

PETER FORREST

## PANTHEISM<sup>1</sup>

There is an excellent survey of Pantheism in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (MANDER 2016). In that survey Pantheism is considered a metaphysical thesis with religious implications. Instead of attempting another, superfluous, survey I shall offer an account of Pantheism with two idiosyncrasies. The first is that instead of treating Pantheism as a purely metaphysical thesis I treat it as the metaphysical-cum-evaluative thesis that the Universe is (supremely) worthy of worship. This definition has implications for how we distinguish Pantheism from somewhat similar positions such as Panentheism. My aim will be to achieve some precision even with a broad definition that does not require strict identity between God and the Universe. The other idiosyncrasy is that I consider how the currently—and deservedly—popular Many Worlds theory affects the case for Pantheism.

### 1. DEFINING PANTHEISM

I begin with some analysis. In its narrow or strict sense *Pantheism* is the thesis that the Universe is God. This is distinguished from *Panentheism*, which is the thesis that the Universe is a part of God but not the whole. There are, however, two ways of broadening the definition of Pantheism. But first I clarify the narrow sense.

I understand by the *Universe*, with an upper case ‘U’, the system of all that is physical with its physical relations and its physical properties. Thus

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the Universe excludes any non-physical things but located things there might be. I understand by *God* a supremely worthy object of worship.<sup>2</sup> (I do not assume that worship need be public, it could be a private religious practice.) And I take Pantheism, defined narrowly, to be the assertion that the Universe is a God.

I anticipate two objections to this definition. The first is that to treat worship as the primary religious attitude towards something divine represents an Abrahamic bias, unduly restricting religion to a certain kind of attitude towards a certain kind of being. I am unrepentant about this bias. As I understand it the term 'religion' was introduced so as to cover various practices that were relevantly similar to Christianity. To provide a fairly clear object of enquiry I shall retain this usage.

This leads to the second objection, namely that I am presupposing that God must be personal, contrary to the assertions of many pantheists. My reply is that worship requires a degree of obedience and trust beyond the obedience and trust we might have in other human beings, and beyond the reliance on one's own powers or good fortune. As such it requires a certain kind of object, namely a supreme quasi-personal God, or if this is more general, a supreme quasi-(personal God). By a personal God I mean an agent whose power, knowledge, and moral status, warrant worship. We may reasonably worship something we do not believe to be literally an agent; hence the qualification '(quasi)' indicating that the object of worship is either literally a suitable agent or that it is as if there is this agent. The force of the 'quasi-' qualification amounts then to something like analogy in the following compound sense: *X* is a quasi-God if *X*'s interaction with us is similar to sufficiently knowledgeable and powerful good human beings' interaction with other human beings, especially those they look after, such as children.

Pantheism, as a religious practice is, then, the worship of the Universe. Trivially this presupposes the judgment that Universe is worthy of worship. If something less than worship is commended then, I suggest, the result is not pantheist religion so much as *cosmic spirituality*. This spirituality is based on the wonder and awe at the universe, especially as revealed by the sciences and as displayed in unspoilt nature. There is nothing controversial about this and someone lacking this spirituality is in much the same situation as someone who is tone deaf. Pantheism should, however, be treated as something much more controversial.

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<sup>2</sup> I owe this functional definition of God to John Bishop.

Because I take Pantheism to express a religious attitude in addition to being a metaphysical thesis care is required when broadening the definition. For we should ask of a proposed broadening:

1. Is it compatible with pantheist religion?
2. Does it result in merely cosmic spirituality or even merely ‘materialism grown sentimental,’ as Illingworth complains (1898, 69)? or,
3. At the other end of the spectrum does it amounts only to asserting the immanence of God?

A borderline case between Pantheism in the broad sense and divine immanence is obtained by varying the classical theist position that God is strictly speaking non-physical, but is the sustaining cause of the Universe. This variant of classical theism goes on to say that God only acts via the natural order, and so by analogy we may say that the Universe is the divine body, and hence God is the ‘world soul’. (Compare JANTZEN 1998). Should we call this Panentheism or should we call it Pantheism in the broad sense? I submit that, no, it is only Panentheism in a loose sense and not Pantheism even in the broad sense. That is because the object of worship is taken to be the God behind the Universe, not the Universe.

## 2. THE SUPREMELY WORTHY OBJECT OF WORSHIP AND LOOSE IDENTITY

The first way of broadening the definition of Pantheism is to say that the Universe *is* God with a loose identity. Here I note that if we count things using strict identity we get silly answers, as shown by examples involving semi-detached houses or semi-detached hairs. (See WEATHERSON 2015). Consider the latter. The name ‘Tibbles’ as used by Peter Geach refers to a cat and common sense tells us he has only one cat of that name. Yet which of the many semi-detached cat hairs are included in the referent of ‘Tibbles’? If we count by treating things as many if they are not strictly identical then there are thousands of Tibbles. Whatever the correct solution to this problem, one way we deal with it in ordinary language is by using identity in a loose sense, treating as one many things that are functionally equivalent. I shall say, therefore, that *X* and *Y* are *equivalent* if they are either strictly or loosely identical. Applying this to the worship of God, we may say that *X* is equivalent to God if in worshipping *X* we worship God. For example, the reason why Trinitarians are not polytheists is that the worship of the three

divine Persons is the worship of the one God, and when the worship of the three Persons is simultaneous there are not three separate acts of worship. That is not to say that the three Persons overlap like three of the referents of the name ‘Tibbles’. Some other explanation is required as to why there are not three acts of worship. My point, in using this example, is to show that we may loosely identify  $X$  with God, *provided* worship directed to  $X$  is equivalent to the worship of God.<sup>3</sup> So the proviso is that the acts of worship are themselves loosely identical, which amounts to their being equivalent regarding psychological and sociological functions.

