co-exists with time: there is never a time at which it is true to say “God does not exist.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, time and eternity seem to be continuous with one another, i.e. the latter contains the former as a measurable part. This would make God temporal by making eternity and time part of one measurable continuum. This brings us to the second and more fundamental way eternity differs from time: what is measured by each essentially differ: eternity measures what is without succession, being simultaneously whole; time is a measure of successively existing being.<sup>25</sup> They are not the same kind of measure.<sup>26</sup> But what does it mean to speak of eternity as measure of immutable being? *Prima facie*, this is an odd statement to make, for we measure by marking off equal parts of what is measured. But an eternal being has no parts.

In the *Commentary on the Physics*, Aquinas explains how eternity and time are both measures but ones which differ in subject:

For the “now,” insofar as it corresponds to a mobile object, differently related, distinguishes the before and after in time. And by its flux it produces time, as a point produces a line. Therefore, when different dispositions are removed from a mobile object, there remains a substance which is always the same. Hence the “now” is understood as always stationary, and not as flowing or as having a before and after. Therefore, as the “now” of time is understood as the number of a mobile object, the “now” of eternity is understood as the number, or rather the unity, of a thing which is always the same.<sup>27</sup>

Measuring considers a whole as divided into equal parts. Since motion is an imperfect act, motion as a whole exists successively. The only aspect of motion which actually exists *in re* is the current indivisible state of the mobile. The totality exists as a whole only in our mind. By numbering the different states which we experience, we measure the motion and perceive time. The totality of eternity, on the other hand, exists *in re* without succession. By numbering the eternal “now,” i.e. the eternal subject according to its different states, we arrive at our measure. Since it is non-successive, there is no plurality to number; its measure is unity. Thus, eternity essentially differs from time in that its measure is not properly a



number at all.<sup>28</sup> To be a temporal being is to have some measure of its change; its duration consists of a multitude of states in some constant subject. An eternal being is not in time because its duration cannot be measured quantitatively.<sup>29</sup> Its measurable aspect is not a multitude. Eternity is wholly apart from time.

Thus having explained Aquinas's account of God's timeless eternity, I will now move to an important objection to this account. In his famous essay "*God Everlasting*",<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff presents a strong critique of Aquinas's notion that God is an eternal being "which is without beginning and without end, and which has no succession among its aspects."<sup>31</sup> Wolterstorff maintains God is "everlasting" rather than eternal<sup>32</sup> (i.e. God's interminable existence is temporal rather than atemporal) by pointing to an apparent inconsistency that arises from divine omniscience belonging to an atemporal deity. First, Wolterstorff argues that because knowing an event is past or present or future involves temporality, these acts of knowing are distinct temporal events, and, therefore, God's knowledge that an event is past, present or future is a temporal act. From this he concludes that God is temporal. Second, he argues that just as an event changing from future to present to past are successive, so also these three distinct acts of knowing occur successively. Therefore, there is a changeful succession of states in God, making God mutable. It is worthwhile to quote Wolterstorff at length:

Three such acts [of God which are infected with the temporality of their objects] are the diverse though similar acts of knowing about some temporal event that it is occurring (that it is present), of knowing about some temporal event that it was occurring (that it is past), and of knowing about some temporal event that it will be occurring (that it is future). Consider the first of these. No one can know about some temporal event *e* that it is occurring except when it is occurring. Before *e* has begun to occur one cannot know that it is occurring, for it is not. Nor after *e* has ceased to occur can one know that it is occurring, for it is not. So suppose that *e* has a beginning. Then P's knowing about *e* that it is occurring cannot occur until *e* begins. And suppose that *e* has an ending. Then P's knowing about *e* that it is occurring cannot occur beyond *e*'s cessation. But every temporal event has (by definition) either a beginning or an ending. So every case of knowing about some temporal event that it is occurring itself either begins or ends (or both). Hence the act of knowing about *e* that it is occurring is infected by the temporality of *e*. So also, the act of knowing about *e* that it *was* occurring, and the act of knowing about *e* that it *will be* occurring, are infected by the temporality of *e*.

