

BOOK SYMPOSIUM

Minding Creation: response to critics

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Abstract

In this article, I reply to four responses published in this journal to my book *Minding Creation: Theological Panpsychism and the Doctrine of Creation*. Two of these responses, by Christa L. McKirland and Eugene Fuimaono, and by Tim Miller and Thomas Jay Oord, are largely appreciative and propose future engagement with theological anthropology, indigenous perspectives, process metaphysics, and the doctrine of the incarnation. The other two responses, by Andrei Buckareff and Philip Goff, offer critical engagement on arguments I made regarding the relationship between panpsychism, naturalism, and theism.

Keywords: Panpsychism; creation; existence of God; naturalism; indigenous

Introduction

I am truly grateful for these responses, all of which were generous enough to commend the book to future readers, as well as to give me the opportunity to think further about *Minding Creation*. When I wrote this book, I had two audiences in mind, both of which are represented by the kind and thoughtful responses published in this symposium. McKirland, Fuimaono, Miller, and Oord represent the first audience I had in mind: Christian theologians from a wide variety of contexts and sub-traditions. My goal was to convince my theological brethren that panpsychism is a metaphysic, or a theory of consciousness, that they should take seriously, if not fully embrace. I had suspected that theologians from Process and open/relational theological traditions (Miller and Oord), and indigenous theologians (Fuimaono) might be more readily amenable to this argument than others – so it was particularly pleasing also to see that this argument found strong resonances with the work of an evangelical Baptist theologian (McKirland). The end of my book highlights how recent Eastern Orthodox (e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Sergei Bulgakov) and Anglican (e.g. Cambridge Platonists, Rowan Williams, Radical Orthodoxy) theology contains explicit panpsychist thinking, which can also be seen to a lesser extent in the Dutch Reformed (e.g. Herman Bavinck) and Roman Catholic (e.g. Teilhard de Chardin, Leonardo Boff, Rosemary Radford Ruether) traditions. I hope that future engagements with this book, and with panpsychism as a philosophy, continue to reflect the diversity of Christian theological positions.

Buckareff and Goff represent the second audience, philosophers interested in or advocating panpsychism, whose written work has not also advocated Christian theism. The

book only addresses this second audience in a few places, where my goal was to show that, contrary to common historical narratives, Christian theology is compatible with, and even beneficial to, panpsychism. More ambitiously, I also argued that there are reasons for (non-Christian) panpsychists to see Christian theism as a natural extension of their panpsychist logic and motivations. It is entirely appropriate, then, that Buckareff and Goff both focus their responses on these sub-sections of the book. They both agree that Christianity and panpsychism are compatible, and that panpsychism is beneficial to Christianity, but they both query my second normative claim, that panpsychists should be theists.

In the remainder of this article, I will reply to the two theological responses first, before turning to my two philosophical interlocutors.

Response to McKirland and Fuimaono

McKirland notes three overlaps between her own work in theological anthropology and my work on creation: ‘the distinction between the need to exist and the need to flourish; the ontological continuity of all things; and the uniqueness of humankind without reifying the idea of human supremacy over the rest of creation’ (McKirland and Fuimaono 2023, 2). Certainly, I agree with three principles. However, it was not clear to me if McKirland sees the importance of panpsychism for robustly articulating the latter two principles. After all, theologians have sought to affirm ontological continuity and limit human supremacy by affirming that we are creatures ourselves. Shared creaturehood, however, does not go far enough. If humans are the only creatures to receive their souls by an act of special creationism, or if we are the only creature capable of experiencing and responding to God, then these principles of continuity and non-supremacy appear to me little more than empty gestures. To be clear, I am not disagreeing with anything McKirland has written here, I am only taking the opportunity to emphasize why her theological anthropology should explicitly endorse panpsychism to give metaphysical substance to the principles that she and I hold in common.

It might interest McKirland to know that I had originally imagined that theological anthropology would be the doctrinal locus of this project. Panpsychism in current analytic philosophy is primarily a theory trying to answer questions about the origin and nature of *human* consciousness. There remain plenty of interesting issues for a panpsychist theological anthropology to work through in addition to the topics McKirland already mentions, such as the origin of the soul, original sin, moral responsibility, sanctification, personal identity over time, and the doctrine of the resurrection. While I plan to tackle these issues in future publications (see Leidenhag 2024), I hope sharing this list of topics encourages others also to take up the task of seeing the advantages and disadvantages of panpsychism for Christian theology.

