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Introduction

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Introduction

What is the best way to model God—that is, to account for the nature or essence of the divine? This question is vitally important in philosophy of religion. The model of God one assumes affects, for example, the fate of the traditional arguments for and against the existence of God, the coherence of theistic belief, and, for theists, the practice and tenor of the faithful life. It is no surprise, then, that philosophers of religion and theologians are turning their efforts to exploring extant models of the divine and developing new ones. In the last century, and especially in the last twenty-five years, there has been an explosion of work on this topic, from Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* to, e.g., Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz' *The Divine Attributes*, with voluminous articles and books in between.[1]

[1]See also, e.g., Charles Hartshorne's *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (Yale University Press, 1948); Anthony Kenny's *The God of the Philosophers* (Clarendon Press, 1979); Stephen Davis' *Logic and the Nature of God* (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983); Thomas Morris' "Perfect Being Theology" (in *Noûs*, 1987) and *The Concept of God* (Oxford University Press, 1987); Richard Gale's *On the Nature and Existence of God* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Clark Pinnock, William Hasker, et. al.'s *The Openness of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1994); Philip Clayton's *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Eerdmans, 2000); George Mavrodes' "Polytheism" (Coghill Publishers, 1998), and John Bishop's "Can There Be Alternative Concepts of God?" (in *Noûs*, 1998), to name a few.

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Inspired by the importance and growth of work on models of God, and by the fact that no major philosophical venue in the United States had (to our knowledge) been dedicated to exploring it, Philip Clayton and I convened an organizing committee interested in holding a conference on the theme. We proposed the idea to the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association and were delighted when they offered to run a Mini-conference on Models of God concurrent with their annual meeting on April 4–5, 2007 in San Francisco, California.

The mini-conference was an enormous success. In our call for papers, we aimed to encourage fruitful, philosophically sophisticated face-to-face exchanges between proponents of the major models of God—classical and neo-classical theists, open theists, process theists, pantheists, panentheists, Ground-of-being theists, environmental theists, polytheists, theists writing from a feminist perspective, and others. We hoped they would engage in the philosophical exploration, critique, and comparison of specific models of God—both those that had already appeared in philosophical and religious literature, and those worthy of consideration that had not as yet. We also hoped they would address some of the metaquestions that arise in these discussions, such as whether it is possible and desirable to model God, and upon what grounds one might judge between competing models. Our organizing committee received and juried an impressive array of submissions and invited papers, and selected thirty-four speakers from across the world to participate in the mini-conference. Together, they represented all the major models and more, and they made progress on thinking about them in all the ways we had hoped and more. Their work can be found in this issue, which is a publication of the bulk of the proceedings of the event.[2]

The Conceptual Landscape

The mini-conference opened with Ted Peters' "Models of God," which provides a useful overview of the conceptual landscape—both of what models of God are ("not...literal descriptions of reality; rather...'provisional ways of imagining what is not observable'") and of what he describes as nine different models of God: atheism, agnosticism, deism (God created the world and left it to work on its own), pantheism (identification of God and the world), polytheism, monotheism, panentheism (the world is inside God, but God is also more than the world), and his novel model eschatological panentheism, which identifies God's creative work with God's redemptive work.

Peters' commentator James E. Taylor clarifies that atheism and agnosticism are not themselves models of God, since they are not specific descriptions of God's nature but rather a denial of God's existence, and skepticism about knowledge of it, respectively. Taylor also overlays his own helpful taxonomy of models on Peters', by taking pantheism and panentheism to be "naturalist" models, and polytheism, monotheism, and deism to be "supernaturalist" models, and then dividing monotheism into creationist and non-creationist approaches.

[2] The collection here is not exactly the proceedings of the mini-conference: (1) it follows a different order, and (2) it does not include presented papers that were published elsewhere, their accompanying commentaries, nor papers from a few authors who chose not to submit.

The reigning model in Western philosophy of religion, at least for now, is, in Peters' and Taylor's terms, a monotheistic, supernaturalistic, creationist one, generally called 'classical theism.' It suggests that God is maximally perfect, or some close variant thereof, and typically takes this to mean that God is essentially unsurpassable in power, knowledge, goodness, and the other categories of being. Klaas Kraay examines a challenge to this influential view, advanced in various forms by Philip Quinn, Stephen Grover, William Rowe and Jordan Howard Sobel. They argue that there can be no unsurpassable creator because, for any world such a being creates, it could have created a better one. This being's action in creating is thus necessarily surpassable, and so (the argument runs) this being itself is also necessarily surpassable. Kraay finds that the replies available to the classical theist all have their problems, and that this *a priori* argument against classical theism thus "remains a formidable challenge."