But God, as the biblical writers describe him, performs all three of these acts, and performs them on temporal events. He knows what is happening in our history, what has happened, and what will happen. Hence some of God's

actions are themselves temporal events. But surely the nonoccurrence followed by the occurrence followed by the nonoccurrence of such knowings constitutes a change on God's time-strand. Accordingly, God is fundamentally noneternal.<sup>33</sup>

According to Wolterstorff, the act of knowing that an event is occurring<sup>34</sup> must itself occur simultaneously with the event, i.e. there can be no time at which the act of knowing occurs at which the event does not also occur. Knowing that an event *e* is present is only possible when *e* is actually occurring. Before *e* is occurring, we cannot know that *e* is present because it is not the case. Likewise, after *e* has occurred, we cannot know that *e* is present because it is not the case. Because knowing *e* is occurring is simultaneous with *e* occurring, the temporal measurability of *e* will also belong to the act of knowing that *e* is occurring. Since God must have true knowledge of any temporal event, it appears that the same conditions must apply. He cannot know that *e* is occurring before or after *e* occurs. When *e* is not yet occurring or is no longer occurring, God must know that *e* is future or past. God knows that *e* is present only when *e* is presently occurring. Thus, when *e* is actually occurring, he cannot believe *e* has ceased to occur or has yet to occur. Such belief would be false and, as Aquinas notes, we cannot attribute a false belief to God.<sup>35</sup> But if we deny that God has any false belief, his knowledge of *e* occurring must have a beginning and an end, which places a distinct temporal state in God. The successive transition of *e* from future to present to past will be accompanied by a succession of three distinct states in God: i.e. God will be mutable.

How can we solve this problem? First, we must address Wolterstorff's assumption that if God knows temporal events, he must be temporally simultaneous with these events. It is true that even though God is timeless, he is said to co-exist with temporal beings. We say God exists simultaneously with them. However, we must make a distinction between different senses of simultaneity. We say that two entities are simultaneous in the most basic sense when they co-exist. Let us therefore define simultaneity *simpliciter* thus:

- (1) Two things A and B are simultaneous *simpliciter* if at some time *t* it is true to say that both A and B exist.

Since we are temporal beings, our knowledge that two things co-exist is itself temporal. For this reason, we include the qualifier "at some time *t*." This simple co-existence is logically prior to temporal co-existence, for temporal simultaneity adds an additional condition to this co-existence. For temporal beings, to exist simultaneously means there are distinct states in each being

which co-exist and which can be identified by the same temporal indexical. We may understand the temporal relation of simultaneity in terms of co-existence at some time  $t$ . It was explained above that “Socrates is sitting at 10:00 am” and “Socrates is sitting at 11:00 am” identify two different temporal states in Socrates. Socrates’s act of sitting at 10:00 am was simultaneous with a certain position of the sun. His act of sitting at 11:00 am was simultaneous with a different position of the sun. The resting state from 10:00 to 11:00 has a relation of simultaneity with the intervening motion of the sun. Even though he has not changed, his sitting is in time because of these relations of simultaneity. Let us therefore define temporal simultaneity thus:

- (2) Two things are *temporally* simultaneous if it is true to say at some time  $t$  that both A and B exist *and* it is true to say that both A and B exist at time  $t$ .

By saying “A and B exist at time  $t$ ,” we mean that A and B have states which are actually or potentially distinguished by time  $t$ . When we turn to God, we see that God is simultaneous *simpliciter* with temporal events but he is not temporally simultaneous. Since God is pure existence, he always exists. It is false to say at any time  $t$  that God does not exist. Furthermore, it is true to say at 10:00 am that both God and Socrates exist for God co-exists with everything which exists at 10:00 am. The same holds true for 11:00 am. However, God’s simultaneous existence with creatures is not temporally simultaneous. “It is the case that Socrates exists at 10:00 am” and “It is true to say at 10:00 am that Socrates exists” are both true statements about Socrates. However, on my explanation, these formulations are not both true of God. The proposition “It is true to say at 10:00 am that God exists” is true, for God always exists. There is no time when saying “God exists” is false. On the other hand, we cannot say “It is the case that God exists at 10:00 am.” Temporal references to God do not refer to distinct states in God since God is simple. “It is the case that God exists at 10:00 am” is false since He does not exist at any time. To exist at a time is to be temporal, i.e. to possess a multitude of actually or potentially distinct states. If God existed at time  $t$ , then references to God at  $t$  would indicate a state in God distinguishable from a state indicated at time  $t^1$ . This would necessitate that there be a multitude of distinct states in God temporally corresponding with every possible time, which entails change or the possibility of change in an immutable being. However, since there are two senses of simultaneity, we may maintain that God’s co-existence with creatures is simultaneous *simpliciter* without making God temporal. There is no temporality in God based on relations of simultaneity.