I didn’t start with these topics, however, because I came to the conclusion that the doctrine of creation has logical priority over the doctrine of humanity. This is not only because the mind–body problem ‘is not just a local problem . . . it invades our understanding of the entire cosmos and its history’ (Nagel 2012, 3), nor is it just that in Christian creedal confessions of faith, creation precedes anthropology. It is also to reject the concept of humanity as the microcosm of creation, which has traditionally been the foundation of the claim of humanity’s role as a cosmic priesthood, which McKirland and I affirm in a qualified way (see, Leidenhag 2021a, 149–150). Emphasized most explicitly within Eastern Orthodox theology, the claim that humanity is a ‘microcosm’ of creation is based on the idea that *homo sapiens* alone contains both mind and matter, representing and reconciling heaven and earth. By democratizing mentality, theological panpsychism abandons such a claim. Humanity’s priesthood is not then based on an utterly unique

ontology (although more complex mental abilities have given us a power over the planet unlike that of any other creature) but on a vocation to be a worship leader, community-facilitator, pastoral healer with and for all of God's creatures. McKirland, as a Baptist theologian, will, I imagine, agree that there is an equally important point to make here about our understanding of priesthood and leadership, as there is about metaphysics.

I am very grateful to Fuimaono for his evaluation of where my theological panpsychism overlaps and diverges from Pacifica indigenous thought. I agree that engagement with indigenous (and other majority world) traditions of thought and practice, which have consistently encountered the natural world as filled with experiencing and enspirited subjects, is an important direction for theological panpsychism to develop. Such engagement would not only sharpen and deepen my own thinking but has the potential to repair some of the wrongs of colonialism both within Christian indigenous theologies, and between *mātauranga Māori* and Western science. When I was writing this book, one or two people asked me how it might engage in dialogue with (Native American) indigenous perspectives. At the time, and still today, I did not feel able to answer such a question. I am grateful to Fuimaono for pointing the way (and pointing to further literature to read). As he advises, to achieve these goals Western Christians such as myself must initially take the posture of students and remain mindful of the differences between indigenous traditions, and between indigenous and Western theories, even as panpsychism moves us closer together.

Fuimaono argues that my 'theological panpsychism' is 'not wholly transferable into indigenous thought', but that there are important 'points of congruency with Māori theology' (McKirland and Fuimaono 2023, 3–4). What I find particularly challenging in his response is how Fuimaono points out that – for all our shared conclusions – the method of analytic theological analysis is not only contextual to Western approaches but has been used to oppress and marginalize indigenous knowledges and people. When I (and others I quote) positioned panpsychism as a more viable alternative to animism, I implicitly (and unintentionally, but nevertheless) perpetuated this tradition of off-the-cuff, unexamined, marginalization (see Leidenhag 2021a, 139 n. 2; 145 n. 29). For this, I can only repent. My hope is that analytic philosophy and theology, as an intellectual tradition, is both flexible enough to change and still has something important to contribute to a better, post-colonial and anti-racist, academy (for an example of this see, Yadav 2020). In terms of philosophy of mind and doctrines of soul and creation, panpsychism seems like one of the most obvious places for this new kind of work to start.

As Fuimaono notes, sometimes this marginalization comes in the form of what I called 'the incredulous stare'. These are objections that (often, tacitly or through throw-away comments) take panpsychism to be too counter-intuitive to be taken seriously. In the book (contrary to what Fuimaono says), I do first respond to this at the level of epistemology. I point out that this quasi-objection only arises because of a highly questionable set of contemporary Western intuitions and assumptions (Leidenhag 2021a, 60–61). I see this as in keeping with, although not as multifaceted as, Fuimaono's argument that the incredulous stare 'hinges on the persisting core of Whiteness in Western theological academy' (McKirland and Fuimaono 2023, 4). Importantly, his reference to 'Whiteness' adds embodiment and social privilege, in addition to geographic and historic location, to the picture of where these intuitions – intuitions that are not only about consciousness but also about who is worth listening to – come from and how they are sustained. As Fuimaono rightly predicts, when I have presented panpsychism outside privileged, White, modern, Western contexts (or, increasingly, presented it to people committed to environmental action, or those who have taken psychedelics), I am *not* met with the incredulous stare, but rather with either enthusiastic agreement or slightly disappointed boredom that I am saying something so obviously true.

