

throughout the whole culture. Simon warns that we should be on our guard, lest the evils of these days provoke us into a violent opposite reaction in which we in our turn turn natural law theory into an "ideology" with which to bludgeon to death the opposite regnant "ideology," thereby becoming victims of the disease which we are struggling to cure.

The constraints of space have permitted touching only a few of the gems in this treasure trove of philosophic

wisdom. There are so many penetrating insights, such profound understanding of perennial truths, all presented in a style which is characterized by its freshness, clarity and elegance, that one can say with confidence that this book will be welcomed, and indeed cherished, by all students of natural law.

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TIME AND ETERNITY. By Brian Leftow. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991. Pp. xii, 377.

Up until fifteen years or so ago, one would have had to look long and hard to find an analytic philosopher of religion willing to defend the bare coherence of the Platonism-influenced conception of God as timeless, much less to deem it compatible with the claims concerning God's interaction with his creation found in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. With the publication of Stump's and Kretzmann's seminal essay, "Eternity."¹ however, a growing number of philosophers have begun to give the thesis of God's atemporality a more sympathetic and extended hearing. Professor Leftow's book is by far the most sophisticated and detailed treatment of the topic to have emerged from this wave of renewed interest, and it undoubtedly will be the point of departure of discussion for some time to come. Leftow exhibits a familiarity with a wide range of relevant sources—from the historical contributions of Augustine, Boethius, and Anselm to contemporary studies in

the philosophy of time—in developing and assessing views on the intrinsic nature of a timeless eternity and the possibility of relations of simultaneity between it and the spatiotemporal universe. In later chapters, he takes up a number of further issues, including the following: Could a timeless being have the essential features of personhood, and participate in interpersonal dialogue with temporal entities? Are there irreducibly "tensed" facts that a timeless being could not know? How does the atemporal conception ultimately bear on the problem of freedom and foreknowledge?

Given the impressive scope of the book, it is inevitable that the informed reader will desire a more sustained discussion of some of these later matters (particularly, I think, the question of timeless personhood). Even here, however, the author is to be commended for providing ample references to writings taking opposing positions, so that the nonexpert seeking further discussion is given an

¹ *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1981), 429-58.

evenhanded introduction to the contemporary literature. The only criticism of a highly general nature that I have concerns style, rather than substance. I found the exposition rather difficult to follow in some places, and this was exacerbated by a certain degree of repetitiveness. It is my impression that the work improved a fair bit in this regard in the later chapters.

The first particular item that I want to discuss is Leftow's treatment of intrinsic nature of a timeless eternity. Although his discussion of this matter is richly detailed, space permits only some very brief comments. He begins with Boethius' characterization of eternity in the *Consolation of Philosophy* and *De Trinitate* and then takes up the interpretation and defense of Boethius given by Stump and Kretzmann in their original "Eternity" article and in subsequent elaborations.² On the Stump-Kretzmann view, eternity is an atemporal duration, unbounded and encompassing of time and yet absolutely indivisible in that it contains no parts or distinct positions along its continuum. Although Leftow agrees that Boethian eternity is a duration, he criticizes Stump and Kretzmann for failing to provide an adequate defense of this interpretation. Following Paul Fitzgerald,³ he claims that the passages that they cite, which employ such terms as "enduring," "remaining," "limitless," and "fullness" in depicting eternity, may be interpreted in either of two ways: that eternity is a duration *in se*, or that it is so merely *quoad nos*. In the latter case, God will

in fact exist "in a single unextended *nunc stans* while all times goes by" (p. 116). I believe this criticism is misplaced, however, since the alternative it suggests is a spurious one. Once we grant the claim of God's eternal co-existence with all of time, we *thereby* grant durational extension. It is simply incoherent that a strictly durationless entity bear real relations to the whole of a duration. Consider the center-point-of-a-circle metaphor to which critics of the eternity view often point in claiming that the latter really amounts to a conception of God's existence as analogous to a temporal instant. Here the fact that God's life is represented by a point while the existence of the universe is represented by a circle is not meant to depict their relative durationality, but rather their respective capacities for divisibility (in addition, of course, to God's co-presence with all of time). Imagine the center point as persistently lit up (light representing present actuality) while a lighted point slowly makes it way around the darkened circle (representing the feature of real temporal "becoming"). This upgraded version of the metaphor perhaps makes clear the implication for durationality of co-existence with a temporal extension.