One way of broadening the definition of Pantheism, then, is to worship the Universe even though the Universe is only loosely identical to God. Because loose identity has been characterized in terms of functional equivalence, it follows that Pantheism in this broad sense is the thesis that the Universe is worthy of worship, and that this worship is equivalent to the worship of anything supremely worthy of worship.

Having broadened the definition that much, a further step is required to reflect the idea of Pantheism as a religious attitude. I take Pantheism, therefore, to mean the worship of the Universe provided the Universe is, perhaps implicitly, taken by the worshipper to be equivalent to anything else worthy of worship. If there is something *supremely* worthy of worship then it is God and this definition collapses to the previous one. But if there is nothing supremely worthy of worship, maybe because there is an infinite hierarchy of beings each more worthy than the previous, then this definition is weaker. (If  $X$  and  $Y$  are both worthy of worship but  $X$  is more worthy of worship than  $Y$ , then we should worship  $X$  rather than  $Y$  if both  $X$  and  $Y$  exist, but worship  $Y$  if nothing more worthy exists<sup>4</sup>).

#### GOD AS SUPREME

To worship requires total trust, submission and obedience. Therefore if something is worthy of worship nothing else is worthy of an inequivalent act of worship—one focused elsewhere. The object of worship,  $X$ , need not, however, be supremely worthy of worship. For there might be some  $Y$ ,

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<sup>3</sup> Conversely, because worship takes an intentional object it is possible to be idolatrous in the worship of  $X$  even though  $X$  is strictly identical to God.

<sup>4</sup> Thank you to the referee who requested clarification on this point.

equivalent to  $X$ , worthier of worship than  $X$ . To be sure, if the worshipper knows of  $Y$ 's existence then the question arises, 'Why worship  $X$  not  $Y$ ?' but the worshipper may not know this. I draw a conclusion that is of quite general religious significance:

Anything,  $X$ , worthy of worship is equivalent to anything else worthy of worship. Moreover, assuming there is something, God, that is supremely worthy of worship, then  $X$  is equivalent to God and we may loosely say that  $X$  is God.

Applying this to Pantheism, I arrive at its broad definition as the thesis that the Universe is worthy of worship. I submit that this, rather than the stricter definition, expresses Pantheism as a religion.

#### IS PANENTHEISM PANTHEISM IN THE BROAD SENSE?

The answer, I think, depends on what panentheists take God to be in addition to the Universe—call this addition the *peculiarly divine*. I can think of three ways of being a panentheist. The first is apophasis about the peculiarly divine. The second, at the other extreme from apophasis, is to say that the peculiarly divine is the Universe qua mental. The third is to say that the Universe is *by analogy* God's body, so the peculiarly divine is the 'world soul.' (I have noted and already rejected as not even broad Pantheism the thesis that God is the sustaining cause of the Universe.)

First consider apophasis about the peculiarly divine. This is the position that there is something more to God than the Universe but we do not know about it, so our focus of worship should be on what we do know, the Universe. A necessary condition for this to be appropriate is that the Universe would be worth worshipping if there was nothing peculiarly divine. Even if this is satisfied, however, we should be agnostic about whether the Universe is actually worthy of worship. For, according to apophatic panentheists, God is more worthy of worship than the Universe, and we do not know whether the Universe is equivalent to God.

Next I consider a pantheist position that is strictly speaking panentheist, and, only fails to be narrow Pantheism for technical reasons. This arises if we hold a theory of essential properties according to which the Universe is the same as God except that some properties essential for God are accidental for the Universe, or vice versa. For instance, we might hold that mental properties are a subclass of physical properties but that God has them essen-

tially whereas the physical universe has them merely accidentally. In that case, God and the Universe are not identical, and it is God not the Universe that is the object of proper worship. This is broad Pantheism because we can say the Universe is being worshipped qua (i.e., considered as) God. If we suppose, say, that being essentially just and merciful makes God more worthy of worship than merely being just and merciful, then the Universe is not as worthy of worship as God but nonetheless we may say the Universe and God are equivalent.

A standard philosophical example of this sort of distinction is the statue and the lump of clay that constitutes it. (WASSERMAN 2015). Loosely speaking we say the statue is the lump, but the lump could have been a vase whereas the statue could not have been. In such cases we might say the statue is the lump qua shaped a certain way. To be sure if we reject the intuitive essential/accidental distinction we may dismiss these subtle distinctions and assert that the lump is strictly identical to the statue. Likewise if we reject the essential/accidental distinction the position described above would be narrow Pantheism. But those pantheists with metaphysical scruples about essential properties should admit to being pantheists only in the broad sense.

Finally, suppose we think of the Universe as God's body. The question, then, is what else is there to God other than the 'body'. We may consider various philosophical positions concerning the relation between a human body and the mind/spirit/soul, and apply them to the divine case. A strict physicalist identifies mind or spirit with some part or aspect of the human body, and denies the existence of the by-definition-non-physical soul. Applying that to the Universe as the body of God leads to narrow Pantheism, and, moreover, I would submit, the only version of Theism that coheres well with strict Physicalism. This is clearly not a version of Panentheism, for there is nothing peculiarly divine.

Next consider the loosely physicalist thesis that the mental *supervenies* of metaphysical necessity on the physical but without identity of mental and physical properties. There are different concepts of supervenience (KIM 1987). But because we want to apply the human to the divine case, the relevant concept is that anything that is an exact physical duplicate of an ordinary human being is an exact mental duplicate. This amounts to a Double Aspect theory, and is quite compatible with the loosely idealist thesis that a physical difference without a mental one is metaphysically impossible. Applying it to Universe as the body of God, we obtain a theory which is either

narrowly pantheistic and broadly panentheistic or vice versa. Which we say depends on whether when we refer to something, the Universe, as the sum total of all that is physical we include supervenient mental states. I think not. So I would opt for saying that this is an example of strict Panentheism being Pantheism but only in the broad sense.