Wolterstorff, in analyzing Aquinas, fails to make this distinction. Although he recognizes Aquinas does not allow for a multitude of actually distinct states in God, he does not realize this also implies there cannot be a multitude of potentially distinct states in God. “[God’s act of being omnipotent] occurs simultaneously with every temporal event whatsoever. Since God’s being omnipotent is always occurring, it ‘overlaps’ all temporal events whatsoever.”<sup>36</sup> Wolterstorff’s language of God’s simple act “overlapping” temporal events suggests he is conceiving of eternal existence in a similar manner to Geach’s imaginary opponent who thinks of eternity like a uniform blue line.<sup>37</sup> Although Wolterstorff grasps the uniformity of immutability implied by “interminable existence,” the other part of the definition of eternity, “simultaneously whole and perfect,” rules out both actual and potential distinctions of states in God resulting from Cambridge changes. There is no “overlap” since overlap implies a distinction of parts, which implies potency, which is contrary to simplicity and immutability. Thus Wolterstorff makes the assumption that God’s eternity is temporally measurable and that this follows from Aquinas’s admission that God’s existence is simultaneous with all times. However, based on our distinction, the application of this assumption to Aquinas’s account is unwarranted.

The non-temporal simultaneity of God and creatures allows for God to know all times without any succession in him. Aquinas explains that from the perspective of eternity, events which occur at different times are simultaneously present to God. Each event *e* occurs simultaneously with God knowing *e* but God knowing *e* is not temporally measured by *e*:

Things which are reduced to act temporally are known by us successively in time, but [they are known] by God in eternity, which is above time. Whence because we know future contingents insofar as they are such, they cannot be certain to us but only to God, whose act of understanding is in eternity above time. Just as that man who goes on the road does not see those who come after him, but he who looks at the whole road from some height sees together all travelling on the road.<sup>38</sup>

The man on the hill, in one glance, takes in the entire stretch of the road and sees all those who are on the road. In this single glance, he can distinguish where one traveler on the road is from where one travelling behind him is. He does not anticipate or guess where someone on the road is for each traveler is present to him. Transferring the metaphor to God’s knowledge of temporal events, God knows events occurring at different times without incurring the temporal character of these events. Even though an event begins and ends, the temporal limits of this event do not mark off distinct states in God. By seeing all events simultaneously, the beginning, end and all intermediate

states are present together in his knowledge. Thus, for God, knowing the succession of events is not a temporal act. It is akin to knowing, by one single glance, that different parts of a line are successive. When Aquinas speaks of God's knowledge of the future, he says that such an event "must be understood as it is subject to the divine knowledge, namely as it is in its presentality."<sup>39</sup> If God knows all things in their "presentality," it seems we may maintain that God's relation with temporal events allows us to say that God knows that *e* is present without infecting or transferring the measurable duration of *e* onto the non-measurable eternal duration of God. Wolterstorff assumes that because God is simultaneous with all events, his existence is "present" in time rather than in eternity and thus must be measurable.

But there is a difficulty with this solution. To say that past and future events are known by God "in their presentality" implies he does not know past events as past or future events as future. If God is like an observer on a hill to whom every moment in time is present, the distinction of events as past, present, or future will be meaningless for God. If event *e* is present, event *e*<sup>1</sup>, which is earlier than *e*, will be past. But since all events are known by God "in their presentality," we may just as well suppose *e*<sup>1</sup> to be present, in which case *e* will be future. Since all events are present to eternity, the eternal observer will simultaneously know an event as presently past, presently present, and presently future, which renders the real distinction between past, present and future incoherent. Thus, events at different times will only be actually distinguished insofar as they are earlier than, later than and simultaneous with other events.

From this we end up denying the reality of time and change for the eternal observer, since the distinction of past, present and future are essential aspects of time. Time, as the measureable quantity of motion, follows necessarily upon change. Thus, if there is no time, change is not actually or even potentially measureable. Since this measurability arises from the successive states of change, the denial of measurability means there is no succession. But change is essentially successive. Put succinctly: no time, no change.

Since all times are simultaneously present to eternity, two different states of a motion are not distinguished insofar as one does not exist and one does exist; they both exist simultaneously in the subject. They are merely distinguished by having different temporal positions in the subject. Therefore, for the eternal observer, there is no changeful succession among events, in which a continuum of states comes to be and ceases to be in a subject.

However, to remove succession from God by removing from his knowledge of creation the changeful succession of states in creation does not solve the problem pointed out by Wolterstorff. Per Geach,

Put succinctly, if God does not know things as they are, then God is mistaken. If we throw this out by protesting that God does know things as they are yet all things are present to God “in their presentality,” that God is like an observer on a hill who sees every moment in time as present, we end up denying the reality of time. To deny the reality of time is to deny the reality of change, for since time follows necessarily upon change, if there is no time, there is no change. For in [Jewish and Christian] theism an absolute distinction has to be made between the eternal unchangeable God and his mutable creatures: they depend upon God’s will from moment to moment, and by that will could at any moment sink into nothingness. If we reject the reality of time, there cannot be this relation between God and creature, and therefore traditional theism must be rejected as false.<sup>40</sup>