Response to Miller and Oord

Miller and Oord have written a very positive response to *Minding Creation*. This is perhaps unsurprising, given Oord's own work combining pan-experientialism and Christian theology – although I had expected to be pushed more on my commitment to creation *ex nihilo* and my critiques of Process theology. As they write, pan-experientialism is the preferred term used by Process theologians, such as John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin (but not Charles Hartshorne), because of the risk that 'psyche' may imply a more complex form of consciousness than 'experience' (see Leidenhag 2021a, 76). (It should be noted, however, that the actual occasions at the bottom of the Process metaphysic do more than passively experience the world; they are also said to make a self-determining choice with some degree of intentionality or agency.) 'Psyche' and 'experience' are slippery terms. Certainly, my work and that of the philosophers I draw upon (who use 'panpsychism') repeatedly stress the very basic, minimal, form of experience being discussed at the fundamental level of reality; it is a subjectivity that lacks cognition, emotion, rationality, or (excepting, Goff 2019) agency. As Oord shows, he is happy to use the language of mentality and mind in describing pan-experientialism.

On the one hand, this semantic choice can either be chalked up to mere personal preference, or as a form of sociological signalling. Certainly, one of the reasons I favour panpsychism over pan-experientialism was because the literature that inspired this book came from recent analytic philosophy of mind, which uses the term 'panpsychism', rather than from Process philosophy and theology. If anything, I was happy to have a way to signal to my fellow theologians that my 'theological panpsychism' is different from Process theology (see Leidenhag 2021a, 6–11, 116–122).

On the other hand, the choice of language between panpsychism and pan-experientialism may point towards a deeper disagreement; namely, whether the world is most basically made up of substances (subjects that have experiences) or processes (streams of experiences that make up subjects). In the book, I critique Process pan-experientialism's event-based ontology for positing experiences without enduring subjects to experience them, and likewise for positing actions without agents to perform them (Leidenhag 2021a, 120; Leidenhag 2022a, 16–19). I simply cannot get my head around the coherence of a process or event-based ontology. Rather than critiquing my position, Miller and Oord gently invite me to think more in terms of processes rather than substances. I want to propose a compromise; charitably interpreted, it might be that the debate between substance-based and process-based thinking is a false dichotomy.

The standard dichotomous picture is that the universe is either made up of unchanging substances, or of processes/events of change without substance. In such extreme terms, both views are clearly false; the world seems to contain both continuity and change. From pre-Socratic times to the present, philosophers have struggled with how to make sense of this, and I am certainly not going to solve the problem here. Rather, I think we can agree that there is a very difficult philosophical problem and neither dichotomous extreme suffices as an answer. I assume that Process thinkers think that I must include processes of change and activity, even at the fundamental level of reality. I am happy to do so. I think that Process metaphysics must include a notion of at least *very short-lived* substances at the fundamental level, which have properties and causal powers, or whatever else. Furthermore, given that contemporary physics suggests that fundamental particles are sometimes also waves, and that even as particles they are very short-lived, I can see why it might sometimes be helpful to think of ultimate reality in terms of processes (which substances undergo), and sometimes in terms of substances (which are ever-changing). There are big philosophical questions here, but I'm not sure the fight between Process and substance-based metaphysics is really getting at it the right way.

Lastly, Miller and Oord write that ‘Leidenhag worries a bit that if Christians see incarnation as a one-time breaking through of the Divine into human form, they will miss Christ incarnate throughout all. Perhaps in her future work, she will explore this broader vision of incarnation’ (Miller and Oord 2023, 4). This is not correct. I think that the incarnation was a once-for-all event in cosmic history and that we should turn to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, not to a broader vision of incarnation, to articulate how the benefits of Christ’s person and work are communicated to all creation. As I wrote in the book, ‘I do not wish to develop a panpsychist deep incarnation, but instead offer a cosmic or “deep” view of the presence of the Spirit of Christ (see Chapter 4)’ (Leidenhag 2021a, 157). We do not need multiple species-specific, or even planet-specific, incarnations because we are not saved by a common biology with Christ, but by the receiving of his Spirit (see also my critique of emergent Christologies, in Leidenhag 2021a, 39–43).