Major Alternatives to Classical Theism

Kraay's work prepares the way for consideration of the many alternatives to classical theism. Over the course of the mini-conference, we examined in panel form three well-known alternative models—open theism, process theism, and panentheism (though the panentheistic papers are not published here). Of the three, open theism comes closest to the classical theism which Kraay challenges. In fact, Alan Rhoda, one of the three open theists contributing here, explicitly situates open theism in the family of "broadly classical theisms," distinguished from other members of this class by its insistence that "the future is, as of now and in some respects, epistemically open for God." By appeal to generally held views such as the principle of charity and modern-day physics, Rhoda argues convincingly for the two premises that entail this key claim (that "the future is, as of now and in some respects, causally open," and that, in those respects, it cannot thus be "epistemically settled" for anyone, including God). The result is that open theism is plausible so long as broadly classical theism is. But Kraay and other challengers of classical theism have made us wonder if it is.

David Woodruff frames the debate between open theists and other broadly classical theists, not in Rhoda's terms of propositional disagreements, but in terms of disagreements about "divine values," or what is taken to be analytic about the concept of God. He takes open theists' fundamental divine value to be that 'God is in loving relationship with people and the rest of creation'. Their critics, he says, have other divine values, such as 'God is worthy of worship', 'God is in control', or 'God knows the future'. Woodruff thinks that much of the sometimes-charged debate about open theism is fall-out from differing divine values, and that parties to the debate would do well to "come to a better understanding of control beliefs and the motivation" for them. When they do, Woodruff is hopeful that the conversation will end, not in relativism, but rather movement in some direction; "people can be swayed." Though Woodruff's focus is on a relatively narrow dialectic, his advice applies to the wider dialectic between all models of God: begin the conversation by locating the core divine value in the models in question; attempt to sway each other about these; let the rest come.

Richard Rice focuses his attention on open theism's core divine value – that God genuinely interacts with the world – and then explores the divine temporality this value implies. Rice follows Robert Jenson in taking "each of the Trinitarian relations [to be] an affirmation that...God works creatively among us" (e.g., the Father creates, the Son redeems, the Spirit supports, perhaps)—making God not just accidentally relational, but essentially so. Rice claims Jenson missteps, however, when he thinks "of time as a bounded sphere which God may precede, succeed, or envelop," since these spatializing metaphors are inconsistent with God's being temporal enough to act in history. Rice finds "a different way to envision" God's temporality in the terms of process theology, in which God's reality consists in a sequence of experiences which, unlike ours, is without beginning or end. We are temporal; God is supremely, or eternally, so.

As interesting as Rice's understanding of divine temporality is the fact that he, an open theist, developed it by borrowing from process thought. His product is thus a kind of "process-open theism." The creation of such syncretic models is, I think, on the rise, and constitutes one constructive response to the plurality of models of God, as I will return to at the close.

The second major alternative to classical theism featured in this collection is process theism, first enunciated in the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead last century, and further developed by Whitehead's one-time assistant Charles Hartshorne.[3] Included here are two substantive papers on process theism – Monica Coleman's, which tries to create a process model for the divine in a non-Christian religion, and Donald Viney's, which uses process thought to resolve a longstanding puzzle in philosophical theology – as well as Delwin Brown's commentary on both of them.