As Geach points out elsewhere, “God sees creatures *as* changing and *as* being in different states at different times, because that is the way things are and God sees things the way things are.”<sup>41</sup> To maintain the “man on the hill” account of eternal knowledge denies that God knows things the way they are. If God does not know things as they are, i.e. as temporal, then God is mistaken. He is under an illusion. On the other hand, if the divine observer, from his vantage point on the hill of eternity, does know things as they are, then time and change are not real. This has disastrous consequences for theism: the doctrine of the creation of a mutable world must be rejected along with any real distinction between the immutable God of theism and his mutable creation.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, in order for Aquinas’s account of eternity to be consistent with divine simplicity, immutability and omniscience, we must show how temporal things being subject to divine knowledge “in their presentality” does not make time and change unreal for either God or creatures.

However, this problem only obtains if we conceive God as knowing motion and time in the same way we do. Thus, we may find the solution to our dilemma by considering *how* God knows temporal things. Wolterstorff posits that knowledge of whether a thing is present depends on the succession of states of beginning to know that a thing present, knowing it is present and ceasing to know that it is present. And this is quite true for those who are in time. But for a timeless God, this does not apply. Why not? God knows casually rather than observationally. Both our knowledge of temporal acts and God’s knowledge of temporal acts concern what exists successively. However, our knowledge of this succession is itself successive whereas God’s knowledge of this succession is not successive.<sup>43</sup>

As temporal creatures, we come to know observationally. Our concepts of motion and time are formed by our sense experience of motion. I know that Socrates is walking because I see Socrates walking. Because motion is an

imperfect act, the actualities of being in each location belong to Socrates successively. I see Socrates passing through different locations, and mark these out successively in my memory. Thus, my knowledge of the temporal event "Socrates is walking," a successive act, is itself a successive act.

God, however, does not know motion and time observationally by conforming himself to the way things are. Rather, God knows insofar as things conform to him. That is to say, his knowledge is not caused but causal. As Aquinas notes in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, "The divine intellect does not gather its knowledge from things, as does ours; rather...it is through its knowledge the cause of things."<sup>44</sup> What exactly does such causal knowledge entail? Aquinas provides an analogy:

The knowledge of the divine intellect is to other things as the knowledge of an artisan to artifacts, since through his knowledge he is the cause of things. Now, the artisan knows through his art even those things that have not been yet fashioned, since the forms of his art flow from his knowledge to external matter for the constitution of the artifacts. Hence nothing forbids that there be in the knowledge of an artisan forms that have not yet come out of it. Thus nothing forbids God to have knowledge of things that are not.<sup>45</sup>

God's knows future contingents because he knows what he is going to do. Although the effect is brought about successively in time, the artisan comprehends his effect without succession. He knows the form which will be brought about because he has the form of the effect in him. Likewise, God does not need to observe his effects in order to know them. The series of temporally ordered events is present all at once to the divine knowledge because God knows everything by one simple act. Just as the artisan knows every effect he will cause before he causes it, so to God knows every event before it occurs, when it occurs, and after it occurs. God's knowledge of an event does not depend on observing it. There no succession in God's knowledge because God does not understand motion or time by composing the whole from successive experiences of the parts. Rather he understands simultaneously every effect which he may cause because he pre-contains all effects in his power.

But what is the proper object of God's knowledge? It is not the temporal events but himself. Since God knows himself and by this knowledge he knows all things insofar as he knows all the effects which he can bring about, all events at all times are "present" to him. He knows them insofar as he intends them as effects. This "presentness" does not imply actual existence outside God. At this moment, God knows that I am going to be eating dinner tonight with my wife. Being a future contingent, *we* cannot say with certainty whether it will. However, it is not the case that God believes this event

actually exists in the order of things as we speak. He knows it because it is present in his will as an intended effect. When it does in fact occur, it will be temporally present and actual in the thing.

God knows change insofar as he knows that a subject is one way at one time and a different way at a different time. This does not involve change in God, but in things. God knows all things by one unchanging act. He causes all things by this same one unchanging act. When what is currently future becomes present, there is no change in God but a change in the subject of the event. I am sitting here now but later I will be at a restaurant. I am not eating a steak at the local diner now, so I change. God, on the other hand, being eternal, is not subject to my successive states because he causes it all by one act.

His knowledge and plan are not present to him like a strip of film which contains every shot in a movie but can only be comprehended by successively examining one frame after another one. Rather his knowledge and plan are present together without any distinction of parts. The succession which we experience is brought about in creation without any change or succession in him. The succession occurs entirely on the side of things, not God.

