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Panentheisms, Creation and Evil

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Abstract: Can panentheism cope with the problem of evil? This problem is often understood as one for classical theists, who maintain that the cosmos, together with its evils, was created by an all-powerful and benevolent God. For classical theists need to reconcile the world's evils with divine creation. But corresponding problems re-emerge for theologies of both pantheistic and panentheistic kinds. Thus a problem arises for panentheists, with their teachings about a close relation between God and the cosmos. The closer the relation, the more intense the problem. Thus panentheists who regard the world as necessary to or part of God must hold that its evils are likewise necessary to or part of God. I explore in this paper whether panentheism can overcome the corresponding problem. This exploration involves sifting different varieties of panentheism. While for some varieties the problem is insoluble, this turns out to be less so for others, which retain central features of classical theism, while stressing interaction between God and the created world. In particular, grounds will be offered for holding that the version of panentheism put forward by Jürgen Moltmann and by Arthur Peacocke is defensible and can overcome this problem.

Keywords: Panentheism, creation, moral evil, natural evil, contingency, Strict Panentheism, Arthur Peacocke, Jürgen Moltmann, Christopher Southgate, Bethany N. Sollereder

1 Introduction

The problem of evil is a problem not only for classical theism, but for pantheism and for panentheism (in its diverse varieties) as well. The problem for classical theism concerns whether an omnipotent, omniscient and all-good creator could allow both the evils for which human agents are directly responsible, like massacres and wars, and those other evils, like earthquakes and diseases, for which they are not.

But there is also a problem for pantheism, wherein God and the universe are held to be identical; for the evils which form parts of the universe will now be parts of God, and so God can hardly be all-good. There is also the problem that if God is not independent of the universe, then he or she cannot be its creator, and can hardly have the properties of omnipotence and of omniscience, properties which the universe lacks. Pantheism certainly has its own appeal, particularly for evolutionists, as Jürgen Moltmann has made explicit,¹ and has been held in a variety of more-or-less overlapping forms, e.g. those of Spinoza, Schelling and Jeffers.² But in the end commitment to pantheism and to its characteristic implications (such as the impossibility of God existing and the universe not existing) involves a rejection of belief in creation. Besides, as Mark Johnston has argued, 'On the hypothesis that the natural realm is all that there is, talk of God has little point'.³

1 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 212.

2 Levine, "Pantheism", 338-342.

3 Johnston, *Saving God*, 127.

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Particularly with its suggestion that God is present in the world and in every part of it,⁴ panentheism seems more promising, and, at least in the form presented by Peacocke and Moltmann, appears capable of surmounting these problems.⁵ Yet panentheism encounters problems of its own, relevant aspects of which will be appraised below.

For, like pantheism, panentheism is also subject to problems relating to evil, but the nature of the problem varies with the kind of panentheism envisaged. Versions of panentheism for which God is necessarily related to the world, or the divine properties are emergent from natural properties, share in the problems just depicted for pantheism, which put in question whether God can be all-good, while at the same time casting doubt on whether God can be independent enough to be the world's creator. But versions of panentheism for which God is the universal creator and yet immanent in the world and in its processes are subject to a problem similar to that confronted by classical theism, of whether God could allow the existence of the world's evil and of its actual extent.

In this essay, I will consider in turn different varieties of panentheism, with a view to discovering which ones, if any, combine cogency with ability to be reconciled with the world's evils. In order to undertake this investigation, I will begin with Niels Henrik Gregersen's taxonomy of kinds of pantheism, and, using methods characteristic of analytic philosophy, consider in turn what he calls "Strict Panentheism," "Soteriological Panentheism" and "Expressive Panentheism."⁶ I will also consider versions of panentheism for which the world is understood as God's body, and the distinctive panentheism of Jürgen Moltmann (1985)⁷ and Arthur Peacocke (2007)⁸, to see whether, particularly with relation to the problem of evil, any of these versions enhance the case for panentheism. Grounds will be supplied for holding that the kind of panentheism upheld by Moltmann and Peacocke is a viable one, and can overcome this problem.

2 Strict Panentheism

Before introducing Strict Panentheism as a kind or species of panentheism, Gregersen helpfully specifies what all panentheisms have in common (in his view). Informally, he suggests that 'they all share the intuition of a living two-way relation between God and the world, within the inclusive reality of God'.⁹ More formally, he presents a definition of Generic Panentheism, as follows:

1. God contains the world, yet is also more than the world. Accordingly the world is (in some sense) "in God".
2. As contained "in God", the world not only derives its existence from God, but also returns to God, while preserving the characteristics of being a creature. Accordingly, the relations between God and the world are (in some sense) bilateral.¹⁰

The problem, however, as he proceeds to explain, is to make sense of '(in some sense)'. This is purportedly achieved by Strict Panentheism by invoking necessary interdependence. After giving a brief account of the stances of A.N. Whitehead and of Charles Hartshorne, he presents contrasting definitions of Strict Panentheism (glossed as Dipolar Panentheism, after Hartshorne's suggestion that there are two 'poles' in God)¹¹, and of Qualified (Christian) Panentheism. Here are those definitions:

⁴ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 212; Peacocke, *Creation*, 203ff.

⁵ For an overview of panentheism, see Culp, "Panentheism", 2008/2017; for one way of demarcating panentheism from pantheism, see Mullins, "Demarcating Panentheism," 2016, cited with approval by Clayton ("Prospects," 2019), although it would be possible to replace the substance metaphysic assumed by Mullins with a systems metaphysic and still make the same distinction.

⁶ Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," 19-35.

⁷ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, xii, 204-5, 211, and *passim*.

⁸ Peacocke, *All That Is*, 203ff.

⁹ Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Hartshorne, "Reply to My Critics," 614.

Strict (Dipolar) Panentheism Defined.

