ON THE CONSISTENCY OF PANTHEISM

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Abstract: Pantheists commonly wish to hold three distinct theses: that God is identical with the universe as a whole, that God is to be found altogether in each part of the universe, and that some features of the universe are more divine than others. However, it might well be complained that these constitute an incompatible set of requirements on any theory. After outlining the three positions in question, this paper considers how successfully the four main species of pantheist metaphysic — the substance monist model, the microcosmic-macrocosmic model, the universal-expressivist model, and the Absolute Idealist model — are able to respond to the problem of their compatibility.

Any acceptable pantheism, that is to say, any pantheistic scheme which is both intellectually believable and capable of grounding a living spirituality, needs to maintain three distinct things: (1) that God is identical with the universe as a whole, (2) that God is may be found wholly in each part of the universe, and (3) that some things in the universe are more divine, and hence more valuable, than others. Moreover, supporting this, any open survey of the broad range of past philosophies which might fairly be called 'pantheistic' will also reveal, admittedly not complete, but certainly very widespread, adherence to these three requirements. However, it might well be complained that they form an incompatible set of requirements on any theory. In this paper I examine first the three positions in question, before turning to consider

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in turn how effectively the four main types of pantheism are able to respond to the problem of their compatibility.

I

At its simplest pantheism is the equation between God and the universe as a whole. The qualifier 'as a whole' is important, for otherwise the term 'God' would be just a synonym for 'everything'.[1] Instead, we are to suppose that the various things we might more naturally think of as distinct combine together to constitute a genuine unity, something which it is appropriate to label with a single noun. This is by far the most common understanding of pantheism, and so in the contemporary literature we often find definitions such as the following: "Pantheism essentially involves two assertions: that everything that exists constitutes a unity and that this all-inclusive unity is divine." Or again, in the same vein: "Pantheists… believe that there is only one being, and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it or identical with it."[2]

This conception of pantheism is far from modern, however. The thesis that God exhausts the universe is one for which we may find a variety of historical sources. It is, for example, a key idea in the Advaita Vedanta tradition of Hindu philosophy. Shankara maintains that "Brahman alone is real. There is none but He", and that "Brahman fills everything."[3] It is a thought which occurs in classical monotheism too. Anselm says in his *Proslogion* that all things are in God — nothing contains him but he contains all things[4] — while Amalric of Bena reputedly held that all is one and all is god.[5] Similar ideas are to be found in the Islamic Sufi philosopher, Ibn' Arabi, who in developing the Koranic notion of *tawhīd* (God's unity) asserts that there can be no real being

1 This point was famously made by Schopenhauer, *Parega and Parlipomena,* II:99, who complained that "to call the world God is not to explain it; it is only to enrich our language with a superfluous synonym for the word world."

2 MacIntyre, 'Pantheism' 34; Owen, *Concepts of Deity,* 65. See also Levine, *Pantheism.*

3 Shankara, *Shankara's Crest — Jewel of Discrimination,* 69, 110.

4 *Proslogion,* ch.XIX, 140-3.

5 Capelle, *Amaury de Bene,* 108: "*omnia esse unum, et omnia esse deum.*" Supposedly influenced by John Scotus Eriugena, the views of Amalric of Bena / Amaury de Bène (1204-1207) were condemned by synod in 1210 and are known only by report.

other than God; that God permeates through all creatures and *is* essentially all things. Especially among his followers this was developed into a monistic ontology of *wahdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being).[6]

The chief theoretician of this form of pantheism, however, is Spinoza who sums up his own position with the claim that: "Except God, no substance can be or be conceived."7 To Spinoza, the nature of substance is to be wholly independent. This makes it unique and all-encompassing. It also makes it unconditional and hence infinite or perfect. He calls it 'God or Nature.' Some commentators have doubted Spinoza's sincerity, supposing that all he really means is 'nature,' but such readings are not sustainable.

II

It might be supposed that holism is all that there is to pantheism, but if one thinks or reads a little further, it soon becomes clear that there is more. A good way to explore what further there might be to the doctrine is to consider a common objection.