But while such an indirect route is sufficient to establish a point of interpretation, it is another matter directly to defend the possibility of an atemporal duration. Fitzgerald has recently voiced the objection of many in claiming that any true duration (or, more generally, extension) must contain distinct positions, and, conse-

² "Atemporal Duration," *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987), 214-19; "Divine Action and Awareness," forthcoming.

³ "Stump and Kretzmann on Time and Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985), 260-69.

quently, distinct parts or subphases. Stump and Kretzmann are undaunted by the fact that their description of eternity fails this requirement. On their view, "atemporal duration is the genuine, paradigmatic duration of which temporal duration is only the moving image," and so it is inappropriate to draw general conditions for durationality from the latter. Leftow criticizes this move, noting that temporal duration is the only sort of which we have experience and so it is obviously what underlies our concept of duration. He urges as a consequence that atemporal duration must share—univocally—at least some of the characteristics of its temporal counterpart if we are to have any basis for claiming that we have got a notion of duration.

I find this objection unconvincing as it stands. While it is certainly true that temporal duration forms the basis of our original concept of duration, I fail to see why metaphysical reflection cannot point us (in a faltering, groping manner) towards the notion of a "fuller" form of it, in which the characteristic features of temporal duration are present only in a dimly *analogical* sense. As Leftow himself notes, a philosophical tradition virtually as old as philosophy itself has claimed that the radically ephemeral nature of the temporal present (and, therefore, the "incompleteness" of temporal existence) ought to prod us in just this way.

Nonetheless, there may be other reasons for supposing that God's eter-

nity does share at least some of the characteristics of temporal duration. Leftow suggests as an alternative to Stump and Kretzmann's approach an account he calls "Quasi-Temporal Eternity" (QTE). On this account, an eternal life contains distinct points that are ordered in a manner analogous to earlier and later moments in time, but with no succession between them (p. 120). One consideration to which Leftow could appeal in advancing this alternative is that it seems we must at least be able to make logical distinctions between 'bits' of God's eternal state of knowing/willing, in order, e.g., to make sense of God's willing some state of affairs to occur at t_2 *because* of what he knows to occur at t_1 .⁴ Leftow argues that recognizing the existence of distinct points along the eternal continuum does not thereby commit one to the existence of distinct subphases or durational parts within the divine life. One of the ways he tries to support this claim is through an analogy with the concept of a chronon, an indivisible minimum unit of temporal duration (p. 141).

Here, then, suggests Leftow, we have a clear notion of a partless duration with points ordered as earlier and later. Although I haven't the space to address these matters here, I will simply note a couple of questions this suggestion raises: Is it plausible to deny that points along a continuum are themselves parts of that continuum? And is the impossibility of dividing time atoms alleged

⁴ Leftow appears to recognize the relevance of this consideration on p. 145. Some simplicity theorists might balk at this, although I believe that refusing to countenance even this much "complexity" in God's cognitive life leads to irresolvable problems. Leftow will be addressing the issue of the divine simplicity in a forthcoming two-volume work entitled *God and Modality*.

by some theorists properly thought of as metaphysical or causal in nature? If only the latter, is the analogy strong enough to support the possibility of a partless eternal extension?⁵ However these matters are to be resolved, though, one wants to know just why Leftow takes it to be important to deny the existence of distinct (although simultaneous) durational parts. As he himself plausibly argues, an eternal entity's life having distinct durational parts does not entail that the entity itself is also parted (and so *prima facie* does not conflict with the thesis of divine simplicity). Given the amount of space Leftow takes up in denying QTE's commitment to durational parts, he should make clearer at the outset just what is at stake.

