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Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism

Christopher E. Etter

Sacred Heart University, christopheretter@outlook.com

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Kenotic Effluent Panapothoism

Master's Thesis (M.A.)

by Christopher E. Etter

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Introduction

In these times of changing and evolving scientific discovery, philosophy and theology are at a critical juncture where they stand to lose all relevance if they are unable to keep up with the wealth of new knowledge and discoveries. Among the recent attempts in philosophy and theology to reconcile the relationship between science and these fields is Process Theology. Process Theology owes its origins to the 20th Century American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead and the philosophers and theologians he has influenced have developed a myriad of new theologies that all attempt to incorporate the new sciences, such as Quantum Physics, Emergent Biology, and Evolutionary Science. Kenotic Effluent Panapothoism is an attempt to build on these concepts and reintroduce older theologies to help facilitate the new emerging theologies.

Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism is based on three major principles. Kenosis means “self emptying” or “self limitation” and it is commonly used in theology to refer to God’s act of emptying itself either of its presence or will. In this model, I am using Kenosis to refer to a process of creative succession that is found in Neo-Platonist cosmology and Kabbalistic cosmology, primarily those of Plotinus and Isaac Luria respectively. Kenosis is a creative process of self limitation where complete, perfect and absolute being, limits itself in order to create finite beings and a finite physical universe. I will be exploring Neo-Platonism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah and Process Theology in an attempt to explain this position and building and adding new original concepts to this model.

Effluence refers to the process of creation found in these schools of thought, however, there is a semantic distinction I am purposefully making here by using the term Effluence. Effluence, Emanation and Emergence are synonyms, however, Emanation and Emergence are already associated specifically with certain schools of thought. Neo-Platonism is commonly defined as Emanationism, which refers to the natural process by which created things “emanate” from its source, called the One. Although this model is very similar to Neo-Platonism, there are some major differences which I will be pointing out in this thesis. Emergence has been adopted by Process Theologians to define some of their cosmologies, and has been incorporated into their understanding of Emergent Biology. Therefore, Effluence is the term I am choosing to use to distinguish this model from others, as this model is different metaphysically and philosophically from both Neo-Platonism and Process Theology even though it builds upon them both.

Finally, Panapotheism is a term I coined specifically for this model. The name means All-from God, and it refers to a cosmology where the universe is created out of the very same substance of the source of creation. This model is not a Pantheism or a Monism, and it is not entirely a Panentheism as it differs from other Process Panentheisms that I will explain in this thesis. Theology lacks the term for the concept I am trying to define, so I developed a term that I hope will become common usage in academic theology. “Creatio ex Deo” which means “created from God” in Latin, is the closest theological terminology to the ideas in this thesis. However, even this phrase brings up certain metaphysical problems of its own. Panapotheism is an attempt to explain a “creation from God” cosmology, while maintaining certain ontological distinctions between God and that which is created from God’s own being.

I will be exploring in depth the roots of this theology, starting in Neo-Platonism and ending in modern Process Theology and by the end of the thesis I will have established an original and comprehensive theology that I feel is the most logical approach to science and theology, while answering some of the most problematic metaphysical problems in theology, such as the problem of God’s Perfection/Immutability, and God’s Absoluteness.

Neo-Platonist Emanationism

Plato's Timaeus

History

In order to understand the cosmogony of Neo-Platonist Emanationism in general, we first must look at Plato's dialogue called the Timaeus. The Timaeus is Plato's only substantial treatise on cosmology and the origins of the universe and is considered to be one of his later pieces of work, coming after the great group of dialogues composed on the Phaedo, Symposium and Republic. [1](#)

The cosmology proposed by Plato consists of three major principles The Good, the Demiurge and the World Soul. The Good is also referred to as the ultimate Form within the World of Forms. The World of Forms is the concept that there exists an "Intelligible Realm" in which the source of all the created things and their attributes can be understood as eternal principles. This world is a perfect absolute reality in which permanent and immutable principles exist in a state perfection and goodness. For Plato, the World of Forms is a state of being where intelligible principles exist as universal immovable truths that form the prototypes for the images seen in the material realm. In the sensible world, objects perceived are merely imitation and reflections of the true Forms. Amongst the Forms is the Ultimate Form the Good. The Good represents to pure beauty of Reality.

In Plato's cosmogony, the Demiurge, or Craftsman, uses the Good as the model for which to order the universe after and model the perfection of the World of Forms in the pre-existent chaos that exist already in the universe. The Demiurge is not considered itself to be the Form of Good; it merely uses the Form of Good as the model to order the universe in its image. The Timaeus states this as such: "God therefore, wishing that all things should be good, and so far as possible nothing be imperfect, and finding the visible universe in a state not of rest but of inharmonious and disorderly motion, reduced it to order from disorder, as he judged that order was in every way better. It is impossible for the best to produce anything but the highest." [2](#) In this quote we see God referred to as the Demiurge, the one who creates the universe from unordered chaos in the image of perfect order and harmony.

God is depicted as a craftsman who forms the universe from a world of chaos into an image and reflection of perfect goodness and oneness. God is called the Demiurge and uses as his model of perfection the concept of the Good. The Timaeus describes this as such: "For God's purpose was to use as his model the highest and most completely perfect of intelligible things, and so he created a single visible living being, containing within itself all living beings of the same natural order. Are we then right to speak of the one universe, or would it be more correct to speak of a plurality or infinity? ONE is right, if it was manufactured according to its pattern; for that which comprises all intelligible beings cannot have a double." [3](#) Plato's Timaeus is the first real concrete declaration of a cosmology based in the principles of one-ness, where the universe is modeled after the one-ness of the Good and had its order and origin in the work of God the Demiurge.

However, God does not do this directly. The Demiurge creates first a "World-Soul, that orders the world from preexisting elements, called the four elements of fire, air, water and earth. This World-Soul acts as an intermediary between the finite and the infinite. Plato describes the role of the World-Soul as such: "From the indivisible,

eternally unchanging Existence and the divisible, changing Existence of the physical world he mixed a third kind of Existence intermediate between them” [4](#) In this way, the World Soul acts as a mediator between the intelligible world of Forms and the physical sensible world.

Neo-Platonism

Neo-Platonism is the resurrection of Platonic cosmogony and philosophy, primarily by the philosopher Plotinus (204 CE- 270 CE), and then later carried on by his successors Prophyry (233 CE-309 CE), Iamblichus (245 CE-325 CE) and Proclus (412 CE- 485 CE). Although these philosophers are called Neo-Platonists, Plotinus would consider himself a true student of Plato. Neo-Platonism is an attempt to clarify and understand Plato in a deep and metaphysical way that later Neo-Platonists, like Iamblichus, later even took into the realm of mystical experience. Neo-Platonism can also be seen as an attempt to not only understand Plato, but an attempt to reconcile Aristotelian Metaphysics with Platonist ideas. Neo-Platonists were very educated in Aristotle as well as Plato and thought of themselves as philosophers who were reconciling the two ancient philosopher’s teachings.

One and the Many

The most fundamental metaphysical problem, of Neo-Platonism is the reconciliation of the idea that the universe emerged from God who is ultimately an undifferentiated unity and one-ness and yet there exists a reality of multiplicity in the sensible universe. How can “the many” come from the “One” and yet there not be a cosmic dualism between God and the universe.

Neo-Platonists sought to explain a metaphysics that involved a universal God from whom all multiplicity emanated from, and yet was inherently intertwined with in such a way that there never becomes a true duality between the One and the Many.

On the one side of the debate, you have the philosopher Parmenides who argued that the universe ultimately is one unity and there is no division or multiplicity between objects or concepts. In fact, he even argued that time itself is an illusion because the universe not only was an undifferentiated unity, but also an unmoving static unity. For Parmenides, change is an illusion and existence itself is timeless and uniform.

The other side of the debate we can find in Aristotle who felt the universe has legitimate definable realities within it. Aristotle not only argued in favor of the Metaphysics of distinction and definition, he argued that Plato’s ideas of distant Forms that created the prototypes for created “things” were erroneous. For Aristotle, the form of an object, (or the principle that determines the nature of an objects being) was contained directly in an object and the object reflected that form and possessed independent qualities that could be defined that can describe the individuality of that particular object. The form remains unchanged, but the matter can take on accidental

qualities.

Neo-Platonists attempted to reconcile both of these views. On the one hand Plotinus saw with Plato and Parmenides the need to understand the natural one-ness of the world, but on the other hand Aristotle's *Metaphysics* were quite compelling and served as the standard way of defining the sensible world. The main principle goal of the Neo-Platonists were to show how a universe can be both deeply interconnected at its source and fundamental being and still exhibit the qualities of multiplicity in the sensible world.

Plotinus' Neo-Platonism

Plotinus' cosmogony rests on the principles of his three Divine Hypostases. Without getting into the difference between these hypostases and the Christian Trinitarian hypostases, the major distinction is that these three hypostases all proceed from each other and participate in both the former and latter emanation in the chain of emanation. The first is the One from which all emanates, the Nous or the Intellect (sometimes called Divine Reason as well), and the Soul (which also includes the Soul of the All, or World Soul)

The One

Plotinus builds on Plato's cosmogony by calling the first cause of creation the One. The One is the infinite, absolute perfection that is a parallel to Plato's the Good. The One is that from which all else emanates from. The One is not the Demiurge. The One is something beyond description which does not act or have attributes other than the Good. The only thing that can be attributed to the One is the Good. Good for Plotinus means perfected beauty and harmony. Instead of being a Creator God, the One is more like the source of creation from which all multiplicity emanates from.

The one is pure undifferentiated Oneness. Within the One, no multiplicity exists and it is beyond all qualitative description or quantitative measurement. It is infinite, universal and absolute. The One represents the perfection of all existence and also serves as the ground of all multiplicity as its source. From the One, flows the many. [5](#)

Nous

The first emanation from the One is the Nous or Divine Mind. In order for there to be multiplicity the Mind emanates as a means for which simplicity to yield multiplicity. The Divine Mind is a reflection of the One and acts as the mediating principle that creates the rest of the universe as a reflection of the perfection of the One. The Divine Mind is also called the Divine thought of the One, from which Philo will later develop his concept of the Logos (Divine Reason). In this way, The One emanates the universe as a mental act in which the Divine Thought emanates and from the Divine Mind or Thought the rest of creation follows.

Although the One is undifferentiated, the Mind communicates its beauty and creates

within itself the forms for multiplicity. For Plotinus, the realm of Intelligible Forms is contained within the Intellect, not the One specifically. Because the One contains no differentiation or attributes, the concept of the Intellect is needed to create the beginning of intelligible concepts for the created universe to be mirrored after. This is where Plotinus incorporates Plato's Forms. For Plotinus, the Good is Plato's ultimate Form, which he defines as the One, but all other Forms fall into the category of the Intellect which contains all Intelligible Forms and serves as not only the basis for multiplicity itself, but for the source of the shape and attributes of the sensible realm. [6](#)

Soul

The third emanation is the Soul, which acts as Plato's World-Soul. For Plotinus, the Intellect is immutable and absolute. Although the Intellect now forms the multiplicity needed to create the universe. The Intellect contains immutable and absolute Intelligible principles, and is therefore unable to be the actual process of ordering and creation. The Soul is needed to transform the Intelligible world into the sensible world.

The Soul is the emanation that handles ordering the universe and acts as a mediator between the immutable Intellect and the changing physical universe. The Soul forms the universe as reflective layers of creation and models the universe on the principles of the Divine Mind. The soul becomes the means in which immutable Intelligible Forms can become manifest as multiple objects reflecting the Intelligible world.

The Soul also manifests in us as our intellectual souls and our animal and primal souls. Along with becoming the source of all created matter, the Soul also is our root within ourselves that connects our personal soul back to the One. The Soul can be seen as collective root and source of all Souls and in turn the source of our spiritual; being as well as our physical being. It is the mediation of multiplicity between the universe and the Intellect and in turn has attributes of both. Each emanation participates in the cause and effect of that emanation, so the Soul participates in the lives and movement of the physical universe, while remaining the bridge between the Intelligible and the sensible.

[7](#)

Plotinus summarizes this cosmogony as such: "We have seen elsewhere that the nature of the Good is simplex, primal; when we speak of the One and when we speak of the Good we must recognize an identical nature. We need not go seeking any other principles; This- the One and the Good- is our First, next to it follows Divine Mind, the Primal Thinker, and upon this follows Soul. Such is the Order of nature," (from Against the Gnostics) [8](#)

Soul of the All

The Soul acts as a mediating principle that bridges the gap between the singular simplicity of the One, the potential multiplicity of the Intellect and the Intellectual Forms, and acts as the principle of actuality in terms of bringing into existence a universe modeled after the forms. In this way the Soul participates in the singular eternal simplicity of the One through the Intellect and participates directly in the multiplicity of the ordered universe.