Coleman sets for herself the ambitious task of discovering whether process theism, rooted as it is in Western thought, is flexible enough to produce a model of God that works for the religion of the Yoruba people from current-day Nigeria, now practiced also in the Caribbean, South America, the United States and Canada. After a fascinating discussion of monotheism, in which she argues that it oppressively sets up a false dichotomy with polytheism that leaves no room for a third way, she types Yoruban religion as "communotheism," i.e., "the position that the Divine is a community of gods who are fundamentally related to one another and ontologically equal while at the same time distinct from one another by their personhood and functions." She suggests that process theology can offer a communotheistic model of

[3] For those unfamiliar with process thought, it takes the fundamental metaphysical kind to be experiential events (called "actual entities" or "actual occasions") rather than static substances. Reality is the dynamic succession of these actual entities, which can bundle together into large "societies" that we recognize as dynamic persons and other macro-events, and each of which is influenced at any given moment by: (1) other actual entities; (2) itself (actual entities self-determine), and (3) for process theists, God, at least when the actual entity is open to God. God is also itself an actual entity – or, perhaps, a series of them – but a uniquely important one, since it functions as the guiding principle of the Universe, in something like the way the human mind is the guiding principle of the human body. God has two natures—a consequent one, which feels or "prehends" the experiences of each actual entity, and a primordial one, which contains all the infinite possibilities that could be actualized in the world. As Monica Coleman says succinctly in her article: "Whereas the two natures of God can be separated in abstraction, they form a unity that receives, evaluates and lures the world to a vision of the common good." The Universe and God are thus both engaged in a mutual process of realizing the divine vision—hence the term 'process theology'.

gods by locating "the community of gods precisely where Christian Whiteheadian theologians have located the 'community of God'...in the consequent nature of God." This is the "place" within process thought "where there is immortality" – which Yoruban gods have – and where "multiplicity is held together and affirmed" as it is in the Yoruban community of gods. She worries momentarily that, by placing the community of gods within the one process God, she has reverted to the "diffuse monotheism" she was trying to avoid. But then she sees a further fit between the God of process theism – which she takes literally as actual entity and thus as event – and *àse* in Yoruban religion, "the power or vital principle...the world's life force." The parallel is strong. Coleman has, in my opinion, delivered a process model of gods.

Why do this? Why attempt to place a Western theological construct on Yoruba traditional religion? Coleman gives two answers: because it allows religious scholars in the academy to "engage" Yoruban and other African traditional religions in their work, and because it reflects the lived reality of the many practitioners of these religions who find themselves in Western contexts. Proof positive of the benefit of such dialogue is evident in Brown's response to Coleman, which closes with a thought that probably never would have been born without the dialogue. It is that the many different process views of God – such as Robert Neville's God as "the indeterminate ground of all things," or Bernard Loomer's God as "the whole of things" – might be, not "different views of one God," but instead "different Gods!" as Brown exclaims. Instead of seeing this multiplicity as facets of the One entity to "which we might properly give ourselves," we could see them each as a proper object of devotion, in its own right. This kind of fresh look at a familiar conceptual landscape is comparative religious philosophy at its best.

The puzzle Viney takes up is how theologians and philosophers talking extensively about God's nature can, at the same time, take into account God's mystery. Focusing on a little-discussed moment in Anselm's corpus that God must be "greater than can be conceived," Viney says that Anselm has "hit upon an insight that is central to any responsible theological discourse. An adequate concept of God must point beyond itself to a mystery not wholly available to our conceptuality." After showing the inadequacies of both Descartes' and Aquinas' approaches for accommodating divine mystery, Viney shows how Hartshorne can neatly account for it, by drawing a distinction between God's abstract essence and God's actuality. For Hartshorne, God's abstract essence can be known: we can know, for instance, that God is perfect, or that a perfect being is immutable in some respects and mutable in others, etc. But God's actuality is mysterious. Hartshorne says, beautifully: "The mystery is...what the divine life concretely is, how God prehends you or me or Hitler, or the feelings of bats, ants, plant cells, atoms. The one 'to whom all hearts are open' knows, or loves, the concrete concretely. We know nothing in that way."

Viney's major contribution here is the introduction of a new criterion for model choice: that a model of God should be able to accommodate divine mystery. This criterion is a worthy addition, faithful as it is to the discourse in lived religious traditions about God's being "beyond" us, as well as to the philosophical role that the concept of God plays in, e.g., the cosmological argument, which, if sound, forces the thinker to posit the existence of something totally different from the contingent stuff of everyday life. Hartshorne's own process theism ably satisfies this mystery criterion,

but, as Viney's commentator Delwin Brown suggests, so do other models, both from within and from without process theology.