Pantheists are sometimes by hostile critics accused of animism. Do they not worship trees, mountains, rivers, etc? Theorists of pantheism usually reject that charge. Their belief is not that each natural thing has a divine soul. Rather, they venerate *nature as a whole*. But this response is not quite adequate. For pantheism is not *simply* the view that God is the unified totality of things (not even if we add that, in some not-entirely-clear sense, the unified totality of things is 'greater' than the sum of its parts.) For if pantheism is to be any sort of religious view, it must ground some form of religious experience, but none of us can experience the universe *as a whole*. We can only grasp its parts, however sizable those portions may be. Yet, as half a joke is rarely funny, nor half a word meaningful, so likewise a bit of the divine is not

6 "He *is* essentially all things… He permeates through all beings called created and originated, and were it not the case, [relative] being would not have any meaning. He is Being itself" (*Bezels of Wisdom,* 135) "For He will not have aught to be other than He. Nay, the other is He, and there is no otherness." (*Treatise on Being*, 816) More likely the work of one of Ibn 'Arabi's disciples than of the master himself, the *Treatise on Being* (also known as the *Treatise on Unity*) draws out even more strongly the pantheistic implications of his ideas.

7 *The Ethics*, Part I Proposition 14.

even a bit divine. And if there is nothing more to pantheism than holism it would leave finite minds such as ours experientially shut-out from divinity. In short, holism by itself fails to do justice to the experiential root of pantheism, which grows out of a deep *reverence* for the world in which we find ourselves. Epistemically it seems to us that God is not distant but can be encountered directly in what we experience around us. We experience God in everything. The pantheist may not make the crass mistake of thinking God is literally just *this* tree or just *this* sunset or just *this* waterfall, but certainly he or she supposes that we find God in just these things.

In more technical language pantheists have often expressed this point by thinking that God is wholly present in *each* part of the world.[8] As Paul Tillich put it, "Pantheism is the doctrine that God is the substance or essence of things, not the meaningless assertion that God is the totality of all things."[9] Or in the words of an even more recent commentator, "To the notion of God as the unified totality of all things pantheism often, indeed typically, adds the notion of God as the inner life or being of each individual thing. Somehow, for most pantheists, the whole is present in each of the parts."[10]

This way of thinking too has historical precedent. Early examples may be found in the *Enneads* of Plotinus' (for whom each being "contains all within itself" such that "all are mirrored in every other")[11] and in John Scotus Eriugena (for whom God is "both whole in the whole of the universe [and]

8 Theism finds itself facing a version of this thought in its doctrine of the indwelling of God. God dwells in the heart of the believer.

9 Tillich, S*ystematic Theology,* 233-4.

10 Sprigge, 'Pantheism' 192.

11 "all that is not of process but of authentic being they see, and themselves in all: for all is transparent, nothing dark, nothing resistant; every being is lucid to every other, in breadth and depth; light runs through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory. Each of them is great; the small is great; the sun, There, is all the stars; and every star, again, is all the stars and sun. While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other." (5.8.4, paragraph one) Against "those who maintain our souls to be offshoots from the soul of the universe [parts and an identity modally parted]" Plotinus insists that reappearing in each case "there is one identical soul, every separate manifestation being that soul complete.(Plotinus *Enneads* 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, see also 5.5.9, paragraph 4; 6.5.1 paragraph 1).

whole in its parts, since He is both the whole and the part").[12] Giordano Bruno distinguishes between two forms of infinity in God, which we might term extensive infinity (*tutto infinito*) and intensive infinity (*totalmente infinito*). The one is mere bounded-less-ness the other absolute or total infinity which is complete involvement in the parts.[13] To explain his meaning Bruno employs the two illustrations of a voice heard in its entirety from all sides of the room, and that of a large mirror which reflects one image of one thing but for which, if it is broken into a thousand pieces, each of the pieces still reflects the whole image.[14] In each of these thinkers, the notion of the whole-in-each-part is largely imagistic or metaphorical. But in the nineteenth-century, in the post-Hegelian idealist tradition which flourished in Britain and America, much work was done to develop the theory of relations upon which this notion might rest. To properly connect terms, it was argued, relations must be 'internal' to them, but in that case it is possible, from any individual term, to read off its standing to the whole universe.[15]

12 *Periphyseon* 228 [IV.759a-b].