Response to Buckareff

Buckareff and Goff mostly focus on sections of the book addressed to non-Christian panpsychist philosophers, where I argue that panpsychists should stop calling their view naturalistic and be open to or endorse theism.

Buckareff argues that ‘panpsychism does not commit one to *any* conception of God. But certain conceptions of God fit better with panpsychist assumptions’ (Buckareff 2023, 6). I agree entirely! In fact, I have argued exactly this point in a subsequent publication. The following is taken from the abstract:

It is seen that as a family of views, panpsychism is a theologically flexible position that has been used to support atheism, pantheism, panentheism, and traditional monotheism. However, the relationship between panpsychism and philosophy of religion is not infinitely flexible. Different versions of panpsychism constrain these models of God, and *vice versa*. (Leidenhag 2022b, 1)

Of course, Buckareff was not asked to respond to this subsequent article, but to my previous monograph. However, nothing I said in the book contradicts this later article. In short, I do not think Buckareff and I disagree as strongly as he implies in this part of his response.

First, Buckareff argues that naturalism and panpsychism are compatible. I do not, strictly speaking, disagree with this claim, and nowhere do I say panpsychism and naturalism are *incompatible*. I do, however, think they make poor bedfellows. In the book I put it like this: ‘Panpsychism’s relationship to naturalism seems one of unrequited love; many naturalists want little to do with panpsychism, but panpsychists still want to associate themselves with naturalists, vainly hoping that their beloved naturalism will turn from the error of her positive truth claims’ (Leidenhag 2021a, 64–65). Much depends on how ‘naturalism’ is defined. To try and get a handle on this difficult term, ‘I distinguish between naturalism’s positive truth claims, regarding what *does* exist, and naturalism’s negative truth claims, regarding what *does not* exist’ (Leidenhag 2021a, 64). As indicated in the final sentence of the quote above, it is naturalism’s positive truth claims that I take to cause difficulties for panpsychists, not the naturalist’s negative truth claims (I clarify this because the sequence of quotations provided by Buckareff (2023, 2) may make it seem otherwise). Regarding naturalism’s negative truth claims, I make it clear that ‘a panpsychist can choose to adopt or reject [supernaturalism] at will’ (Leidenhag 2021a, 69). Naturalism’s positive truth claims, as I take them, amount to ‘materialist naturalism’ or

'physicSalism', which Buckareff agrees is incompatible with panpsychism (Buckareff 2023, 2).

As Buckareff notes, in my attempt to get a handle on the term 'naturalism' I first draw on (influential) non-panpsychist philosophers, since I had assumed that panpsychists would want to use the term in broadly the same way as other philosophers (Leidenhag 2021a, 65). If panpsychists feel the need to define 'naturalism' in a bespoke way, then I see this as only adding credibility to my argument that panpsychists should drop the term. Contrary to Buckareff's argument, I do go on (Leidenhag 2021a, 67) to reference briefly the minimal views of naturalism endorsed by Chalmers and Strawson (Nagel is also mentioned in a footnote). The point of disagreement between Buckareff and me seems to be whether holding views that do not contradict contemporary natural science warrants the label (minimal) methodological 'naturalism'. He thinks it does warrant the label, and I do not. This is methodological naturalism as opposed to what? Are there any views that actively, consciously, and consistently oppose contemporary data gathered and interpreted by natural scientists? Belief in a supernatural interventionist God certainly does not oppose contemporary science. (I acknowledge that science scepticism exists in some places, but do not think these movements are intellectually consistent enough to qualify as an alternative philosophical position.) Buckareff stands on stronger ground with regard to a minimal ontological naturalism regarding the mind, because there are views that see the mind as supernatural or non-natural in some way (e.g. soul creationism, if a unique supernatural origin apart from biological evolution warrants the claim non-natural, which I think it probably does). On this logic, I would be a minimal ontological naturalist about the mind, as I think consciousness was created by God the same way as everything else that qualifies as 'nature'. But I do not embrace this label for my position, because I think it is unhelpful: more likely to confuse than illuminate. It is on this basis that I stand by my argument at this point in the book, that 'Certainly, panpsychists do not abandon all commitment to the natural sciences, but I find it implausible that they (or any so-called liberal naturalism) can be regarded as naturalists in so far as the term connotes any positive propositions that distinguish it from other positions' (Leidenhag 2021a, 67).