Emerging Models of God

In addition to examining the major alternatives to classical theism, the mini-conference exhibited several emerging models of God worthy of our attention, either newly created, or retrieved from the history of philosophy to be reclaimed for use today. Three such models are showcased here. The first comes from Pamela Sue Anderson, who offers a model of God in the course of presenting a feminist challenge to the ideal observer (IO) theory, a generic title for those views that posit a divine or imaginary ideal against which humans can measure their ethical or epistemological points of view. According to Anderson, standard IO theories have been charged with being gender-blind, class-blind, and "unwittingly masculinist." She introduces Luce Irigaray's work as an alternative view, perhaps classifiable as an IO theory, that is gender-aware and not masculinist. Irigaray recommends that women go beyond the prison of their own bodies (*en-soi*) and "gain their own gendered subjectivity by becoming a divine in the feminine" (*pour-soi*). But, Anderson urges, even Irigaray's view falls prey to a complaint that she lodges against all IO views: that they are "unachievable," since no human can ever actually meet these ideals. Moreover, certainly in Irigaray's case which emphasizes auto-affection and virginity as fidelity to self, the ideal keeps women enclosed – not in their own bodies, but in a constructed feminine divine (*en-soi-idéale*, perhaps) – and thus paradoxically cuts them off from the very relationships that Anderson takes to be the real source of self-transcendence. Her overarching message is that we should *not* strive to become an ideal third person, but rather strive to live out ideal but achievable first- and second-person relationships with ourselves and other real men and women, by giving "attention to the intrinsic goodness of each and every subject." She says "human subjects self-transcend" in this sense "all of the time, often unwittingly," and predicts that if all humans do this enough, we could "develop a collective reality: we might find, so to speak, 'God amongst us.'"

In his commentary on Anderson's piece, Charles Taliaferro suggests that Anderson is in fact tacitly committed to a version of the IO theory against which she is arguing. He has in mind his version of the IO theory—on which an observer is ideal if she knows all the relevant non-moral facts, is "omnipercipient (affectively apprised of the points of view of all involved parties), and is impartial." He argues that, if Anderson were to reject this IO, she would thereby be rejecting the values it embodies. And these values are natural allies to her cause: "impartiality is precisely what is violated in the masculinist agenda" and omnipercipience is at least part of what is violated in excessive self-enclosure. Like any thinker engaged in "recognizable moral inquiry," Taliaferro says, Anderson will want to espouse these values, and thus, the IO theory from which they spring.

Despite their disagreement, both Taliaferro and Anderson recognize the profound social power of models of God or the ideal, and want to use that power for the good. Levinas could not agree more, at least as Turrell and Turner explicate him. They begin their paper with the jarring phrase that Levinas' God "is wholly human, is

always good, and does not exist." Levinas says his God *does not exist* for the same reason Simone Weil's God does not: "existence...is not enough for God"—not enough because God is too holy to exist, and because we cannot even begin to say what it is whose existence we mean to discuss, since "the idea of God surpasses every capacity and breaks apart the cogitation." At the same time, Levinas' God is *wholly human*, not by being human (ontologically), but rather, by being known only through humans and their relationships (epistemically). For Levinas, God's trace is particularly visible in the humans "to whom one is ethically bound," such as the "stranger, orphan, and widow," and "rises to his supreme and ultimate presence" in one kind of human relationship, namely, in "the justice rendered unto men." These claims lead quickly to Turrell and Turner's characterization of Levinas' God as *always good*—since God's trace is most visible in the most ethical human encounters. As Turrell and Turner read him, Levinas thus pictures a God so transcendent that it does not exist, still immanent in human relationships, and – much like Anderson says – present in genuinely ethical living.

In his response to Turrell and Turner, Daniel Murphy reflects on "their reference to Kierkegaard as a kind of existentialist forefather of Levinas," and in the process problematizes the assimilation of the religious to the ethical visible in both Anderson and Levinas. According to Murphy, the story begins with Hegel, whose "ethics and its derivatives...very strongly tend to reduce the religious to the ethical." Kierkegaard reacts to this reduction in his famous interpretation of the story of Abraham and Isaac, which, as Murphy says so well, is meant to "re-awaken [us] to the fact that being religious in the most authentic sense is something different from and 'higher than' being ethical." Levinas inherits from Kierkegaard a willingness to recognize that God's transcendence has implications for ethics, but he would rather fight traditional theology than Hegel, in light of "the conceptual acrobatics required to reconcile belief in a [traditional God] with the reality of radical evil." Given Levinas' history with the Holocaust, it is no wonder that (1) evil is Levinas' main theoretical concern, and that (2) he calls, not for subordinating the ethical to the religious, but for identifying them, since such identification doubles the motivation people have to stop making evil and indeed to redress it.[4]