13 Bruno, *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds,* 1st Dialogue, Part II, 261: "I call the universe *tutto infinito*, because it has no margin, limit or surface; I do not call the universe *totalmente infinito*, because any part that we take is finite, and of the innumerable worlds which it contains each is finite. I call God *tutto infinito* because He excludes of Himself all limits and because each of His attributes is one and infinite; and I call God *totalmente infinito* because He is wholly in the whole world and infinitely and totally in each of its parts, in distinction from the infinity of the universe, which is totally in the whole but not in the parts."

14 Bruno, *Concerning the Cause, Principle and One*, 50, 129.

15 By way of example we can look at John Watson, *Christianity and Idealism*, 259-60: "No form of reality can be regarded as 'mere appearance,' but only as the more or less adequate manifestation of the principle which is the source and explanation of all reality. When, therefore, we speak of an 'individual' reality, we must remember that its individuality is constituted by its relation to the whole." See also *Christianity and Idealism*, 276: "we have to conceive even this stage of the world as implying an organic unity or system, in which the whole determines the parts, while the parts are essential to the whole. If we treat any part as self-complete in its isolation, we fall into the untenable doctrine of atomic Materialism; if we deny the reality of the parts, we commit ourselves to an equally untenable Pantheism; we have therefore to affirm at once the reality of the parts in the whole, and of the whole in the parts." And *The Philosophical Basis of Religion,* 457-8: "In a living being, we cannot say that the whole is simply the sum of the parts : what we must say is, that each part contains the whole, and yet that the whole could not exist apart from the peculiar activity of the parts. And if this is true of organized beings, it is true in a much higher sense of self-conscious or spiritual beings."

III

Life is characterised by distinctions of value between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, etc. But if all is one within God, it is hard to see how such divisions can be maintained at any deep metaphysical level.[16] Pantheists have a variety of ways of responding to this puzzle. (1) Some have replied by holding that the pantheistic whole is something which exists 'beyond good and evil.' Such differences it might be said are but local variations, or perspectival appearances, on a whole which accommodates them all without difference.[17] This view is consistent enough, but highly unsatisfactory, for it robs the pantheistic position of all religious value. How can we worship that which stands outside all value? (2) An alternative response to the problem of value would be to hold that since God is good, and God is identical with the world, it must in fact be the case that the world is wholly good, and evil merely an illusion or appearance. In so far as the divine light is then taken to illuminate everything, however small or mean, there is something inspiring in this view. To such a pantheism, the glory of God can be seen as all-pervasive and found even in neglected things. But of course, the view has another less attractive side, for it is a denial of the existence of evil which really amounts to a repudiation of all ethics.[18] (3) A third and far more attractive response is the attempt to retain

16 The presence of evil is a problem for theists too, of course.

17 This is a common theme in Hindu pantheism. Shankara for example maintains that while good and evil both appear to exist, in reality both are *maya* (or illusion), and to one who is enlightened nothing is either good or evil (Shankara, *Shankara's Crest — Jewel of Discrimination,* 105, 123).

18 Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. II, Ch. XLVII, 590: "All pantheism must ultimately be shipwrecked on the inescapable demands of ethics, and then on the evil and suffering of the world. If the world is a theophany, then everything done by man, and even by animal, is equally divine and excellent; nothing can be more censurable and nothing more praiseworthy than anything else; hence there is no ethics." Lewis, *Mere Christianity,* 41: "If you do not take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But, of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you cannot talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some of the things we see in it are contrary to His will. Confronted with a cancer or a slum the Pantheist can say, 'If you could only see it from the divine point of view, you would realize that this also is God.' The Christian replies, 'Don't talk damned nonsense.' For Christianity is a fighting religion. It thinks that God made the world—that space and time, heat and cold, and all the colors and tastes, and all the animals

distinctions of value within the pantheistic scheme as a whole. Somehow we want to say that while God is present in all things, divinity characterises some features of the universe more than others.