What effects occur depend on the state of the object being acted upon. There is succession in creatures because matter must be disposed to receive forms. Taking an example from Aquinas, fire does not change its temperature when heating water but remains the same throughout. It is the water that undergoes change. Are we to posit that there are different states of heat in the fire successively as there are different states of heat in the water successively? Of course not. Nevertheless, each state which comes to be in the water pre-exists in the fire through the fire's power to heat. Even though we may attribute to the fire the successive states of causing 90° and causing 100°, this does not mean there are different states in the fire when the water is at these different temperatures. This succession exists solely in the water.

Likewise, there are not different states of knowledge in God regarding the past or present or future. God knows what he knows by a single, perfect act devoid of potency, and he cannot know more than he knows. The changes of creatures do not imply any real change in God nor does his knowledge of what he causes change. This causal knowledge is simple and invariant.

To posit that God does not know things as changing because he does not change is to assert that the only way to know change is to change. It is to presuppose that God is in time. We know past, present, and future insofar as these events are temporally simultaneous with us. God, as eternally present to any time and any instant of time, is not temporally simultaneous. He does not know past, present and future in the same way we do, namely as temporally



related to our awareness, since he is not in time. Aquinas elaborates on this principle (using a spatial metaphor):

Furthermore, since the being of what is eternal does not pass away, eternity is present in its presentality to any time or instant of time. We may see an example of sorts in the case of a circle. Let us consider a determined point on the circumference of the circle. Although it is indivisible, it does not co-exist simultaneously with any other point as to position, since it is the order of position that produces the continuity of the circumference. On the other hand, the center of the circle, which is no part of the circumference, is directly opposed to any given determinate point on the circumference. Hence, whatever is found in any part of time co-exists with what is eternal as being present to it, although with respect to some other time it be past or future. Something can be present to what is eternal only by being present to the whole of it, since the eternal does not have the duration of succession. The divine intellect, therefore, sees the whole of eternity, as being present to it, whatever takes place through the whole course of time. And yet what takes place in a certain part of time was not always existent. It remains, therefore, that God has a knowledge of those things that according to the march of time do not yet exist.<sup>46</sup>

Aquinas notes that “eternity is present in its presentality to any time or instant of time.” However, this does not mean temporally simultaneous. What does it mean to be present other than to be actual? As Wolterstorff himself points out, what is past is not occurring. Likewise for what is future. But for an event to be occurring is nothing other than to be actual. The actuality of a thing, as opposed to the potentiality of a thing, is what we mean when we say something is *present*. Thus God is present to all times. We may make true statements about God at any time (“God is eternal” or “God is good”) and the different times at which we say this do not imply any difference in God, for as noted by Geach above, we cannot distinguish states in God based on external relations of succession. Moreover, we can truly say that God causes different things at different times without positing any change in Him because he is simple and present (i.e. actual) to all times through his causal act of sustaining creation. This likewise does not create any succession in God, for since God acts by one single, simple act which contains all possible effects, the changes which we see around us are not a result of God performing a different act, as if parting the Red Sea and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are accomplished by numerically different states of divine power. God can do all these actions by one power, one act. Similarly, since God knows all things causally, the knowledge of these things will not differentiate his act of knowing.

God is present to all times unchangingly, unlike temporal creatures which are only present to what is temporally simultaneous. Thus, God does not know what is present in the sense of being temporally simultaneous. "Whatever is found in any part of time co-exists with what is eternal as being present to it, although with respect to some other time it be past or future." As we analyzed above, all things are present which are actual. Something is present to an eternal God insofar as it is actual. It is past or future to us insofar as these relate to a non-actual state in us as simultaneously actual. But for God, there is no potency. Temporal events do not relate to God as past or future as they relate to us. God knows the past as past insofar as he has caused it, but this does not involve a change in his act of causing. Since he knows what he causes, there is no change in knowing that his effect is no longer actual.

While it is difficult to fully understand how an eternal being knows time because our own knowledge of time and change is itself in time, what we do see is that we ought not to attribute to God the same mode of knowledge as creatures. Knowing past, present and future belong to God in a different way than they do to us. We may not be fully able to explicate the constitution of this mode, but, on the basis of Aquinas's account, we may consistently hold that this different mode exists.

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<sup>1</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Richard Green (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1988). Bk. V, Prose 6, p. 115

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Physics* IV, Ch. 11

<sup>4</sup> ST I, q. 10, a. 1c: Sicut in cognitionem simplicium oportet nos venire per composita, ita in cognitionem aeternitatis oportet nos venire per tempus; quod nihil aliud est quam numerus motus secundum prius et posterius. (All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Latin for all *Summa Theologiae* passages are taken from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1951).)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: Cum enim in quodlibet motu sit successio, et una pars post alteram, ex hoc quod numeramus prius et posterius in motu, apprehendimus tempus; quod nihil aliud est quam numerus prioris et posterioris in motu.

