

# Everywhen: Examining Omnipresence

on the Limited Human Perception  
of Space and Time

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June 2019

# This is about human limitations

Specifically:

- Human perception of TIME is very limited
- God's perception of time is NOT limited
- This mismatch gets in the way of human understanding of God.

# Omnipresence

- God is everywhere ... widely agreed
- God is every**when** ... what does that mean?
- Perceiving all time (past, present, future) in a unified way is beyond human comprehension.
- Human experience says that “time marches on”
  - Absolute, One-directional, Irreversible
- But that is *our* problem, not God’s

# physics principle

- Start with basic scientific principle:
  - Nature makes sense
- Physics (including theory of relativity) relies on certain very basic mathematical principles.
- Foremost principle is ***symmetry***
- symmetry in math is a form of beauty
- When mathematical symmetry describes nature, it is “correct”
- It is an ***article of faith*** to believe in symmetry

# Time and space in physics

- In the equations of relativity, space and time appear in a symmetric way.
  - via theory of relativity, you can transform space into time (and vice-versa)
  - experimental observations confirm this theory
- We conclude the theory is correct
- But there is ***no*** direct human experience of this space-time equivalence

# Relativity

- Never say “absolutely certain” about science, but ... this is a very good theory.
- High comfort level
  - sound reasoning
  - observational confirmation
- Relativity says: space and time comprise a four-dimensional manifold.
- Therefore, treat them in a unified way.

# God's perception of space-time

- Basic principle of any religious person:
  - **God understands any human theory**
- So God comprehends space & time  
in a unified way
- God's omnipresence extends to *time*  
as well as *space*.

# How does God comprehend time ?

- Nobody knows
- If someone did know, how could they convey the idea ?
- Barriers:
  - language
  - everyday experience
  - thought structure
- These barriers comprise a **human** limitation
- Math expressions → words? Hard to do!

# Another basic principle: **Never underestimate God**

- Acknowledge human limitations
  - Physicists sometimes make mistakes
    - Example: Hawking's "*Brief History of Time*"
- Be happy with incremental progress
  - God gave us the ability to reason
  - Reason takes us beyond sensory perception
  - Mathematics leads us to new discoveries
  - Space and time are equivalent
- Remain humble before God

# Beyond comprehension

- A common experience:
  - “I know it’s true but I can’t explain it.”
- “*Flatland*” (book from 1872) demonstrated this situation:
  - In 2-dimensions, how do you explain “upward, but not northward” ?
- Recognize limits of your ability to think
- Some things are “transintelligible”
  - Statement is true but beyond the mind’s reach
- The word “mystery” is often used for this.

# History

- St. Augustine (~ year 400) said that  
God created space and time together.
- To grasp that the *coordinate system* is created  
(not “just there”) was a major stride forward.
- Augustine perceived that God is  
superior to time and space.
- Several theological puzzles vanished at once.
- But the insight of Augustine was forgotten.

Theological problem:  
**Predestination**

How can God know the future without forcing the past ?

- Mankind demands an “either/or” answer.
- To accept a “both/and” answer requires stepping up to a higher level of thinking
  - It’s like “upward but not northward.”

Theological problem:

# Process Theology

- Began when Classical Mechanics was at its zenith, determinism was widely accepted, and time was considered absolute.
- Key premise: God changes with time.
- No !! Man's perception of God changes over time, but that doesn't mean that God changes.

## Theological Problem:

# Evolution

- Hostile question: Why did God have to take so LONG to create what we see?
- The premise here is that God has to watch time drift by the same way we do.
- Too many religious people accept this premise.
  - Unable to answer, they flee from science altogether.
- There is no contradiction between God having a plan and taking a long time.
- God is superior to time.

# Summary (1)

- God transcends time and space
- We are limited, but try to make progress.
- Certain words are associated with attributes of God
  - One such word is “omnipresence”
- Omnipresence means
  - God is everywhere
  - God is everywhen

# Summary (2)

- To acknowledge a human limitation is a step forward. Mankind had placed a false god (**time**) before God.
- When something is beyond human comprehension, it is ***transintelligible***.
  - God's transcendence and immanence .
- In the future, others who approach these topics may find this perception about time and space helpful.