If we look to actual pantheistic systems, this third is probably the most common response. As John Macquarrie notes: "It is sometime said in Pantheism, God is supposed to be equally present in every part of the universe. This may be an implication of the literal meaning of pantheism, that everything is God or God is everything. In practice, however, some things are accepted as more fully manifesting the presence of God than others."[19]

This is very clear if we look at contemporary popular pantheism. Pantheism today is most commonly taken as the view that *nature* is sacred; that God is found in *nature*. The more natural a thing is the more divine it is held to be. This requires us to say that human culture is artificial or unnatural, and in some sense less than holy. In one sense, no doubt, that is deeply problematic — for "Even what is most unnatural is Nature"[20] — but there is another sense in which we can readily sympathise with it. It is not merely pantheists who find natural places highly spiritual, who find God in mountains but not car-parks.

But pantheists are not necessarily nature lovers, for that is not the only way to understand degrees of divinity. For Hegel, the divinity of the world lies in *reason*. On the Hegelian scheme everything is rational, but some things are more explicitly so than others. To Hegel God is revealed in the rationality that underlies human culture and history. The city is more sacred than the grove. The rational state is the march of God on the earth. Such views may be disquieting to nature lovers, but they are not unfamiliar in traditional theism. Nature may be God's handiwork, but if the Church is the body of Christ then its action may be even more divine than that of Mother Nature.

Notions of degrees of divinity are much older than this, however. For their roots we might best look to Neo-Platonism. "Seeking nothing, possess-

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and vegetables, are things that God 'made out of his head' as a man makes up a story. But it also thinks that great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again."

19 Macquarrie, *In Search of Deity*, 52.

20 Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, 209.

ing nothing, lacking nothing the one is perfect" maintains Plotinus,[21] but as such it is "unable to remain self-closed"[22] and produces from out of itself a cascading sequence of emanations. "For a tendency dwells in every being to bring forth what follows after him, and to unfold, as from seed… The highest level, however, remains in its own place, while it brings forth, as it were, that which is lower than itself out of an overwhelming power of which it bears the abundance in itself."[23] "To resume: there is from the first principle to ultimate an outgoing in which unfailingly each principle retains its own seat while its offshoot takes another rank, a lower, though on the other hand every being is in identity with its prior as long as it holds that contact."[24] As reality is qualified and diversified, it undergoes diminution in unity and in reality, which is simultaneously a diminution in value. Those who complain that not everything in the universe is perfect fail to see, urges Plotinus, that there is a necessary order of progression from primaries, to secondaries, etc. which is inevitably a dilution of goodness;[25] perhaps somewhat as an electrical charge that becomes smaller each time it is subdivided. Of course, the reverse process — the passage from part to whole, from finite to infinite—traces a steady increase in value. What Plotinus' system shows is that the difference between the monistic reality of The One and the pluralistic appearance of everyday reality need not be all-or-nothing; but may rather be characterised by degrees of truth, reality and value.

IV

The three pantheistic theses, and the cases for them, briefly introduced, we may now turn to consider the charge that they are mutually incompatible. The tension between them is not hard to see. Between 1 and 2: Either God is something which exists separately in each part of the universe, in which case the whole is irrelevant, or God is the whole universe itself, in which case the

21 Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.2.1.
22 Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.4.1.
23 Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8.6.
24 Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.2.2.
25 Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.8.13.

parts, taken separately, are each something less than God. Between 2 and 3: If God is wholly present in each part how can some parts be more valuable than others? If some things are worth more than others they cannot all be equally divine. Between 3 and 1: How can the whole be more present in some things than in others? That may make sense for some features or aspects of an object, but what can it mean for the whole?

The tension between these three principles is not intrinsic but derives from our underlying metaphysics, and different metaphysical schemes cast it in a different light. In the remainder of the essay I shall compare four basic metaphysical models for understanding pantheism, drawn from the history of the doctrine, in order to see how well they are able to address and integrate each of the three requirements set out. The perspective taken is a very wide one, for if choices are to made about fundamental metaphysical allegiances, broad brush outlines of the entire domain are necessary. A paper of this compass, however, cannot hope to do more that sketch the main advantages and disadvantages of each path. Only by fully developing one branch or other could a final judgement be made. This I have not attempted.