However, Plotinus distinguishes two (and later three) divisions of the Soul that each perform different functions in the participation of the higher metaphysical realms, and in the ordering of the universe. The higher aspects of the Soul are eternally intertwined with the Intellect and participate directly in that Divinity. It is the lower aspects of the Soul that actually act as the metaphysical “soul” of the ordered universe and this lower aspect of the Soul is more analogous directly to Plato’s World-Soul, ad which Plotinus sometimes calls the World-Soul, or the Soul of the All. Plotinus distinguishes the dual functionality of the Soul in this passage from the *Enneads*, where he describes the universal governing aspect of the Soul as in directly participates in the Intellectual Forms in the ordering of the universe, and he further describes the role of the lower soul in directly facilitating the ordering of the physical realm. “The Soul’s care for the universe takes two forms: there is the supervising of the entire system, brought to order by deedless command in a kingly presidency, and there is that over an individual, implying direct action, the hand to the task, one might say, in immediate contact: in the second kind of care the agent absorbs much of the nature of its object. Now in its comprehensive government of the heavenly system, the Soul’s method is that of an unbroken transcendence in its highest phases, with penetration by its lower power: at this, God can no longer be charged with lowering the All-Soul, which has not been deprived of its natural standing and from eternity possesses and will unchangeably possess that rank and habit which could never have been intruded upon it against the course of nature but must be its characteristic quality, neither failing nor ever beginning.” [9](#)

It is important to recognize that Plotinus is explaining to the reader that the Soul is not only the governing principle in the order of the universe, but is also directly involved in its design. In this way, the Soul becomes the actualizing principle that takes potential Forms from the Intellect and makes them individually actual in the physical universe. In other words, when a particular “thing” such as star or a tree, comes to be formed in the physical universe, it does so by the guidance of the Soul of the All, which in union with the higher aspects of the Soul, form the particular “thing” in the image of the Intellectual form contained within the Intellect of the One.

The Soul of the All is Plotinus’ way of distinguishing between the aspect of the Soul which play a Divine eternal role in participation with the Intellect, and the aspect of the Soul, that plays a direct role in the ordering of the universe. The Soul of the All, as opposed to the Soul itself, is limited to the physical universe itself. It acts as a field that encompasses the entire universe and is immanent in its structure and order, but it is the higher aspect of the Soul that is infinite and eternal in terms of its relationship to the Intellect and the One.

Paulina Remes describes the Soul of the All as such: “The Soul of the All is the structural organization of the whole universe, of its order both at this very moment and in temporal succession. It produces the totality of bodies in the universe. As in Plato’s *Timaeus*, the universe is a bodily, ensouled whole (*Enn.* IV.3.4.26-8). This soul unifies the universe into one, a reified and supreme living being, the parts of which connect to one another and form a unified whole.” [10](#) Remes points out here both the metaphysical solution to the One and Many, and the role that the Soul of the All plays as the universal Soul of the Universe. The Soul of the All unifies the entire universe, ad from its ordering of that multiplicity becomes the unifying principle that creating simplicity and unity from

multiplicity. As the unifying principle of the universe it becomes the living soul of the universe and the universe is seen as the body of the Soul of the All.

Nature

Earlier I had mentioned there were three aspects of the Soul in the Enneads. There is a tendency in the Enneads to use terms interchangeably. However, Plotinus clearly defines three principles, all of which he defines as aspects of Soul. He uses the term Soul to speak directly of the principle that is the third emanation, and the actualization of potentiality in the Intellectual Forms and participates directly in the Divine Being. He also uses the terms World-Soul or 'Soul of the All' to define the presence of the Soul in the structure and ordering of the universe, literally as the Soul of the physical universe itself, and its unifying principle, that bridges multiplicity into simplicity. The third aspect of Soul Plotinus speaks about he calls Nature.

The potential ambiguity of Plotinus' terminology can be seen in this seemingly contradictory interpretation of the Enneads from Frederick Copleston in his work the History of Philosophy. Copleston only recognizes the aspects of the Soul and Nature and the higher and lower aspects of the Soul. In this quote he explains the role of the Soul: "From Nous, which is Beauty, proceeds Soul, corresponding to the World Soul of the Timaeus. This World Soul is incorporeal and indivisible, but it forms the connecting link between the super-sensual world and the sensual world, and so looks not only upwards to the Nous but also downwards towards the world of nature." [11](#) Here we see a clear description of the Soul role as intermediary between the Intellect (Nous) and the world of Nature.

This is completely in line with our discussion thus far. However, Copleston goes on to suggest that what Plotinus describes as Nature is equitable to what he describes as the lower aspects of the Soul. Here Copleston explains the role of Nature (which Plotinus capitalizes as a proper noun and speaks extensively about on its own):

"Whereas Plato, however, had posited only the World-Soul, Plotinus posited two, a higher and a lower, the former standing nearer to Nous and being in no immediate contact with the material world, the latter being the real soul of the phenomenal world, This second soul Plotinus termed Nature." [12](#)

Regardless of Copestone's omission of the Soul of the All in the Enneads, here we see what is technically the third level of Soul, called Nature. Plotinus speaks of this and distinguishes it specifically from the Soul and the Soul of the All, as being an aspect of Soul, but one that is almost mechanistic and unconscious. It does not act on its own. Nature for Plotinus is the aspect of the universe that takes order from the Soul and the Soul of the All, and carries out the natural functions of the universe itself. It does so as the means by which the Soul orders the universe. In this quote from the Enneads we can see Plotinus description of the functions of Nature: "It means that so-called Nature is soul, the child of a higher soul with a more powerful life; being at peace it possesses within itself a contemplation which is directed neither above nor below; it remains stable where it is, and in its stability and so to speak self awareness (sunaisthesis) it saw what was posterior to itself through the consciousness and self awareness, as far as it was able, and having gained a glorious and delightful vision it ceased its search. If one wishes to ascribe any consciousness and perception to it, it is not the consciousness and perception that we speak of in the case of other beings, but it is as if we were

likening the consciousness and perception of sleeping to those of wakefulness. For Nature is asleep, enjoying a contemplation of itself which comes to it because it endures in and with itself and is itself an object of contemplation; its contemplation is noiseless and somewhat dim, while there is another which is clearer to vision than it, of which it is an image.” [13](#)

Nature for Plotinus is the ordered forces of the universe. According to Plotinus, The universe is structured and ordered living being. The consciousness of the universe is found in the highest levels of Soul. However, Nature is a lower aspect of Soul that although is the means of structure and order, it operates in an unconscious state, never changing or altering its course on its own will. All functions of the natural world operate in predictable patterns and processes and to Plotinus this unwavering and perfect cosmological order in what he calls Nature.

Matter and the Sensible Realm

In Plotinus' cosmogony, the farther one gets from the source of being, the One, the less one participates in pure Being. Plotinus speaks of privation of being as the natural progression as one proceeds farther from the source. The Intellect is slightly less perfect and complete than the One, the Soul is slightly less perfect than the Intellect, the Soul of the All, is slightly less perfect than the higher level of Soul, Nature is slightly less perfect than the Soul of the All, and finally Matter, is the farthest from the One, and therefore, the most limited and imperfect aspect of the universe.

For Plotinus the physical universe is the farthest manifestation of reality from the One, and in turn represents a near full privation of all being. Plotinus equates evil with privation of being, so in turn matter for Plotinus is at the very least the most susceptible to evil. However, it is inaccurate to claim that Plotinus saw matter as fully evil, as this was the Gnostic view which he argued against (further explanation below).

Matter as the privation of Being can easily be understood with the analogy of light or heat diminishing through expansion and dissipation. Coppleston does an eloquent job of explaining this analogy in this quote: “Below the sphere of the Soul is the material world. In accord with his conception of the emanative process as radiation of light, Plotinus pictures light as proceeding from the centre and passing outwards, growing gradually dimmer, until it shades off into that total darkness which is matter-in- itself, conceived as the privation of light... Matter, then, proceeds from the One (ultimately), in the sense that it becomes a factor in creation only through the process of emanation from the One; but in itself, at its lowest limit, it forms the lowest stage of the universe and is the antithesis to the One.” [14](#)

I will be asserting that this type of cosmogony is fully in line with the view of modern science in terms of the first few seconds after the Big Bang, but for this section what should be understood is that Plotinus saw the universe in terms of pure simplistic Being emanating levels of less perfect layers of existence through self limitation and dissipation which results finally in the manifestation of matter which is the most limited

aspect of the universe and the farthest from the One. Matter is then in turn ordered directly by unconscious Nature, which gets its direction from the Soul of the All, which in turn derives its being from the higher levels of the Soul, which in turn participates directly in the Intellect and derives the order of the universe from the Intellectual Forms within the Intellect, which finally in turn is a near perfect reflection of the perfect and absolute source of the universe, the One.

Where Plotinus viewed Matter as privation of Being and in turn, saw it essentially as evil or at least corruptible by evil, other Neo Platonists like Iamblichus, took a much more monistic view of the universe and saw matter as inherently interconnected to the Divine, even if it was inherently limited in relation to the Divine. This quote from (.....) clearly explains Iamblichus' position on the nature of matter: "Iamblichus flatly denied that the material principle of number was evil. In *On General Mathematical Science* he says: "It is not appropriate to contend that this [material principle] is evil or ugly... It would be far from true to suggest that the material principle is evil." Iamblichus argues that if the One is praised on account of its independence (autarcheia) and being the cause of beauty in numbers, "would it not be senseless to say that the natural receptacle of such a thing is evil or ugly?" Just as the principles of the "same" and "different" were mixed together by "persuasive necessity" in the *Timaeus* 35a), so, Iamblichus said, the principles of unity and multiplicity were combined by a "persuasive necessity" (tinos pithanes anagkes; DCMS 15, 17) and in both cases the resulting harmonia served as the framework for the manifest world." [15](#)

For Iamblichus the material universe was inherently interconnected to the Divine and his argument that if the Forms and the means by which the Forms are to become actualized are in themselves perfect reflections of ultimate perfection, how then can we say that the actualizations of those Forms are somehow in themselves ugly or evil.

The Sensible Realm

The Sensible Realm is the universe the way we perceive it. It is composed of a multiplicity of objects with individual attributes, and for the most part can be understood in terms of Aristotelian *Metaphysics*. However, Neo-Platonism never sees the sensible realm as being completely distinct from the unity of the One. Not only does the universe have its source in the One, the One is also the center and ground of being in the universe.

For Plotinus, the material is not separate from the One, but he never really goes so far to declare a monism where the material and the One are essentially the same. For Plotinus, the farther the emanations get from the One, the more they lose the perfection found in the beauty of the One. In this way, the sensible realm exists farther from the source of the One, and in turn can be seen as a privation of the Good.

This becomes the tricky and sometimes problematic aspects of Plotinus' cosmogony. He is actually ambiguous at times on the exact nature of Matter and the physical universe. On the one hand, he sees Matter as being empty of the true presence of the One, or the Good, but on the other hands he argues firmly against the concept of Matter being inherently evil.

For Plotinus, one of the biggest perversions of Platonism is the dualism found in Gnosticism. Gnostics took Plato's Demiurge and vilified it, claiming that the Demiurge

was an evil antithetical principle to the Good which created an inherently evil prison-like universe that we inhabit as humans. In his writing, usually called “Against the Gnostics” he argues vehemently against the dualistic notion that somehow matter is evil. Plotinus draws distinction between the One and Matter by means of saying Matter lacks the perfection of the One, but it is not inherently evil. [16](#) Furthermore, in Plotinus’ writing called “Are the Stars Causes?” he argues against the teachings of the astrologers. For Plotinus, the universe is created in the image of the Good, which is Plato’s primary view as well. This being the case, if one is to claim that the universe’s motion has a direct influence on the actions of man, then the universe is then also responsible for influencing the evil actions of man as well. Because Plato and Plotinus believe the stars and the motion of the universe mirror the Good, the idea that the stars could influence evil actions was completely unacceptable, and Plotinus argues against this as well. [17](#)

Matter and the Many

Although Matter is not considered a hypostasis, Plotinus refers to it as a proper noun and concept. Matter as opposed to ordinary matter, is the fundamental “stuff” that composes all things. For Plotinus, Matter is not atomistic or differentiated. It, like the Soul and the Intellect, is uniform and simplex.