<sup>6</sup> When we measure something continuous, we take some particular continuous amount as the unit and apply it to the thing being measured. After seeing how many times the unit may be applied, we express its measure in terms of a number of units (five degrees, ten yards). Since time and motion are continuous, to number motion is to measure it. Thus, I shall be using "number" and "measure" interchangeably.

<sup>7</sup> ST I, q. 10, a. 1c: In eo autem quod caret motu, et semper eodem modo se habet, non est accipere prius et posterius. Sicut igitur ratio temporis consistit in numeratione prioris et posterioris in motu, ita in apprehension uniformitatis eius quod est omnino extra motum, consistit ratio aeternitatis.

<sup>8</sup> By a single kind of actuality, we are merely noting that all changes involve changing from a privation of an act to that act. The intermediate state between these—motion—will not involve any acts of a different kind. The intermediate stages of a change are the same in species as the initial and final states. Change in temperature does not consist in going from hot to cold by becoming sweet or orange. Changes from hot to cold involve becoming warm and then cool before finally ending in the state of being cold. We are not considering the case of substantial change, which, because it is instantaneous, does not involve a plurality of successive states. However, there is a succession insofar as what proceeds and follows a substantial change are two different substantial forms.

<sup>9</sup> P. T. Geach, *God and the Soul*, 2nd Edition ed. (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2000). p. 73

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 73

<sup>11</sup> ST I, q. 10, a. 1, obj. 3: Praeterea, totum dicitur quod habet partes. Hoc autem aeternitati non convenit, cum sit simplex. Ergo inconvenienter dicitur tota.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. ad. 3: In eo autem quod caret motu, et semper eodem modo se habet, non est accipere prius et posterius. Sicut igitur ratio temporis consistit in numeratione prioris et posterioris in motu, ita in apprehension uniformitatis eius quod est omnio extra motum, consistit ratio aeternitatis.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. ST I, q. 10, a. 1c

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, Lib. 1, d. 8, q. 2, a. 1c

<sup>15</sup> Cf. ST I, q. 10, a. 1c

<sup>16</sup> Cf. ST I, q. 2, a. 3c

<sup>17</sup> Cf. ST I, q. 10, a. 1, ad. 2

<sup>18</sup> ST I, q. 10, a. 1, ad 6: Ad sextum dicendum quod illud quod possidetur, firmiter et quiete habetur. Ad designandam ergo imutabilitatem et indeficiendiam aeternitatis, usus est nomine possessionis.

<sup>19</sup> ST I, q. 10, a. 2c: Respondeo dicendum quod ratio aeternitatis consequitur immutabilitatem, sicut in ratio temporis consequentur motum, ut ex dictis patet. Unde, cum Deus sit maxime immutabilis, sibi maxime competit esse aeternum. Nec solum est aeternus, sed est sua aeternitas: cum tamen nulla alia res sit sua duration, quia non est suum esse. Deus autem est suum esse uniforme: unde, sicut est sua essentia,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. SCG I. 15

<sup>21</sup> Cf. ST I, q. 9, a. 2c

<sup>22</sup> ST I, q. 10, a. 4c: Sed tamen istae differentiae consequuntur eam quae est per se et primo, differentiam, per hoc quod aeternitas est tota simul, non autem tempus.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ibid. obj. 1

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. c.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. ad. 1

<sup>27</sup> *Commentary on the Physics*, Bk. 4, Lec. 18, n. 586 (Translation from Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirkel (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995). p. 285)

<sup>28</sup> For Aquinas, one is not a number. Only a multitude of units is a number. Rather one is the principle of number. Cf. Euclid, *The Elements*, Book VII, Definitions 1 and 2. This unity is akin to that of a point. It is essentially indivisible. This aspect is the key to understanding how the unity of eternity differs from the modern mathematical understanding that number is continuous and that one can be divided. Far from being at odds with the Thomistic understanding of number, this modern notion neatly fits into the conception of the number by which we number, rather than the number of the thing numbered. We may divide a nominal unit into parts or speak intelligently of one half of one because we are speaking of logical creations. On the other hand, it is absurd or at the very least odd to say there are five and a half goats in a room with five live goats and one stuffed goat. The unity of essence is not divisible. A stuffed goat is not part goat. It is not a goat at all, properly speaking. It is the corpse of a goat, or the skin of a goat stretched on a sculpture. It is this indivisibility of essence which is the unity of eternity. The divisibility of a unit of time, on the other hand, comes from the continuous nature of its subject. When we measure a continuous quantity, we take some length as a *nominal* unit. However, as a measure, its character as a unit also comes from it sharing the same nature as what is measured, i.e. it is extension.