On both these counts, Levinas has a friend in John Bishop, one of the two keynote speakers at the mini-conference. After offering a new criterion for model choice – that it should be morally permissible to leap to the God of whatever model one adopts – Bishop argues that, on this criterion, a Kantian cannot rightly leap to a classical God, because this God's response to evil, at least as pictured in the standard greater goods defense, is morally impermissible. Even a supreme good is ill-gotten gain if it took evil to get it, a Kantian might think; or she might decide that "causing another harm in order to do him an otherwise impossible good is always to put oneself into a manipulative relationship with that other," which, if true, conflicts with Kant's call to treat people as ends.

Bishop turns to creating his own model of God that can accommodate the reality of evil better than the classical model. The model starts with the Christian identification of God as Love, and shows that the most perfect love would be

[4] Donald Turner raised (2) in discussion at the mini-conference.

embodied not in a supreme individual but rather in a supreme community – most economically, a community of three, each "making room" for another in a way that is not possible with just two – and that it would be identified not with the persons in this relationship but with the relationship itself. It is clearly a good, both ontologically and ethically, to extend this kind of supreme loving relationship in degree, and thus to engage in a form of creation. But, in order to keep the God in question from bearing responsibility for evil in the world, Bishop denies that supreme Love is the source (efficient cause) from which all things come, and says instead that it is the goal (final cause) to which all things are going; it is not the *alpha*, just the *omega*. This means that "the Universe is such that Divine Love comes to exist" (and grow) "within it"—first, haltingly, in the earliest recorded religious moments; then fully, say, for the Christian tradition, in Love's incarnation in Jesus; and later, if the prophecies have it right, totally, when Love is victorious over the brokenness of this world. It is clear that this is a God that even a Kantian, or anyone else, *can* leap to: there is no cause more moral than perfectly loving relationship; indeed, engaging in perfectly loving relationship is the paradigmatic fulfillment of the moral project. In my response, though, I ask whether such a relationship can fill the pragmatic role for God to which theists within the world's religious traditions are accustomed. Can one pray to a relationship? Can one worship it?

Metatheoretical Concerns about Modeling God

In light of all the models of God surveyed here – Peters' eschatological panentheism, open theism, process theism, Coleman's process communotheism, Rice's process-open theism, and Anderson's, Levinas' and Bishop's models – there is obviously a plurality of models of God. Our second keynote speaker, Wesley Wildman, identifies the various responses people can take to this plurality. Stances include the comparing inquirers, such as Wildman himself, who seek to reconcile the conflicts between models by identifying the greatest among them; multi-traditional appreciators, such as Wildman's commentator Andrew Dell'Olio, who (to use Wildman's metaphors) make a "museum" or, better, "dance" of models and understand each one as responsive to different existential needs and expressive of different theoretical insights; or mono-traditional investors, who, in light of human finitude, take the practical course to be to pick a model and use it to live out one's spirituality, recognizing all the while the contingency of their choice.

Wildman then looks behind, between, and beyond the many models of ultimate reality. When he looks *behind*, he cautions us to be aware of the sources of error that come to bear on our process of making models of God, including the misapplication of human cognitive structures to God-modeling that were naturally selected for other (mere) survival purposes. When he looks *between* models, he asks us to think of them as hypotheses, then test them against data sets – including evolutionary psychology, cognitive psychology, or comparative religion – and finally take the models that best explain the data to win. He reports the anti-climactic result that, using this kind of comparative inquiry with a "fairly large set of key comparative criteria," "all of the very great models do fairly well." In the final section, he suggests, first, that we should look *beyond* the highly anthropomorphic models,

since, e.g., they line up perfectly with our cognitive biases and moreover fail to meet the criterion of subsuming other models within them. He suggests, second, that we must look beyond even the very great models, since ultimate reality is beyond even them. They are our best "intellectual avenues for potentially authentic engagement with ultimate reality," but even they "fall before light inexpressible."