Plotinus describes this as such in his writing titled Matter: “There are no atoms; all body is divisible endlessly: besides, neither the continuity nor the ductility of corporeal things is explicable apart from Mind (Intellect), or apart from the Soul which cannot be made up of atoms; and, again, out of atoms creation could produce nothing but atoms: a creative owner could produce nothing from a material devoid of continuity.” [18](#) Although Plotinus cannot be considered a Monist directly, he is definitely not Pluralist either. For Plotinus, even at the most differentiated stages of creation, there still exists a continuity between the all things made of Matter.

He further defines Matter in this next passage: “What then is this Kind, this Matter, described as one stuff, continuous and without quality? Clearly since it is without quality it is incorporeal; bodiliness would be quality. It must be the basic stuff of all entities of the sense-world and not merely base to some while being to other achieved form. Clay for example is matter to the potter but is not Matter pure and simple. Nothing of this sort is our object: we are seeking the stuff which underlies all alike.” [19](#)

This becomes the critical piece of the metaphysical puzzle, and is a prophetic allusion to a Quantum Field Theory argument. He is claiming that although the sensible is composed in such a way to have distinctive attributes and exist is a state of qualitative multiplicity, the actual “stuff” from which ALL objects are literally formed, which he calls Matter, is uniform, simplex and without division or attributes. In this way, Matter retains the qualities of the Intellect and Soul in being uniform non-atomistic and continuous, and yet is the grounding principle in which qualitative existing objects can have their own individuality and attributes.

Although there is no time here to elucidate Quantum Field Theory (I plan to in my thesis), what Plotinus is suggesting as a cosmology, is that the sensible universe

although observed in multiplicity and qualitative distinction is somehow (keep in mind he lacks the physics terminology to explain this) at its most fundamental level not only made up of the same “stuff” but also made up of a “stuff” that is indivisible, uniform and continuous. This simplicity is found in Matter and then follows itself continuously back through the Soul and the Intellect to the One.

This is how Neo-Platonism solves the metaphysical problem of how the One can become the Many. The One emanates infinite eternal and unchanging forms of multiplicity that form the structure of the universe itself, called the Intellect. The Intellect emanates the Soul which is the state of being between static universal logical truths and the changing corporeal universe, and Matter emanates as a uniform substance shaped by the Soul in the image of the Intellect. From this progression, all of the universe remains grounded in the One.

The most important problem for Neo-Platonism

Unfortunately for Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists, there is one irrefutable error that completely changes the validity of their cosmological model. For Plato the universe was ordered from preexisting matter, and for the Neo-Platonists, the physical universe was merely ordered by the One, not created by the One, in fact it was a predominant belief in that they even attributed to Aristotle, that the universe was beginning less.

It is a common misconception that Platonic and Aristotelian cosmology involved a God who actually “creates” the universe at a given point in the past. This misconception becomes reinforced by the usage of the word God in English translations of the Greek texts as well. The God of Plato and Aristotle was quite different in terms of their role in the universe than the Judeo-Christian God, who creates the universe as opposed to arranging or perpetuating its motion. Dr. Richard Sorabji explains this misconception in this quote from his work called *The Philosophy of the Commentators*: “It is natural in a Christian culture, to assume that God must be a creator. But Aristotle’s God was a thinker, not a creator. Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists agreed that the physical universe was beginning less, but the Neo-Platonists nonetheless saw Deity as the beginning less cause of its existence, and eventually ascribed this view to Aristotle himself. They differed from Christianity, not only in denying a beginning, but also in making the creation and unintended, though inevitable, effect of Deity.” [20](#)

Although St. Thomas Aquinas later adapted Aristotelian metaphysics to incorporate the concept of a Prime Mover who actually was the cause of the existence of the universe, Aristotle’s Prime Mover was just that, one who “moved” the universe and was in itself “unmoved” by any other force. Because the universe was seen as beginning less, the actual substances in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, did not in themselves require a creative principle, his system relied entirely upon the principle that was responsible for perpetuating and setting things into motion in the cosmos.

Plato’s God was considered to be the ultimate source of the Forms, which in turn set the structure of the objects in the physical universe. However, for Plato the physical universe was ordered from chaos, and the God, which was typically called “the Good”, did not play the role of “creator” in the Judeo-Christian sense that God was the cause of the creation of the universe in time. Furthermore, Platonist emanationism suggests the universe is formed by God necessarily by pure consequence of Deity,

rather than an intentional act of creation, as the Judeo-Christian tradition suggests.

St. Augustine in *The City of God*, speaks to this fact specifically. Here we have first hand evidence that, at least in the mind of early Christian Theologians, Neo-Platonists believed that universe had no beginning in time and therefore, no Creator would actual was responsible for the actual existence of the universe itself. In this quote Augustine addresses this problem: “Yet Plato most clearly says of the world and of the gods which he writes were created in the world by God, that they had an origin and originated, but he asserts that they will endure forever through the most powerful will of the Creator (Timaeus 41A-D). But [the Platonists] have found a way of understanding that origin as being and origin not of time but of dependence.” [21](#)

Augustine recognizes that the Platonists understand the universe to be dependent upon God for order, but Christian theology suggests that is not only responsible for order in the universe but is also responsible for being itself.

These differences must lead us to conclude that although Neo-Platonism may provide the framework for a workable metaphysics concerning the relationship of the One and the Many. It is unsuitable to explain a universe that involves creation, as we understand in through the Big Bang theory and modern physics. It is my assertion that if they had this knowledge, the cosmological picture within Neo-Platonism would have changed and most likely incorporated something similar to the Trinitarian structure found in Christianity, as they always spoke of Plotinus hypostases as being eternal. However this will be elucidated later in my thesis.

Hermeticism

History of Hermeticism

Hermeticism grew out of the Hellenized Egyptian communities as a hybrid mix of Egyptian and Greek religious concepts of God, specifically the Greek God Hermes and the Egyptian God Thoth. Hermes Trismegistus emerged as a central figure of the teachings of Hermeticism. Hermes Trismegistus is considered by some to be a God who is a union of the Gods Hermes and Thoth and considered by others to be a real prophet who was a contemporary of Moses. However the actual Hermetic writings are most likely written in late antiquity between 200BCE and 200CE. The name Trismegistus means “Thrice –Great”, which has come to mean in contemporary Hermetic teachings the adeptness of Hermes Trismegistus in Magic, Astrology, and Alchemy. [22](#)

The main set of Hermetic writing that now forms the canon of contemporary Hermetic practice are the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Emerald Tablet of Hermes*, and *The Kybalion* (1908), these along with the contemporary scholarship of 19th and 29th century occult writers compose the body of what we now call Hermeticism. [23](#)

Hermeticism today is a mystical and occult movement that involves ritual magic,

practice of the Qabalah, astrology, Tarot and practical meditation to achieve harmonious union with God, and higher spiritual forces with the intention of achieving an enlightened level of spirituality. The main body of knowledge for this teaching comes from the Hermetic Golden Dawn which still has chapters all over the world. [24](#)

Hermes Trismegistus and the Corpus Hermeticum

The Corpus Hermeticum is the only substantial remaining canon of ancient Hermetic writing since the destruction of the library in Alexandria. Although the exact number of original Hermetic texts is unknown, early Christian writers like Clement of Alexandria claimed to have knowledge of the “Forty Two Books of Hermes”, four of which he labeled as the Astrological texts of Hermes. Other early Christians, like Lactantius, hailed Hermes as a prophet who foretold of the coming of Jesus. The Corpus Hermeticum now serves as the primary set of texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus and is the core of the Hermetic canon. [25](#)

Textual Analysis of the Corpus Hermeticum

The Hermetic cosmogony begins with a concept of God similar to Plotinus’ vision of the “One”. For Hermeticism the concept of God is called the “All” and sometimes referred to as the Good (a term Plato used as well). Central to this cosmogony is that the “All” is a mental being. The Mind of God is what is responsible for the creation of the universe and the universe is contained as a process within the mind of God.

God is seen much in the way Kabbalists see the Infinite Light of Eyn Sof. God is seen without division and without duality or plurality. God is a perfect ultimate one-ness that contains all of creation within itself. God’s being is that of a living energy that exists without a second and without division or attributes.

The Corpus Hermeticum describes God and the Hermetic cosmogony in this dialogue of Hermes: “The elements of nature-whence have they arisen?, I asked. And he answered, “From the council of God which, having taken in the Word and seeing the beautiful cosmos through its own elements and progeny of souls. The Mind who is God, being androgynous and existing as life and light, by speaking gave birth to a second mind, a craftsman (Demiurge), who, as God of fire and spirit, crafted seven governors; they encompass the sensible world in circles, and their government is called fate.” [26](#)

In this quote we see the heavy Greek Platonic influence in the text. Here God being without division of gender, creates as a second a “craftsman” which in Greek is translated as Demiurge. The Demiurge is found in Plato’s Timaeus as the craftsman that puts the cosmos in order from preexisting chaos. We also see God referred to as the Mind. This theme becomes central to Hermetic cosmology. The seven governors referred to here (also referring to the seven visible planets) as well as the Demiurge would later become central to the Gnostic doctrines as well, but Gnosticism demonized the Demiurge and speaks of the seven governors as “prison guards” of the evil physical entrapment we live in. Hermeticism emphasizes that God is Good, and is antithetical to Gnostic demonization.

Hermeticism also incorporates the teaching that humans were made in the

likeness of God. In this quote we see that explanation given for the creation of humans: “Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father’s image; and God who was really in love with his own form, bestowed on him all his craftworks.” [27](#) Hermeticism sees that humans were made in the image of the Father, and that God loves humans as the pinnacle of His creations because God loves His own form. Hermeticism also claims that God creates the entire universe in its image, but claims that there are different levels of reality that differ in their qualities and existence. Depending on their nature they will either retain their original goodness or corrupt and change. The farther something is from the One-ness of God the more differentiated and more susceptible to evil and temporality. In this quote we see the beginnings of the explanation of how the universe comes to be: “God, craftsman of all things, makes all things like himself in crafting them, but these things that begin as good come to differ in their use of energy. The motion of the cosmos, as it grinds away, produces generations of different kinds: some of it soils with vice, others it cleanses with the good.” [28](#)

For Hermeticism the universe is created through a series of creations and creative principles. God does not directly form the finite aspects of the universe. They emerge as functions or differing principles that trace their origins back to God Himself. Much like Platonism, God creates his Demiurge, who in turn creates the universe. However, on more than one occasion the Corpus Hermeticum uses different language and terminology to describe its cosmogony. The Corpus Hermeticum differs from traditional and Neo-Platonism in that it describes a more complex series of creative principles and reactions. In this excerpt we see instead of describing the craftsman as the first creation, the cosmos is used instead: “Thus, god the father of the cosmos, but the cosmos is father of the things in the cosmos; the cosmos is the son of God, and the things in the cosmos are made by the cosmos. It is rightly called ‘cosmos’ or ‘arrangement’ for it arranges all things in the diversity of generation, in the ceaselessness of life, in the tirelessness of activity, in the rapidity of necessity, in the associability of the elements, and in the order of things that come to be. That it should be called an ‘arrangement’ then, is necessary and fitting.” [29](#)

Here we see the Cosmos used instead of the term Demiurge. However, the Cosmos is responsible for the arrangement of the moving living universe that remains in a state of constant flux and change. Therefore, the Cosmos arranges the order of this motion, much in the way Plato’s Demiurge orders the universe from chaos in Plato’s Timaeus. The Cosmos is seen as the Son of God and arrangement refers to how the Son orders the universe. God therefore is not directly responsible for the ordering of the finite universe. The Cosmos is an intermediary force or principle that orders the chaotic universe to be in line with Divine harmony.

From this cosmology a view of the universe emerges as a series of creative processes that all contain their created counterpart within themselves. These principles begin in the Mind of God, starting with the Cosmos. The Corpus Hermeticum refers to this progression as such: “Hear how it is with God and the universe, my child. God, eternity, cosmos, time, becoming. God makes eternity; eternity makes the cosmos; the cosmos makes time; time makes becoming. The essence (so to speak) of God is [the good, the beautiful, happiness] wisdom; the essence of eternity is identity; of the cosmos, order; of time; change; of becoming, life and death.” [30](#)

Here we see a clear progression of creative processes as well as a clear progression of changing essences within those creative processes. The cosmogony begins with God's wisdom, then the identity of Eternity, followed by the order of the Cosmos, followed by the change of time, and finally the life and death of Becoming. The physical world of Becoming is the last in a chain of creative processes all linked and contained within each other and all of them contained within the Mind of God.