The application of Property Dualism without supervenience to the thesis that the Universe is God's body results in Panentheism. For, on this thesis, a human body has of nomological necessity but metaphysical contingency additional mental properties, but there is no additional mental substance. My judgment is that if this holds and you worship the Universe, then you are in much the same situation as loving another human for that person's purely physical characteristics. This is to be condemned as shallow, as missing out on other just as important characteristics. Indeed the, perhaps silly, idea of 'loving someone for her or himself alone' seems to mean loving with disregard for the physical attributes. If this, perhaps silly, idea is applied by analogy to God and the Universe. then we should treat the beauty of the Universe as a distraction. But in any case if we think there are extra non-physical properties that do not supervene on the physical then to worship the Universe is not merely to focus on something less than God but to perform an act of worship that is not equivalent to worshipping God. So this belief about God is panentheistic, but not pantheistic even in the broad sense.

Finally consider the position that a human being has a non-physical part that is a substance, the soul. Applying it to the Universe as the divine body we obtain the idea that the peculiarly divine is literally a world-soul. Whether this may be considered Pantheism in the broad sense depends on the mental properties that the soul possesses. If this possession supervenes on the physical, then the mere existence of a non-physical soul does not prevent equivalence between God and the Universe. For it is not the soul but the properties that are relevant to worship.

## 2. IDENTIFYING GOD WITH SOMETHING LESS THAN THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

The other way of broadening the definition of Pantheism is to identify God with only part of the Universe. The motivation for this is the worry that there might be no such thing as the Universe. Or, if like Stanisław Leśniewski (1916) or more recently David Lewis (1991) we are mereological univer-

salists holding that any things have a sum, then the worry is that only a suitably *unified* sum could be the focus of worship. I submit, then, that the object of worship should be a *substance* in the following minimal sense.

#### DEFINITION OF SUBSTANCE

A substance  $u$  is something that:

1. has properties and stands in relations but is not itself a property or relation,<sup>5</sup> and
- 2a. is either without proper parts, or
- 2b. there are some real external relations, the  $RR$ , where the substances  $ss$  which form  $u$  are related by some of the  $RR$  and any substance related to the  $ss$  by some of the  $RR$  is itself part of  $u$ .<sup>6</sup>

A somewhat more Aristotelian conception of a substance would require a further clause:

3. The substance  $u$  has causal powers or capacities that cannot be analyzed in terms of the powers and capacities of the  $ss$ .<sup>7</sup>

If a substance satisfies condition 3, then, with some disregard for scholarship, I call it an *Aristotelian substance*.

If condition 2b holds the substances form a *kind* specified by the relations  $RR$ , and whether something is a substance is relative to that kind.

#### THE UNIVERSE, UNIVERSES AND MULTIVERSES

By the *Universe* I mean the system of all that is physical with its physical relations and its physical properties. Because many avowing Pantheism have been idealists this might seem strange, but I nonetheless stipulate that Idealism is only compatible with Pantheism if it is asserted that physical things are themselves of a mental or spiritual character. If, on the contrary, idealists assert that there are no physical things but only mental or spiritual ones, then this is incompatible with Pantheism for it denies the existence of the Universe.

<sup>5</sup> Here I assume we are considering *natural* properties and relations. Not every predicate corresponds to a natural property or relation. An example of a non-corresponding predicate is: 'is either an egg or an irrational number'. Likewise there is no (natural) relation corresponding to the predicate 'x and y are not spatio-temporally related.' (Compare ARMSTRONG 1978.)

<sup>6</sup> Properties enter into the analysis because if  $Rwx$  is a natural dyadic relation and  $Py$  and  $Qz$  are natural properties there is a composite natural relation  $Ryz \& Py \& Qz$ .

<sup>7</sup> This does not entail the Aristotelian thesis that substances have no substances as parts, but it does entail that no Aristotelian substance can be analyzed purely in terms of its part

In accordance with my interest in Many Worlds theories, I distinguish the Universe from a lower case 'u' universe. Consider the symmetric relation  $R$  of *being spatio-temporally related by a finite distance*. I stipulate that this is reflexive, so everything physical is spatio-temporally related to itself by being zero distance from itself. I then consider the ancestral  $R^*$  of  $R$ .  $R^*$  is the relation of *being directly or indirectly spatio-temporally related*. For example, in an expanding universe there might be galaxies  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  with the distance between  $x$  and  $y$  increasing at near the speed of light, that between  $y$  and  $z$  at near the speed of light but the distance between  $x$  and  $z$  increasing at more than the speed of light. It is controversial whether or not we should say that  $Rxz$ . But  $Rxy$  and  $Ryz$ . So  $R^*xz$ . Again if a universe undergoes fission the branches are indirectly related because both related to the common 'trunk' from which they branched.

Because  $R^*$ , the direct-or-indirect spatio-temporal relation, is reflexive, symmetric and transitive the various physical things, (events and persisting objects) can be divided into sums of equivalence classes, that is one or more non-overlapping universes, where a lower case 'u' universe is a substance that is both unified by spatiotemporal relations and maximal among such substances. Provided spatio-temporal relations are real (and external) there should be no objection to the existence of universes. If there is only one universe then it is the Universe but if there are many universes there is doubt about whether they are suitably related to form substances larger than the universes themselves. I shall call a substance that is maximal among substances unified by physical relations (including but not restricted to the spatiotemporal ones) a *multiverse*. So if there is just one universe it is by default the unique multiverse. If there is a unique multiverse it is the Universe, but if there are many multiverses they cannot form a purely physical substance. To be sure, the classical mereology of Leśniewski implies that all the multiverses form a sum, but if it is merely a sum of substances and not itself a substance I fail to understand how it could be worshipped.