V

The most straightforward species of pantheism is that of substance monism. A substance is a particular individual, something existing in its own right, and typically we suppose that there exist many such substances. The substance monist maintains, by contrast, that only the totality of these taken all together as one great whole counts as a genuine substance. If such a substance is further deemed to bear the marks of divinity, we have pantheism. Pantheism of this type is to be found, for example, in Spinoza and in F.H.Bradley.

From even so brief an account as this it should be clear that pantheism conceived in this way is well able to manage the unity requirement. To appreciate this it helps to remember that the thesis is not quite that which it is usually taken to be. Put quickly or carelessly the account is often expressed by saying that the things we call substances are really just parts of one great substance. But this is an unfortunate way of speaking. 'Parts' have a relatively

loose and detachable connection, and a mere collection of units is no genuine unity. For this reason in place of the language of merelogical composition Spinoza prefers the locution of a 'substance and its modes' where modes are to be understood as more akin to properties than parts. For Bradley even this designates too loose a union and he rejects altogether relational thought and language. His Absolute is a unitary whole which contains diversity, but does so without in any way being broken up into terms and relations.

How the substance monist model deals with the question of differential value is more complicated. It was noted above that one response would be to say that the pantheistic whole is 'beyond good and evil,' and there is a certain amount of textual support for the view that both Spinoza and Bradley take just this line.[26] But in neither case does this stance represent their last word. In both philosophers we find also the view that the unified totality of all beings termed 'God' or 'the Absolute' may be understood as the culminating step along a notional ladder or chain, in which the whole of creation may be arranged in order of increasing degree of reality or coherence; a chain which, if we are prepared to equate the real and the good, may also be thought of as a hierarchy of increasing value or divinity. To take an imperfect analogy, if the human being is a single integrated whole, the human brain is both a greater and a more unified contributor to that whole than, say, the foot. It bears a greater imprint of the whole. In similar fashion the pantheist may suppose that certain regions or sides of reality reflect more fully than others both the metaphysical and the ethical character of the whole.

However, despite its potential on these two fronts, when we turn to the third condition of an adequate pantheism — the idea of the whole as somehow present in each part — the substance monist conception of pantheism appears to run out of steam. The very essence of substance monist thinking is that whatever contributes to form a whole, considered separately, must be deemed less than or inferior to that whole. In so far as fragments bear traces or marks of the greater whole from which they are drawn, in so far as they point towards whatever is necessary for their own completion, they may be thought to carry with them

26 This conclusion might well be drawn from Spinoza's comments about the subjectivity of value, see for example *Ethics* e3p9s; e3p39s; e4d1; consider also Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 355: "Evil and good are not illusions, but they are most certainly appearances. They are one-sided appearances, each overruled and transmuted in the whole." In *Appearance and Reality*, 363 he also says: "the good is not the Whole, and the Whole, as such, is not good. And, viewed thus in relation to the Absolute, there is nothing either bad or good, there is not anything better or worse."

echoes of their divinity. But that is merely a starting point in any search for the divine, which is something that can only be found insofar as we *transcend* the finite or partial for the infinite and complete.

VI

There is a long tradition of world-views in which human nature is understood as the microcosm of the macrocosm or the universe at large. Such a relationship may be generalised to apply not merely to human beings but to all particular existents, generating a metaphysical scheme in which every part of the universe is structured in such a way as to mirror the whole; in which the finite is the echo of the infinite. Such metaphysical schemes are rare, but certainly not unheard of. Often, as in the case of Giordano Bruno that we considered above, they are cast in highly metaphorical form, but it is possible to construct more rigorous accounts. In his *Monadology* Leibniz presents a world-view in which, because of the interconnection of all created things to each one, each substance has relational properties that express all the others, such that it is a 'living mirror' to the entire universe.[27] Another interesting example would be the American idealist, Josiah Royce's conception of the universe (or as he terms it, the Absolute) as self-representing whole. Drawing on the pioneering mathematical work of Richard Didekind, Royce illustrates his idea by asking us to imagine a map of England so detailed as to include even a representation of itself — one part reflecting the whole.[28]

Leaving for another day the question of what grounds we might have for thinking that the universe is arranged like this, it is clear to see that this scheme meets at least one of our conditions for an adequate pantheism. As would be expected — since that is the very heart of its formulation — it is able to capture the pantheist wish to maintain that we meet with God in the inner essence of each individual thing. If the mapping is perfect, it simply may not

27 *Monadology* §56. The British Idealist J.M.E. McTaggart put forward an interesting development of that idea which he called a 'determining correspondence' scheme, in which the parts of each substance correlate to the group in which it belongs (*The Nature of Existence,* ch.XXIV).