The Corpus Hermeticum goes further to describe the difference in the energies of each of these creative processes. By doing this, the distinction is made that the universe and God are of a different nature yet ultimately contained within the Mind of God. Hermetic cosmology is summarized the Corpus Hermeticum as such: "But the energy of God is mind and soul; the energy of eternity is permanence and immortality; of the cosmos, recurrence and counter-recurrence; of time, increase and decrease; of becoming, quality <and quantity>. Eternity, therefore is in God, the cosmos in eternity, time in the cosmos, and becoming in time. And while eternity has stood still in God's presence, the cosmos moves in eternity, time passes in the cosmos, but becoming comes to be in time." [31](#)

Philo of Alexandria Alexandrian Theology

Philo of Alexandria lived in Hellenized Egypt amongst a society where the Jewish community composed half of the population of Alexandria. The Jews of Alexandria had synthesized many of their beliefs with the Greek culture and Philo is an extreme example of that. Hellenized Egypt is where the Jewish God Yahweh, transformed from a tribal God into a cosmic principle that was infinite and had the qualities found in Greek philosophy of perfection and absoluteness. Philo synthesized the image of the Jewish God with Greek philosophy and developed a story of creation that involved principles from both Judaism and Neo-Platonism. [32](#)

God/Logos/Spirit [33](#)

Philo's On the Creation claims that God created the universe from nothing, which is in contrast to the Platonic idea that God ordered the universe from chaos. However, Philo incorporates the concept of the Divine Mind in Plotinus' cosmogony, and calls it Divine Reason, or the Logos. This is the image of the Logos that would later become fundamental to Christian theology used in the Book of John.

Philo describes the Logos and creation as such: “Accordingly he, when recording the creation of man, in words which follow, asserts expressly, that he was made in the image of God- and if the image be a part of the image, then manifestly so is the entire form, namely, the whole of this world perceptible by the external senses, which is a greater imitation of the divine image than the human form is. It is manifest also, that the archetypal seal, which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the idea of ideas, the Reason (Logos) of God.” (from On The Creation) [34](#) Philo claims here that the universe and man are modeled after God and formed through the archetypal image of the Logos. The Logos serves as the creative principle and the archetypal form in which the universe and man are modeled after.

Philo reinforces this by stating: “And this divine reason (logos) perceptible only to the intellect, he calls the image of God.” (from On The Creation) [35](#). And further in this statement: “The incorporeal world was then already completed, having its seat in Divine Reason (Logos); and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made as a model of it.” [36](#)

Philo sets the stage for Christianity to develop the concept of the Logos as the archetype of the Person of Christ in God. In Philo’s model however, the Logos is the archetypal pattern for the created universe (which is created by God out of nothing) to be modeled after.

Isaac Luria’s Kabbalah

Introduction to Luria’s Cosmogony

Lurianic Kabbalah is based on a cosmogony that uses archetypal symbolism that explains the origins of the universe, the structure of the universe and the “Divine Light” it emanates from. Luria’s work is described in this text by his student Hayyim Vital, from the famous Kabbalistic text called the Tree of Life (1592). For Isaac Luria, the universe is created as a series of emanations that emerge from the Infinite Being of God, through a willful contraction and emptying of itself. The Divine Light then emanates as a series of levels of existence that form the layers of the created universe starting from the Divine Light itself all the way down to the most differentiated layers of matter and material diversity. [37](#)

The process of emanation begins with the Infinite Light of God called Eyn Sof, or simply “Limitless Light”. The Eyn Sof then creates within itself an archetypal model and reflection of itself that acts as a mediator between the Infinite and the finite emanations of the created universe. This archetypal model is called Adam Kadmon or “Primordial Man”. Adam Kadmon then is considered the medium of emanation from which all the following stages of creation emerge. Adam Kadmon is not only a reflection of the Divine

Light, but is reflected himself in the created worlds that follow. I will begin with a description of each of the factors involved in Luria's cosmogony. [38](#)

Infinite Light: Eyn Sof

Luria's cosmogony begins with an understanding of God that is reflective of prior Platonist influenced schools of thought. Similar to Plato's "The Good", Plotinus' "The One", and the Hermetic concept of "The All", Eyn Sof is the Infinite absolute being of God. It is undifferentiated oneness that exists without cause and exists in a perfect equilibrium without change or corruption. Eyn Sof is the Divine Light of Creation and therefore is both the "Cause of causes" and the highest supreme reality. Kabbalists of the Safed school in Safed, Palestine where Luria studied, infused Platonic concepts into the model of God and the creation of the universe. Much like other mystical concepts of God Eyn Sof is unknowable, and beyond all human comprehension. The only way to describe it is in the limited language of human reason that includes concepts like Infinite, and Absolute. [39](#)

Vital describes Eyn Sof as such: "You should know that before the emanations were emanated and the creations created, a most supreme, simple light filled the whole of existence. There was no vacant place, no aspect of empty space or void, but everything was filled with that simple, infinite light. It had no aspect of beginning or end, but was all one pure, completely uniform light, and that is what is called the light of the Infinite ('or Eyn Sof)." [40](#)

God's Absolute Being filled all of reality and the whole of existence was simply the Absolute Being of God's eternal presence. God existed without a second and without internal differentiation or plurality. The Limitless Light was simply that, the limitless energy of Divine Being. God in turn began a willful act to create a universe as a reflection of Himself. Unlike the Emanationism of Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, Luria saw the creation of the universe as a willful act of creation where Platonism saw the emanation of the universe as more of an overflowing of the presence of "The One". For Luria, God actively emptied himself in an act of contraction called the Tzimtzum. [41](#)

Tzimtzum

The Tzimtzum is the willful contraction of God's Divine Light from within itself to create an empty space in order to create the universe within itself. This contraction happens within God's Infinite Being and is like a bubble forming in an Infinitely large ocean. Unlike the Platonists who saw creation as restructuring of preexistent chaos, or Classical Theism which says God creates the universe from nothing (creatio ex nihilo), Luria's cosmogony is that the universe is created within the Infinite Light of God's being through a willful contraction of its Light, and into this void of empty space e God emit's a single ray of its Divine Light that emanates and permeates the empty space as progressive succession of layers of reality that become more and more differentiated as they get farther from the Infinite One-Ness of God's Being. [42](#)

Vital summarizes the Tzimtzum as such: "When it arose in His pure will to create worlds and to emit emanations, to bring out the perfection of His actions, His names, and His

attributes-for this was the reason that the worlds were created, as we explained in the first inquiry of the first branch- then the Infinite contracted itself at its midpoint, in the exact center of its light. And after He contracted that light and withdrew away from that mid-point to the sides surrounding it, it left a vacant space- an empty hollow void.” [43](#) From this quote we see that God willfully empties Himself so that he can emanate reflections of His perfections and attributes. The universe unfolds as a series of reflective images and levels of reality that mirror the nature of the Divine Light. The first of which is Adam Kadmon. Adam Kadmon is the archetypal reflection of God and serves as the model and method of creation through emanation. [44](#)

Adam Kadmon

Adam Kadmon is created within the Divine Light and exists prior to the emanations of the layers of the universe called the “Four Worlds”. He is composed of ten Sephiroth or enumerations. In this way Adam Kadmon serves as the intermediary between God and the universe because God Himself cannot be enumerated or distinguished as having a plurality in its structure.

Without going into too much depth about the actual nature of each enumeration they are numbered one to ten and compose the actual body of Adam Kadmon as a geometrical figure in the image of a human being, but with the qualities and nature of God Himself. In this way Adam Kadmon serves as both a reflection of God’s Being and the archetypal prototype for the creation of the universe and man in the image of God. The Sephiroth compose a geometric design that can be found at all stages of creation, much in the way a fractal pattern in Chaos mathematics is a repeating geometric design that can be found all through the pattern itself. Adam Kadmon serves as the emanator of the “Four Worlds” to follow and these Sephiroth can be found in the design of each of the Four Worlds of creation and can be seen directly reflected in the creation of humans as we are made in the image and likeness of God. [45](#)

Adam Kadmon is the archetypal prototype of the entire created universe and therefore, aspects of everything in creation can be found within Him. Luria uses the imagery and symbolism of the soul/body analogy to describe Adam Kadmon as the soul of the universe and the created universe as His body, just as most panentheists would view the God/world relationship. However, Luria takes it one step further and uses the symbolism of clothing on the body to further explain the multi-layered cosmos. The first Emanation is the first of the Four Worlds called the World of Emanation and Luria calls this the body Adam Kadmon, and the following three worlds are the clothing of that body. Luria summarizes this idea as such: “We conclude that the Infinite is the “soul of the soul”, from which was emanated a single Adam that includes all of the worlds- every one of them. His essence corresponds to the five levels of the soul: nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayyah, and yechidah. He is called Adam Kadmon. His body is the World of Emanation. His clothing consists of the three other worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action. Together these three worlds form only a single world, which is the clothing of the World of Emanation.” [46](#) As I will explain the Four Worlds emanate from Adam Kadmon in succession and each have their own attributes and level of reality. Each of these worlds also have corresponding parallel realities at the human and cosmic level because as Adam

Kadmon is the archetype of creation, his pattern is reflected in the human soul, body and in the physical universe the human inhabits. [47](#)

Emanationist Panentheism

Luria's cosmogony is a perfect example of Emanationist Panentheism. God exists as a perfect one-ness without cause and willfully creates a void in which God emanates its own Light into in order to create the universe within itself out of its own Being.

The symbolism is heavy. First we begin with the archetypal symbolism of Adam Kadmon. Adam Kadmon is a geometric arrangement that serves as a primordial prototype that the entire cosmos is mirrored after, and is in Himself a reflection of God's light. This archetypal symbol manifests in all the layers of the emanating universe and manifests directly as the image of God incarnate in the human body and soul. There is a very deep religious symbolism in the creation of human in God's image, and Adam Kadmon is a symbol of that image.

Secondly we have the symbolism of the mind (soul)/body analogy to the God/world relationship. Luria chooses this analogy to explain that God through Adam Kadmon is the soul of the emanated universe and the emanated universe is the body of God. He goes even further to describe the multi-layered aspects of the cosmos as the clothing of the Body of God, which is a step beyond most Panentheistic analogies.

Classical Theism

St. Augustine's City of God

In this thesis I will be drawing a parallel between the Neo-Platonist and Hermetic concept of the Mind of God (Nous or Intellect) and the Christian concept of the Logos that was incarnated as the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This is not merely my conclusion. It is actually St. Augustine who first recognizes this parallel, and from his works we can actually see that he understood that the Neo-Platonists themselves understood this parallel.

St. Augustine first makes it clear that although there are clear differences between Platonism and Christianity, the Platonists are the closest in spirit to the theology of Christianity. Augustine was influenced highly by the Platonists, and he even seems to be trying to convince them that they could be Christians themselves if they just accepted some basic changes in their philosophy. In this quote, we see his declaration in defense of the Platonists: "Thus there are philosophers who have conceived of God, the supreme and true God, as the author of all created things, the

light of knowledge, the final good of activity, and who have recognized him as being for us the origin of existence, the truth of the doctrine and the blessedness of life. They may be called, most suitably Platonists; or they may give some other title to their school..... Whoever they may have been, we rank such thinkers above all others and acknowledge them as representing the closest approximation to our Christian position” [48](#)

For Augustine, the Platonists have nearly identical views on God, they simply lack some of the essential concepts to bring them in line with Christianity. The first most important parallel is the parallel between the Platonist Nous and the Christian Logos. Augustine makes this statement while arguing that it is thoroughly plausible for a man to embody the Mind of God (Logos): “You Platonists have, at any rate, so lofty a conception of the ‘intellectual’ soul (which must be identified with the human soul) that you assert that it is capable of becoming consubstantial with the Mind of the Father, which is, on your admission the Son of God.” [49](#) Although this statement was used to justify the doctrine that Jesus was the Logos incarnated, It is clear that Augustine understands the Platonists position to be that the Nous of Plotinus and the Logos of Christianity is equitable.

Furthermore, St. Augustine understands the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Platonists concept of Soul. However, this is the critical disconnect that will be the core of my particular Monistic model in this thesis. Again Augustine confirms the Platonists understanding of the Nous and the Logos, and then comments on the hypostasis of the Soul as a possible parallel between the Soul and the Holy Spirit: “You assert the Father, and His Son whom you call the Intellect or Mind of the Father; you also speak of a being who is between the two, and we imagine that you are referring to the Holy Spirit. And it is your habit to call them three gods.” [50](#)

This becomes the central disconnect between Christianity and Neo-Platonism, and it will be my assertion that the Christian position is simply based on fallible and invalid science. If we look closely at the central point of objection that God is the Soul of the world, we can deconstruct it using modern science. Although this will be explained fully in the latter half of my thesis, I will construct his argument briefly.