Leftow also advances a novel suggestion concerning the possibility of relations of simultaneity between time and eternity. Again, the chief rival to his account is the view of Stump and Kretzmann, which posits a *sui generis* relation *between* radically distinct frames of reference ("ET simultaneity"). Leftow argues convincingly (pp. 164-82) that their approach faces some serious, as yet unresolved difficulties. Taking his cue in part from the work of Anselm in *De concordia*, Leftow claims by contrast that we should think of eternity as something like a supertemporal dimension that literally contains tem-

poral entities, so that temporal and eternal events are linked by a relation of *eternal* simultaneity within the one eternal frame of reference. But while all temporal events (past, present, and future) are simultaneous in this reference frame, it does not follow that they are so within any temporal reference frame.

Now, as Leftow recognizes, the only clear manner we have of modelling the claim that one dimension contains another—viewing the corresponding objects and events in terms of coordinate systems of varying numbers of axes—is not available here, since God is thought to exist along the supertemporal, eternal dimension without having a temporal (or spatial) location. But then it is hard to understand the claim that eternity "contains" time.

Leftow offers two, fairly similar, direct arguments for the containment thesis (pp. 215 and 227-8),⁶ a summary statement of the first of which is provided in the following:

. . . all times are in the same direction from eternity, namely, the null temporal direction. But if locations 1 and 2 are equidistant from location 3 in the same direction, locations 1 and 2 are at the same place. Distinct times are not at the same time. So there must be a higher dimension that encompasses time,

⁵ Phil Quinn discusses these matters in connection with Leftow's account in "On the Mereology of Boethian Eternity," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1992, 51-60.

⁶ After giving this argument, Leftow gives some indication (although without explanation) that he may not want to be committed to its acceptability (p. 216). And the second, similar argument appeals only to a (null) *distance* relation between eternity and moments of time, without claiming that there is a *direction* along which eternal and temporal points lie. It is hard to see, though, how he can have one without the other, and so my criticism of the first argument would seem to carry over to the later one.

within which locations 1 and 2 have the same coordinate (p. 215).

Leftow appears to accept the possibility of a second temporal series distinct from our own. But the argument just given seems equally applicable to this sort of case (with the result that discrete temporal series must be embedded within a higher temporal dimension), a consequence that many would take to provide a *reductio* on the validity of Leftow's argument.

Furthermore, the analogy Leftow gives (pp. 213-14) doesn't seem to help much either. According to it, just as our ordinary conceptual scheme fails to capture the true character of the four-dimensional space-time continuum (given the standard interpretation of the Special Theory of Relativity), so that the "invariant facts of space-time 'show up' within our coordinate systems as various spatial and temporal facts," so also "[t]he fact that God and things share the same eternal coordinate 'shows up' within our coordinate systems as the fact that God is wholly present with each time, in some sense at once, and yet these times are not temporally simultaneously" (p. 214).

But there is an important difference here. Consider the common-sense thesis that only what is presently occurring is actual. On our ordinary way of cashing out, we say that there is a single, perspective-independent frame of reference in which the system of presently-occurring events are linked by a relation of simultaneity, and only these events are actual (as distinct from those that

were actual or will be actual). Since STR implies that presentness and simultaneity are framework-relative, it also (given the above thesis) accords the same relative status to actuality. But notice that it requires only a modification of the present-actuality thesis, since there are strict limits to the relativity of simultaneity: if event A is in the causal ancestry of event B, then A and B do not co-occur in any temporal frame of reference. But if Leftow's thesis of the co-occurrence of all events in eternity were correct, we seem to be forced to abandon the present—actuality thesis - with its implication that events future to the present don't exist - altogether (*pace* Leftow's discussion of this case on pp. 233-35).

Needless to say, Leftow's discussion of these issues is far richer than I have been able to convey here with my brief critical remarks. (For instance, he considers and partially develops various alternative routes along the way that may be worth exploring.) And one important part of his discussion that I have had to ignore here is his defense of several arguments for the claim that the God of classical theism *must* be timeless, arguments that defenders of a temporalist conception of God have generally not addressed. I strongly and unreservedly recommend this book to all who have interest in its subject matter.

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