#### MULTIVERSE WORSHIP

Suppose there are many multiverses but they do not form a single substance, the Universe. Then those who are otherwise pantheists should identify multiverses with gods, but there is no unique god. It follows that, strictly speaking, polytheism is correct. Nonetheless we may still *say* there is one God, just as we say there is one Sun, meaning a unique star in our system.

Thinkers living on a planet orbiting a double star could not truthfully say that. Likewise traditional polytheists should not talk of God unless they believe that among the gods there is one supreme being who alone is God, or they hold the many gods are equivalent. We may *say*, then, that the Universe is God meaning that our multiverse is our God. In this case worship is relative: our multiverse is worthy of worship by us; other multiverses may well be worthy of worship by their inhabitants.

Rather than describe Pantheism as the worship of our multiverse I shall assume there is only one of them and hence continue to describe Pantheism as worship of the Universe. The necessary correction can be made as required.

#### TOO VAST?

There might be too many universes for them to form a set. In that case on Leśniewski's mereology (1916) they nonetheless form a sum, but maybe we disagree, restricting summation to sets of things. In that case it is conceivable that there is no multiverse because there is no maximally related system of universes but rather a sequence of larger and larger systems of universes with no sum. Then there would be no God. This form of technical atheism would resonate with those scrupulous folk who think that any conception of the divine as idolatrous. For whatever system of universes is the focus of worship there would be a greater. In this situation the partial multiverses are equivalent and so there is no obstacle to broad Pantheism as I have defined it.

#### 4. NEAR PANTHEISM

Because pantheist religion permits some broadening of the narrow definition, it is all the more important to note various forms of worship that are near to pantheism but not pantheism even in the broad sense. I have already discussed which versions of Panentheism may be taken to be Pantheism in the broad sense. The remaining versions of Panentheism may be taken to be near to Pantheism. In this section I note some other near Pantheisms.

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### COLLECTIVE, DISTRIBUTIVE AND PARTIAL PANTHEISM

Graham Oppy distinguishes *Collective* Pantheism the thesis that, in my terminology, the Universe is worthy of worship from *Distributive* Pantheism, the thesis that, again in my terminology, there are many separated physical substances every one which is worthy of worship. (OPPY 1997.) The latter requires the equivalence of these separated substances, in which case either collective Pantheism holds or there are too many worship-worthy substances to have a sum. For example, suppose there is an Earth-like planet with reflective religious extraterrestrials, who worship their planet, taken to include its ecosystems and their evolution. Call this god Gaius. Now consider the impact on them of contact by us. They can no longer think of their own planet as privileged over others and hence to worship their own planet is idolatrous unless it is thought of as equivalent to our planet with its ecosystem, the god Gaia. But Gaia and Gaius are non-equivalent gods unless they are both equivalent to something more inclusive such as the Universe. This non-equivalence can be shown by further supposing that due to some impending catastrophe, only one of Gaius and Gaia can survive. Without the belief that to worship one is equivalent to worshipping the other, a hateful religious war is likely to break out between the worshippers of Gaius and Gaia. I conclude that Distributive Pantheism is a genuinely pantheist alternative to Collective Pantheism only in the circumstance in which either the Universe or our multiverse is considered too large to form a substance, because it corresponds to a proper class of universes. In that case the pantheist theory in which partial multiverses are worshipped is a version of broad pantheism as I have characterized it. Otherwise, Distributive Pantheism seems to be a religiously incoherent version of Polytheism in which the attempt is made to worship several inequivalent gods.

### THE SWISS CHEESE THESIS

Elsewhere I have stated the Swiss Cheese thesis that we humans and other creatures capable of critical reflection and free will are holes in God. (FORREST 2007). That is, God is the rest of the Universe. This results in partial Pantheism. My reasons for not considering the Swiss Cheese thesis a version of Pantheism even defined broadly are closely related to my reasons for preferring it to Pantheism. It concerns the prevalence of genuine *evil*, by which I do not mean everything of intrinsic badness (disvalue). The

difference is that something  $X$  is intrinsically bad but not evil if and only if there is something  $Y$  such that it is morally permissible to bring about  $X$  for the sake of bringing about  $Y$ . Hence the occurrence of genuine evil is the premise for the intuitive and emotional version of the Argument from Evil, one which refuses to accept that a good and loving God would bring about genuine evils. This argument holds not only for those who take God to be literally good and/or loving but for those who adopt an analogical or instrumental conception of God as having effects like those a literally loving or good God would produce. That either love or goodness holds of God either strictly or by analogy is a prerequisite of worship, which comprises trust and/or obedience, in addition to awe. So this intuitive and emotional argument from genuine evil has force, even without assuming that God is personal. The only solution, I say, is that genuine evils are brought about by non-divine agents, including ourselves. In that case it is a serious error, bordering on blasphemy, to accept as if from God not merely ordinary bad things ('life's gristle') but that which is genuinely evil. Hence the worship of God should explicitly exclude creatures who are free agents. If there are genuine evils then Pantheism, even in a broad sense, requires a curious anti-Manichaeism—matter good, spirit bad—religion of non-physical beings doing evil in a Universe that is the good God. Assuming this anti-Manichaeism theory is rejected, then the free agents who do evil must be holes in the divine body and Pantheism is false. Nonetheless the Swiss Cheese thesis will be relevant when I come to consider the five ways leading to Pantheism. For they are better described as five ways to the disjunction: either Pantheism or Swiss Cheese.

The Swiss Cheese thesis is open to the objection that even though the Universe is a substance, the part of it that excludes free creatures lacks the unity required to be a substance. Clearly it is not a substance of the kind specified by  $R^*$ , indirect spatio-temporal connection, but it might be a substance specified by suitable psychological relations between its parts. I discuss this below when I consider the Way of Metaphysicians.