Augustine lives in a world where the scientific and philosophical worldview is that things are composed of individual substances, or at the very least imperfect reflections of Platonic Forms. Therefore, something like dirt, mold, or waste are individual substances and separate from the rest of the universe and God. Therefore, any type of Monistic cosmology invokes this particular response found in Augustine’s City of God: “Putting aside all contentious polemics, let us note carefully that if God is the Soul of the World and the world is to him as the body to the soul, if this God is as it were, in the bosom of nature and contains all things in himself, so that from his soul, which gives life to the whole of the mass, the life and soul of all living things is derived-according to the lot assigned at birth to each; if this is so, then nothing at all remains which is not part of God. Can anyone fail to see the blasphemous and irreligious consequences? Anything which one treads underfoot would be a part if God! In the killing of any living creature, a part of God would be slaughtered! I shrink from uttering all the possibilities which come to mind; it would be impossible to mention them without shame.” [51](#)

Besides making a great case for not eating animal products, Augustine underlines the principle argument in Christianity against the Neo-Platonists, and that is

that if the universe is a part of God, God must somehow be equal to even the most vile aspects of the universe, even what we would consider evil. It is my assertion that this position is simply based on flawed science. This will be the primary point I will be arguing in my thesis using Quantum Field Theory, but for now it is simply important to see that Augustine draws a direct parallel between the Nous of Platonism and the Logos of Christianity, but differs on his view of the Holy Spirit and the Platonists Soul.

Perfection/Immutability

Classical Theism is primarily based on the works of philosophers such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. This thesis is not meant to explain the whole of Classical Theism, but I will provide a brief and concise explanation of the main theological assertions made by Augustine and Aquinas that led to the contradictions that Process Theology tries to address.

The first and most essential assertion is the assertion of God's perfection. Aquinas explains this in this way in his work the Summa Theologica: "Now that God is the first principle, not material, but in the order of efficient cause, which must be perfect. For just as matter, as such, is merely potential, an agent, as such, is in the state of actuality. Hence, the active first principle must need be most actual, and therefore most perfect; for thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection." [52](#)

Here we see the Aristotelian influence in Aquinas' writings when he refers to God as the "efficient cause" of the universe, and the fact that this first cause must be perfect. Perfection is an essential concept in Platonic and Aristotelian worldviews, the latter being the primary source of Aquinas' influence. Aquinas emphasizes the importance of God being perfect, and as we will see from the following passage, that perfection must imply immutability or the lack of change in God's being: "The idea of eternity follows immutability, as the idea of time follows movement... Hence, as God is supremely immutable, it supremely belongs to Him to be eternal. Nor is He eternal only; but He is His own eternity; whereas, no other being is its own duration, as no other is its own being. Now God is His own uniform being; and hence, as He is His own essence, so He is His own eternity." [53](#)

In the previous passage, Aquinas is referring to the temporal nature of matter and the eternal permanent nature of God. God's permanent and incorruptible nature implies immutability, because something that changes is somehow deficient, and incomplete. For Aquinas God is perfect and complete, and therefore has to be unchanging.

In this effort to reinforce the perfect unchanging image of God Aquinas creates an inherent contradiction found in this passage: "But since God is infinite, comprehending in Himself all the plenitude of perfection of all Being, He cannot acquire anything new, nor extend Himself to anything whereto He was not extended previously. Hence movement in no way belongs to Him. So, some of the ancients, constrained, as it were, by the truth, decided that the first principle was immovable." [54](#) Here Aquinas is saying that God is immovable since he cannot acquire anything new or extend Himself anywhere because He is infinite. But in this same passage Aquinas contradicts his own

theology by saying God is infinite and cannot extend Himself anywhere He hasn't been. The question becomes "How can God be infinite and absolute if there exists a universe that is somehow distinct and separate from God?" If God extends everywhere and there exists a temporal existence separate from God, God cannot be infinite and all-encompassing. The highest reality, in turn, would be one where God is merely a piece of a puzzle containing God plus the world. Therefore, by trying to reinforce God's perfection, Aquinas ends up negating God's absoluteness.

Whitehead's Process Theology [55](#)

Di-Polar Theism

Process Theology owes its origin to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead was a 20th century philosopher whose focus was primarily in philosophy itself and less on theology. The theology of Process Philosophy was later expanded on and developed by scholars like Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb and Philip Clayton. However, the origins of the Process concept of God are found primarily in Whitehead's work *Process and Reality*.

In *Process and Reality* Whitehead explains his doctrine of God's nature in an attempt to clarify and correct some of the inconsistencies found in Classical Theism and Christian Theology in general. As we have just seen the inconsistencies of Thomistic theology can be found when trying to reconcile the concept of God being absolute and yet unchanging. Classical Theism claims that God is transcendent, perfect and immutable, and yet somehow is still infinite and absolute. The obvious problem is how can God be unchanging and absolute and yet there exists a universe that exists separate from God that is changing and temporal?

Whitehead answers this question by introducing the doctrine of Di-Polar Theism. Whitehead attempts to address this contradiction by calling into question the idea of God's immutability. Immutability is based on the idea of God's Perfection because that which is perfect cannot need or want for anything and in turn any type of change would make God incomplete in some way. Whitehead claims that this is erroneous and due to the climate of the new physics emerging in the 20th century, Whitehead feels the need to reconcile the image of God from one who is separate from the world to one who is receptive and engaged in the world.

Di-Polar theism is the concept that God has two natures. One of the natures is immutable, unchanging and incorruptible, as in Classical Theism, and Whitehead calls this nature the "primordial nature of God". The primordial nature of God is the transcendent nature of God and possesses the qualities Classical Theism would place on God. However, in Di-Polar Theism the primordial nature is coupled by the consequent nature of God. The consequent nature of God is both changing and receptive to the physical universe. In this way God has a transcendent quality in its

primordial nature and an integrating quality in its consequent nature.

Whitehead explains the two natures as such: “the nature of God is di-polar. He has a primordial nature and a consequent nature. The consequent nature of God is conscious; and it is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual; the consequent nature is the weaving of God’s physical feelings upon his primordial concepts.” [56](#)

In this passage from *Process and Reality* we see that Whitehead sees the primordial nature of God as a type of potentiality that exists in perfection much in the way Plato’s Forms were treated. The primordial nature is “conceptual” in that it exists in principles and stasis rather than actualized existence. The consequent nature of God is “conscious” and is therefore receptive and actively engaged in the process of the physical universe. As the physical universe changes that consequent nature of God is that part of God that is able to respond, interact and literally feel the love and suffering of human beings. The God of Classical Theism, being immutable, had no ability to interact with the universe because that would require the concept of reciprocity and change. Whitehead addresses this by introducing the consequent nature of God.

On the primordial nature he adds: “One side of God’s nature is constituted by his conceptual experience. This experience is the primordial fact in the world, limited by no actuality by which it presupposes. It is therefore infinite, devoid of all negative prehensions. This side of His nature is free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient and unconscious.” [57](#) The primordial nature is seen as the complete and infinite aspect of God. The fact that God is unconscious in its primordial nature suggests an aspect of immutability and perfection because consciousness implies being involved in a changing reality.

The conscious aspect of God is described as: “The other side originates with physical experience derived from the temporal world, and then acquires integration with the primordial side. It is determined, incomplete, consequent, ‘everlasting’, fully actual and conscious. His necessary goodness expresses the determination of his consequent nature.” [58](#) The consequent nature is in turn, fully engaged in the processes of the changing universe. Without this aspect, God would be distant and unable to be involved directly in the spiritual lives of human beings. By being rooted in the physical experience of the world, God is capable of receiving and giving love and feeling and healing suffering. He also makes the distinction between everlasting and eternal in these two statements. Eternal signifies an unchanging infinite state of being, where as everlasting implies a living process subject to change which is also infinite. These two infinite realities form the integrated natures of God and therefore God is di-polar.

This sense of Di-Polar theology is also seen in the teachings of God’s love. God’s creative love is seen as an aspect of God’s primordial nature from which the Son and the universe is born, and God’s receptive and responsive love is seen as an aspect of God’s consequent nature. This is explained in this in this quote from John Cobb and David Griffin’s work, *Process Theology*: “In addition to the presence in the world of the creative love of God (the Primordial Nature); there is also the presence of the responsive love of God (the Consequent Nature). The responsive love of God is just as fully God as is the creative love of God.” [59](#) God’s fully manifests in a di-polar fashion and each aspect of God’s love is fully a part of the being of God.

Whitehead further explains on his cosmology by taking a very Platonist position on the make-up of the higher levels of the universe and the aspects that both go into the creation of physical reality, but also to God's relationship to the universe. In this passage from *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead explains the Platonic cosmology: "The temporal world and its formative elements constitute for us the all inclusive universe. The formative elements are: 1. The creativity whereby the actual world has its character of temporal passage to novelty; 2. The realm of ideal entities, or forms, which are in themselves not actual, but are such that they are exemplified in everything that is actual, according to some proportion of relevance; 3. The actual but non-temporal entity whereby the indetermination of mere creativity is transmuted into a determinate freedom. This non-temporal actual entity is what men call God- the supreme God of rationalized religion." [60](#)

For Whitehead, God's primordial nature contains within itself, both the ability to create and the ability to conceptualize all possible actualized realities, which he calls, actual occasions. Actual occasions can be atoms, events, or beings, but the potential for their actualization is contained within the primordial nature of God as universal ideas. This concepts is admittedly Platonic and is derived from Plato's concept of the Forms. The potential ideas therefore, are the infinite possibilities of actualized reality, in the physical universe. This infinite potentiality is then contained within the conceptualization of the mind of God. God's creation of the physical universe, is in turn, God's actualization of potential ideas, manifested as physical reality in the universe. Whitehead expands on this definition in this passage: "God, who is the ground antecedent to transition, must include all possibilities of physical value conceptually, thereby holding the ideal forms apart in equal, conceptual realization of knowledge. Thus, as concepts, they are grasped together in the synthesis of omniscience." [61](#) God's knowledge is therefore, not an objective knowledge of external objects, but a subjective conceptualization of all possible manifestations of real objects, and it is through making actual God's ideas, that God creates in the universe.

For Whitehead, the universe is connected through God's ideas as potential to actual reality. However,. for Whitehead, there is a necessary dependence between both God and the universe. Some Process theologians like Bracken and Clayton dispute this, but Whitehead clearly felt that God was as equally dependent on the actualized physical universe, as the actualized physical reality of the universe was dependent on the infinite potentiality of God to exist. Some Process theologians take this to be more true than others, but in this passage we can clearly see Whitehead's position: "The abstract forms are thus the link between God and the actual world. These forms are abstract and not real, because in themselves they represent no achievement of actual value.... Apart from these forms, no rational description can be given of God, or of the actual world. Apart from God, there would be no actual world; and apart from the actual world with its creativity, there would be no rational explanation of the ideal vision which constitutes God." [62](#)

For Whitehead, God's existence is necessarily linked to the universe, and in turn the universe is dependent upon God to exist. This is in direct antithesis to the Classical Theistic doctrine of Perfection. Perfection is defined by the concept that God is complete and is in need of nothing in order to be complete. Whitehead's position is that God's Perfection is dependent on the existence of the physical universe and therefore

God is incomplete without the actualization of its potential ideas.

Whitehead, even takes this a step further by claiming that God is not only limited in Perfection, but limited in Absoluteness or Infinity, by placing it ontologically in relationship to the universe as a distinct substance. Rather than pursue an argument that includes the actualization of God's potentiality as an extension of God's own substance, Whitehead opts for a position that claims distinct substances in relation to God's substance. In this passage we see this position defined: "But the main point of all such philosophies is that they presuppose individual substance, either one or many individual substances, "which requires nothing but itself in order to exist." This presupposition is exactly what is denied in the more Platonic description which has been given in this lecture. There is no entity, not even God, "which requires nothing but itself in order to exist." [63](#)

Therefore, not only does Whitehead take the position that God is dependent upon the universe to exist, he claims that this relationship is one of distinct substances in a dependent relationship. In doing so Whitehead is claiming God is both limited in Perfection and Absoluteness as defined in Classical Theism.