<sup>29</sup> One might object that God could be in time based on the similarity between the indivisible instant of motion and the indivisible whole of eternal existence. As Aquinas says, “Nor is anything concerning motion actually found in things except a certain indivisible part of motion, which is a division of motion” (*Comm. Phys.*, Bk. IV, Lec. 23, n. 629). Moreover, as Brian Leftow suggests in *Time and Eternity*, such indivisible states are timeless entities which nonetheless exist within time. “A being is *intrinsically* timeless iff it does not ‘contain’ time, i.e. does not endure through time. If there are events without duration, they are intrinsically timeless even if they are located in time. But arguably, if there is a distinct event that is my beginning to write this chapter, it is a nonenduring or ‘point’ event. For it makes no sense to ask how long I have been beginning to write. We can certainly conceive that events of beginning exist. There seems to be no contradiction or other impossibility in this” (Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 31). However, as noted above, the essential difference between an instant of motion and the simultaneously whole duration of eternity is that one is partless because it is imperfect while the other is partless because it is perfect. The instantaneous state cannot be measured by time, but it is a principle of time; it is in time as its principle, just as a point is in a line, even though neither time nor a line are composed of their partless principles. What is composed from an infinity of non-contiguous points is only a whole accidentally. When we speak of a line being composed of points, taking the limit of a continual division of a line, we do nothing more than provide a conceptual device, albeit a useful one. Parallel lines are said to meet at infinity, even though there is no particular distinguishable point we can mark out where both lines coincide.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, “God Everlasting”, in *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology*, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 485-504. This essay is a standard found in many anthologies on philosophy of religion.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 498

<sup>32</sup> Wolterstorff’s treats of temporality in terms of two basic sets of temporal relations: “A series” relations and “B series” relations. This distinction was first set out by J. M. E. McTaggart in his famous article “The Unreality of Time” (*Mind* 17, no. 68 (Oct. 1908), 457-474). In this article, McTaggart presents two ways we may consider the series of temporal positions. The first, called the “A series,” considers the time of an event in terms of past, present or future. We may refer to these as the A-characteristics of an event. The second, called the “B series,” considers whether the time of one event is earlier than, later than or simultaneous with the time of another event (*Ibid.*, 458). We may refer to past, present and future as A-characteristics and to the relations of earlier than, later than and simultaneous with as B-characteristics. An event  $e_1$  in the A series will have a different A-characteristic depending on whether the time of its occurrence is future, present or past. On the other hand, when we consider the same event  $e_1$  in the B series, it will always have the same B-characteristics regardless of whether it has yet to occur, is occurring or has already occurred. If  $e_1$  has the B-characteristic of being earlier than another event  $e_2$ , then  $e_1$  will be earlier than  $e_2$  when both  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  are future, when  $e_1$  is present and  $e_2$  is future, when  $e_1$  is past and  $e_2$  is present, and when both  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  are past. McTaggart argues that these

unchanging relations only take on their temporal character in terms of past, present and future, making B-characteristics logically posterior to and dependent upon A-characteristics (Ibid. p. 461). To this, Wolterstorff adds that, among A-characteristics, the present is most basic, for an event is only past, present or future if it is presently past, presently present or presently future (Wolterstorff, "*God Everlasting*", p. 490). For the purposes of his argument, Wolterstorff treats the B-characteristics of events as "the decisive feature of temporality" (Ibid. p. 487). From this it follows that Wolterstorff has a different conception of timeless eternity than Aquinas. For a being to be timelessly eternal "none of its aspects [may] be related by any temporal order-relation to any event whatsoever" (Ibid. p. 489). If God is truly timeless, none of his aspects will be part of an event with B-characteristics. Put another way, if 'α' is truly predicated of God, then any proposition in which A-characteristics or B-characteristics are predicated of 'α' will either be false or meaningless.

<sup>33</sup> Wolterstorff, "*God Everlasting*", 485-504 p. 499

<sup>34</sup> Wolterstorff defines an event as some aspect of a subject: "[an event] consists in something's actually having some property, or something's actually performing some action, or something's actually standing in some relation to something" (Wolterstorff, "*God Everlasting*", p. 487). An event may be something such as "being tan" or "running on the beach" or "being Plato's teacher." Moreover, one event may belong to multiple subjects (Ibid. p. 488). For example, the event of Socrates sitting under a tree belongs both to Socrates and the tree. The aspect "sitting under this tree" belongs to Socrates and the aspect "being sat under by Socrates" belongs to the tree. Insofar as this has temporal relations to other events, the subjects of these events will be called temporal. However, this seems to imply that every event of being related will belong to both subjects as distinct aspects of each subject. Consider Wolterstorff's own example of Euclid referring to the number three. On his account, this event will belong to both Euclid and the number three. Thus, he explains that the event of "being referred to by Euclid" constitutes a distinct aspect belonging to the number three (Ibid. p. 489)