#### LAWS OF NATURE

Michael Levine, who is an atheist, has recommended as an alternative both to straightforward theism and to ordinary Pantheism the identification of God with the Laws of Nature, or the Natural Order (LEVINE 1994). In response, I distinguish the fundamental from the derived laws. The latter are

the result of symmetry-breakings in (our part of) the early universe or the prevailing conditions in our neighborhood, and include, for example, the familiar laws governing electromagnetism, the laws governing chemistry and the natural order discovered by biology. A pantheist who emphasizes the natural order may well think of the as yet undiscovered fundamental laws as the hidden, transcendent, aspects of God. But the natural order, as it holds in biology, ecology and human psychology, is so entangled with the details of the physical universe that to worship it and not the whole Universe would seem arbitrary. I think that Levine's motivation for his suggestion is that a universe lacks the unity to be a substance, whereas the fundamental laws are unified. If Levine is right then his proposal should be considered a near Pantheism. Contrary to Levine I do take a universe to be a substance. The reason why we might initially think a universe lacks unity is that there are no other familiar examples of substances united by spatio-temporal relations. That follows from the maximality requirement for a substance. (See condition 2b.) Once we grant the conceivability of many universes we should accept that they are genuine substances. Likewise multiverses are genuine substances.

#### 4. ASSESSING PANTHEISM

There are three, not wholly distinct, questions we can ask of any religious attitude, including pantheist worship of the Universe.

- a) Is it edifying?
- b) Is it a reasonable attitude to have to the supposed object?
- c) Does the supposed object of the attitude exist?

##### IS PANTHEISM EDIFYING?

The three questions can be illustrated by considering idolatry. The worst sort is to worship a god, such as Moloch, who commands what is wrong, namely infant sacrifice. This is unedifying in the extreme. The cult of Astarte (Ishtar) the goddess of love, sex and fertility was perhaps somewhat unedifying but exhibits more notably another defect, lack of proportion. For although her going down to the underworld in an attempt to bring back her dead husband Tammuz is an edifying example of love, she failed. This failure marks her more as a superwoman than a genuine goddess. So even if she exists she is more a powerful ally or colleague than a suitable object of worship. (Compare Gandalf in Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*.)

The prophets emphasized that neither Moloch nor Astarte existed, and this is implicit in the idea that idolatry is the worship of an image. For if there is no such goddess as Ishtar then to prostrate yourself before her image is just that, and not a sign of prostration before the goddess herself.

Pantheism is often taken to be edifying because it supports a 'deep green' environmental ethics, one that grants that non-human living organisms and their ecosystems have intrinsic value. That may well be the case, but I reject Pantheism as unedifying, for the reasons mentioned when considering the Swiss Cheese thesis. By worshipping a God that causes genuine evils these evils are treated merely as bad things. You may well disagree, but if you agree then I suggest that Pantheism should be replaced by the Swiss Cheese thesis.

#### IS THE UNIVERSE AN APPROPRIATE OBJECT OF WORSHIP?

The requirement that the object of worship be appropriate is relative in the sense that something might be worthy of worship partly because there was nothing more worthy. That is because worship requires wholehearted and hence undivided service. Hence, although polytheism makes sense as a collective religion, it is unstable at the personal level, either the many gods are arranged in a hierarchy with only Top God being worshipped, or the many gods are seen as equivalent and the choice of which to be devoted to is personal. There is, then, a form of idolatry due to modesty, worshipping some lesser deity not equivalent to the Supreme Being. And that charge might well be made against pantheists by those who insist that the Universe is far exceeded by its creator.

When evaluating the idolatry of the modest we should ask whether there is indeed something more worthy of worship. For instance, I hold the Trinitarian conception of God as a community of love whose members are of one will regarding matters external to the Trinity. This is, I say, a greater thing, a better object of worship, than the Unitarian conception of God as a single divine person. Nor do I take these as equivalent acts of worship. But I do not accuse those such as Muslims who worship a Unitarian God of idolatry, for they deny there is a Trinitarian God.

As a corollary I reject as unhelpful the Anselmian definition of God as that than which no greater can be conceived. For something than which a greater could be conceived could nonetheless be worthy of total devotion and complete worship, if it is the greatest there actually is, or if it is equivalent to the greatest there actually is. For instance, Findlay in 'Can God's Ex-

istence be Disproved?’ requires that God be a necessary being and argues that there can be no such being. (1963) I disagree, but there is a related problem. The conception of God as the greatest conceivable being requires that God be *a se*, that is, without further explanation. Now a plausible Platonist explanation of God’s existence noted by Alfred Ewing (1973) is that God exists because it is good. In that case Goodness is *a se*, not God. But goodness is not worthy of worship so the greatest being that actually exists and is worthy of worship is God even though God does not meet the Anselmian criterion. I am not here quibbling about the proper definition of the term ‘God’ but defending Pantheism from the objection that a transcendent God who created the Universe *ex nihilo* would be greater.

#### MUST THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP BE AN ARISTOTELIAN SUBSTANCE?

If we are realists about spatio-temporal and/or causal relations it is almost true by definition that there is at least one Multiverse, with the caveat that it might be just one universe unrelated to others. I say *almost* true, because of the non-Lesniewskian idea that the universes that are appropriately connected to form a multiverse fail to do so because they fail to form a set.

To be a suitable object of worship, rather than just some aesthetic attitude, say awe at its sublimity, might seem to require that in addition, the Universe (or our multiverse) be an Aristotelian substance, with causal powers to affect us or capacities to be affected. This is too swift. Obviously the Universe affects and is affected by us. The issue, though, is whether these causal powers are *irreducible*, that is not due to the network of causal interactions between universes or their parts. The thought that these causal powers are irreducible would seem to be a reaction to our inability to think how the many causal interactions could make up something as significant as the Universe that pantheists worship. Here I rely upon the analogical treatment of the Universe as the divine body. Are our powers as cognitive agents irreducible to the relations between the parts of our bodies, notably our brains? Reducibility is not the same as supervenience, which I take to be a relation that permits symmetry. Non-reductive physicalists are those who take the mental to supervene upon but not be reduced to the physical. If that is correct a human person is not merely a substance in the minimal sense but an Aristotelian substance. Likewise any pantheist who denies the reducibility of the divine to the network of relations among physical parts of the worshipped Universe should grant that it is an Aristotelian substance.