Whitehead's position is based upon the idea that the universe is "societal". By society, Whitehead means an interconnected whole where the parts are neither independent of the whole, nor consumed by the whole. The universe from its formative elements to its complexity in actualized physicality operates in an inter-relational society, where the parts are interdependent and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Whitehead describes societal organization as such: "According to the doctrine of this lecture, every entity is in its essence social and requires the society in order to exist. In fact, the society for each entity, actual or ideal, is the all inclusive universe, including its ideal forms." [64](#) Therefore, nothing not even God is exempt from its participation and necessary dependence on the society to exist and function. As we will see later, this concept is actually used by Bracken to support the inter-relational aspects of the Trinity, and therefore Bracken restores God's Perfection in terms of dependence, by making the Trinity a societal relationship that then shares with creation the divine life shared among the persons of the Trinity.

Panentheism: Triangular Comparison

Roland Faber underlines Whitehead's Panentheism in his work *God as Poet of the World*. In his text he describes the "triangular comparison" of three schools of thought in relation to Classical Christian Relations, which is the Christian concept that a transcendent God has an immanent "relationship" with the world through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Whitehead explains that there are three antithetical concepts to Reationalism. These three are the concepts of Extreme Transcendentalism, Extreme Immanentism and Extreme Monism. Extreme Transcendentalism is the Semitic concept that this universe is completely ontologically separate from God. God transcends the physical universe and is in no way engaged in the universe as a changing process. Extreme Immanentism is a type of pantheism, or literally "all is God", where the identity of God is completely

dissolved into the identity of the physical universe. In this type of pantheism the physical universe itself is seen as the whole of reality and is in essence God. [65](#) Extreme Monism is a type of pantheism, where the identity of the world is completely dissolved into the identity of God. You can find this type of pantheism in the Advaita (Non-Dualistic) Vedanta of the Hindu teachings of Shankara.

Whitehead expressed the need for a middle ground between these concepts and in turn laid the groundwork for people like Charles Hartshorne and Philip Clayton to suggest types of panentheism, or literally "all-in-God". Panentheism suggests that the physical universe is neither the same as God, nor completely ontologically distinct from God. The universe is literally contained within God, and God is able to retain its distinct separate nature without the existence of the universe (Although, some Process Theologians claim that God is also dependent on the universe).

Process Panentheism requires that the universe is inherently of a distinct "substances" from God. Monistic cosmologies suggest that the component structures of the physical universe are composed of the same substance that God is composed of, In Extreme Monism, the physical universe is considered to be not only a part of God, but ultimately indistinct from the substance of God.

Process Panentheism speaks directly of the interconnection of God and the universe, but as the etymology of the term Panenthesim suggests, "all" is contained in God, and therefore, Process Panentheism suggests an ontologically distinct substance in relationship to God itself. Although Process theologians will tend toward seeing the universe in itself as one substance itself, Process Panentheism is predicated on the concept that God and the universe are distinct substances, as we saw Whitehead define earlier. Philip Clayton is even more clear in this definition of a two substance Panentheism.

This predication of an ontologically distinct substantial relationship between God and the universe, also therefore requires by necessity that God must be in some sense limited in terms of its Absoluteness. In order for there to be a another distinct substance in relationship to God, God's Absoluteness and Infinity must be limited ontologically. Whitehead, holds this view, and as we will see, Process Theologians take this even further by claiming it is also God's Omnipotence that is also limited.

Whitehead is entirely comfortable claiming that God is limited in terms of its existence in relationship to the universe. In fact, Whitehead claims that God's limitation is essential to its loving relationship with the universe: "The limitation of God is his goodness. He gains his depth of actuality by his harmony of valuation. It is not true that God is in all respects infinite. If He were, He would be evil as well as good. Also this unlimited fusion of evil with good would mean mere nothingness. He is something decided and is thereby limited." [66](#) Without expanding on my objection to his doctrine of theodicy just yet, I will point out that for Whitehead the universe and God are in a polar relationship. In order to understand that relationship, Whitehead claims we must revise our Classical Theistic concepts of God's Infinity and Absoluteness, and recognize it's ontological limitation as part of God's harmonious and loving relationship in which God's love and creative will can become manifest in reality in our lives and in the universe itself.

Charles Hartshorne's Panentheism

Six Mistakes

Charles Hartshorne one of the primary scholars who helped develop the concepts found in Whitehead's philosophy into a working theology. Hartshorne expanded on Whitehead's assault on Classical Theism by underlining six major errors he found in Classical Theism in his work Omnipotence and other Theological Mistakes. [67](#) The first two are the most important for our discussion of cosmogony and panentheism. The first is that the concept of God's Perfection is flawed because it implies a state of immutability. For this Hartshorne sides with Whitehead in claiming that Perfection need not include immutability, otherwise it negates God's absoluteness. [68](#) The second is God's Omnipotence. Classical Theism, especially Calvinistic Protestantism, claims that the universe is set in divine order by God's all powerful will and in turn all things happen according to God's divine plan. This negates the possibility of a free-will. Hartshorne responded to this by claiming that God creates a changing universe in which things themselves have the ability to create events, and in turn God becomes receptive to these vents through its consequent nature [69](#)

Panentheism

For Hartshorne it was important to preserve the supremacy and infinite nature of God primordial nature and not let the concept of Process dissolve to transcendental nature of God's existence. To distinguish his doctrine of pantheism, or what he calls surrelativism, he states: "Is surrelativism a pantheistic doctrine? Not if this means a doctrine which denies the personality of deity; nor yet if it means that deity is identical with a mere collection of entities, as such, even the cosmic collection." [70](#)

From this passage from Hartshorne's work The Divine Relativity, Hartshorne is clear to distinguish surrelativism from strict pantheism as Whitehead did in his triangular comparison. Hartshorne is showing the relationship of the two types of pantheism (extreme immanentism and extreme monism) from surrelativism by maintaining God's ability to be ontologically distinct from the universe but yet be directly immanent in the universe while it exists.

He clarifies this further by stating: "Traditional Theism or Deism makes God solely independent or non-inclusive. Thus there are logically the three views: (1) God is merely the cosmos, in all aspects inseparable from the sum or system of dependent things or effects; (2) he is both this system and something independent of it; (3) he is not the system, but is in all aspects independent. The second view is panentheism." [71](#)

For Hartshorne, God and the world are intimately integrated in a mutual relationship where God is not only present in its design, but active in its evolution and change. However, Hartshorne reinforces the concept that God is independent from the universe and exists above and beyond the scope of the finite physical universe itself. For Hartshorne God is not simply the whole of the universe. God exists outside the universe as well as immanently throughout it.

Mind Body Analogy

Hartshorne uses the Mind/ Body analogy found in Neo-Platonism and Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita Vedanta to describe the relationship of God to the universe. The mind/body analogy suggests that the God/universe relationship is similar to the idea that the mind (or soul) inhabits and is intertwined with the physical body. In this analogy the physical body and the mind are both mutually dependent on each other to exist as an individual being, but the mind (or soul) can exist without the body after death. For Hartshorne, the universe is similar to God's body. The term "society" is used to describe the idea that the physical body is a "society" of cells, and universally God's body is a society of actualized events and beings. God is the "World –Soul" of the universe. The universe relates to God as a "society" of actualization and it in turn is reflective of the mind/body analogy in that the "society" is similar to the "body" of God. This type of analogy is used throughout panentheistic theologies, but is always seen as an analogy not simply a direct reference to the universe as an actual physical body of God. [72](#)

Types of Panentheisms

David Griffin's Process Panentheism

David Griffin uses the mind/body analogy as well in describing his vision of a panentheistic theology. Griffin's as well as John Cobb's theology uses a Neo-Platonic vision of creation where the universe is formed by God out of a preexistent state of chaos and random events.

In Griffin's panentheism, the universe is seen as somehow within God. The universe is created within the being of God; however the universe has an element of independence from God either necessarily or through the will of God. God is then in a reciprocal relationship with the universe where the universe is influenced by God's will and love and God, in turn, is also influenced and receptive to the events of the physical universe. This makes God an active agent of change in the universe, and can be seen in relation

to universe as the mind is to the body. Both the mind and body have some sort of independent essence and they both reciprocally influence and are influenced by each other. [73](#)

He describes panentheism as such: “According to process panentheism, God is essentially the soul of the universe, God’s relation to it belongs to the divine essence. This does not mean, however, that our particular universe- with its electrons, universe square law, and Planck’s constant- exists necessarily.” [74](#)

For Griffin panentheism is the intimate relationship of God and the universe and is very similar to Hartshorne’s vision of panentheism. However, Griffin emphasizes the concept of creation from chaos, and argues against creatio ex nihilo, or creation from nothing, as in Classical theism. Creatio ex nihilo is essential to Classical Theism because it reinforced the idea of God’s omnipotence and that nothing exists without being created from God. This Platonic image of creation suggests a state of being prior to creation that is not God’s infinite nature and is composed of chaotic events.

Griffin describes this state of being as such: “This universe was divinely created, evidently 15 billion years ago. It was even created out of “no-thing” in the sense that, prior to its creation, there were no enduring individuals sustaining a character through time (such as quarks and photons), which is what is usually meant by “things”. [75](#)

However as seen from this quote from Griffin’s work Process Theology, co-written by John Cobb, Griffin fully comprehends this state of no-thingness to be an actual state of being pre-existent and different from God’s infinite being: “Process theology rejects the notion of creatio ex nihilo, if that means creation out of absolute nothingness. That doctrine is part and parcel of the doctrine of God as absolute controller. Process theology affirms instead a doctrine of creation out of chaos (which was suggested by Plato but also by more Old Testament passages than those supporting the doctrine of creation out of nothing). A state of absolute chaos would be one in which there is nothing but very low-grade actual occasions happening at random, i.e., without being ordered by individuals.” [76](#)

Creation from Chaos is challenged by many Process theologians especially those who try to develop stricter Christologies. Most Process theologians claim creatio ex nihilo in some fashion rather than creation from chaos. I will be arguing a creatio ex deo, or creation from God’s being, model as the primary concept behind Emanationist Panentheism.

Philip Clayton’s Kenotic Trinitarian Panentheism

Clayton tries to bridge the gap between transcendence and monism, while maintaining a more monistic concept than Griffin, especially in terms of creation. First Clayton explains his position as a middle ground between monism and transcendence: “What happens when we return with this result to the question of God’s relation to the world? Earlier we found ourselves pulled between the monism of Spinoza’s “one substance with many modes” and the separation of God and the world based on the demands of divine perfection. Di-polar panentheism suggests a more dialectical answer: not unity or difference, but unity-in-difference. The world is neither indistinguishable

from God nor (fully) ontologically separate from God.” [77](#)

Then Clayton describes the process of creation as an emptying or “kenosis” of God’s being so that he can create an empty space within God’s being for the universe to form. He describes this process in the article *Kenotic Trinitarian Panentheism*, where he describes kenosis as the action of creation where God’s infinite being empties itself in such a way so that God can create the finite temporal world . Clayton claims the universe then “emerges” from God as a process of creation. However, in this article he leaves the door open for *creatio ex nihilo*, as the actual process of creation. [78](#)

Clayton is a Christian Trinitarian who views God as a field of activity, that willfully creates the universe within itself and is actively engaged in both ongoing creation within the universe and interpersonal relationships with people in the world. Here he explains Trinitarian Process Theology in the words of Joseph Bracken: “Bracken begins by postulating that God has existed eternally as a Trinitarian field of forces, as tri-personal identity. Each aspect of God is personal, or more than personal, and together they constitute “a single unbounded field of activity.” Open panentheists add that at some point God freely chose to share the divine life, creating finite centers of activity within the space of the divine being.” [79](#) Unlike some more Platonist Process Theologians, Open Pantheists believe in the direct personal interaction of God in the universe.