28 *World and the Individual*, 502-7.

be possible to choose between thinking of each part as a reflection of the whole and thinking of the whole as something which reflects each of its parts.

It might be suggested that success won in this dimension can only be at the expense of the dimension of unity. In what sense is an assemblage of reflections — we might recall Bruno's illustration of the shattered mirror here — a genuine whole? It seems to me that this concern is misplaced, however. For if one may find the entire universe echoed in a single speck, that fact in itself gives a real and significant unity to the resulting universe. The nature of any unity lies precisely in the ways that its parts all make reference to each other, and in a case such as that we are considering here, each part carries, in its own nature its connection to every other thing. Leibniz himself understood well how very close this conception brought him to a monism not so different from that of Spinoza. What saved him from this unwelcome fate was in his opinion, nothing in the system of monadic mirrors itself, but rather the assignment of individual causal power to each distinct monad.

However, the microcosmic-macrocosmic model of pantheism is less successful in dealing with the requirement for degrees of divinity. If the whole is present in each part, then will it not be equally so, making all parts equally divine? Leibniz was dimly aware of this problem. For Leibniz each monad sees the whole universe. Because he wishes to *distinguish* monads one from another he maintains that each does so from a different point of view. But further to this we wishes to defend a *hierarchy* among monads — from God, through rational souls, to animal souls, to the 'bare monads' that lie behind corporeal matter — and this he does by introducing differences in the clarity of monad perceptions. As he charmingly puts it, all minds are omniscient, although all (with the exception of God) are to differing degrees confused.[29] Such an answer is too subjective to capture genuine differences in degree, however. On the Leibnizian scheme it remains the case that each thing reflects the whole equally; it is simply that that is clearer in some cases than in others.

29 *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 18.

VII

Further to the substance monist and the microcosmic-macrocosmic models, an alternative framework for conceiving pantheism we might call the universal-expressivist model. According to this scheme the world, in all its detail and variation, is to be thought of as a set of manifestations, or expressions, or emanations of a single underlying principle of divinity. The key thought behind these metaphors is that of the theory of universals; the relation between the eternal nature of God and the temporal world in which it is expressed being modelled on the relation between eternal essences and mutable particulars which are their instances. The two universals at the heart of this way of thinking are 'Being' and 'Goodness'. From the earliest classical theism right through to modern theology it has been maintained that God is not a being, but rather 'being itself.' God is precisely the ground or root of all that is. And a similar pedigree may be traced for the conception of God as 'the Good' itself, as the value which is 'in' all valuable things. Everything, in so far as it has worth, manifests the original worth of the divine nature.[30]

Where the macrocosm-microcosm model struggled with degrees of divinity, the universal-expressivist model of pantheism is at its strongest. For it belongs to the very nature of expression, manifestation, or instantiation that it may be more or less adequate, more or less complete. That the things of this world may be ranked according to the degree to which they manifest Goodness itself is a quintessentially Platonic doctrine, further developed in Neoplatonism, and from there finding its way in to classical theism. The most common metaphor used to express this relation is that of *light*; steaming out from a single source and diminishing in brightness the further it travels from that point of origin.

Taking the theory of universals as a blueprint for understanding pantheism also affords a good model for making sense of the pantheist claim that God may be found at the heart of everything. For it is in the very essence of a

30 The notion of God as 'Being itself' may be found all the way from Aquinas *("Ipsum Esse per se Subsistens" Summa Theologicae*, 1, question 4. Article 2, 52-3) through to modern figures such Paul Tillich. (*Systematic Theology*, volume I, 235-41) That God is 'Goodness itself' occurs from Augustine (*On the Trinity*, Book VIII, ch.III, §4) through to such modern voices as Hugh Rice (*God and Goodness,* ch.5).

universal that it is a 'one in many', a unitary character to be found undivided and wholly present in each of its particulars. The various instances do not get 'a separate bit each.' Now, if God just is 'Being itself' or 'Goodness itself', since the being and the goodness of individual things are no less genuinely existent or good than that of the whole, it is easy to see that this scheme will afford us a mechanism for meeting the pantheist demand that the Divine whole be found in each of its parts. (It is important to make a distinction between 'wholly present' and 'perfectly present' least what is being said here be thought to contradict what was just said above. A universal is not divided up into portions, but that is not to say it is everywhere perfectly instantiated. The slightly curved or kinked line may not perfectly express straightness, but what it fails to express perfectly is straightness itself, not some curious segment thereof.)