1. God cannot exist without generating a world, analogous to the way a soul cannot exist without a body; however, God can exist by embodying other worlds than our physical cosmos.
2. It is by a metaphysical necessity that God and world co-exist and co-determine one another, so that God influences the world and temporal experiences flow into the actual nature of God; all that exists necessarily participates in divine life.¹²

And here is Gregersen's contrasting definition of 'Qualified (Christian) Panentheism':

1. While the world cannot exist without God, God could exist without a world; accordingly the soul-body <phraseology> is at most a helpful metaphor for the intimacy of the God-world relation once the world is created out of divine love. (The term in diamond brackets has been supplied by the author for the sake of grammatical completeness.)
2. It is by divine grace that the world is co-determining God, so that temporal events may influence God and creatures share the life of God; all that is redeemed participates in divine life.¹³

These are helpful definitions; but it should at once be added that the Qualified Panentheism of this definition could be embraced by (at least some) Unitarians, Jews and Muslims (and would not, of course, be accepted by all Christians), and so the gloss of "Christian" is misleading. This said, it should rapidly be added that the definition of Qualified Panentheism well captures the traditional theistic stance that while the universe is wholly dependent on God, God could exist independently of the actual world and of any other world.

This stance, however, is precisely what the Strict Panentheist denies; for her/him, there is a two-way necessary dependence between God and one world or another. This is how she/he makes sense of the world being "in" God and *vice versa*.

It will not be possible, within the confines of this essay, to follow through all the implications of the definitions just supplied, let alone which aspects of Generic Panentheism (as here defined) would have been rejected by Thomas Aquinas. (Gregersen in fact argues that it is the second proposition of this definition that Aquinas would have rejected,¹⁴ but limits of space prevent a discussion of this issue here.)

What is relevant here is that Strict Panentheism makes the evils of our actual universe necessarily aspects of God. For while, in theory, God could have been necessarily related to another universe, the actuality of the one in which we live means, in the light of Gregersen's definition, that this is the universe with which God stands in a necessary relation of co-determination. Hence the actual evils within it necessarily determine God, as well as God necessarily determining them.

But this raises insurmountable problems for the acceptability of Strict Panentheism. On the one hand, the world's evils, both those apparently due to the choices of free agents and those 'natural evils' not due to such choices, must be seen as necessary to God. From this it already follows that God cannot be all-good, as believers in creation maintain. Adherents of Strict Panentheism may be prepared to accept all this, but, if so, do so at the heavy cost of foregoing belief in creation. But there are further problems. For in view of the relation between God and the actual universe being a necessary one, God was not free to bring into being a universe with fewer (let alone with none) of these evils; and so God can have little or no freedom in shaping the actual universe. God cannot exist without a universe, or without "creating" whichever universe becomes actual, however evil it turns out to be.

But, this being so, God is not sovereign and cannot be held to be related to the universe as its creator at all, but becomes at best its unfree 'cosmic-explanatory-being' (to use a phrase of Ninian Smart).¹⁵ Since, however, God is supposedly necessarily determined by the universe, as well as the universe by God, there is a circle of explanations from universe to God and back. In other words God cannot even be held to explain

¹² Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," 23.

¹³ Ibid., 23.

¹⁴ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵ Smart, *Philosophers and Religious Truth*.

either the existence or the character of the universe, since (given Strict Panentheism) the apparent theistic explanation of the universe is cyclical, and thus no explanation at all.

A closely related point is that Strict Panentheism fails epistemically because it makes God dependent on the cosmos. Yet some of the central reasons for belief in God include independent divine action bringing about its existence; thus divine creation helps explain why a world which could have had a different character or which might have not existed at all is in fact as it is. So if God is no longer held to be independent of the world, and effectively ceases to have the role of creator, there is far less reason to adhere to belief in God in the first place. Strict Panentheism, in fact, undermines the central epistemological grounds for theistic belief.

There again, for many forms of Strict Panentheism, the divine properties are emergent from natural properties, being determined by them. Thus if the universe is afflicted by suffering and sin, then the divine properties, which are necessarily determined by those of the world, will be likewise afflicted. However “emergence” is understood (and although there are many ways of understanding relations such as “emergence” and “supervenience”), the divine properties will be inescapably besmirched with corresponding properties of the world, given the *necessary* co-determination of God and world inherent in the definition of Strict Panentheism. Strict Panentheism may have seemed to overcome some of the problems traditionally faced by pantheism and some of those encountered by traditional theism. But, given the above reasoning, Strict Panentheism turns out to be in no better a position than either of these stances (pantheism and traditional theism), and arguably to be in a worse position, and one that is at least as unacceptable.

It might at this point be suggested that the divine properties are emergent from the properties of the universe other than the presence of evils (whether humanly generated or not), or that God is constituted by the same range of properties only (and not by evil ones). The divine nature might in consequence still be held to be all-good. But this defensive move is profoundly unsatisfactory. For there is no apparent reason why God should be constituted by one restricted range of the world’s properties rather than by an unrestricted range; and there is no apparent reason why God’s properties should be emergent from a limited range of worldly properties, rather than from the rest, or from worldly properties in their totality. There again, there is no apparent reason why there should be two different relations between God’s properties and those of the universe (that is, with the generality of worldly properties and, differently, with properties embodying evils), and no rationale to explain this difference. Thus the exclusionary character of this defensive move is entirely lacking in justification, and the move therefore collapses.

Supporters of Whitehead, Hartshorne and other process-theologians might here wish to allude to ways in which their theologies in fact cast light on the divine creativity. Peacocke, for example, cites a passage of J.B. Cobb and D.R. Griffin concerning the ideas of Whitehead about God’s ‘initial aim’ for each occasion to illustrate this.¹⁶ Likewise Joseph A. Bracken is sympathetic to Whitehead’s ‘bottom-up’ approach,¹⁷ and to Terrence Deacon’s account of how higher-order systems emerge from lower-order processes.¹⁸ Deacon wisely avoids defining “system” (unlike Bracken: see below), but supplies examples of how systems can be generated and maintained by simpler forces and factors, and by Darwinian evolution. One example is worth quoting here:

Indeed, body temperature regulation is accomplished by a thermostatlike feedback mechanism. But, of course, the optimal temperature for body functions is not an accidental value. This mechanism evolved because this temperature was optimal for the many metabolic processes that ensured health and reproductive success of a long lineage of warm-blooded animals ... In this respect, following a standard neo-Darwinian line of reasoning, we can say that this end wasn’t the product of design. Its end-oriented tendency was produced by accident, and was retained merely because of its serendipitous contribution to the reproduction of organisms happening to exhibit this particular variant.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 53; Peacocke, *Creation*, 211.