This is an example of what Aquinas calls a relation which is only real in one direction (ST I, q. 13, a. 7c), which Geach calls a merely Cambridge change. In such cases, "A is related to B" refers to a real, distinct state in A; "B is related to A" is a logical predicate which refers to an idea, a logical state rather than a real, distinct state in B. When Plato thinks of Socrates, there is a real change in Plato; the idea of Socrates comes to exist in his mind. When Socrates is thought of by Plato, no such state comes to be in Socrates. If this were not the case, Socrates would be aware that he had begun to be thought of, even though anyone watching Socrates would not observe a change in him. There is no real distinction of states in Socrates when he is thought of and when no one pays him any mind.

However, as far as I can tell, Wolterstorff does not recognize that this logical state "being thought of by Plato" is fundamentally different in kind from the real aspect "thinking of Socrates." Although he notes that a series of successive references to the number three would not constitute "changeeful succession," it constitutes as succession of distinct states nonetheless. Presumably for Wolterstorff, the event "A is related to B" occurs because A has the aspect "relating to B." But since every relation

involves two terms, this event can only occur if B has the corresponding aspect “being related to by A.” Since “B is being related to by A” may be assigned both an A-characteristic and a B-characteristic, it involves a temporally distinct state in B. Thus, every relation of some term A to another term B necessarily entails that both A and B possess distinct aspects in themselves.

This of course goes against what I noted above, namely that merely Cambridge changes do not imply a really distinct state in the subject. They indicate a logically distinct state which either corresponds *per accidens* to a potentially distinct state in the subject (in the case of a resting body) or does not correspond to any state at all (in the case of an immutable being).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. SCG I. 66.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p. 498

<sup>37</sup> At the risk of going against Geach’s warning about using spatial images to solve problems with time, let us suggest a different image. Wolterstorff should not think of eternity as a uniformly colored straight line running parallel another straight line representing time. Rather, he should think of eternity as the vertex of a cone with time as the circumference of a circle somewhere on the cone’s surface. The vertex point is “simultaneous” with every point on the circumference insofar as we may pass a straight line through both the vertex and any point on the circumference. Although every point on the circumference is present to the vertex, the vertex does not “overlap” any segments of the circumference. It is present to the whole circle without being a circle or being on the circumference. Even though different points on the circle are related to the vertex, these relations do not entail that there are parts in the vertex.

<sup>38</sup> ST I, q. 14, a. 13, ad. 3: Ad tertium dicendum quod ea quae teporaliter in actum reducuntur, a nobis successive cognoscuntur in tempore, sed a Deo in aeternitate, quae est supra tempus. Unde nobis, quia cognoscimus futura contingentia in quantum talia sunt, certa esse non possunt: sed soli Deo, cuius intelligere est in aeternitate supra tempus. Sicut ille qui vadit per viam, non videt illos qui post eum veniunt: sed ille qui ab aliqua altitudine totam viam intuetur, simul videt omnes transeuntes per viam.

<sup>39</sup> ST I, q. 14, a. 13, ad. 2: Et similiter si dicam, si Deus scivit aliquid, illu erit, consequens intelligendum est prout subset divinae scientiae, scilicet prout est in sua praesentialitate.

<sup>40</sup> P. T. Geach, *Truth, Love, and Immortality: An Introduction to McTaggart's Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 163

<sup>41</sup> Geach, *God and the Soul* p. 93

<sup>42</sup> “Even if there were not decisive reasons for rejecting as logically incoherent the theory that time and succession do not exist ‘from God’s point of view’, we should still need to notice that no Christian apologist can use this theory. For the one thing that is clear about Divine creation is that the things created have to be temporal, even if the Creator and his creative act are held to be eternal. If time is an illusion, then there is not the sort of mutable world that can be supposed to be a creation; so in this case the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation has to be rejected. Significantly the doctrine was rejected by great metaphysical thinkers, Spinoza and Bradley and McTaggart, who denied the reality of time. And again, if time is an illusion, this

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strikes at something that is central to the Christian creed: its reference to a datable event in time—the crucifixion of Christ under Pontius Pilate.” Geach, *God and the Soul* pp. 92-93

<sup>43</sup> Cf. ST I, q. 14, a. 13, ad. 3

<sup>44</sup> SCG 1.65 from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, ed. Anton C. Pegis, trans. Anton C. Pegis, Vol. 1 (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995). p. 215

<sup>45</sup> SCG 1.66 from *Ibid.* pp. 218-19

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*