

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE: A DEFENCE OF THE CLASSICAL VIEW

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Abstract. I defend Christian classical theism's view that God is aspatial in the strict sense but omnipresent only in a loose sense. I consider ten different proposals according to which God is strictly omnipresent and reject them all. I then present two arguments for the claim that God is strictly aspatial. Finally, I argue that, given God creates and sustains all else, God is loosely omnipresent.

Jewish and Christian scripture teaches us that God is omnipresent. The Psalmist writes: 'Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.' (Ps. 139:7-12). The prophet Jeremiah writes: 'Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God afar off? [...] Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. [...]' (Jr. 23:23-24). Classical theists say that God, being perfect, is aspatial. And Christian classical theists affirm that God is both aspatial and omnipresent.¹ By 'spatial' I mean *is located at some place*. So by 'aspatial' I mean *is located at no place*. Nothing, of course, is both spatial and aspatial. But it seems that anything omnipresent is spatial. How then do we reconcile these

¹ See Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. by Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), 2.7, 5.9, Boethius, 'De Trinitate', in *The Theological Tractates*, trans. by H. F. Stewart et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 4.54-59, Anselm, 'Monologion', in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 20-23, 'Proslogion', in *Works*, 13, and Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol.3, trans. by Vernon J. Bourke (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), 3.68, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. by Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1a.8.

claims? I argue, in defence of Christian classical theism, that God is aspatial in the strict sense but omnipresent only in a loose sense.

I assume that God is immaterial, simple, omniscient, and omnipotent, and that God creates and sustains all else. By ‘immaterial’ I mean *is not physical*, i.e. lacks physical features. By ‘simple’ I mean *is not composite*, i.e. lacks proper parts. By ‘omniscient’ I mean *knows every truth*. By ‘omnipotent’ I mean *has the power to do anything possible*.² And by ‘creates and sustains’ I mean *causes to begin and continue to exist*. I also assume that there are spatial regions, any material substance is located at some spatial region, and location is a fundamental (or perfectly natural) relation.³ Anyone who thinks that there are no such regions may tell a similar story.

I. STRICT AND LOOSE SENSES

To say that a cat is healthy is to say that it is healthy in the strict sense. To say that the cat’s food is healthy is to say its food is healthy in a loose sense in that the cat’s food has the power to cause the cat to be healthy. Perhaps any loose sense is not literal but figurative. Or perhaps any loose sense is literal but analogical.⁴ Or perhaps some loose senses are literal and others not. Either way, strict and loose senses of a word are distinct but related. The strict sense is central. Any loose sense is more peripheral. I suggest that one uses a predicate *F* in a loose sense just if that loose sense stands in some salient relation to the strict sense, where what counts as salient is contextually determined.

I now argue for two claims:

- (1) God is strictly aspatial.
- (2) God is loosely omnipresent.

Why think that God isn’t strictly everywhere? I now go through a list of ten proposals according to which God is strictly everywhere and say why it’s (at the very least) unclear that God is strictly everywhere in any of those ways.

² This will do for my purposes. Perhaps, though, it is better to say that God has maximal knowledge and power, where ‘maximal knowledge’ means *it couldn’t be something has more knowledge*, and ‘maximal power’ means *it couldn’t be something has more power*.

³ A fundamental relation is any relation that belongs to a minimally complete supervenience base that accounts for the relational aspects of similarity and difference; see footnote 9.

⁴ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.13.

II. KNOWLEDGE, CAUSATION, AND POWER

Aquinas, following a saying of Gregory the Great, claims that God is everywhere by essence, power, and presence. God is, according to Aquinas, everywhere by essence in that God is in all else because God creates and sustains all else. God is everywhere by power in that all else is subject to God's power because God is omnipotent. And God is everywhere by presence in that God knows all else because God is omniscient.⁵ Aquinas, it seems, believes that God is aspatial in the strict sense but omnipresent in an analogical sense. Nevertheless, I now consider each of these as a proposal according to which God is strictly everywhere.

So first, perhaps God is everywhere because God directly knows every truth about every place and anyone who directly knows every truth about some place is located there. God is omniscient and so knows every truth about every place. There are only three senses of 'direct' here: non-inferential, non-testimonial, and causal. God has perfect knowledge. So in each sense, God directly knows every truth about every place. But why think that anyone who directly knows every truth about some place is located there? Why can't there be direct knowledge at a distance? I return shortly to whether there could be direct causation at a distance. As for the rest, it seems there could be such knowledge at a distance.

Secondly, perhaps God is everywhere because God directly causes every place to exist and anything that directly causes some place to exist is located there. God creates and sustains all else and so causes every place to exist. Every place God causes God does so not by way of another agent. So God directly causes every place to exist. But why think that anything that directly causes some place to exist is located there? Why can't there be direct causation at a distance? The idea that there could be such causation is a source of discomfort to many. But distinguish (broadly) logical from nomological possibility. The concept of logical possibility is primitive.⁶ But a proposition *P* is nomologically possible just if it is logically possible that *P* is true and the actual laws of nature hold. Even if action at a distance is nomologically impossible, it seems logically possible. And this equally applies to the suggestion that God is everywhere because God has the power directly to cause every place to exist and anything that has the power directly to cause some place to

⁵ See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.8.3.