## 5. FIVE WAYS TO PANTHEISM

There are three requirements for worship: that it be edifying; that the object be appropriate; and that the object exist. I have defined Pantheism (in the broad sense) in such a way that the existence problem does not arise. If necessary, we should resort to the Swiss Cheese thesis to ensure an edifying worship. This leaves the question of whether pantheist worship is appropriate. I now consider five ways of reaching that conclusion.

### THE WAY OF METAPHYSICIANS

Spinoza argues that there is just the one substance, which he calls God-or-Nature. And other philosophers have likewise argued for Substance Monism understood as the thesis that there is just the one substance. This might seem to be half way towards Pantheism or Panentheism.<sup>8</sup> At least Substance Monism excludes the Swiss Cheese, which is, however, compatible with *initial* Substance Monism and *initial* Pantheism with non-divine minds developing later. To arrive at Pantheism from Substance Monism two premises are required: the mental must be pervasive not just occurring on Earth and similar planets, and it must be unified. The pervasive character of the mental is ensured by a suitable theory of the mental, such as (in a different sense of the word ‘monism’) Neutral Monism.<sup>9</sup> For then we should say there is nothing physical that is not also mental and vice versa.

Granted Neutral Monism Substance Monism is, however, redundant in the case for Pantheism. What is required is the far more plausible thesis that the Universe (or Multiverse) is a substance. The appeal of Monism is explained by the, to my mind mistaken, assumption that substance-hood is absolute. (I take it to be relative to a kind except for the special case of substances without parts. )

Even granted Neutral Monism or some other reason for holding that the mental pervades the Universe, Pantheism requires that these mental states are unified, and the Swiss Cheese requires that the mental states not associated with creatures are unified. This is a Kantian theme with the manifold of mental states requiring a mental unification, and not the unity of a suppos-

<sup>8</sup> If Spinoza is not an atheist I think he is a panentheist because the one substance is said to have an infinity of attributes of which we only know two.

<sup>9</sup> I take Neutral Monism to be a universal and necessary property dualism: all substances have both mental and physical properties. And these mutually supervene.

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edly absolute substance, nor the unity of a substance characterized by spatio-temporal relations. I fail to see how purely metaphysical arguments can establish this unity thesis, but other ways, notably those of theists and scientists support it. For it is a metaphysically contingent matter to what extent the Universe is still unified.

#### THE WAY OF MYSTICS

Reports of mystics are culture-dependent—at least in their details. For example in the Christian tradition there is reluctance to claim identity with divinity rather than union, while identity is commonly asserted in the *Upanisads*, which I take to be reports of experience rather than philosophical arguments. Nonetheless mystical experiences can be used to support either Pantheism or something near to Pantheism, such as Panentheism or the Swiss Cheese. They do so by filling in the gap left by the way of metaphysicians. For suppose you already find it plausible that the Universe is a manifold of mental events, and then have an ‘extrovertive mystical experience’ (STACE 1961). That is, you experience your surroundings as unified and as unified with your own experience of it. It is reasonable to attribute the grandeur of what you have experienced to the Universe, or some part of it and the experienced unity then supports the idea that there is something like a mind that you were temporarily fused with. This supports (near) Pantheism.

#### THE WAY OF AESTHETES

Enlightenment aesthetics distinguished the sublime from the beautiful. This can be trivialized as in Kant’s remark that blondes are beautiful but brunettes sublime. (What did he think of red heads?). Nonetheless the distinction marks a shift from the joy at something beautiful to an attitude that includes the fear of losing oneself in something that seems greater. Although the sublime can be diabolical instead of divine, the experience of the natural world as sublime might lead to Pantheism—Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” is cited as an example. The sense of being swallowed up by the sublime offers some support for the thesis that what you experience is mind-like. Otherwise, how could your mind fuse with it? But the support is rather weak.

## THE WAY OF SCIENTISTS

The new atheists are not, of course, religious, but many are spiritual. For an expansive and moderately detailed knowledge of the sciences presents a grand narrative: the symmetry-breaking by which the underlying laws result in the more specific and complex ones that govern our part of our universe; atomic physics; chemistry; the evolution of the cosmos to generate galaxies stars and planets in their abundance; the presumably rare and beautiful planets like ours with the circumstances for intricate ecosystems and complex life forms; evolution from the simplest, but still marvelous, prokaryotes to eukaryotes and many-celled organisms, the unfolding of diverse life forms over hundred of millions of years and then, like a cosmic conjuring trick, creatures who can reflect and choose how to act.

This narrative prompts the question of whether it has meaning only as a description of something wonderful, something *as if* created by God, or whether it is more than that, the first part of the divine biography, of which as a Christian, I consider the next part to be Salvation. The answer depends on whether agency detection is rightly applied to this narrative. Do we see it as a process or as something more? Justin Barrett (2004) attributes belief in God to HADD, the hyperactive agency detection device. But for every 'hyper' there is a 'hypo'. And the failure to interpret this narrative in terms of Pantheism or near Pantheism is as easily described as the due to an intermittent faulty agency detection device. And we should not decide between HADD and IFADD by appealing to scientific progress. For we should remember how for many years scientists expressed undue skepticism about the mental life of non-human animals, even many of whom we now consider near-persons, such as elephants, apes and dolphins.