¹⁷ Bracken, *The World in the Trinity*; “Panentheism”, 219.

¹⁸ Deacon, *Incomplete Nature*, 216.

¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

Yet, despite his admiration of Deacon's materialist and systems-theory approach, Bracken still maintains a place for a form of top-down causality,²⁰ on the basis of grounds which he quotes from Nancey Murphy and George Ellis, and which I would endorse: "The symmetries and delicate balances we observe in the universe require an extraordinary coherence of conditions and cooperation of laws and effects, suggesting that in some sense they have been purposely designed."²¹ It is worth adding that Bracken's systems-based approach appears, at least initially, capable of sustaining a version of panentheism which would replace the substance-based version advocated by Mullins; hence the earlier qualification to the effect that Mullins' manner of demarcating panentheism from pantheism is not the only possible manner (see note 5).

There again, supporters of Whitehead and other process theologians might alternatively seek to overcome problems about God's relation to the world by claiming that God is unchangeable and transcendent in some respects, but changeable and limited by the world in others,²² despite the apparent contradictions that such claims involve, and that have been argued to count conclusively against panentheism, at least of this type.²³ Hartshorne appears even to solve the problem of theodicy by denying that, in the relevant sense, God is omnipotent.²⁴ The same denial has recently been reached by a different route by Thomas J. Oord. God's love and self-emptying supposedly mean that God is essentially unable to prevent evil.²⁵ However, this raises the issue of whether, lacking omnipotence, God has the power either to create the existing world or any other.

But for present purposes, these contributions can and must be set aside as beside the point. For to the degree that these theologians comply with Strict Panentheism, as defined above, their positions remain indefensible as acceptable understandings of the relation between God as creator and the world as creation. Some of their more constructive thoughts may still be open to combination with other varieties of Panentheism, interpretations of divine creativity included (as Peacocke appears to suggest in the same context); but this makes no difference to the fundamental untenability of their stances.

For the nub of the matter remains that as long as the relation of God and the universe is represented as one of necessity, as Strict Panentheism represents it, then the above problems, concerning evil, concerning creation and concerning the basis of theistic belief persist and must be recognised to prevail. The proposals of Hartshorne and of Oord may be seen to shift the contours of the problem, but serve only to cast doubt on the credibility of creation itself.

However, to be fair to Bracken, it is not clear that this theologian is fully committed to the necessary relation of God and world espoused by Whitehead, despite his general endorsement of Whitehead's overall stance. For Bracken, the material world is a sub-system within the higher system which comprises the Trinity.²⁶ While I am sympathetic to Bracken's emphasis on systems theory, problems remain about how the material world can be understood as a sub-system of the divine life or of God. These problems include the problem that the higher system must surely include the evils that are parts of the sub-system of the material world, as well as the problem that the relations between these systems seem far removed from that of creator and creature. But there is a more fundamental problem for adopting Bracken's stance, to be found in his initial definition of "system".

Bracken writes that "a system is a corporate or socially organised reality whose constituents are momentary self-constituting subjects of experience (actual entities)".²⁷ This definition is an adjusted version of Whitehead's definition of society. But it suffers from the assumption that the momentary entities or subjects of which systems are composed can be understood independently of the medium-term or long-term entities which these momentary entities are held to comprise. Momentary entities must be something like momentary time-slices of (say) plants or pandas or persons, but in fact they cannot be identified or understood independently of (to take the same examples) the plants or the pandas or the persons which they

²⁰ Bracken, "Panentheism", 208, 222-3.

²¹ Murphy and Ellis, *Moral Nature of the Universe*, 57; Bracken, "Panentheism," 224.

²² Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*.

²³ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 83, 88 and 147.

²⁴ Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*.

²⁵ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, 94; *God Can't*, 31.

²⁶ Bracken, "Panentheism", 221.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

are held to constitute. This being so, it emerges that systems theorists of this kind assume or presuppose the independent existence of entities such as plants or pandas or persons in order to mount their definitions or descriptions of systems. So the notion of “system,” understood as Bracken understands it, cannot be treated as metaphysically basic, or as a suitable basis for his system of panentheism. This is not to suggest that other forms of systems theory might not fare better, but it is to suggest that the form of Whiteheadian panentheism put forward by Bracken is insufficiently coherent to present a convincing alternative to Whitehead’s belief in the necessary relations between God and the material world. This criticism is not grounded in assuming a metaphysic of substance, but in the problem of the independent identifiability (or lack of it) of momentary subjects or entities.

Accordingly it is time now to consider other forms of panentheism, in case they can be seen to fare better than panentheism of the Strict kind. It is time to turn from Strict Panentheism to the Generic Panentheism of Gregersen’s definition, and to the two related kinds of panentheism which he proceeds to consider in greater detail.

3 Soteriological Panentheism

Here, the suggestion is that we can be ‘in God’ in a qualitative sense, as “when the playing of a symphony orchestra is so sensitive that each member of the orchestra becomes one of many in the unified experience of the symphony”.²⁸ A persistent problem is whether the relevant concept of relationality with God can be extended to apply to the world as a whole, and to its ‘return’ to the divine life.

The prospects seem brighter (at least for Christians) when Gregersen suggests that the passage about the Logos in the first chapter of the gospel of John be understood to express a divine revelation that permeates creation. If we translate Logos as “pattern”, then this passage can be taken to declare that “every configuration within the world of creation is a specific pattern elicited by the all-pervasive pattern of the Logos”.²⁹ Or better, if we translate “Logos” as “Dialogue”, then the chapter may be read as declaring: “In the beginning was the Dialogue ... and the Dialogue was in God and the Dialogue was God. ... All things came into being through this Dialogue, and without it nothing came into being”.³⁰

Subsequently, though, another passage of John’s gospel is cited as implying that participation in the divine community relates to the future: for Jesus is represented at John 14: 10 as saying that “On that day you will know that I am in the Father and you in me, and I in you”. Here the persistent problem resurfaces; for Christian tradition, fortified by passages like I Corinthians 15: 50 (“Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God”) contends that far from all things can be really united with God. “Is small-mindedness, miserliness, hatred, torture, terror, war <sc. united with God>?” asks Gregersen.³¹ Panentheism, he claims, could not be affirmed from a Christian perspective as a matter of (present) fact, for attunement to God cannot be fulfilled until after the resurrection. Soteriological panentheism thus really amounts to “eschatological panentheism”.³²