⁶ See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), ch.1.

exist is located there. If there could be action at a distance, there could be the power to act at a distance. And as there's no good reason to think that anything that directly causes some place to exist is located there, so there's no good reason to think that anything that has the power directly to cause some place to exist is located there.

III. THE FEATURE OF BEING

Perhaps instead God is everywhere because God is the feature of being, any feature is located at any place any instance of it is located, and every place has the feature of being. David Armstrong, for example, thinks that universals are present where their instances are.⁷ Consider three versions of the proposal: God is the Platonic form of Being itself, God is the immanent universal of being, and God is the maximal fusion of duplicate tropes of being. Let me explain the terminology.

There are many true claims but what makes such claims true? For every truth, is there a truthmaker, i.e. an entity in virtue of whose existence that truth is true? Consider the claim that Tibbles exists. Tibbles, all by herself, makes this claim true. Nothing else is needed. A predication is any claim that predicates a feature of something. A feature of some entity is essential just if that entity can't exist without having that feature. So a feature of some entity is non-essential just if that entity can exist without having that feature. An essential predication is any claim that predicates an essential feature of something. So a non-essential predication is any claim that predicates a non-essential feature of something. Consider a true essential predication: e.g. Tibbles is a cat. Again, Tibbles, all by herself, makes this claim true. But now consider a true non-essential predication: e.g. Tibbles is black. If there is an entity in virtue of whose existence this predication is true, what is it? One thing necessitates another just if the first couldn't exist without the second. A necessary condition for an entity to be a truthmaker of a truth is that that entity necessitates that truth's truth. So it can't be Tibbles that makes it true that Tibbles is black, for Tibbles could exist and it be false that Tibbles is black. And it can't be the feature of blackness, for blackness could exist and it be false that Tibbles is black. And it can't be the fusion of Tibbles and blackness, for the fusion could exist and again it

⁷ See D. M. Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), ch.3.

be false that Tibbles is black.⁸ Perhaps then the truthmaker is the fact that Tibbles is black or the state of affairs of Tibbles' being black, which has as constituents Tibbles and blackness. Or perhaps the truthmaker is the trope of Tibbles' particular blackness, distinct from any other cat's duplicate trope of blackness.

Moreover, entities resemble each other in some respects but differ in others. What explains this? Are there features by virtue of having which entities resemble? Consider two entities that have the same feature, e.g. two black cats. If blackness exists, what is it? Perhaps it is the Platonic form of Blackness itself, an entity that is the perfect example of something black, the standard by which one measures all else that is black, and an entity that all else that is black participates in in that the form causes it to be black. Or perhaps it is the immanent universal of blackness, an entity that recurs in each of its instances. Or perhaps it is the maximal fusion of duplicate tropes of particular blacknesses, where a fusion of duplicate tropes is maximal just if it is a fusion of all and only duplicate tropes?⁹ I now look at each proposal in turn.

So thirdly, perhaps God is everywhere because the Platonic form of Being itself is everywhere and God is such a form. A feature is intrinsic just if it never can differ among duplicates.¹⁰ Augustine says that anything great is great by being identical to or participating in Greatness itself, and Greatness itself is greater than anything that participates in it, but nothing is greater than God, so God is identical to Greatness itself, and the same holds of every intrinsic feature God has, which includes being.¹¹ So if God is Being itself, God is the perfect example of something that *is*, the standard by which one measures all else that *is*, and all else participates in Being itself in that Being itself causes it to *be*. But why think that any

⁸ For any *x* and *ys*, *x* is a *fusion* of the *ys* just if each of the *ys* is part of *x* and every part of *x* overlaps some of the *ys*.

⁹ I restrict the domain of truth-makers to minimal truth-makers and features to fundamental features. Armstrong writes: 'If *T* is a minimal truthmaker for *p*, then you cannot subtract anything from *T* and the remainder still be a truthmaker for *p*' (D. M. Armstrong, *Truth and Truthmakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 19-20). David Lewis writes of natural properties: 'Sharing of them makes for qualitative similarity, they carve at the joints, they are intrinsic, they are highly specific, the sets of their instances are *ipso facto* not entirely miscellaneous, there are only just enough of them to characterise things completely and without redundancy' (David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 60).

¹⁰ See David Lewis, *Plurality*, pp. 61-2.

¹¹ See Augustine, *Trinity*, 5.11.

Platonic form is located at any place something that participates in it is located? Participation consists in a form causing an entity to be like it in a certain respect. But if there can be likeness at a distance and if there can be direct causation at a distance, which it seems there can, it also seems there can be directly causing to be like at a distance.