The way of scientists supplements the way of metaphysicians. For if we grant that there is a manifold of mental states and are interested in how if at all it is unified the scientific narrative supports either pantheism or near pantheism, by enabling us to recognize the agency in the narrative. The requisite unity is one of purpose or telos. (I take telos to be quasi-purpose.)

## THE WAY OF THEISTS

The explanatory power of Theism can be compared favorably to that of Naturalism, provided Theism is treated as a suitably simple hypothesis.. For Theism offers an explanation of the life-friendly character of the ultimate

laws. (Fine-tuning concerns derived laws. I discuss it in the next section.) In addition Theism explains the judgment we make that morality is not merely conducive to the common good but commanded. This comparison is the stuff of apologetics but it faces not just the familiar problem of evil (and the similar problem of divine hiddenness) but also the comparison of the ultimate explanations. Theism as a hypothesis either needs further explanation in terms of Axiarchism or must be itself fairly simple. Either way the identification of God with the Universe (perhaps with holes) and of cosmic history with divine development provides a satisfactorily straightforward ultimate theistic hypothesis, one that does not have to posit some additional spiritual being. In this way (near) Pantheism supports Theism and the explanatory power of Theism therefore confirms (near) Pantheism

#### COMMENT ON THE FIVE WAYS

None of the five ways is conclusive, but that should not surprise us. Of the five ways, the way of theists implies a personal Pantheism, namely the identification of the Universe with a personal God like that of popular theism. For the explanatory power of theism is based on the hypothesis of a God who acts for good reasons or, only slightly different, awareness of the valuable. Putting a 'quasi' in front express an ignorance that robs a hypothesis of explanatory power.

## 6. THE CASE FOR MANY WORLDS

I shall delay until the end of this section the discussion of the conceptual connection between worlds and universes. For the moment a world could be thought of as a universe. Here I shall sketch six reasons we might have for proposing many worlds.

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM MODAL REALISM

The Lewis-Leibniz theory of modality is that there are many possible worlds only one of which is actual. A proposition is true if and only if it is true at the actual world, possible if and only if it is true at some world. I shall endorse this but with the modification that there are many actual worlds. Lewis notoriously holds to the indexical theory of actuality, namely

that the actual world is distinguished from others only by being the world we inhabit. Hence there are gods and goddesses in infinite profusion, just not, according to Lewis, in the world he inhabits. Without going into details, I judge that the Lewis-Leibniz theory of modality has some very attractive features but the token reflexive theory of actuality is highly counter-intuitive. (See MENZEL 2016.)

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM AN 'ARISTOTELIAN' THEORY OF UNIVERSALS

Realists about universals face a dilemma. On the one hand there seem good reasons to hold that not all universals have instances. For instance if the universe is of finite size the family of universals *being of volume  $x$  cc*, contains uninstantiated members for large  $x$ . (The same argument applies to the spatio-temporal universe if it is also of finite duration.) And examples can be multiplied. One due to George Molnar is *being a river of Coca Cola*. On the other hand the straightforward theory of the way complex universals are formed out of simpler ones requires them to have instances. For example, the universal *being a solar system* is not easy to analyze directly in terms of *being a star*, *being a planet*, *orbiting*, and so on. As Lewis points out, the complex universal is not the mereological sum of the components. Instead the universal *being a solar system* can be analyzed as: that universal whose instances are systems with a star and planets orbiting around it. The easiest solution to this dilemma is to rely on possible worlds for then we only require universals to be possibly instantiated in order to describe their structure.

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM FINE TUNING

This argument and the next are horns of a dilemma. This one is directed at atheists and the next at theists. And you cannot go between the horns by resort to Pantheism without belief in a personal god. The argument from fine tuning is familiar enough. There are, I assume, fundamental laws that have no fine-tunable constants but the derived ones do, for instance the ratio of the electron to the proton mass. We know that for life to occur that is in any way like ours these constants have to be as they are to a fair degree of accuracy. I assume that some process of symmetry breaking led to the derived laws that we enjoy with their fine-tunable constants. The straightforward naturalist explanation of this is that there have been very many opportunities for such symmetry-breaking resulting in many and varying universes or

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many domains in the one universe. In either case there are many worlds. If you believe in many worlds for other reasons, say Lewis 'modal realism then you do not have to resort to symmetry breaking—the multitude of differing constants must occur in some world or other.

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM THEISM

Theists have two reasons to believe in many worlds. First we would antecedently expect God to create profusely, with different kinds of world. The second is based on this but is more detailed. One—only one—version of the argument from evil starts from the premise that out of all acts of creating a world God would choose the best act. But ours does not seem to be the result of the best act of creation. A solution, or at least a partial solution, to this problem of which act of creation God would perform is that God performs many acts of creation resulting in many worlds. Or else God performs one act but the result is many worlds. In either case, there can be many (as if) acts of creation than which none possible is better, without any one of them being the best. This occurs if one act favors one kind of value, another a different one, and there is no objective comparison between the two kinds of value. We, for instance, seem to be in a universe governed by unbreakable and elegant laws, which constrain any further divine intervention to be within the scope of these laws. We can conceive of worlds with uglier laws including various *nihil obstat* clauses that allow God to intervene much moiré frequently. This would, I submit, be neither better nor worse but different.

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM QUANTUM THEORY

The Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Theory relies on quite general way of interpreting indeterminacy without positing indeterminate states. Consider the classic example of the electron passing through a screen with two slits. In this Twin Slit Thought experiment it is indeterminate which slit the electron goes through. The Many Worlds explanation is that in some worlds it goes through one in others the other. A corollary is that both the electron itself and we the observers are extended across worlds. That is, we have parts in many different worlds.

When a veridical observation is made, say that the electron went through Slit Two then we the observers after that observation are extended only across worlds in which the electron goes through Slit Two. On standard

Many Worlds Interpretations it is held that we have counterparts who are extended only across the other worlds and so observe the electron going through Slit One. This is counter-intuitive in much the way that Lewis' token-reflexive theory of actuality is, and so I prefer a modification in which only some of the worlds persisted as actual, namely those that include we who observed the electron going through Slit Two.