Thus moral evil (evils for which conscious agents are responsible) is here treated as an obstacle to (this form of) panentheism. Yet when Paul made his speech at Athens and spoke of God as one “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17: 28), he did not mean that in God we *shall* have our being (at some point in the future), nor that either Athens or Jerusalem or the world was immune from moral evil. Our living in God was to be understood in some other way, concerning, for example, the presence of God’s spirit (or Spirit) in all creation. Indeed, all this suggests that some form of panentheism may be tenable after all, as long as the world’s being *in* God does not imply that it is a world in which moral evil has been overcome. But that version can hardly be the soteriological version of Gregersen’s depiction, because the latter version does not apply to the world as it is, but only to the world as it might become.

²⁸ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 24.

²⁹ Ibid., 26.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 27.

³² Ibid.

It is time to turn now to his remaining form of panentheism, ‘Expressivist Panentheism’. Gregersen depicts this variety in a section entitled ‘Expressivist Panentheism in the Context of German Idealism’.³³

4 Expressivist Panentheism

The term ‘panentheism’, as Gregersen discloses, was devised in 1829 by the post-Kantian German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832). For Krause, both nature and humanity are ontologically distinct from God, and are subordinate beings, but each (and particularly humanity) expresses the richness of the divine life. Also, both are destined to be taken back into that life. In this way, Krause was avoiding both the supernaturalist theism of Leibniz and the pantheism of Spinoza. Though subordinate to God, both nature and humanity were to fulfil the will of God to become loving, and in this way, and after struggles, achieve union with God (*Gottesinnigkeit*).³⁴

The stance of Krause was taken further by Hegel, for whom God’s infinity was capable of including the finitude of the world within itself. For, as Philip Clayton has more recently argued,³⁵ infinity can hardly be regarded as separate from, outside of and other than what is finite, or it would not be infinity.

Starting from this promising basis, Hegel proceeded to re-interpret the doctrine of the Trinity so as to re-envision the relation of the world to God. The details are not significant here, but include his view that creating a world was not a free option for God, but an implication of his self-giving nature, and also that it was an implication of the nature of his infinity to include finitude. Thus both the creation and the redemption of the world are regarded as the self-realization of the divine life. In the end, the Spirit will work to reconcile the created and alienated world with eternal being. At the same time, evil, supposedly a necessary outcome of the emergence of humanity, becomes absorbed by God.³⁶

Gregersen here finds Hegel’s overall stance consistent with Generic panentheism, and also overlapping in large degree with Soteriological panentheism. While there is much to be said for Gregersen’s recognition of overlap between these two stances, it must be doubted whether Hegel’s stance really conforms with Generic Panentheism, as defined by Gregersen himself. It is certainly not consistent with Gregersen’s definition of Qualified Panentheism, on which God could exist without a world, and therefore creates freely, something that Hegel denies. Further, when Generic Pantheism asserts that the world derives its existence from God, the most natural interpretation is that the existence of the world is contingent, and depends on divine choice, as opposed to Hegel’s claim that God’s very nature means that God has no choice in the matter. Indeed if God has no choice in the matter, there is good reason to hesitate to say that Hegel’s position concerns creation at all; for the universe becomes a necessary emanation of God, as in neo-Platonism, rather than a creation.

So at least some aspects of Hegel’s version of expressivist panentheism are problematic, where consistency with Generic Panentheism is concerned. Another, apparently, is his treatment of evil, both as a necessary outcome of human emergence, and as something destined to be absorbed within God. Nevertheless, his account of God’s infinity can be seen to contribute to a theistic panentheism, and so does his account of the divine spirit working in the world to secure reconciliation with God.

Maybe some of the more promising features of Soteriological and of Expressivist Panentheism could be held to contribute to a tenable version of panentheism. These include their provision for the events of human history to affect God, if only in terms of attitudes that he or she adopts. But further versions again warrant consideration before that theme is revisited.

³³ Ibid., 27-31.

³⁴ Ibid., 28.

³⁵ Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, 99.

³⁶ Gregerson, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 29-30.

5 The world as God's body

Another version of panentheism which should be considered is the tradition for which the world is to be understood as God's body. A philosopher who held such a stance was A.N. Whitehead, who considers what is usually considered an objection to the world being related to God as body to mind, soul or self, namely that matter will then limit what God can do. Whitehead, however, accepted this implication, and held that matter exists eternally and independently of God. Indeed it is the universe that makes God what God is, or his consequential nature. For the body constitutes, and thus in a sense creates, the self, and this is what the universe does for God.³⁷

Subsequently Sallie McFague commended the metaphor of 'The World as God's Body'.³⁸ But since this image of God's relation to the world was a metaphor, she was not committed to accepting those implications of God having the world as her/his body which belong to Whitehead's view. McFague claimed, in my view mistakenly, that traditional images of God have 'nothing to say about the nonhuman world',³⁹ and sought an image lacking this defective silence. Yet we can believe, with Gerard Manley Hopkins, that "The world is charged with the grandeur of God",⁴⁰ without regarding it as God's body. But the real issue concerns whether, as Whitehead held, the claim that the world is God's body should be held non-metaphorically, as an analogy conveying a deep metaphysical truth.

Clearly this stance clashes with belief in divine creation. But there is also a problem where evil is concerned. For, since God is constituted by cosmic processes, the conflict, suffering and evil in the world turn out to be parts of the divine being,⁴¹ contrary to standard theistic beliefs in creation for which God is all-good, and that it is his or her will to overcome evil, rather than to share in it.

We should also note that the approach of Whitehead and his followers, for which the world is God's body through constituting God, is far removed from Expressivist Panentheism. Yet some of the supporters of this stance also hold that the world is God's body, but maintain that God is independent of the world, and (as we have seen in a previous section) that the world is an expression of the divine being.