Fourthly, perhaps God is everywhere because the immanent universal of being is everywhere and God is such a universal. Any immanent universal is wholly located where its instances are – it's not partly located at different places by having different parts at its different instances. But if there are immanent universals at all, why think there's a universal of being? One should posit a universal only if it accounts for non-essential similarity or difference among particulars. Otherwise, the particulars themselves can, all by themselves, account for such similarity or difference. Of necessity, however, any two particulars, no matter how much they might otherwise differ, resemble in respect of being and so do not differ in that respect. So there's no non-essential similarity or difference among particulars here. Furthermore, one should posit a universal only if it is a determinate and not also a determinable of any determinate. Having a determinate necessitates having any determinable of that determinate. So what makes it true that a predicate for that determinate is true of a particular also makes it true that a predicate for any determinable of that determinate is true of that particular. So there's no need to posit, in addition to the determinate, a further determinable universal. Having any other universal necessitates having any universal of being. So what makes it true that a predicate for any other universal is true of a particular also makes it true that a predicate for any universal of being is true of that particular. So there's no need to posit, in addition to other universals, a further universal of being. And so there's no good reason to posit a universal of being and indeed good reason not to.

Fifthly, perhaps God is everywhere because the maximal fusion of duplicate tropes of being is everywhere and God is such a fusion. Any trope is wholly located where its instance is. But any fusion of different tropes is only partly located at different places by having different parts at its different instances. But if there are tropes at all, why think there are tropes of being? One should posit a trope only if it provides a truthmaker for a true non-essential predication. Otherwise, the entity itself provides the truthmaker. Of necessity, however, any entity *is*. So there's no non-essential predication here. Every entity already makes it true that that entity *is*. So there's no need to posit, in addition to that entity, a trope

of being. But if there are no tropes of being, there's no maximal fusion of such tropes either. So there's no good reason to posit tropes of being and indeed good reason not to. So it seems there's no good reason to think that God is omnipresent because God is the feature of being.

IV. SUBSTANCES AND ACCIDENTS

Perhaps God is everywhere because every place is in God and anything some place is in is located there. Aristotle, in *Categories*, makes a distinction between substance and accident: no substance is in anything else as a subject (e.g. an individual human or horse), but every accident is in something else as a subject (e.g. an individual knowledge is in a soul; an individual white is in a body), where an entity is in something as a subject just if it is in that subject, not as a part, and can't exist separately from that subject.¹² J. L. Ackrill, in his notes on *Categories*, interprets this as 'A is 'in' B (in the technical sense) if and only if (a) one could naturally say in ordinary language either that A is in B or that A is of B or that A belongs to B or that B has A (or that ...), and (b) A is not a part of B, and (c) A is inseparable from B'.¹³ Moreover, Aristotle lists ten categories of things that are said of another: the first is substance; the other nine are accidents, which include where (or place).¹⁴ No place is a proper part of God, for God is simple. And no place could exist without God, for God creates and sustains every place and nothing God creates and sustains could exist without God. Could one naturally say in ordinary language that every place is in God, or etc.? It seems not – at least, not in the sense that some accident is in some substance. Nonetheless, we now consider two forms of the proposal that every place is in God in the sense that an accident is in a substance: the Berkeleyan view that every place is an idea in God, and the Spinozistic view that every place is a mode in God.

Sixthly, perhaps God is everywhere because every place is an idea in God and anything some place is in is located there. Berkeley argues that there are only minds and their ideas. There are many finite minds but only one infinite mind: God. Berkeley argues that every physical object

¹² See Aristotle, 'Categories', in *Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. by J. L. Ackrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), ch.2.

¹³ See J. L. Ackrill, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, p. 74.

¹⁴ See Aristotle, 'Categories', ch.4.

is an idea in God.¹⁵ Moreover, he argues that every place is a physical object.¹⁶ It follows that every place is an idea in God. But even if every place is an idea in God, why think that God is located at every place? I return to this presently.

Seventhly, perhaps God is everywhere because every place is a mode in God and anything some place is in is located there. Spinoza argues that there's only one substance: God (or Nature), and so everything else is either an attribute or mode of that substance.¹⁷ Descartes' thought provides the proper background for Spinoza's thought here. Descartes thinks that there are only substances, attributes, and modes. A substance is anything that depends on nothing else for its existence; in this sense, he thinks there's only one substance: God. In a derivative sense, a substance is anything that needs only God's concurrence to exist; in this other sense, he thinks there are substances of only two kinds: mind and body.¹⁸ Descartes thinks that any attribute or mode is a feature of some substance: any attribute is a highest determinable; any mode is a determinate of some attribute. Finally, Descartes thinks that every substance has only one principal attribute and that there are principal attributes of only two kinds: thought and extension.¹⁹ Spinoza follows Descartes in many ways but departs in many others. Spinoza claims that there's only one substance, which has every possible attribute and so has thought and extension.²⁰ Spinoza defines the word 'God' as an infinite being, that is, a substance that has infinite attributes, by which he means that it has every possible attribute.²¹ Finally, Spinoza claims, like Descartes, that matter is space and so every place is a body, but claims, unlike Descartes, that every body and so place is a mode in God.²² But even if every place is a mode in God, why think that God is located at every place?

¹⁵ George Berkeley, 'Principles of Human Knowledge', [1710] in *Philosophical Works*, ed. by M. R. Ayers (London: Everyman, 1975), §1-4, 'Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous', [1713] in *Works*, §230-1.

