JON ROBSON
University of Nottingham

Hud Hudson: *The Fall and Hypertime*, Oxford University Press 2014, 211pp.

The view that science and religion are in some kind of conflict with one another has become something of a commonplace in much contemporary scholarship. It is far less common, though, that we are told precisely what the nature and extent of this conflict is supposed to be. It is also — as Hud Hudson notes in the opening pages of his new book *The Fall and Hypertime* — something of a rarity that the role for philosophy within such controversies is so much as mentioned. In Hudson's view, this is a mistake. Philosophy '(especially contemporary analytic philosophy) deserves a clearly marked place at this conversational table' (p. 1). Hudson suggests a number of roles philosophers could play once properly seated, including helping us to 'reveal the boundaries of our representational and cognitive capacities' (ibid.), recommending an appropriate degree of 'intellectual modesty' (p. 2), and much more besides. For the purposes of the current work, though, Hudson focuses on one particular (and surprising) role for the analytic philosopher: peacemaker. In Hudson's view, the philosopher can show that many of the most heated putative conflicts between science and religion are, in fact, not genuine contests between these two camps, but rather, skirmishes 'between metaphysics and metaphysics' (p. 76).

To illustrate this point, Hudson chooses to focus on the question of whether an extreme literalist interpretation of the biblical story of the fall (according to which the first human beings were specially created by God a mere few thousand years ago, and then proceed to eat the forbidden fruit and so forth) is in conflict with some of the conclusions reached by modern science (concerning the age of the Earth, the evolutionary origins of human beings, and the like). Doubtless, many will think that this question is hardly in need of serious consideration, but Hudson demurs. While Hudson does not himself subscribe to this extreme literalist view, he maintains that this view is not in direct conflict with any of the deliverances of modern science. Rather, it is only in conflict with these scientific results when they are taken in conjunction with certain controversial metaphysical theses. Given this, Hudson

maintains, 'it is possible for a literalist to grant all the alleged implications of our modern worldview informed by astronomy, physics, geology, paleoanthropology, genetics, and evolutionary biology' (p. 186). Before we consider this rather surprising claim in detail though, it's worth stressing that the appeal of *The Fall and Hypertime* certainly isn't confined to those with an interest in the (apparent) conflict between modern science and biblical literalism (or in the interplay of science and religion more generally). During the course of his arguments, Hudson discusses an impressive array of topics including the metaphysics of time (pp. 78-88), scepticism in epistemology (pp. 113-32), and the problem of evil (pp. 161-7). As such, even those who find themselves unconvinced by, or uninterested in, Hudson's central claim, will still discover much of value in this book. For the rest of this review, though, I will focus almost exclusively on the central claim.

So, what could possibly motivate the claim that there is no conflict between the extreme literalist interpretation of the fall and the deliverances of modern science? In order to defend this surprising conclusion, Hudson proposes to 'tell a *just-so story* accommodating both the relevant verdicts of our modern worldview and a full-blooded realism' concerning Adam, Eve, the Garden of Eden and so forth (p. 194). Key to this just-so story is postulating a second temporal dimension of 'hypertime'. Appealing to hypertimes allows us to say, for example, that a certain event which didn't take place in our past (it doesn't, to frame things in terms of a 'block' view of time, occur at an earlier moment in the temporal block) *did* occur in the *hyper*-past (it occurred as part of a different temporal block which existed at a previous *hypertime*). The concept of hypertime is, doubtless, one which is unfamiliar to many philosophers, and it is disappointing, then, that Hudson never provides a clear and accessible introduction to this difficult concept for the novice reader. Nor is there space to give an adequate account of the nature of the hypertime view here (those looking for a useful introduction to the relevant ideas are encouraged to consult G. C. Goddu (2003). 'Time travel and changing the past: (Or how to kill yourself and live to tell the tale)'. *Ratio*, 16(1), 16-32). All that matters for understanding the outline of Hudson's account of the fall, though, is the key distinction between what *was* the case and what *hyper*-was the case. According to Hudson's account:

> In the beginning […] God created a spacetime and its contents whose earliest stages of growth witnessed the forming of a man from the dust of the ground, the planting of a garden into which he was placed […] the extraction of a rib from and creation of a companion for him […] and a rebellion that took the form of eating forbidden fruit. […] Finally, driven out of the garden, they and their world underwent a spectacular change.
>
> At the hypermoment the pair exited the garden […] God annihilated every piece of the block save that region on its outermost edge thus occupied by these ancestors of ours and then embedded that very region and its contents in a new block — a block sporting a several-billion-year history, replete with ice ages, long-dead hominids […] even a big bang. (pp. 190-1)

According to this story, then, the past history of the human race — and the universe more generally — is exactly as our best science would have. Yet, there is another history, a *hyper*-history of the world, according to which the first human being hyper-was created from the dust of the ground, ate the forbidden fruit, and so forth. Thus we are, Hudson maintains, able to endorse both extreme literalism and all of the deliverances of modern science. Ingenious though Hudson's account undoubtedly is, I was far from convinced by his central claim. In fact, I worry that in trying to construct a position compatible with both extreme literalism and contemporary science Hudson ends up with a position which is in tension with both.