Philip Clayton adheres to a panentheism of this general kind, insofar as for him the world is an expression of God's will and omnipresence. (I am not of course suggesting that Clayton endorses all the characteristics of Expressivist Panentheism associated with either Krause or Hegel.) For Clayton, the physical matter of the world exists, but has no independent existence apart from God, and exists 'within God', who 'holds the world within himself in some sense',⁴² despite being infinite.⁴³ It is also able to affect God, without changing 'his' essential nature.⁴⁴

More light is apparently thrown on how God 'holds the world within himself in some sense' when Clayton discusses 'the panentheistic analogy'⁴⁵ (that is, a way of understanding how the world is in God and God is in the world, analogous to the relation between a person's body and mind or soul). Here he adopts the suggestion of Grace Jantzen that God 'stands in a relation to the universe as a whole that is analogous to your relationship to your body',⁴⁶ and has been applauded for doing so by Brierley.⁴⁷ This is an intimate relationship, for persons have both the physical properties of their bodies and psychological properties emergent in part from those physical properties. So in this form panentheism associates God with materiality, and in support of this stance, Clayton cites a passage of Jantzen which runs:

³⁷ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*; Ward, "The World as the Body of God", 68.

³⁸ McFague, "The World as God's Body", 671-3. See also McFague, *The Body of God*.

³⁹ Ibid., 673.

⁴⁰ Hopkins, *Poems and Prose*, 27.

⁴¹ Ward, "The World as the Body of God", 71.

⁴² Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, 91-2.

⁴³ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 262.

⁴⁶ Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body*, 123-4; Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, 262.

⁴⁷ Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution".

The idea of matter as utterly alien to us, incapable of thought or life, and hence unworthy to be predicated of God, is a view which theology must follow science in rejecting. The holism and integration of human persons which religion strives for, integration with the world, with other men and women and with our own bodies, is incompatible with a derogatory evaluation of matter. But this means that, with a more positive view of matter, the way is open to consider its relationship to God, on the model of the divine embodiment of the world.⁴⁸

However, we may well applaud this positive evaluation of matter without going along with Jantzen's and Clayton's conclusion about divine embodiment in the universe as a whole. Indeed the analogy between God's relation to the world and the embodiment of persons breaks down in several significant ways. For classical theism and for Clayton's variety of panentheism alike, God creates the universe, whereas persons do not create their own bodies, and so God's relation to the universe (or action within it) can hardly be compared to that of embodiment, let alone bodily action. (Ward rejects most forms of the panentheistic analogy on grounds of this kind.)⁴⁹ Besides, as Elizabeth Burns notes, following G.R. Peterson, this analogy 'portrays God in terms which are too anthropomorphic, because God does not have a human-like brain, and therefore cannot have thoughts that are constrained, as ours are, by the limitations of the body of which the brain is a part.'⁵⁰ There again, both for classical theists and for Clayton, God would exist even if there were no world, whereas the existence of persons is usually held to depend either on having a body, or else (if we follow the New Testament) a resurrection body. Further, the extinction of the universe would not imply God's ceasing to exist, or (if the word 'ceasing' is inappropriate) God's not existing in its absence, whereas it is much more doubtful whether persons could exist without either the physical bodies of their mortal lives or (to follow the New Testament again) the existence of resurrection bodies with which God may choose to endow them thereafter. But these are not mere superficial disanalogies; they strike at the heart of the suggestion that the universe is related to God in any way analogous to the relationship between a person and her or his body. Further disanalogies concern the natural and moral evils which the world exhibits; for if the world is God's body, then these become properties or elements of Godself. But enough has been said already to undermine the 'panentheistic analogy', when understood in this manner. The model of the world as God's body is an unhelpful one, even as a metaphor, contrary to Gregersen's definition of Qualified Panentheism.

Yet the panentheist may uphold other models of ways in which God can be 'in' the world and the world 'in' God. Hence the demise of the panentheistic body analogy need not spell that of panentheism. In the coming two sections I consider the ways in which Jürgen Moltmann and Arthur Peacocke set about expounding their version of panentheism, and then how the problem of the presence of moral and of natural evils in the world can be reconciled with this version.

6 A defensible version of panentheism?

Moltmann declares that "The Creator, through his Spirit, *dwells in* his creation as a whole, and in every individual created being, by virtue of his Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life. The inner secret of creation is the *indwelling* of God ...".⁵¹ Later he adds that "Absolute space means the direct presence of God in the whole material world and in every individual thing within it".⁵² Clayton's comment on this passage is that "The motivation of the doctrine of divine omnipresence, then, is not to pretend that all things *are* God, but to locate all things *within* the divine presence, which is the only source of all existing things. ... If space is God's space, then the world is not 'outside' him but by definition within him".⁵³ These passages, I submit, offer an unusually clear sense in which everything can be understood as existing "in God", and also in which God can be understood as present and dwelling in everything.

⁴⁸ Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body*, 122; Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, 264.

⁴⁹ Ward, "The World as the Body of God".

⁵⁰ Burns, "How to Prove the Existence of God," 16; Peterson, "Whither Panentheism?", 402.

⁵¹ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, xii.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵³ Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, 89.

Moltmann adds illuminatingly to these claims by adding that the whole world has to be regarded as an open system.⁵⁴ The universe is so made that the parts continually give rise to new structures. Understood as an open system, it is a participatory system (with local systems and their quantitative variety facilitating “leaps into the new quality of higher levels of organization”); it is an anticipatory system, being aligned to growing communication and new possibilities; and a self-transcendent system, to be interpreted as ‘the self-transcendent totality of a diversity of communicating, individual open systems’, with no foreseeable end to their evolution.⁵⁵ Among the implications are that “God acts *in* and *through* the activities of his creatures; ...created beings act *out* of the divine potencies and *into* a divine environment; the activity of created beings is made possible *by* the divine patience; the presence of God in the world is the space free for the liberty of created beings”.⁵⁶ While some of the italicised prepositions are less than clear, overall the message of this passage is clear enough. As Peacocke expresses matters, quoting Charles Kingsley, God ‘makes creatures make themselves’.⁵⁷ It could hardly be clearer that, for Moltmann, as well as Peacocke, the world is dependent on God and not vice-versa.