¹⁶ George Berkeley, 'Principles', §116-17.

¹⁷ Note that, on Spinoza's concept of God, God is not a person.

¹⁸ René Descartes, 'Principles of Philosophy', [1644] in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol.1, trans. by John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), §51-2.

¹⁹ René Descartes, 'Principles', §53.

²⁰ Benedictus de Spinoza, 'Ethics', [1655] in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol.1, trans. by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Prop.14.

²¹ Benedictus de Spinoza, 'Ethics', Def.6.

²² Benedictus de Spinoza, 'Ethics', Prop.15.Note.

The initial argument went like this: every place is in God, anything some place is in is located there, so God is everywhere. But there are two relevant senses of the word 'in' here. The first is the sense in which an accident is in a substance. The second is the sense in which one place is in another place. It seems the first occurrence of 'in' in the argument uses the first sense, but the second occurrence uses the second sense, and so the argument equivocates. Being an accident is one thing; being located in is another. There's no reason to think the first implies the second. So, even if every place is an idea or mode in God, it seems there's no good reason to think that God is omnipresent because every place is in God in the sense in which an accident is in a substance.

V. THE NULL INDIVIDUAL

Eighthly, perhaps God is everywhere because the null individual is everywhere and God is the null individual. As the null set is a subset of every set, so, some have suggested, the null individual is a part of everything.²³ And the null individual is everywhere because it is part of every place and anything that is part of some place is located there. Suppose the null individual exists. What's it like? First, there is at most one such individual. Suppose, for *reductio*, there are at least two. Then each is part of the other. But parthood is anti-symmetric: for any x and y , if x is part of y , and if y is part of x , then $x=y$. So they are identical. So, by *reductio*, there aren't at least two. Secondly, the null individual is a simple. The null individual is a part of everything. So any part of the null individual is such that the null individual is part of it. So, by the anti-symmetry of parthood, any part of the null individual is identical to the null individual. So the null individual has no proper parts. Thirdly, the null individual is the only simple. The null individual is a proper part of everything else. So everything else is not a simple.

Why think such a thing exists? There are reasons for.²⁴ But it seems the reasons against outweigh them. First, it seems some things are disjoint, i.e. don't overlap. For example, it seems we are disjoint. If you think we share some universal as a common part, pick two maximally dissimilar things that share no universal as a common part. If, however,

²³ See David Lewis, *Parts of Classes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 10-13. Lewis rejects this suggestion.

²⁴ See Hud Hudson, 'Confining Composition', *The Journal of Philosophy* 103 (2006), 631-51.

the null individual exists, no two things are disjoint. Secondly, it seems something has proper parts that are disjoint. Consider two plausible supplementation principles. The strong supplementation principle says:

(SS) For any x and y , if x is not part of y , some z is such that z is part of x and z is disjoint from y .

The weak supplementation principle says:

(WS) For any x and y , if x is a proper part of y , some z is such that z is a proper part of y and z is disjoint from x .

It seems that at least one of these principles is true. Suppose, though, that the null individual exists. Then, as seen above, no two things are disjoint. So nothing has proper parts that are disjoint. So (WS) is false. But, since (SS) implies (WS), (SS) is also false. So if the null individual exists, each supplementation principle is false. Thirdly, it seems that there isn't only one simple: either there is less or more than one simple. Perhaps there are immaterial simples: souls and angels. Or perhaps there are material simples: quarks and electrons. In either case, there is more than one simple. If, though, the null individual exists, there's only one simple. Fourthly, say an object is gunky just if every part of it has a proper part.²⁵ If the null individual exists, no object is gunky because every object has some part that is simple (viz. the null individual). But say an object is quasi-gunky just if every non-null part of it has a non-null proper part. And consider the following very weak supplementation principle:

(WS') For any x and y , if x is a proper part of y , some z is such that z is a proper part of y and z is distinct from x .

If the null individual exists and (WS') is true, then every object is quasi-gunky. Suppose the null individual exists. The null individual is quasi-gunky because it has no non-null part. Now consider some non-null object a . a has some non-null part (namely, itself). And every non-null part of a has a null proper part. But, by (WS'), no non-null part of a has only one proper part. So, by (WS'), every non-null part of a has a non-null proper part. So every non-null object is quasi-gunky. So if the null individual exists and (WS') is true, then every object is quasi-gunky. It seems, though, that (WS') is true but not every object is quasi-gunky. Fifthly, if the null individual is located at every place, then anything else

²⁵ See David Lewis, *Parts*, p. 20.

is partly located at every place because anything else has a proper part that is located at every place. It seems, though, that something is neither located nor partly located at every place. So there's good reason to think that the null individual doesn't exist.

In any case, why think that the null individual is everywhere? The null individual is part of every place. But why think that anything that is part of some place is located there? Being part of is one thing. Being located at is another. So, even if the null individual exists, it seems there's no good reason to think the null individual is everywhere.