Any strength that pantheism taken as a theory of universals may have won in these two fields, however, it appears to have paid for with respect to the third field: holism. For while co-instantiation of a common universal introduces a certain unity among a given set of particulars, this hardy effaces the diversity of the set itself or makes the collection of instances into one greater whole. A collection of instances of a given universal is not in any helpful sense a single thing. It is marked by qualitative unity, but by no sort of numerical unity.[31]

VIII

Metaphysical frameworks for pantheism mostly picture God as something residing within and completely suffusing the world. But there is a different way to look at the matter. Rather than thinking of God as set inside the world in some strange way, it may be better to think of the world as somehow set inside God. Such is the final species of pantheism that I wish to look at, the Absolute Idealist scheme, in which the universe and all of its contents are thought of as existing within the *mind of god.* To a realist, who believes in

31 Although such an analysis *could* be attempted, it is not very plausible to think of a universal as a collection of all its particulars. 'Concrete universals' do better on this, but only because they are really more like Spinozistic or substantial wholes than universals.

existence of independent material being, such a scheme may be inconceivable. But to an idealist, for whom there can be no reality outside of experience anyway, the case may be easier. Although even here there remains the great puzzle of how many different minds might possibly be combined together within one greater consciousness; for *prima facie* individual minds seem each to possess a sort of distinct impermeability unlike that of the myriad drops of water that combine together to form the ocean.

If it is possible to understand the entire universe as a single all-encompassing whole of experience, its unity would be secured by the unity of consciousness which is definitive of mental life itself. Mind is characterised by many different perceptions, conceptions and capacities, but unless they are all bound together in one whole, by one 'I', there is no 'mind' at all. This thought, indeed, lies at the very heart of all pantheistic schemes. Faced with the assertion that 'God = the universe', we naturally read this assertion as telling us, not that God is as diverse and aggregate as the universe, but rather that the universe is as unitary as God, and the reason for this that the we characteristically think of God as a self or mind, and the very essence of mind lies in its unity.

But if my consciousness is a unified whole, it is nonetheless true at the same time that 'I' am wholly and equally present as the subject of each one of my individual thoughts and experiences. The contents of my experience are multifarious, but the subject of them all — their *author* or their *possessor* — is one and the same. It is in this sense that my identity remains constant, even if my thoughts and experiences themselves change. Now, if God stands to the multiple things of the world as I stand to my perceptions and thoughts, it would be possible to think of divinity as wholly present in each individual substance or process. At this point it is interesting to observe how language comes full circle. The desiderata of an adequate pantheism of which I am speaking here is that which was described as the requirement that it be possible to find 'the whole in the part'. But this phraseology has a history. Its origin may be traced back to the Scholastic notion of *totum in toto et totum in qualibet parte* ('the whole in the whole and the whole in each part.') But that form of words, it turns out, is in fact an historical locution for the human mind, coined precisely to capture the way in which we wish to identify

ourselves simultaneously with *both* the whole compass of our mind *and* the subject at the centre of each individual thought.[32]

The third criterion of an adequate pantheism — that it be capable of accommodating degrees of value or divinity — is less obviously amenable to the Absolute Idealist scheme of God as a universal consciousness. However it may be possible to make some steps in this direction. Although conscious mind is not divisible into parts or degrees, it is possible to be more or less truly — more or less fully or genuinely — oneself at any time or other, or in any one thought or another. Not every thought we have is equally expressive of who we are — they range from the sublime to the mundane — but if the contents of the world are just so many thoughts of God the same perhaps may be said of their variety.

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32 A more recent echo of the use can be found in Hume (*Treatise* 238)

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