Thus the universe is self-creative; but pantheism is far from the only allowable interpretation. Moltmann suggests a theistic interpretation of this; “The God who is present in every part of the world and in every part of it, is the creative Spirit”.⁵⁸ (Moltmann in fact prefers a trinitarian interpretation of this claim; but the same claim is credible on a unitarian basis, and thus to Jews, Muslims and Unitarians alike.)

Here it could be commented that, whether or not creatures have simultaneous impacts on God, they will in any case make impacts on the outworking of his purposes. The clearest example is found in the evolution of life on Earth; but another possible example is the impacts of each human generation on the course and progress of human history. The choices of agents may even sometimes change God’s purposes; for many human choices bring into being individuals who would not have existed otherwise, yet who will not fall outside God’s eventual purposes; this is because for these new lives there will arise either a new purpose in the mind of God, or the actualisation of an antecedent purpose that was conditional on these individuals being brought into existence. Indeed if panentheism requires impacts by creatures on God, as well as the other way round, then here we already have a vindication of panentheism, albeit not quite in the sense specified for Generic Panentheism by Gregersen, which requires creatures ‘returning to God’.⁵⁹

Peacocke, for his part, adopts Moltmann’s account of the universe as an open system, and explains that this picture of the world stands opposed to viewing it as “a closed mechanism, operating according to laws and with boundary conditions both prescribed ‘at the beginning’ and identified with a temporal act of creation by God”.⁶⁰ Creation is rather to be understood as continual, not least through the creative action of natural processes, which are also acts of the creator.⁶¹

Scientific findings appear to support Peacocke’s view, from Heisenberg’s Indeterminacy Principle to the Darwinian theory of evolution. This theory (in the form of the twentieth-century Darwin-Mendel synthesis) shows in particular how, without supernatural interventions, creatures can mutate and, when the mutations prove viable, form new species. Peacocke regards such developments as continuing episodes in the story of creation, and God’s chosen approach to the creation of communicating creatures, including, eventually, humanity. He would also have been free to regard at least some of the episodes of human history, such as the inauguration of the United Nations and its agencies, as further manifestations of the divine creativity.

Peacocke has the good sense to reject the claim that the universe is to be regarded as God’s body, partly because it represents the universe as being of the same ontological order as its creator.⁶² In his version of panentheism (as in that of Moltmann), the distinction between the creator and his or her creatures is

⁵⁴ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 204-5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁵⁷ Kingsley, *The Water Babies*, 248; Peacocke, *All That Is*, 18.

⁵⁸ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 212; see also Attfield, *Creation, Evolution and Meaning*, 168-171.

⁵⁹ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 22.

⁶⁰ Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science*, 203.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶² Brierley, “Naming a Quiet Revolution”, 7.

securely preserved, and yet God, as Spirit, remains active in and through creatures. In this connection, Peacocke accepts the view of Geoffrey Lampe that “the Spirit of God” is to be understood as referring not to “a divine hypostasis distinct from God the Father and God the Son or Word”, but to “God himself as active towards and in his human creation”.⁶³

There is further important and relevant common ground between Moltmann and Peacocke. Thus Moltmann held that “Creation in the beginning is simultaneously the creation of time” (we should treat “simultaneously” here as a metaphor).⁶⁴ Peacocke, who, like Moltmann, endorsed the “open system” understanding, accepts, with Einstein, that time enters the scene when matter and energy appear,⁶⁵ a remark that is in complete accord with Moltmann’s view of God’s initiation of time. Their stance is consistent with the view that creation itself is a timeless act, which itself makes temporal acts and events possible; but this vocabulary might not have been congenial either to Moltmann or to Peacocke. It should be admitted that Moltmann might have been uneasy about Peacocke’s endorsement of Lampe’s account of “God as Spirit”, but this does not detract from their combined awareness of the presence of God as Spirit across and throughout creation. Theirs, then, is a significant contribution to panentheism, and what Clayton has recently called (in the terminology of Imre Lakatos) a ‘research sub-program’.⁶⁶ Research programs and sub-programs are not falsifiable (at least directly), but wax or wane as they attract or forfeit intellectual support. This one, I suggest, is worthy of further study.

The main problem confronting versions of panentheism such as that of Moltmann and Peacocke is the problem of evil. There are also differences between these two thinkers, due in part to their differing backgrounds, the one in systematic theology and the other in biochemistry and later in the science-religion debate.⁶⁷ But their differences should not be allowed to obscure the common elements of their shared panentheist position. We should instead focus on the much more pressing problem of theodicy. Ruth Page remarks how inadequate the defences of panentheists have frequently been in this regard.⁶⁸ Confronting this problem is the task of the next section.

7 Panentheism and moral and natural evil

One aspect of the problem of evil has been made explicit by Gregersen, when he asks: “Are all things really united with God? Is small-mindedness, miserliness, hatred, torture, terror, war?”.⁶⁹ Pantheism has no satisfactory answer, but panentheism can begin its reply that the creator, operating through evolution and through human history, might be expected to provide free persons with opportunities for moral choices. A good God might credibly grant freedom of choice to conscious agents, for the sake of their being able freely to choose to do his/her will, and might choose not to override evil outcomes of those choices, lest those choices should cease to be choices (the Free Will Defence). There again, as John Hick has argued, a good God might credibly allow a cognitive distance between the perspective of human agents and their attainment of a clear vision of the path of salvation, for the sake of the development of their characters (Hick’s Irenaean Defence).⁷⁰ These are mutually compatible defences. They would require further development, and to be presented with due humility, before they could be accepted to show how they apply to such major atrocities as the Nazi holocaust; yet they can still be understood to suffice to rebut the claims that God could not have made a world in which moral evil is present,⁷¹ and could not have been active within it in the manner proposed by the Moltmann/Peacocke version of panentheism.

⁶³ Lampe, *God as Spirit*; Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science*, 207.

⁶⁴ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 207.

⁶⁵ Peacocke, *All That Is*, 20.

⁶⁶ Clayton, “Prospects for Panentheism as Research Program.”

⁶⁷ Culp, “Panentheism,” 7-9.

⁶⁸ Page, “Panentheism and Pansyntheism”, 222-232.

⁶⁹ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 27.