VI. THE WORLD, SPACE, AND EMBODIMENT

Ninthly, perhaps God is everywhere because the world or space is everywhere and God is the world or space. By 'the world' I mean *the fusion of all and only substances*. By 'a space' I mean *a fusion of all and only spatially related places*. There's more than one substance and there are different places spatially related to each other. So the world and space are composites. God, however, is simple. So God is neither the world nor space. But perhaps God is everywhere because everything embodied in an entity is present where that entity is and God is embodied in the physical world or space. By 'the physical world' I mean *the fusion of all and only physical substances*. One might think that every embodied human person is an immaterial simple humanly embodied in a human organism. Suppose that's right. Then to be embodied is for there to be distinctive pairs of active and passive causal powers between the person and the organism. On the one hand, the person causally affects the organism because the person has an active causal power to affect the organism, which has a corresponding passive causal power to be affected by the person. On the other hand, the organism causally affects the person because the organism has an active causal power to affect the person, who has a corresponding passive causal power to be affected by the organism. So such embodiment involves pairs of powers for distinctive causal interaction. This causal interaction is a many-splendored thing. In the human case, the organism causes perceptual experiences and bodily sensations and the person intentionally acts through the organism. So suppose God is embodied in the physical world. Then there are distinctive pairs of active and passive causal powers between God and the physical world. God causally affects the physical world and the physical world

causally affects God. Perhaps the physical world causes God to have perceptual experiences and bodily sensations and God intentionally acts through the physical world. But why think that any immaterial simple person is located where any material substance that embodies it is located? Of course, when a person is humanly embodied, there is a peculiarly intimate association between the person and organism so that it is perfectly acceptable to attribute mental features of the person to the organism and also physical features of the organism to the person. It is perfectly acceptable to say, even if you are a dualist, that you can see yourself in the mirror or that you can hold your child in your arms, even though, strictly speaking, you can only see or hold a physical object. Roderick Chisholm says:

Speaking in a loose and popular sense, I may attribute to myself certain properties of my gross macroscopic body. (And speaking to a filling station attendant I may attribute certain properties of my automobile to myself: 'I'm down there on the corner of Jay Street without any gasoline.' The response needn't be: 'How, then, can you be standing here?' One might say that the property of being down there is one I have 'borrowed' from my automobile.)²⁶

But, though this helps us see how it might be acceptable to say and so true in some loose sense that some immaterial simple is located where some material substance is, it doesn't help us see how this could be true in the strict sense. So it doesn't help us see how it could be true that God is located where the physical world is.

Finally, perhaps God is everywhere just because. There's no explanation. It's a brute fact.²⁷ One should, of course, posit as few brute facts as possible. And that already counts against the view. I can't be sure, however, that I've considered every possible view according to which God is strictly everywhere. So I now directly argue that God is strictly aspatial.

²⁶ Roderick Chisholm, 'Which Physical Thing Am I? An Excerpt from "Is There a Mind-Body Problem?"' [1978] in *Metaphysics: the Big Questions*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 294.

²⁷ This is how I interpret John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, [1690] ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 2.15, Isaac Newton, 'De Gravitatione', [1685] in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Andrew Janiak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 25-6, 'The Principia', [1687], in *Writings*, p. 91, and Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, [1704] ed. by Ezio Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 33-5.

VII. GOD IS STRICTLY ASPATIAL

If God is strictly everywhere, what follows? Hud Hudson, who provides one of the best discussions on the metaphysics of location, defines four ways for a substance to be located at a spatial region: pertension, entension, spanning, and multiple location:²⁸

- (L1) 'x is entirely located at r' =_{df} x is located at r and x is located at no region disjoint from r.
- (L2) 'x is wholly located at r' =_{df} every part of x is located at r.
- (L3) 'x is partly located at r' =_{df} x has a proper part entirely located at r.
- (L4) 'x pertends' =_{df} x is entirely located at some composite region, r, and for any proper sub-region of r, r*, x is partly located at r*.
- (L5) 'x entends' =_{df} x is wholly and entirely located at some composite region, r, and for any proper sub-region of r, r*, x is wholly located at r*.
- (L6) 'x spans' =_{df} x is wholly and entirely located at exactly one composite region, r, and no part of x is located at any proper sub-region of r.
- (L7) 'x is multiply located' =_{df} x is located at more than one region and x is not located at the fusion of the regions at which x is located.

Hudson claims that the predicate 'is located at' is primitive, that the location relation the predicate expresses is fundamental, and that any substance that bears the relation to some region completely fills that region, but perhaps not conversely.²⁹ Suppose there's a table in my office. First, at which regions is the table *entirely* located? It is located at some table-shaped region *T*. And it is located at no region disjoint from *T*. So, by (L1), the table is *entirely* located at only *T*. Secondly, at which regions is the table *wholly* located? It is located at *T*. But no proper part of it is located at *T*. So, by (L2), the table is not *wholly* located at *T*. What about other regions? If the table is located at no proper sub-region of *T*, then, by (L2), the table is *wholly* located at no region. But suppose the table

²⁸ See Hud Hudson, *The Metaphysics of Hyperspace* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 99-103. I delete reference to 'space-time' and replace 'non-point-sized' with 'composite'. For a similar list, see Josh Parsons, 'Theories of Location', *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 3 (2007), 201-232.