Clayton is also responsible for bringing in Kenosis to the Process dialogue more fully. However, for Clayton, as with Hartshorne, the focus of God's limitation and self-emptying, is not so much in the ontological sense, but more in the sense of God's omnipotence. “According to the doctrine of “kenotic creation”, creation itself is a kenotic, relational act. God freely limited God’s infinite power in order to allow for the existence of non-divine agents. This self limitation is best understood as a self emptying, insofar as God chose to limit or “empty Godself of” qualities that would otherwise seem to belong to the divine essence, such as omnipotence or the unlimited manifestation of divine glory and agency. We might therefore label the resulting position *open kenotic panentheism*.” [80](#)

The most important aspect of Clayton's theology to this thesis is his Panentheistic vision of Pneumatology. Unlike Classical Theists, Process Panentheistic Pneumatology, does not involve a distinct substantial separation between spirit and matter. Although there are differing opinions on this, Process Theology recognizes that spirit and matter must be seen as intimately intertwined: “We likewise eschew all dichotomies between Spirit and matter or between Spirit and body, following the lead of emergent theories of human personhood. Even if the divine Spirit precedes all creation, every manifestation of Spirit in the world depends essentially on the evolutionary process. Nor can the divine Spirit be a timeless entity standing immutably outside the flow of cosmic history. The divine Spirit- by which I mean that aspect of the divine being that correlates with the spirit of which we have knowledge of ourselves- must also be temporal, the emergent result of a long term process of intimate relationship with beings in the world. In this view, then, the Spirit is not a fundamentally ontological category but an emergent form of complexity that living things within the world begin to manifest at a certain stage in their development.” [81](#)

I personally further emphasize that spirit and matter are specifically two aspects of the same substance and will be arguing for a “*creatio ex deo*” model of the universe. Clayton on the other hand emphasizes the distinction between God and finite things

more directly. For Clayton, Kenotic Panentheism allows for a creatio ex nihilo" model of creation, which he and other Christian Process Theologians interpret to be the correct theological approach. Here we can see Clayton's opinion on "creatio ex nihilo": "The hypothesis of a kenotic creation out of nothing serves as a crucial component in the mediating position of open panentheism. This view accepts the process insight that a God who is love must exist eternally in relation, yet it locates that relatedness already within the divine nature itself as a model for God's subsequent relatedness to all things. God then freely creates space within the divine life for other selves or entities. These others are like God in that they too are centers of activity; hence creation is, as the tradition has held, imago Dei." [82](#)

Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism

Neo-Platonism

Neo-Platonism provides us with a structural cosmological framework on which we can base the following argument. Neo-Platonism offered philosophy with a metaphysical cosmology that attempted to answer the problem of how the One can interact and interrelate with the Many. In other words, how the physical universe with its seemingly infinite multiplicity, can be united and grounded in the singular simple principle of the One.

The One is the metaphysical principle that is devoid of qualities, enumeration, dualities, and is the ultimate source of all created being in the physical universe. The One is the principal creative force in the universe and the ground of all being. However, the One does not create directly on its own. Plotinus postulated the existence of a second hypostasis called the Intellect. The Intellect involves all potential divisions and relationship in the universe, and contained within itself the equivalent of Plato's Forms. These Intellectual Forms are the potential structure of all possible manifestations in the created physical universe.

The Intellect participates directly in the One and is a dimmer reflection of the perfection of the One, however, it is not directly responsible for the creation of the physicality in the universe as well. The Intellect becomes the framework for the third hypostasis that is the cause of actualizing the potentiality in the Intellectual Forms. This hypostasis is then called the Soul.

The Soul is active creative principle in the universe that participates in the Intellect by transforming potentiality in the Intellectual Forms into actuality in the physical universe. In this way, the Soul acts as the mediating principle between the Intellect and the physical universe by becoming the means in which Form is communicated to matter, and it is the hypostasis responsible for forming the universe in the image of the

Intellectual Forms.

The Soul is then defined by different levels of the Soul. The highest levels of the Soul participate directly in the Intellect and the highest levels are only attainable through the individual Intellectual soul found in creatures possessing an Intellectual Soul. There is however a lower aspect of Soul commonly referred to as the Soul of the All. This level of Soul is literally the Soul of the physical universe itself. In this way it encompasses and is omnipresent through the structure and design of the universe. The Soul of the All is the level of Soul that structures and communicates the design of the Intellectual Forms directly to every level of the physical universe. It is literally the point of actualization that occurs at every instance of materiality, and can be considered the soul of every physical manifestation in the universe. Normal physical structures only participate at this level of Soul, and are incapable of rising up to comprehend the higher levels of Soul. Life forms with the capability of intellectual comprehension are the only things in the universe capable of participating in the higher levels of Soul (spiritual or human).

As the "light", to use Father Copleston's metaphor, extends farther from the One, it becomes dimmer and dimmer. What this means is, from the infinitely radiant being of the One, emanates a dimmer reflection of the perfection of the One called the Intellect. From the Intellect, we have an actualization of the potentiality found in the Intellectual Forms called the Soul. From the Soul's closest levels to the One we have a more limited aspect of the Soul whose only participation is in the structuring of the universe. Finally, extending from the Soul of the All, we have the lowest form of Soul, Nature, and following that we have Matter, which together form the physical universe we observe today. Nature is an unconscious aspect of Soul that simply carries out the will of the Soul. It shapes and forms the universe as directed by the higher aspects of Soul, but does so as the forces of nature, and does not in itself ever consciously alter its own course. Matter is the simplest level of physicality that takes the form communicated to it from Nature. Together Nature and Matter are the finally formative aspect of physical reality. As with our previous explanation. Matter is the farthest from the One and therefore the most limited in terms of being. Plotinus describes Matter as the privation of being, although he does not claim it is absolute privation. IN this way the emanations become more and more limited as they get farther from the source., the One.

This cosmology offers us the first structure that can offer us a complete description of the physical universe and offers us a complete metaphysical vision that answers the basic problem of how multiplicity can interact and be united as one whole, through progressively self limiting emanations. However, Neo-Platonism suffers from one very serious flaw. Plato believed the Demiurge formed the universe from preexisting chaos, and the Neo-Platonists tended to argue that both Aristotle and Plato believed that the universe itself had no beginning in time. We obviously know now that the universe had, at some point 15 billion or so years ago, a definite beginning called the Big Bang. This causes many enigmatic problems for Neo-Platonism. Plotinus and Proclus especially, claimed that the hypostases were in some sense eternal, yet they still claimed successive emanation from the One. If the emanations progress in succession, how then can they be seen to exist eternally outside of time? It is because of this essential error we need to look further into similar cosmologies to find a solution to these errors.

Hermeticism

Hermeticism offers us the Platonic cosmological hierarchy, and helps answer the problem of where the universe itself came from. In the Corpus Hermeticum, there is a clear Platonic hierarchy, beginning with God, who is responsible not only for order, but for the actual creation of the universe itself. Like Platonism Hermeticism postulates the Nous, or Intellect of God as the first aspect of creation. Creation happens within the Mind of God and from the Mind of God we have a successive hierarchy of created principles that all lead finally to the created universe itself.

Hermeticism suggests that creation is an Intellectual act of the Mind of God, and through a series of created principles. The physical universe is created as these successive principles, each of which is less complete than the prior principle, are created and extend farther from the source, God.

Hermeticism also introduces the concept of the Logos or Divine Reason into the cosmology. Hermeticism clearly defines Divine Reason as being something contained within the Mind of God.

However, Hermeticism suffers from two very distinct and serious problems. Hermeticism attempts to incorporate the successive hierarchy of created principles, but still refers to this hierarchy in terms of its creation pre-eternity. God somehow creates eternity and the principle of Mind and Logos in succession, yet claims eternity is at the same level of Mind and Logos. This is the same problem Platonism suffered from, but at least in Platonism they could argue that the universe had no beginning and therefore there is no need to address the question of successive emanations in terms of a beginning of the universe. For Hermeticism the introduction of God as Creator of the universe, and Creator of Mind and Logos, introduces the metaphysical problem of how God can create these principles of successive principles if they themselves exist before the creation of time itself.

Philo's Logos

In Philo of Alexandria's work, we see the Hellenistic philosophical tradition slowly merging with the Judaic doctrine of God and Creation. Philo incorporates this concept of Divine Reason within the Mind of God without distinguishing between God's Mind and its Reason. For Philo God's Divine Reason, or Logos, is the means by which God creates the physical universe and man in God's image. For Philo not only is there no distinction between the Mind of God and God's Reason, but there is no distinction between God and God's Reason or Logos. In other words, God does not create a separate entity called Mind or Reason, as in Platonism and Hermeticism. For Philo God's Divine Reason is a part of God Himself, not a distinctive principle from God itself.

Lurainic Kabbalah

Lurainic Kabbalah offers us the first concept of Kenosis, incorporating Platonist concepts of Form and emanation with Judaic concepts of willful creation. For Isaac

Luria it was important to show that God was infinite and simplistic, without division or enumeration. God prior to creation had no other to be reflected in. God was a simple unified state of Being. The Kabbalists realized if God was then to create a universe, it would have to undergo a state of self limitation in order to allow for something other than pure unity and being to exist.

Lurianic Kabbalah postulated the concept of Tzimtzum which is God's willful contraction and act of self limitation to create a void in which to create the physical universe. The physical universe is then created directly out of a measured amount of its own being. This act of self limitation, both in creating the void and creating the universe from a limited measured amount of its own Divine Light, is the first instance of a solid doctrine of Kenosis in terms of creation and cosmology.

Lurianic Kabbalah then incorporates its own version of the concept of Mind or Logos as Adam Kadmon or the Archetypal Man. Adam Kadmon serves as an eternal reflection of the Eyn of, or the Limitless. Adam Kadmon then serves as the geometric prototype and the image of God that is reflected in the created universe.

Process Theology

Whitehead does, in my opinion a brilliant job of incorporating Platonic concepts of potentiality and actuality in his definition of universal principles and his definition of how things come to exist in the physical universe. God creates from conceptual principles or ideas contained within its infinite being, and actualizes these potentialities as "actual occasion" in the physical universe. However Whitehead's theology too suffers from some critical flaws.

Process Theology attempts to address Classical Theism's inconsistencies by suggesting further limitations on God. In an effort to make God more personal and relational to the moving changing and evolving universe, Process Theologians suggest that God, is not only relational to the universe, but necessarily mutually dependent on the universe to exist. In an effort to explain God's personal relationship with living beings and the changing universe, Process Theologians also suggest that God must limit its own power, to accommodate other creative beings.

According to Whitehead, not only is God limited in its infinity by being a relational substance to the universe. God is limited in its Perfection by being mutually dependent on its relationship to the substances in the universe in order to in fact exist. Bracken and Clayton address this problem by reaffirming a Trinitarian doctrine that claims, God is not dependent upon the universe to exist because within its Trinitarian nature it already has a mutual dependency and simply shares this Divine life and interdependence with the universe in a relational manner. However, this then still requires creatio ex nihilo, in Clayton's Panenthesim. Clayton claims the universe is then created "out of nothing" as a distinct substance and remains in a mutual non-dual relationship with God. In order to allow for this relationship, God then must undergo kenosis and limit its power in order to facilitate the creation of this secondary substance in which to become relational with.

Kenosis as an Act of Creation in the First Three Hypostases

If we follow the argument laid out so far, the source of the physical universe is what Plotinus called the One, and what Isaac Luria called Eyn Sof (The Limitless). Luria points out that in order for the One, which is pure undifferentiated being, to create a universe in relationship to itself it must first in some way limit itself, or empty itself of its own being. Eyn Sof for Luria, infinitely fills all space and there is nothing, and no space that is not occupied by Eyn Sof. Therefore, Eyn Sof must undergo an emptying and limitation in order to create space for a universe to be created within itself,

Luria calls this action Tzimtzum, or contraction, and it is the willful contraction of God's own self to create a void into which God can create the physical universe we know today. This is the first act of limitation that the One, or The Limitless undergoes, but it is not the last.

Following Plotinus' concept of successive emanations that become progressively limited and less perfect the farther they emanate from their source in the One, we then come to the next act of self limitation. Plotinus calls this the Intellect, Luria calls this Adam Kadmon. The Intellect is the reflection of the One in a comprehensive structure. Although this emanation is a reflection of the perfection of the One, it is limited in that it is not equal to, or as perfect as the One.

The One is a simplistic and unified one-ness, whereas the Intellect and Adam Kadmon are qualified by certain aspects and structures within it. Whitehead calls this concept the "ideas" of God. Taking from Platonist philosophers, Whitehead's "ideas" in the mind of God, are pure potential possibilities of creation. Within the mind of God, God can conceptualize all possible relationships to itself in potentiality. The entire physical universe, with every infinite possible manifestation can be contained within the mind of God.

Also taking from Plato, Plotinus refers to this as the Intellectual Forms. The Intellectual Forms are the prototype structures in the Intellect of the One which are not yet created, and exist in pure infinite potentiality. The shapes of stars, the possible species that can evolve from DNA strains, every possible physical manifestation is contained in infinite potentiality in the mind of God.

From this emanation come the next aspect of self limitation, the Soul. Plotinus refers to the Soul as that which actualizes potentiality in the physical universe in the images of the Intellectual Forms. This is an act of self limitation as the Soul is less perfectly complete than the Intellect or the One, and also is the principle that actualizes actual instances of reality from the infinite potentiality in the Intellect.