For all his obvious sympathy for Wildman's project, Dell'Olio takes Wildman to task on many of these points. He suggests that all thinking – not just anthropomorphic modeling – is subject to the distortions Wildman mentions, including the kind of meta-thinking they are engaging in together. He denies that we need to move beyond anthropomorphic models, as Wildman suggests, since not all of them are "highly" anthropomorphic; moreover, they are no less suited to subsuming other models than impersonal ones (consider, he says, the power of personal models for explaining the existence of persons). He closes by urging cooperation rather than competition among models, for a reason that is ironically similar to Wildman's final affirmation of ineffability: that the absolute truth cannot be spoken; only the relative truth can. "If so," he writes, "we should then expect a plurality of relatively true models, but not one absolute winner."

Like Wildman, Jeremy Hustwit engages in second-order analysis of God-modeling, i.e., the examination of general features shared by substantive first-order models such as those canvassed above, or of the process of creating them. Whereas Wildman examines the psychological, biological and social forces that lead to model creation, Hustwit focuses on their epistemological origins and prospects. He identifies four "models of modeling God" (MGMs)—all of which agree on a "co-constitution thesis" that both the modeler and mind-independent reality contribute content to a given model, but each of which offers a different estimate of which part contributes the most. He finds that two of these views ("mysteriosophy" and "theopoetics") are too *pessimistic* about our epistemic access to God – since they claim we cannot model God but rather a merely subjective or linguistic reality – and that one of these views ("critical realism") is too *optimistic* about our access, since it "does not take seriously the considerable power of ideology and cultural tradition to conceal the structures of reality in religious experience." He lights on a mean between these views that he calls 'fallibilism'—that models of God indeed can refer to a mind-independent reality, but that, because subjectivity plays an enormous role in obscuring this reality, we will never be able to construct an accurate model of God, nor even reach wide consensus on the proper criteria for model choice.

If Wildman's, Dell'Olio's, and Hustwit's papers are second-order analysis, Samuel Ruhmkorff's response to Hustwit is third-order analysis—a discussion of Hustwit's MGM-modeling. He locates three criteria by which Hustwit judges the MGMs—internal coherence, descriptive faithfulness to non-academic religious discourse, and mindfulness of the co-constitution thesis. Ruhmkorff then suggests a fourth "Competition Criterion," that MGMs "make sense of the reasoned attempts at adjudicating debates among models of God extant in religious communities." He argues that fallibilism is so skeptical about the criteria for competition among models that it cannot make sense of these existing debates and thus fails the Competition Criterion. Ruhmkorff closes by pointing out that both Hustwit's argument and his own assume that we ought to take religious discourse about models of God at face

value, and that an argument in favor of this point is required for those, such as mysteriosophists and theopoets, who question it.

General Themes: Relationality, Naturalism and Pluralism

These, then, were the major discussions of the mini-conference—the first-order production and analysis of many substantive models of God, the second-order debates about their origins, relationships, and prospects, and, finally, some third-order reflection on how that second-order discussion should proceed. Three overarching themes about modeling God emerged from them: relationality, naturalism, and pluralism. Let me explain each briefly, before closing.

It is a striking fact that nearly every first-order substantive God-modeling paper published here mentions relationality, and not off-hand, but in way essential to the model. First, we can see a focus in some models on *God's relationship to creation*: this is the primary divine value in open theism, according to Woodruff; it is what the members of the Trinity essentially do, for Rice; it is part of God's consequent nature to feel creation's sorrows and joys, for process theists in general; and God feels in this way so profoundly that God is mysterious, for Viney in particular. Second, some models locate *relationality within God's self*: Coleman's Divine is a community of gods that fundamentally relate to each other, and Rice and Bishop posit a self-relating Trinity as Godhead. Bishop is perhaps the purest instance of this type, since he explicitly identifies God, not with the divine persons doing the relating, but with the divine relationship itself. Third, some models prize the best of *human relations as instantiations of the divine*: in Anderson, strong, collective instances of human solicitude might be 'God amongst us'; in Levinas, God's trace is visible in those to whom we are "ethically bound" and in "the justice rendered unto" them; in Bishop, God just is perfectly loving relationship, and thus is literally present anytime, anywhere that such relationship is instantiated. It would be an interesting project for psychologists and sociologists of religion to explore why this focus on relationality, and why now: is this a collective reaction to classical theism and the divine impassibility that came with it? Or is there something attractive about relationality in itself, in our time, and if so, what, exactly? Whatever the answers here, one thing is certain: divine relationality is in vogue.