²⁹ See Hud Hudson, *Metaphysics*, pp. 98-99, 102-103.

is located at every sub-region of T . For any proper sub-region of T , T^* , the table has a proper part not located at T^* . For example, if some leg is located at some proper sub-region of T , T^* , another leg is not located at T^* . So even if the table is located at every sub-region of T , then, again, by (L2), the table is *wholly* located at no region. So if the table is located at only T , or if the table is located at every sub-region of T , by (L2), the table is *wholly* located at no region. Thirdly, at which regions is the table *partly* located? The table has proper parts entirely located at proper sub-regions of T . If for any proper sub-region of T , T^* , the table has a proper part entirely located at T^* , then, by (L3), the table is *partly* located at every proper sub-region of T . Finally, if for any proper sub-region of T , T^* , the table is partly located at T^* , then, by (L4), the table pertends.

What about God? Suppose God is strictly everywhere: God is located at every region. First, at which regions is God *entirely* located? Suppose some region M is maximal: every region is a sub-region of M .³⁰ Then God is located at every sub-region of M . But, since no region is disjoint from M , God is located at no region disjoint from M . So, by (L1), God is *entirely* located at only M . So if some region is maximal, God is *entirely* located at only it. And suppose no region is maximal: every region has a proper super-region.³¹ Then for any region, there's some region disjoint from it. So for any region R at which God is located, God is also located at some region disjoint from R . So, though God is located at every region, by (L1), God is *entirely* located at no region. So if no region is maximal, God is *entirely* located at no region and so, by (L4), (L5), and (L6), God neither pertends, nor entends, nor spans. Secondly, at which regions is God *wholly* located? God is located at every region. And God is simple and so has no proper parts. So, vacuously, every proper part of God is located at every region. So, by (L2), God is *wholly* located at every region. Thirdly, at which regions is God *partly* located? Again, God is simple and

³⁰ There is at most one maximal region. Suppose, for *reductio*, there are at least two. Then each is a sub-region of the other. But being a sub-region is anti-symmetric: for any x and y , if x is a sub-region of y , and if y is a sub-region of x , then $x=y$. So they are identical. So, by *reductio*, there aren't at least two.

³¹ A space is any fusion of all and only spatially related regions. Suppose it must be that the sub-regions of any region are spatially related. And suppose there's more than one space. Then, for a different reason, no region is maximal. Even if the fusion of the spaces exists, the fusion isn't a region. If, though, a region is any fusion of regions, and if for any regions there's a fusion of them, and if there could be more than one space, then there could be some region with spatially unrelated sub-regions.

so has no proper parts. So, by (L3), God is *partly* located at no region. Fourthly, does God pretend? Suppose some region *M* is maximal. If *M* is simple, no region is composite and so, by (L4), God doesn't pretend. But, presumably, *M* is composite. And if *M* is composite, *M* has proper sub-regions. Since God is simple and so has no proper parts, God has no proper parts located at any proper sub-region of *M* and so, by (L4), God doesn't pretend. Henceforth, I assume that any maximal region is composite and so has proper sub-regions. So God doesn't pretend. Fifthly, does God entend? Suppose some region *M* is maximal. Then, since God is *wholly* located at every sub-region of *M*, God entends. So if God is everywhere, God entends everywhere. Sixthly, does God span? Suppose some region *M* is maximal. Then, since *M* has proper sub-regions and since God is located at every sub-region of *M*, by (L6), God doesn't span. So God doesn't span. Seventhly, is God multiply located? Since there is more than one region and God is located at every region, God is located at more than one region. But is God located at the fusion of the regions at which God is located? God is located at every region. So does the fusion of the regions at which God is located exist? And if it does, is the fusion itself a region? If some region is maximal, then the fusion of the regions at which God is located exists and is a region and so, by (L7), God isn't multiply located. But if no region is maximal, then the fusion of the regions at which God is located either doesn't exist or isn't a region and so, by (L7), God is multiply located. So, God neither pretends nor spans. If, though, God is everywhere and if some region is maximal, then God entends everywhere but isn't multiply located. And if God is everywhere and if no region is maximal, then God is multiply located everywhere but doesn't entend. So could God entend or be multiply located everywhere?

There are two plausible principles, each of which conflicts with the claim that God entends or is multiply located everywhere:

(P1) Every spatial substance is material.³²

(P2) No spatial substance is located at different regions at once.

If either of these principles is correct, God is aspatial. I now consider each principle in turn.

³² Cf. Boethius, who says that, 'Things which are incorporeal are not in space' is a claim self-evident only to the learned: '*Quomodo Substantiae*', in *The Theological Tractates*, 1.18-27.