If I am honest, I increasingly think the term 'naturalism' should be generally abandoned. Unless we can agree on a range of meaning that is not already well catered for by another word (e.g. atheism, scientism, physicalism, materialism, empiricism, etc.), I fail to see its usefulness. I have heard colleagues argue that belief in the supernatural should be counted as a form of metaphysical naturalism, because there is nothing unnatural about God, and others who think methodological naturalism means using whatever methodology suits the object of enquiry, which in principle could include *a priori* reasoning, deductive logic, prayer, magic, etc. Philosophical terminology sometimes becomes so fashionable that people holding a wide variety of mutually incompatible views want to claim it for their own. When this happens, as it has done for 'naturalism', then the usual methods of preserving semantic hygiene (which help philosophers to avoid talking past one another) are no longer possible – in such a circumstance, we should all just agree to abandon the terminology.

Second, Buckareff opposes my argument that panpsychism invites or implies theism. Buckareff is correct that my use of the term 'imply' is weaker than entailment and stronger than one equally possible conjunction of compatible views. Panpsychists do not have to be theists 'on pain of inconsistency' (Buckareff 2023, 5). Therefore, I don't endorse Buckareff's representation of the argument (Buckareff 2023, 5), although I acknowledge that he is drawing on my own use of this language (Leidenhag 2021a, 83). I stated this too strongly. I think that panpsychism fits with theism. The argument is that 'if the central arguments for panpsychism were extended towards the universe as

a whole then this would result in theism; one might say that panpsychism implies theism' (Leidenhag 2021a, 83). This argument amounts to the claim that 'panpsychists [should] be *open to theism*' (Leidenhag 2021a, 81; italics added). Admittedly, implication, fit, and openness are not terribly precise – apologies, I still cannot think of anything more exact without over-extending the argument.

As Buckareff correctly summarizes, my reasoning rests on the observation that the principles that many panpsychists use to discredit (super)strong emergence theory are the same as those theists use in the cosmological argument for the existence of 'a Creator or First Cause of some kind' (Leidenhag 2021a, 83). Note, in using the language of 'Creator or First Cause' in the book, I did not claim panpsychism implies the revealed God of the Abrahamic faiths exactly. I am comfortable with Goff's language of a 'self-explainer', provided that this self-explainer also explains the existence of the universe either by being the universe or by creating the universe (Goff 2023, 2). Buckareff has several objections to this argument, some of which I find stronger than others. I will focus on three, from weakest to strongest.

First, Buckareff (2023, 5) appeals to Thomas Nagel's reasoning, that turning to theism as an explanation ignores the need for 'intelligibility from within' (Nagel 2012, 26). Buckareff's argument here misses its mark. I entirely agree with Nagel's argument, and I appeal to it myself (Leidenhag 2021a, 84), when we are trying to account for the existence of something within the natural world, because part of the explanation should include understanding how this bit of the universe fits together with other bits. But, in the present case, we are trying to account for existence itself. We need have no concern for intelligibility or place within a system, when it is the system itself that we are trying to explain.

Second, Buckareff asks what I mean by 'exists necessarily' (Leidenhag 2021a, 83). He is right to suppose that I mean metaphysical necessity. I found the subsequent discussion of what 'world' refers to on naturalism or on theism a little confusing, but I interpret Buckareff here as aligning naturalism with actualism and theism with possibilism. This is because of his statement that, on naturalism, 'The space of metaphysical possibility is provided by the universe' (Buckareff 2023, 5). On such a view, there are no possibilities for other universes (i.e. the multiverse), nor is it possible for the universe to have never existed, nor for it to have started to exist, nor for it to cease to exist, nor for it to be in any way other than what it is, since all these scenarios entail that the range of possibilities is larger than the actual universe. I find it far more plausible to describe God in this necessary and actualistic way (e.g. no possibilities for other Gods, nor for God to have never existed, nor for God to have started to exist, nor for God to cease to exist, nor for God to be other than God is), than I do the universe we inhabit, which appears to me full of contingencies and unactualized potential. Buckareff will probably point out that none of this follows directly from panpsychism. Certainly, the panpsychist can choose to ignore the question: Why is there a panpsychist universe at all? Why is there something (conscious) rather than nothing (conscious)? But she will have to make the universe look more and more like a deity in order to maintain this position. Then the real debate is not between atheism and theism, but between various kinds of theism or models of God.