Naturalism in models of God is on the rise, too. If we mean by 'naturalism' in this context what Taylor suggests, i.e., the view that "the divine reality is not completely ontologically distinct from the universe," then naturalistic theology comes in degrees. Process theism and panentheism are *partly* naturalistic: the world is (in some sense) inside God, so part of God is the world, but God is also more than the world. Pantheism is *fully* naturalistic: all of God is the world, and vice versa. Bishop's model of God as perfectly loving relationship is fully naturalistic, too, and, interestingly, the inverse of panentheism: God is (in a literal sense) inside the world, so part of the world is God, but the world is also more than God. In addition, although the details of their accounts are less clear on this point, Levinas' and Anderson's divine models also have naturalistic tendencies.

If atheism is understood as I think it is most often today – as the belief that the natural world is all there is – then one consequence of the rise of naturalistic models

of God is a blurring of the line between atheism and theism. Traditionally, the dispute between theists and atheists has been framed as an ontological one: theists believe that there is a certain kind of thing which atheists believe there is not. But *fully* naturalistic theists and atheists as just described have no fundamental ontological dispute: they both agree that the natural world is all there is. So what distinguishes them from each other? Attitude, I venture. For instance, the attitude that a pantheist has toward the world that an atheist lacks is that reality – or at least the deepest, wholly natural reality that underlies the natural world – is worthy of worship. The attitude that Bishop has that an atheist lacks is a specific hope—hope that the power of perfectly loving relationship is sufficiently strong that it will be victorious in the end. The attitude that Levinas has that an atheist (if he is not himself one) lacks might be reverence for those things that bear God's trace. Of course, some beliefs must ground these attitude differences, and they, too, will constitute points of disagreement between fully naturalistic theists and atheists. Still, these beliefs will not involve positing fundamentally different kinds of entities, and that is important news for properly framing the ongoing dialectic between theists and atheists.

Finally, pluralism. For those attending this mini-conference, it became an inescapable fact that there is a large variety of extant and developing models of God: Peters had to survey nine of them just to get the event started, and by its close, we had been exposed to twenty-two, by my count. The first thing to do in the face of this vast diversity is to embrace and acknowledge it. We also do well to learn from the variety of impulses people naturally have in response to it. We can learn from the multi-traditional appreciators, as Wildman calls them, to welcome the wide array: they see a "relative truth" in each model, so an abundance of models means an abundance of opportunities for discovering such truths. We can learn from Rice and his syncretic process-open theism that one way of operationalizing such appreciation is to combine models, and from Coleman and Brown that another way is to accept them all, since it is monotheism that pushes us to adopt just one.

Whether we choose just one model or more, we can learn from the comparing inquirers to be discriminating about which models we pay the most time, since all models are literally not created equal, as Wildman argued. Criteria for model choice (or 'comparative criteria' or 'adequacy criteria') help us think about how to choose carefully among the array. Such criteria standardly include e.g., internal coherence, coherence with the physical and human sciences, fit with the extant religious tradition whose God one is modeling, ability to account for the problem of evil, etc. Over the course of the mini-conference, Wildman, Viney, and Bishop each offered a new criterion to add to this list—Wildman, that a model should be shaped by cognitive reflexes that are reliable for God-modeling (or at least, *not* be shaped by cognitive reflexes that are *not* reliable for God-modeling); Viney, that a model should be able to accommodate divine mystery; and Bishop, that a model should be such that it is morally permissible to leap toward the God it models. Hustwit and Dell'Olio rightly cautioned that we should expect no more than local agreement on such criteria. Recognizing this as an empirical proposition, the participants in our closing plenary session tested it and found it true: even within our relatively small and homogeneous group, we together identified twenty-eight possible comparative criteria, with obvious dispute about their importance and even, in some cases, whether they should count as criteria at all. For all the disagreement in that final

session, there was, in closing, consensus on several pluralistic themes, including respecting models that are not one's own, taking responsibility for the social power of models to legitimate social structures, and widening the dialogue to include more voices from outside the Judaeo–Christian tradition, should there be a Models of God Conference II.

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