Every Spatial Substance is Material

By (P1), every spatial substance is material. But God is immaterial. So if (P1) is true, God is aspatial. But why think (P1) is true? Here is an argument. Suppose some substance is spatial. Then it is located at some region *R*. *R* has spatial geometrical, topological, and metrical features. Call the conjunction of these features its 'shape'.³³ Any substance located at *R* has the same shape as *R* does. Otherwise, the substance wouldn't fit into *R*. For example, if *R* is spherical, closed, and has a diameter of one meter, then any substance located at *R* is also spherical, closed, and has a diameter of one meter. Any substance, however, that has a shape is material because any shape is a physical feature and any substance that has a physical feature is material.³⁴

No spatial substance is located at different regions at once

By (P2), no spatial substance is located at different regions at once. There are different regions. But if God is spatial, God is located at different regions at once. So if (P2) is true, God is aspatial. But why think (P2) is true? It might seem that any substance extended in space is located at different regions at once. Isn't the table in my office located at some table-shaped region *T* and every sub-region of *T*? Perhaps there's some sense in which the table is located at more than one region. Recall, however, that I am assuming that the location relation is fundamental. Any substance that is so located at some region completely fills that region. And any substance so located has only one shape, which any region at which it is located determines. This is part of the role any fundamental location relation plays. So the table is located at only *T*. Otherwise, it would have more than one shape. And otherwise, the table and its proper parts would be co-located. For any proper sub-region of *T*, *T** at which some proper part of the table is located, the table and that part are co-located at *T**. In what sense, then, if any, is the table located at every sub-region of *T*? The table, as I said, is located at no *proper* sub-region of *T*. But it is *partly* located at every *proper* sub-region of *T*. So the sense in which

³³ See Kris McDaniel, 'No Paradox of Multi-Location', *Analysis* 63 (2003), 310.

³⁴ Each region itself has a shape and so has a physical feature and so is material. If regions are substances, and if regions are distinct from their occupants, then regions and their occupants are distinct but co-located material substances. Even if this is so, however, regions and their occupants are substances of very different kinds, and I don't object, in principle, to co-location of distinct material substances if the substances are of very different kinds.

the table is located at every sub-region of T is that it is either located or partly located at every sub-region of T . That takes care of ordinary material composite substances. Perhaps, though, not every spatial substance is ordinary. On some views of quantum theory, for example, a single photon can be located in two regions at once.³⁵ So if you think for this reason that a single substance is located at different regions at once, here's another but related principle:

(P2') No spatial substance is located at different regions with different shapes at once.

(P2') allows for the possibility that a single substance is located at different regions at once so long as those regions have the same shape. But (P2') still implies that God is aspatial. There are, of course, different regions with different shapes. But if God is spatial, God is located at every region at once. So if God is spatial, God is located at different regions with different shapes at once. So if (P2') is true, God is aspatial. But why think (P2') is true? Here's an argument. Suppose some spatial substance is located at different regions with different shapes. Every spatial substance has the shape of any region at which it is located. So the substance has different shapes at once, which is impossible. Nothing, for example, can be both square and circular at once. So no spatial substance is located at different regions with different shapes at once.

You might object that it isn't any region at which a spatial substance is located but rather any region at which it is *entirely* located that determines shape. After all, it is the region at which the table is *entirely* located that determines the table's shape. So if God extends everywhere, God is *entirely* located at only one region and so has only one shape, and if God is multiply located everywhere, God is *entirely* located at no region and so has no shape.

But this won't do. Every spatial substance has a shape. And if God is spatial, God has a shape. So the fact that if God is multiply located, God is *entirely* located at no region is a problem for the view that *entire* location determines shape. It is true that the region at which the table is *entirely* located determines the table's shape. But this is only because the region at which the table is *entirely* located is also the region at which the table is located *simpliciter*. There is nothing special in itself about the region,

³⁵ See Josh Parsons, 'Entension', available at: <<http://www.joshparsons.net/draft/entension2/entension2.pdf>> [accessed 16/05/2016].

if any, at which a substance is *entirely* located. Suppose some photon is located at only two point-sized regions P and P' at once. The photon has a point-sized shape: the same in every point-sized region at which it is located. But since the photon is located at only P and P' , and since P and P' are disjoint, the photon is *entirely* located at neither P nor P' and so the photon is *entirely* located at no region. So the photon has a shape but is *entirely* located at no region. The regions that determine shape are the regions at which a substance is located *simpliciter*. So, whether or not God extends or is multiply located, if God is located at different regions with different shapes, God has different shapes, which is impossible.

You might object that it's not impossible to have different shapes at once. And there are a number of proposals you might offer at this point. If some substance has different shapes at different regions at once, you might either divide the having relation or divide the features to remove the apparent contradiction. Suppose God is located at a square-shaped region S and a circle-shaped region C and so God is square and circular at once. First, you might divide the having relation: God bears different having relations to different regions at once. So God bears *having being square at* to S , and bears *having being circular at* to C . Secondly, you might divide the having relation in a different way: God bears different having relations to different features at once. So God bears *having at S to being square*, and bears *having at C to being circular*. Thirdly, you might divide features: God has different features at once. So God has the feature of *being square at S* and the feature of *being circular at C*.