It should be noted that the worlds are spatio-temporally complete, with past present and future as in the Eternalist theory of Time. The real change on observation is that only a subset of these worlds persists. The rest are *expunged*. This requires a hypertime, but I do not mind that because I spatialize the metric space-time as a 4 dimensional space and treat the hypertime of successive restrictions of the set of actual worlds

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM AGENCY

How does an agent affect the world? If agency-causation is just a special case of the event causation governed by the laws of nature then every act is either determined or to some extent random, contrary to my intuitions about human freedom. Instead, I submit that agency causation is like observation in the Many Worlds theory discussed above. We act by expunging, i.e. rejecting as no longer actual some of the worlds.

#### COMBINING THESE ARGUMENTS

Putting the modal realist considerations together with those concerning observation and agency we may posit a Universe comprising many physical worlds. These are the worlds in which all possibilities are *represented*. By treating all the worlds as physical we obtain a parsimonious ontology in which everything supervenes on the physical. The straightforward, Lewisian, representation of a possibility is that it occurs in some world. We need, however, to allow other ways of representing possibilities that are not reducible to the physical description, such as action and observation. The possibility of any sequence of observations or actions or other restrictions of what is still actual is represented by a sequence of sums of universes nested with each a proper part of the previous member of the sequence.

The requirement that all possibilities be represented implies that the original Universe is real at all subsequent times. We may if we like think of expunged parts as parts from which consciousness has retreated. In the jar-

gon of philosophers the expunged parts are *bezombied*. An alternative is the pastist theory according to which the past and present but not the future are real. In that case the original Universe exists in a tense-neutral sense, but does not exist now.

Because of the application to quantum theory our universe must be made of many worlds. For we, along with the particles that make us up, have parts in many worlds. To be substances our parts must be related suitably. Hence so are the many worlds. Moreover for both the account of agency and observation the worlds are correlated spatio-temporally, the twin slits are at the same time and place. Therefore the worlds are parts of a universe, a substance united by spatio-temporal relations. To extend the resulting theory of agency to divine acts requires all the worlds to be parts of one universe, not just those required for quantum theory. Hence there is just one universe, identical to the Universe. It is made up of 4 dimensional slices, the physical worlds. As a consequence we may ignore the worries about many multiverses and hence many gods

#### 7. THE IMPACT OF MANY WORLDS THEORIES ON PANTHEISM

The Many Worlds theory of agency implies that there is no creation *ex nihilo*. For agents affects reality by expunction not creation.<sup>10</sup> So the Universe comprising all possible physical worlds exists even at the beginning, prior to any act. Now a central tenet of theism, supported by various Cosmological arguments, is that God alone is the initially necessary being that explains all else. To combine this with Many Worlds we should opt either for (initial) Pantheism or Panentheism. The qualification ‘initial’ is a concession to the Swiss Cheese—the holes develop later. Parsimony then favors initial Pantheism.

The extension of the Universe to include all possible worlds, reinforces the way of scientists, adding an element of transcendence both to cosmocentric spirituality, one which is emotionally conducive to the transition from awe to worship. For in addition to the wonders of the actual there are, just as real, infinitely many different worlds.

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<sup>10</sup> If the Growing Block theory of time is correct each moment of time prolongs the existence of some but not all of the worlds.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have had two aims. One was to describe a number of pantheist or near pantheist religious attitudes, including the influence of many worlds theories. The other was to indicate some of the ways we might arrive at Pantheism.

One final remark: when assessing religious positions the intellectual grounds for accepting or rejecting them should, I suggest, be whether they make sense of things, that is, enable us to understand. The ways to Pantheism, or to near Pantheism, should therefore be interpreted as part of a comparison between ways of understanding.

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## PANTHEISM

## S u m m a r y

In this paper I have had two aims. One was to describe a number of pantheist or near pantheist religious attitudes, including the influence of many worlds theories. The other was to indicate some of the ways we might arrive at Pantheism.

One final remark: when assessing religious positions the intellectual grounds for accepting or rejecting them should, I suggest, be whether they make sense of things, that is, enable us to understand. The ways to Pantheism, or to near Pantheism, should therefore be interpreted as part of a comparison between ways of understanding.

## PANTEIZM

## S t r e s z c z e n i e

Powyższy artykuł jest eksplikacją pojęcia panteizm, zawierając przy tym dwie osobliwości. Po pierwsze, zamiast ujmować panteizm jako tezę czysto metafizyczną, traktuję go jako teorię zarówno metafizyczną, jak i wartościującą, głoszącą, że Wszechświat godny jest religijnej czci. Takie określenie panteizmu ma swoje konsekwencje dla odróżnienia tej doktryny od zbliżonych stanowisk, jak na przykład panenteizm. Po drugie, w moim artykule rozważam, jakie znaczenie posiada popularna obecnie (i słusznie) Teoria Wielu Światów dla argumentacji na rzecz panteizmu. W wąskim lub ścisłym sensie *panteizm* jest tezą głoszącą, że wszechświat jest Bogiem, przy czym przez Boga, pisanego z dużej litery, rozumiem istotę w najwyższym stopniu godną religijnej czci. To odróżnia panteizm od *panenteizmu*, czyli tezy głoszącej, że wszechświat jest częścią Boga, a nie całym Bogiem. W szerszym sensie panteizm jest tezą głoszącą, że wszechświat jest godny religijnej czci, chociaż nie w najwyższym stopniu.

**Key words:** Many Worlds; Panentheism; Pantheism; substance; worshipping.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wieloświat; panenteizm; panteizm; substancja; religijna cześć.

*Translated by Roman Majeran*



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