Third, I think this is Buckareff's strongest point: 'if we duplicate the reasoning of the anti-emergence argument that Leidenhag endorses, then the Creator cannot be an altogether different kind of thing from what it causes, namely, the physical universe' (Buckareff 2023, 5). Assuming that Buckareff is doing something Strawson-esque by equating 'physical universe' with 'panpsychist universe', then I think that is probably right. Applying the exact logic that the panpsychist uses against strong emergence would result in a view whereby the universe is grounded in, rather than created *ex nihilo* by, a self-explainer. I've argued elsewhere, the extension of constitutive panpsychism to the

universe as a whole yield's a form of pantheism, and the extension of non-constitutive panpsychism yields panentheism (Leidenhag 2020, 2022b). Since I endorse the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, I don't myself pursue either of these options. Rather than the extension of a solution, my argument should be limited to the extension of a problem: 'Since the panpsychist is dissatisfied with conscious organisms being a brute fact, it seems likely that she should find the brute fact of the universe's existence to be dissatisfying also' (Leidenhag 2021b, 261). As noted above, once panpsychists agree that there needs to be an explanation for why there is something rather than nothing, we can go on to debate which model of God provides the best solution to that question.

Response to Goff

This helpfully brings us to Philip Goff's response. Goff helpfully notes the divide in the panpsychist research community between the 'resolutely secular' and those who 'have certain convictions which may be called "spiritual"', and my own approach of combining panpsychism with one of the traditional Abrahamic faiths (Christianity) (Goff 2023, 1). The critical comments in Goff's response focus initially on the same section of *Minding Creation* as Buckareff's response. Goff seems to agree that there is a logical route from panpsychism to theism but argues that secular panpsychist's can easily 'get off this bus' along the way (Goff 2023, 2). He also thinks that, for spiritually inclined panpsychists like himself, the more logical destination of this metaphorical bus route is something other than the omni-God of traditional monotheism, such as a self-explaining universe.

First, can secular panpsychists get off the bus early? Goff argues that secular panpsychists can reject the Principle of Sufficient Reason in favour of a more 'minimal rationalism', which preserves the argument against emergent entities, but allows them to maintain that the (conscious) universe is a brute fact, thereby avoiding theism (Goff 2023, 2). This is because the Principle of Sufficient Reason demands an explanation for any contingent facts, and Goff's minimal rationalism only demands that non-fundamental non-singular truths be transparently rendered by fundamental non-singular truths (Goff 2017, 130). This attempt to limit explanatory demands is a neat solution, but it also (in Goff's words) 'feels like a fiddle' (Goff 2017, 131). Ignoring widespread intuitions about what needs explaining (i.e. contingencies) leaves me dissatisfied in much the same way that emergent entities do: 'smuggling in ontology without paying a fair price for it' (Goff 2017, 131).

Goff does not alight at this earlier bus stop, however, but argues that the terminus of the argument from panpsychism to theism is not the omni-God of the Abrahamic faiths, but a self-explaining universe in a non-spatiotemporal form. There are three responses I want to make here. First, Goff's depiction of the omni-God is not quite right from a theistic perspective. Goff describes the omni-God as 'an entity that is all-knowing, all-powerful, and perfectly good – an *Omni-God* – it seems that such a being *might* exist but also might not exist' (Goff 2023, 4). This seems to depict the omni-God as a contingent being with superpowers, but the God of theism is a necessary being that either exists necessarily or is impossible. In a footnote, Goff anticipates this objection and clarifies that 'might' here is epistemic (Goff 2023, 7 n. 3), thereby blocking the use of Plantinga's modal ontological argument. Therefore, I take Goff's statement that 'such a being *might* exist' to really mean that we might *know*, or might be able to know, that this God exists, or we might not (be able to) know that God exists. Once the epistemic reading of 'might' is acknowledged it no longer seems to follow that 'merely postulating such a being doesn't explain why there's something rather than nothing', nor that a necessarily existent God is on an explanatory par with a contingent self-explaining (conscious) universe.