Beginning with literalism, Hudson's story entails that it is not, strictly speaking, true that the world was created a few thousand years in the past, nor is it true that there was some time at which God specially created the first human beings. Instead, the world was (or hyper-was) created a few thousand years in the hyperpast, and the first humans specially created at some previous hypertime. When it comes to the *actual* past, however, things are exactly as modern science has it (and not at all as the literalist maintains); hardly music to the literalist's ear. Hudson (pp. 192-3) considers this worry, but doesn't seem especially troubled by it. Since, as he correctly notes, the biblical writers (along with the Church Fathers and others in the tradition) lacked the theoretical resources to so much as mention hyptertime, or to distinguish between history and hyperhistory. As such, we might reasonably conclude that even if Hudson's account of the fall were correct, such concepts could not be expected to be found in either scripture or tradition. What's more, it would be perfectly natural for the biblical writers to talk in terms of the events they

narrate happening in the past (rather than the hyper-past). The trouble with such a defence is not that it is unconvincing in itself, but that it too closely parallels the explanations offered by many non-literalists as to why the scriptures are silent with respect to, say, the big bang, or evolution by natural selection. That is, it provides precisely the kind of explanation which the extreme literalist, *qua* extreme literalist, is committed to rejecting. Someone unwilling to tolerate the thought that 'yom' as used in the book of Genesis might denote an unspecified period of time rather than a literal day is unlikely to be satisfied with the claim that 'was' as used in the claim that 'the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' means something vastly different from its standard use in the claim that 'it was raining yesterday'.

Although Hudson seems optimistic about his ability to respond to such worries, he does not devote much time to considering them. Rather, he reminds the reader that these are theological objections, and that, since 'theology is not science', this does nothing to undermine his primary aim to 'block conclusive dismissal of literalism by way of appeal to the science of our modern worldview' (p. 193). Importantly though, it is *the literalist's* position which Hudson is trying to make compatible with this worldview, meaning that these theological worries cannot be dismissed as easily as Hudson suggests. Even if it were uncontroversial that Hudson's account is compatible with current science, this is no help to the literalist if this account isn't itself a literalist one.

What's more, it is far from clear that Hudson's view *is* compatible with current science. Certainly it is compatible both with any empirical observations which those engaged in the various sciences might make, and with all of the standard conclusions — concerning physical laws, evolutionary biology, and so forth — which have been drawn from these. We might worry, though, that there is more to being compatible with our 'modern scientific worldview' than this and that Hudson's account is still in tension with modern science in some other respect. Even assuming that we had independent reason for accepting the existence of hypertime (and Hudson certainly offers some very impressive arguments for this conclusion), the account of the world's (hyper) history which Hudson offers still seems to be outcompeted by a number of rival explanations. Most obviously, explanations which make no reference to biblical gardens or divine gerrymandering of temporal blocks are liable to be more successful in terms of their simplicity and elegance. And it seems to be

very much a part of the scientific worldview which Hudson's account is designed to appease that (all else being equal) we should prefer theories which are simple and elegant. Given this, there remains a conflict between Hudson's account of the fall and this scientific worldview. These claim are, I admit, rather controversial, and a defender of Hudson may well respond that considerations of simplicity and the like are (in this context at least) more properly the domain of *metaphysics*, rather than science. There is hardly space to adjudicate such debates here but I would have liked to see Hudson say a little more about exactly what he takes to demarcate the scientific from the metaphysical (especially given the crucial role this distinction plays in his central argument).

Although I have focused above on Hudson's central argument, I should mention in closing that, strange as it may seem, the success or failure of that argument is not especially important to the value of the book as a whole. Even those who ultimately reject Hudson's main claim will still find much of value in *Hypertime and the Fall*. Hudson delivers an immensely rewarding piece of philosophy, one which brings a truly impressive depth and breadth of knowledge to bear in a wonderfully novel way (the original and insightful discussion of omnipresence in chapter seven alone is worth the price of admission). I also found myself agreeing wholeheartedly with a number of the subsidiary claims Hudson makes in the course of his argument (in particular, his defence of 'crazy' metaphysical views on p. 15). Overall then, while the book is by no means easy going — I wouldn't, for example, recommend it as a starting point for those not already well-grounded in the literature on the philosophy of time — it certainly rewards the efforts of those who stick with it.