⁷⁰ Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*.

⁷¹ van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*.

But these defences do not, as such, begin to explain natural evils such as pain, suffering, diseases, earthquakes, hurricanes, wildfires and tsunamis. Even if these episodes result from open systems, no version of the Free Will Defence, nor of Hick's Irenaean Defence, accounts for them. However, as Bruce Reichenbach has shown,⁷² all these evils might be permitted by the creator of a regular world, who operates through predictable laws of nature. In the absence of such natural regularities, living creatures (including human beings) could not flourish, nor develop their characters by making choices in response to (partially) intelligible circumstances; and only thus could free and responsible creatures come into being. Here we already encounter the beginnings of what Christopher Southgate has called the 'only way' argument; there was no other way for a loving creator to generate the realization of creaturely value than through laws such as that represented in Darwinism.⁷³

Indeed in this passage Southgate endorses the argument of a 2006 work of the present author⁷⁴ as 'in itself constitut[ing] a theodicy'.⁷⁵ Similarly Michael Murray, in a work published in the same year as Southgate's book, appealed to 'nomic regularities' as a key component of an acceptable theodicy (while countenancing within the same covers such less credible components (or alternatives) as cancers being due to fallen angels placed in charge of such illnesses).⁷⁶ Southgate proceeds to argue, with Michael Ruse (as the current author too had earlier done) that 'if God was to create through law, then it had to be through Darwinian law. There was no other choice'.⁷⁷ Another theologian who appeals to laws of nature, Nicola Hoggard Creedon, appears to regard as one of the sources of objective evil the second law of thermodynamics;⁷⁸ but as Bethany Sollereder observes, there would be no life at all without this law.⁷⁹ So this law is really a further example of how there was 'no other way'.

In her book "God, Evolution and Animal Suffering" (2019, the book just referred to), Bethany N. Sollereder recognises as 'convincing' the 'only way' argument of myself and of Southgate. For example, she remarks that 'Attfield shows convincingly how biological values—such as organisms with quick neural capacities and fleet-footedness—could only have developed independently [sc. of divine interventions] in predator-prey relationships'.⁸⁰ I am indebted to Rolston for much of the vocabulary here cited;⁸¹ Rolston, indeed, is another source of the 'only way' approach. Sollereder advocates including a theological component within a theodicy as well as (what she regards as) a philosophical one,⁸² but on occasion criticises yet others for failing to include the 'only way' approach.⁸³

Strangely, Sollereder berates the present author for focussing on the way natural regularities are necessary for valuable human pursuits such as science and rationality and (supposedly) neglecting the goods and ills of non-human animals.⁸⁴ Yet the passage that she quotes in fact stresses both. Thus the first three lines, which she rightly prefaces with the phrase 'without natural regularities' run as follows: 'There would be no science and no scope for rationality, there would be no creatures of the kinds that have evolved by natural selection within the framework of the laws of nature to which we are accustomed ...'.⁸⁵ In short, the passage that she criticises is every bit as biocentric as the stance that she castigates me for neglecting.

⁷² Reichenbach, *Evil and a Good God*.

⁷³ Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 47-8; Ruse, *Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*, 130-8. See also Attfield, "Evolution, Theodicy and Value."

⁷⁴ Attfield, *Creation, Evolution and Meaning*.

⁷⁵ Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 47.

⁷⁶ Murray, *Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw*; see also Attfield, "Review of Murray."

⁷⁷ Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 48; Ruse, *Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*, 289; compare Dawkins, "Universal Darwinism", 423.

⁷⁸ Hoggard Creedon, *Animal Suffering*.

⁷⁹ Sollereder, *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering*, 88, n.161.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 52; Attfield, *Creation, Evolution and Meaning*, 129.

⁸¹ Rolston "Disvalues in Nature", 254.

⁸² Sollereder, *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering*, 56-62.

⁸³ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁵ Attfield, *Creation, Evolution and Meaning*, 129.

Indeed it also points out that theodicies that neglect harms and benefits to non-human animals (and their flourishing) are increasingly seen to be indefensible.⁸⁶

So the issue becomes not whether God should abrogate laws of nature to avoid evils to living creatures, but whether there are more beneficent laws of nature that the creator could have initiated instead of those of the actual universe. Here, however, if it is claimed that there could have been different and better laws, the onus is on the critic to specify the nature and shape of some such laws, laws which would produce an improved universe if they were operating throughout it, and at all times at that. Could the laws that, for example, allow the growth of cancerous cells be replaced by different laws of cell division with no such implications? Until any one improved law that would be viable across space and time can be suggested, the regularities of the actual universe look as if they are either better than, or as good as, alternative regularities.⁸⁷ (Southgate suggests that such considerations actually support a 'best way' argument;⁸⁸ but that may well be too ambitious a claim, as well as a claim that exceeds what is needed for a viable theodicy.) Nor can this appeal to laws of nature be regarded as representing the universe as a closed system, since open, indeterministic systems still depend on laws of nature (some of them probabilistic), or they would not be systems at all.

Evolution through natural selection comprises one of these laws (here I am in full agreement with Richard Dawkins, Ruse and Southgate), and facilitates both the emergence of new species and the extinction of many others, operating (as it does) through processes such as predation. Yet critics of theism and of panentheism alike can hardly maintain that, in the absence of evolution by natural selection, miraculous divine interventions to produce new species would generate a more intelligible, let alone a better world.⁸⁹ Meanwhile the creator can be taken to welcome each species living in the manner proper to its kind, and enjoying its own day.⁹⁰ Evolution by natural selection, then, is no exception to the argument advanced above about the regularities that a beneficent creator would introduce.