Second, Goff writes that we can't know *a priori* whether there is only one self-explainer, or if the self-explainer is an intelligent being. Limiting ourselves to *a priori* methods of

enquiry, I think that is probably correct. However, I see no reason not to appeal to additional arguments or evidence here. For example, the intelligibility of the finely tuned and ordered universe to human life and understanding seems to point to a single, intelligent self-explaining creator, rather than irrational self-explaining creator or a group of self-explaining creators who may disagree with one another. Still, we cannot know with certainty from this that there is one self-explainer; there could be multiple self-explainers of which one is the creator, or there could be multiple self-explaining creators that work in perfect harmony. These are less parsimonious options, but they remain hypothetical possibilities. I do think, however, that additional evidence of the universe's fine-tuning, order, and intelligibility shifts the balance of probability in the direction of a single, intelligent self-explainer.

Third, this brings us to Goff's idea that the universe in a non-spatiotemporal form can fulfil the role of the self-explaining creator. I find it very hard to conceptualize a non-spatiotemporal universe (a quantum vacuum, surely, still has some spatiotemporality). I find this even harder than conceptualizing a non-spatiotemporal omni-God, which I also find pretty hard to imagine as atemporal. It helps slightly that, for Goff, this non-spatiotemporal universe is also conscious. So, Goff posits a non-spatiotemporal mind that is causally prior to, and (self-)explains, the existence of the universe. This, of course, sounds very much like 'God', with some adjustments. Since the self-explainer is (or becomes) the universe, we have a pantheism rather than a supernatural God. Goff's self-explainer should probably be granted all the knowledge, power, and moral qualities that actually exist, since she simply is the sum of all existence. This fits some definitions of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, but not others. My point (which I think is broadly in line with Goff's response) is that, as I argued in response to Buckareff, the debate should not be framed as atheism/agnosticism vs theism, but between different models of God, different kinds of theism. Once this is granted, the dialogue must shift considerably from armchair reasoning to take into consideration claims of revelation and divine action.

I am grateful that Goff also comments on two other sections of the book, hitherto undiscussed in this symposium. Goff defends the Process theology view of limited divine action, of which David Ray Griffin is the representative I engage with in the book. Goff's point is that 'Christianity is quite compatible with process theology' (Goff 2023, 6). I just want to clarify that I take this to be correct and nothing in my book should suggest otherwise. Most Process theology is articulated as a form of Christian theology, and many Process theologians (like David Ray Griffin) identify as Christians. My disagreements with Process theology, therefore, are internal disputes that flow from different ways of handling the revelation of God in the resurrection of Jesus and, perhaps, different ways of holding oneself accountable to (past and present) Christian communities. Christian Process theologians, like myself, take these to be relevant and therefore in some sense authoritative, but still disagree about what follows on from there, particularly (as Goff identifies) regarding the problem of evil.

Finally, Goff worries that in arguing that an atheistic panpsychism fills the universe with intrinsic value in an ultimately selfish way, I have not given intrinsic value its full due. I agree that intrinsic value, when truly internalized, inspires moral sentiments of love, respect, and deep care towards the other. However, I still worry that the scope of these sentiments (as well as more cold-blooded obligations) is ultimately self-referential and so egoistical and anthropocentric. A hint of this is seen in Goff's statement that, 'To truly internalize . . . that the other has equal worth *to yourself* is to overcome individualism and ego' (Goff 2023, 7; italics added). I don't think that this is correct, because oneself still sits in the highest position of value (even if this position is shared equally with others) and is the ultimate benchmark of value against which others are measured. We

have not then overcome individualism and ego. Can there be something more valuable than myself, which promotes behaviours of altruism and self-sacrifice? It doesn't seem so on Goff's view. What about the more sacramental view that I advocate in the book? Sacramental value has all the benefits of intrinsic value, but in addition states that one's own intrinsic value is had through participation in something, Someone, of greater value than oneself. This, of course, could be very harmful, if it were not the case that this same participation is one of non-competitive, mutual flourishing. God's glory is in the flourishing of God's creatures. Creation is most itself when it points to God, such that intrinsic value and sacramental value are positively correlated and overlap. It is just that sacramental value provides a horizon of value greater than that of the human individual, which I think is the kind of horizon needed for a satisfactory environmental ethic.

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