But this won't do either. Suppose some spatial substance is located at some region R and so has some shape S . I can allow that it bears having being S at R , that it bears having at R being S , and that it has being S at R . But I insist that the spatial substance also has being S *simpliciter* and can't have another shape *simpliciter* at the same time. If you deny this, you deny that the spatial substance has any shape in itself. But if we know what shape is at all (and I think we do), we know that any substance that has a shape has a shape in itself.³⁶ I can also allow some loose sense in which a spatial substance has different shapes at once. In some loose sense, as said before, the table is located at every sub-region of some table-shaped region T because the table is located or partly located at every such sub-region. And so in that same sense, the table has different shapes at different regions at once because it has the shapes

³⁶ Cf. David Lewis, *Plurality*, p. 204.

of the different sub-regions of *T*. But in no strict sense can some spatial substance have different shapes at once.

VIII. GOD IS LOOSELY OMNIPRESENT

So, plausibly, God is strictly aspatial. In what sense then, if any, is God omnipresent? I suggest, following Aquinas, that God is loosely omnipresent in that God directly causes every place to exist because God creates and sustains every place. There's a peculiarly intimate association between God and every place and what makes for that association is, among other things, God's activity. Presumably, there are many ways in which there's a peculiarly intimate association between God and every place. But one of these ways is that God directly causes each place to exist.

Suppose that my wife and I video call each other by phone. Each of us at the time sees and hears what the other does and each of us converses with the other. Suppose a friend innocent to the marvels of technology overhears me apparently speaking to someone. Naturally concerned for my sanity, he asks: 'to whom are you speaking?' I reply: 'to my wife?' My friend, looking around and seeing no one, asks: 'where's your wife?' I point to the phone's screen or speaker and say 'she's right here'.

You might object to the example. The screen displays an image that represents my wife. And the speaker emits a sound that represents my wife's voice. So perhaps when I point to the screen or speaker and say 'she's right here', I point to the location represented, and not the screen or speaker's location. But suppose due to technical error I temporarily neither see nor hear my wife because the screen and speaker is not working. But I know that my wife sees and hears me on the other end and so I carry on talking. In that case, if my friend asks: 'where's your wife?' I can still point to the phone and say: 'she's right here'. In this case neither the screen nor speaker represents my wife or her voice. So I don't point to any represented location. Rather I point to the location of the camera or microphone, which causes my wife to see and hear me. And in the first case, I think it's clear that I needn't intend to point to the represented location. I could point to the screen or speaker and intend to point to the screen or speaker's location. So it's natural to say, when we video call each other, that each of us is where the other is. Of course, neither of us is where the other is in the strict sense but each of us is where the other is in some loose sense. And note that the truth of these claims doesn't depend

on both of us knowing about the video call. I could accidentally video call my spouse, learn only later on that she was watching and listening the whole time, and so judge that she was there the whole time though I didn't know it then (cf. Gn. 28:16). My wife, as Chisholm says, borrows the property of being here from my phone because there's a peculiarly intimate association between her and the phone. The phone causes her to see and hear what goes on here. And my wife causes an image to be displayed and a sound to be emitted here. But if, in the example, my wife is loosely here because she causes the phone to be some way, then, all the more, God is loosely everywhere because God directly causes every place to exist.

There's a further benefit to considering how God's activity generates a loose sense in which God is omnipresent. There are different modes of God's activity. God acts in all places. But God acts in different places differently. For example, God may cause a miracle to occur in one place but not another. If, though, God acts in different places differently, this can generate a loose sense in which God is in some places in a way God isn't in another. Consider some of the ways that Jewish and Christian scripture speaks of God as being present. God appears to Abraham when three men visit (Gn. 18:1-2). God wrestles with Jacob (Gn. 32:24-33). God appears to Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:2). God goes before his people in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21-22). The glory of God rests on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:16; cf. Ex. 19:17). The glory of God passes before Moses (Ex. 33:19-23). The glory of God fills the tent of meeting (Ex. 40:34). The commander of God's army appears to Joshua (Jos. 5:13-15). The angel of God appears to Gideon and then Samson's mother (Jg. 6:11-24, 13:2-23). The glory of God fills the temple of Jerusalem (1 K. 8:10-11). God passes by Elijah and is found in a still small voice (1 K. 19:11-12). God calls Isaiah in a vision in the temple (Is. 6). God calls Ezekiel in a vision by the river Chebar (Ezk. 1-3). The Father speaks from heaven and the Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove and rests on him at his baptism (Mt. 3:13; cf. Mk. 6:17, Lk. 3:21). The Father speaks from heaven at the transfiguration of Jesus (Mt. 17:1; cf. Mk. 9:2, Lk. 9:28). With tongues as of fire that come to rest on the disciples, the Spirit fills them on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:1-4). And, finally, in a way that differs in kind from the others, the Word, who is God, becomes incarnate (Jn. 1:1-18). In all these examples, it seems there is a sense in which God is in one place in a way in which God is not

in other places. So the loose sense in which God is omnipresent can also help us see a loose sense in which God is in some places in a way that differs from the way God is in other places.³⁷

³⁷ I presented earlier drafts to the Tyndale Fellowship, British Society for Philosophy of Religion, the Society of Christian Philosophers, and the American Catholic Philosophical Association. I thank Daniel Hill, Brian Leftow, Michelle Panchuk, Tim Pawl, Alexander Pruss, and Charles Taliaferro for comments.