Further, to accept this is to accept that a loving God could permit such apparent evils as predation, which is inherent in natural selection, and even parasitism, which as Rolston has argued, is nothing more than a particular form of predation.⁹¹ Sollereeder has well argued that parasitism might be permitted by a loving God, holding that God's love for non-human creatures involves granting them the autonomy to devise strategies of survival such as parasitism,⁹² and that: 'If God were to prevent a creature ... from seeking a meal of meat in the face of starvation, God would be halting and overwhelming creaturely autonomy in ways that are irreconcilable with love'.⁹³ These arguments begin from the nature of divine love, but amount, in my view, to theological translations of the 'no other way' approach presented above. Alternatively they could be seen as complementing and strengthening it, and forming parts of a 'compound theodicy', as commended both by Murray and by van Inwagen.⁹⁴

Southgate, it should be recognized, holds that a stronger theodicy can be found if an eschatological compensation is available to individual suffering animals;⁹⁵ but such considerations are open only to believers in an animal heaven (see below). He also suggests that the suffering of God in Christ somehow enhances the above theodicy;⁹⁶ but this suggestion is available to believers in the Incarnation only, as opposed to Jews, Muslims and Unitarians, and it is far from clear in any case how it contributes to a reconciliation of the creator's goodness with (for example) pre-human suffering, for that remains unchanged.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 129.

⁸⁷ Attfield, *Creation, Evolution and Meaning and Wonder, Value and God*.

⁸⁸ Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 48.

⁸⁹ Humphreys and Vlahos, *Creation, Ethics and Environment*, *passim*.

⁹⁰ Page, "Panentheism and Pansyntheism", 228.

⁹¹ Rolston, "Disvalues in Nature", 256.

⁹² Sollereeder, *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering*, 92.

⁹³ Ibid., 94.

⁹⁴ Murray, *Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw*, 146; van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, 119-123.

⁹⁵ Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 48-54, 88-89.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 48-54.

However, it has been suggested by Trent Dougherty that God will resurrect all living creatures, and endow them with enough characteristics of personhood to enable them to recognise their own place in the overall course of history and of God's purposes.⁹⁷ Sollereeder supports a version of this suggestion, with the proviso that this would be a gift of grace rather than the recompense corresponding to an entitlement.⁹⁸ These suggestions can be supported by scriptural passages such as Revelation 5: 11-13, and are open to many panentheists, as also to many Christian theists; indeed they could be seen as supplementing the theodicy presented above. However, they are not open to Jews, Muslims, or to most Unitarians. Southgate has further suggested that the evolutionary process may be the only way not only to the emergence of selves in this world, but also to the creation of animal 'selves' in heaven.⁹⁹ But the same qualification applies again, and the 'only way' approach (as applied to this world) remains the most reliable theodicy available to the generality of panentheists.

It is worth adding, with Rolston (1992), that despite losses of species, and despite periods of mass extinction, species diversity has continued to grow, currently reaching an estimated total of nine million species.¹⁰⁰ Such diversification can be interpreted as an example of God making creatures make themselves, and also, plausibly, of operating through them to the same end. It is not, as soteriological and expressivist panentheists claim, that God's presence in the world must wait until the end of history, because God's creative spirit has been at work there all along, throughout the long story (or history) of life on Earth. This approach could be held to supplement the 'only way' theodicy without appealing to eschatology.

8 Some conclusions

While other forms of panentheism appear to fail, not least because of different versions of the problem of evil, the forms of panentheism presented by Moltmann and Peacocke offer a viable version. Its credibility is strengthened if it endorses Hegel's account of God's infinity, which can include the world within it (an account recently endorsed by Clayton),¹⁰¹ Clayton's understanding of divine omnipresence, and (at least for Christians) Gregersen's interpretation of the prologue of the gospel of John, which suggests that this passage conveys that God's activity, pattern or dialogue has all along permeated creation. The universe functions as, in Moltmann's phrase, an open system, full of unfulfilled possibilities, and within this system, as Peacocke maintains, God uses evolution by natural selection to make creatures make themselves, and is active in human history as well as in nature.

Within such a system, God permits the evil impacts of misguided human choices (and thus moral evils), but remains active, responding to the new situations that these and other choices produce. Such systems, however, depend on cosmic regularities, rather than supernatural interventions, and through choosing these regularities, God permits suffering and natural disasters, rather than intervening to prevent them. Evolution by natural selection is itself one of these regularities, and is a system through which new creatures are continually created. In these ways, panentheism of this kind is able to combine aspects of classical theism with responsiveness to modern science, and to be reconcilable with the world's evils. It is also consistent with the more expansive form of the philosophical naturalism associated with modern science, a form which includes within its scope not only the material universe, but also values, and additionally the possibility of its being created.¹⁰²

So construed, panentheism is consistent with a scheme of redemption, through which creatures ultimately return to God, but this aspect of redemption should not be explicitly included in the generic definition of panentheism (as it is in Gregersen's definition), although redemption and the creator's redemptive purpose should not be excluded. Redemption and/or the union of creatures with God is

⁹⁷ Dougherty, *The Problem of Animal Pain*, 142-7.

⁹⁸ Sollereeder, *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering*, 156-178.

⁹⁹ Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ Rolston, *Genes, Genesis and God*, 362-5: author reference, book of 2006, 160.

¹⁰¹ Clayton, "Prospects for Panentheism".

¹⁰² Ellis, *God, Value and Nature*.

consistent with panentheism, but panentheism is best understood as concerning the relations between God and the universe at all times, and not only at the end of time, or at the time of a general resurrection.

Further, the openness of creation means that neither should the world be understood as being determined by God (or there would be no freedom of choice), nor God by the world (which would limit the freedom of God), even if each affects the other. Hence co-determination (as opposed to mutual influence) should not be included in definitions even of Qualified Panentheism, let alone Christian Panentheism; yet mutual influence can reasonably be included. Gregersen's definition of Qualified Panentheism should be revised accordingly. Here is a revised definition, embodying a suitably reworded version of Gregersen's.

1. While the world cannot exist without God, God could exist without a world; the relations between God and the world are to be understood as involving mutual influence on this basis, the world existing within the divine presence, but God not being confined in the world or by it.
2. It is by divine grace that God indwells the world, in such a way that temporal events may influence God, and creatures share the life of God. All that is redeemed participates more fully in divine life.

Thus, to conclude with an aspect that Gregersen's definition of Qualified Panentheism rightly includes, for panentheism of the Moltmann/Peacocke variety, creatures may at all times by divine grace share in the life of God, through the presence of the spirit of God in the created world, in which 'we live and move and have our being'.¹⁰³ It is appropriate to add a tenet that he does not include: panentheism of this variety is open to theists in general, and not only to Trinitarian Christians.

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