Whitehead refers to this in the previous quote: "3: The actual but non-temporal entity whereby the indetermination of mere creativity is transmuted into a determinate freedom." [83](#) Whitehead is admittedly very Platonic in this declaration and he clearly is referring in some sense to the Soul of Plotinus' cosmology.

Panopatheistic Pneumatology

Kenosis as an act of creation needs a distinct concept of Spirit and matter in order for this to make sense. Like Clayton, I assert that a substantial distinction between spirit and matter, mind and body and God and the universe is erroneous. Science is pushing further and further past Cartesian dualism concerning mind and body, and it is necessary for theology to understand that a Vitalistic approach to spirit and matter is not only flawed but unnecessary.

In this model Soul, is the will of God, and God's ability to limit itself from pure infinite potentiality into a specific thread of actualized reality. The Soul of God enters the void created by its self limitation as pure creative energy. This process can best be likened to Plotinus concept of the World Soul as being the limited aspect of Soul that acts literally as the Soul of the universe.

This would be closest to Hartshorne's and Griffin's Process Panentheism, where God is seen as the soul of the universe and the universe as the body of God. In this way, Soul exists prior to creation as God's creative energy and throughout creation as the source and "soul of the universe". Soul creates actualized reality from the infinite potentiality of the Logos, and the three hypostases together form the creative principles of the universe itself.

In order to fully comprehend how this is possible we need to take a brief look at the Big Bang Theory and the Standard Model of Quantum Field Theory. According to Stephen Hawking, approximately 15 billion years ago, the universe was infinitely hot and had zero size [84](#). At the moment of creation, there was simply pure energy. This energy expands into empty space and as it does it cools and becomes less energetic. Between 10×10^{-43} seconds and 10×10^{-10} seconds after the Big Bang the energy cools enough so that the four forces of nature become distinguishable and quarks and bosons become distinguishable. The four forces of nature are gravity, electromagnetic force, and the strong and weak nuclear forces. Quarks are the fundamental particle of matter and bosons are the particles which are said to carry the four forces. At one millisecond into the expansion of this energy, the quarks begin to cool enough so that they are unable to overcome the effect of the strong nuclear force, and protons and neutrons begin to form. Three minutes in the expansion and cooling process, the protons and neutrons begin to form basic nuclei. Approximately 500,000 years into the expansion and cooling the particles are no longer energetic enough to overcome the electromagnetic force and atoms begin to form as protons and electrons bond to form hydrogen and helium atoms. Fast forward millions of years and the cooling atoms begin to be overcome by the gravitational force and form stars, and from these stars we begin to see the more complex elements forming in the center of these stars. [85](#)

The important point I am trying to make here is that universe begins as pure creative energy. The physical universe we know today was not created in its entirety at the moment of creation. In fact, it is more appropriate to say that as this creative energy undergoes a limiting process of its own and cools and dissipates as it expands through the void, potential forms become actualized as physical reality. The complex forms we see in our universe today all began as pure undifferentiated creative energy and its complexity emerged through a process of cooling and self limiting. Therefore, I assert it is more appropriate to claim that Kenosis is the actual means of creation. Physical

reality is not created by means of simply manifesting physical objects in the universe. All physical reality emerges from pure simple undifferentiated creative energy.

God's Soul enters the void and creates the universe. As in Luria's Kabbalah, The Eyn Sof emits one ray of its "divine light" that fills this void. The eternal Soul of God enters simply as one ray of itself, and one thread of actualized reality taken from the infinite potentiality of the Intellect of the One. This aspect of Soul is similar to the World Soul of Plato and Plotinus as it is the Soul of the universe. And as this Soul undergoes self limitation, the next aspect of Plotinus' cosmology comes to be: Nature.

I assert that Plotinus's Nature can be equated to the four forces of nature that act upon matter without a consciousness or will of its own, and communicates directly to Matter the Forms of the Intellect. Nature is a further limited aspect of Soul, that is the means in which the World Soul creates more and more complex levels of complexity, and the means by which Spirit controls the motions and behavior of the physical universe.

It is therefore also my assertion that what Plotinus called Matter and what some Aristotelians called Prime Matter can be equated to the quarks and leptons that are formed into particles, atoms, molecules, stars and life by the forces of nature, which communicate form from the Logos of God directly onto the mass particles within matter itself.

Therefore, what we see if we follow Platonist, Hermetic and Kabbalistic logic about the successive emanations from the One, we see a process of self limitation that occurs first as the One limits itself into relational potentiality in the intellect, which is in itself a less perfect reflection of the perfect One. The Intellect is then limited from potentiality into actualized reality through the Soul, the Soul becomes the World Soul as it creates the physical universe in the images of the Intellect. The World Soul is then limited into rational forces of nature, which in turn form and shape matter into the forms found in the Intellect. As Plotinus' analogy of light becoming dimmer the farther it gets from its source, so does the Being of the One self-limit progressively until it reaches the state of elementary mass particles, which is a near absolute privation of Being itself.

Effluence

I have chosen the term Effluent to refer to the act of the One creating the universe through successive stages. The reason for this is purely semantic. There are three useful terms to describe a "flowing forth" or "flowing out of". These terms are Emanation, Emergence and Effluence. Emanation and Emanationism has come to be understood academically, as the necessary affect of Deity in Neo-Platonist and other systems, where creation is not willful but simply a natural occurrence. I did not want to use this term because this technically is a different system than Neo-Platonism as it refers to an actual creation of the physical universe in the past.

Emergence has come to be understood academically in terms of Biological Emergence, and more relevantly in Process Theology as way to describe the emergence of consciousness and life from lifeless atoms, and the emergence of new species in the evolving universe as an act of "Strong Emergence". Strong Emergence implies there is something outside the reductionist science of biology that is responsible for life and evolution.

Therefore, Emanationism and Emergence, not only both did not explain the concept I was trying to convey accurately, I also ran the risk of being misunderstood to mean something found in those other schools of thought. Effluence, for myself, is a much more eloquent way of using the root for fluidity, to explain a system where the One undergoes a willful act of self limitation in order to create and "flows forth" and creates the universe from its own being.

Panapothoism

In order to further elucidate this concept I was forced to create a new Theological term as well. As in Luria's system the universe is a single instance of God's own being. Technically, this could be called a Monism or a "creatio ex deo" (creation from God) model. However, both these terms are insufficient to fully explain this system, and I feel that theological terminology needs to be evolving and expanding in terms of its definitions and concepts.

The term Pan-*apo*-theism, like Pan-*en*-theism, is a word derived from Greek root words. Pan-*en*-theism means "All-in-God"(ism). However, like Emergence, Panenthesim has come to be understood academically in Process Theology as a relational universe, where the "World" is contained in some sense within God. This allows for the possibility for substantial distinction, which you find in Eastern Orthodox Christian Panentheisms, and allows for the possibility for "creatio ex nihilo" models like Philip Clayton's.

The problem with the terms Monism (or Pantheism), and "creatio ex deo", is that they are always followed by the same response by critics. Critics will claim that Monism dissolves either God or the universe's identity into one principle. In order to preempt that argument I wanted a term that would emphasize relationality between the One and Matter, but draw a more monistic line than Panentheism could.

Therefore, I took the Latin phrase "creatio ex deo" and adapted it in Greek to Pan-*apo*-theism, or All-from God. This term suggests a distinction between God and what God creates, However, it also stresses that what is created is of the same essence and substance as its source. As in Luria's system The Limitless, creates the universe as a willful act of self limitation and the result is a universe of actualized potentiality from within God's own being, not created from external material and not simply created from nothing.

Critical Review

Criticisms against this theology can come from both scientific and theological angles. The scientific criticisms are two-fold. First, an atheist scientist has ground to argue that because I have claimed that the soul and matter are essentially co-substantial, there is no need to speak of the creative principles in terms of a conscious God. A scientific reductionist can argue that the only thing that makes us conscious is the bioelectromagnetic fields created by our brains and physiology and therefore, the concept of a "God" is irrelevant.

Although I am inclined to agree that an anthropomorphic concept of the creative principles is a bit of a metaphysical fallacy, my rebuttal to this argument uses the same science that an atheist might use. For myself, the idea that bioelectromagnetism is the root of life and consciousness, and this substance is the same substance as the creative principles, is actually more reassuring than anything. The study of Bioelectromagnetism, is the study of bioelectricity and biomagnetism created by the matter and electrical charges created by the brains and organs in living beings. The fact that that which makes one conscious, namely bioelectricity, is not only interconnected within the environment on a subatomic level, but is also connected universally through the Electromagnetic Force all the way back to the very creative energy that creates the universe, suggests to me, that I am intimately intertwined metaphysically with the universe and my reality. This in no way undermines my belief or philosophical structure.

Criticism from the theological angle would most likely suggest that by suggesting a 'one substance' argument, that I am reducing God to mere matter and energy. My response to this is first that I feel the metaphysical arguments I made for the hypostases of the Intellect and the Soul in no way suggest I have reduced God in any way. But more importantly, my rebuttal is that religious Vitalism, which would suggest there must be a substance other than that which science can explain is an inherently flawed perspective, one which will inevitably be proven to be false as science explains deeper and deeper levels of the physical universe.

Further Study

I began this thesis with the intention of exploring Quantum Field Theory and Emergent Biology, and use Neo-Platonism to create a framework to understand how Intellectual Forms can non-locally act to form emerging complexity. This not only turned out to be a difficult endeavor, but I realized before I could even make claims regarding these sciences, I needed to actually prove the metaphysical and theological model that I was using to make these claims.

My focus then turned to this particular focus. In this thesis I attempted to establish a cosmological foundation, on which further sciences and philosophies could be built. Using Panapotheism, I feel that one can explain the origins of emergent complexity in the universe, and through Kenosis, I feel we can further explain Quantum Field Theory. As levels of emergent complexity are formed from particles to stars to compounds to life, these things take on form, and this form is communicated to it non-locally. What I mean by this is that in a cloud of elements in space, such as a nebula in which stars are born, throughout all of those atoms runs Quantum Fields. The electromagnetic field that runs through every atom in that cloud and whose range is infinitely distant, contains or communicates all potential forms to these atoms. If this cloud contains hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and phosphorus, every possible DNA structure that we know of is contained within potentiality, non-locally to the atoms themselves. Somehow the field itself contains these potentials and the qualities of each life form within the field throughout this cloud.

This is where I would like to take this research in the future. I would like to use Neo-Platonist metaphysics to explore the behavior of Quantum Fields and Emergence in Evolutionary Biology. Needless to say, this particular endeavor was a little extensive for this particular thesis.

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Appendix

Kenotic Effluent Complexity: A Hylomorphic Model of the Creation of the Universe

On The Reduction of the Arts to Theology (St. Bonaventure's *De Reductione*) and Kenotic Effluence

Central to St. Bonaventure's *Reductio* is a medieval metaphysics that some may call, "The Metaphysics of Light". The Metaphysics of Light is a Neo-Platonic influenced cosmology that equates the Creative Light of God to a light leaving its source. This Creative Light radiates from the its source fading in its brilliance as it fills the universe. This light goes through stages which in turn set the basis for the creative stages of the universe.

My interpretation of this metaphysics is something I call Kenotic Effluence. I will explain my scientific basis for this terminology, but in regards to Bonaventure's Cosmology, we can say that the creative light radiates from its Source and begins to fade (self-limit, kenosis) as it permeates and creates the universe. Along with this interpretation, I am claiming that this creative radiation both metaphorically and literally behaves like waves radiating from the Source of Creation. Therefore, to distinguish this metaphysics from Platonic Emanation and what the Process Theologians call Emergence, I will be arguing that the appropriate terminology for this model is Kenotic Effluence, or self-limiting, light that flows from its Source.

According to Hayes, we can see this described in his prologue to his translation of the *Reductio*. His interpretation reflects a Neo-Platonic influence of God's creative light, described as God's creative love and a desire for that creative love to communicate itself outwardly as a reflection of the Eternal Word. It is extremely important to explain here, that although there is a heavy medieval Neo-Platonist influence, Bonaventure's Theology is deeply Trinitarian, and although like St. Augustine, Bonaventure sees the likeness of the Neo-Platonic Intellectual Forms with the Eternal Word of God, Bonaventure, is clearly a Trinitarian theologian in the Catholic sense, and to equate his theology to Platonism directly would be a misrepresentation.

Hayes explains the creation of the universe as a self-expression of God's Divine Word as such:

"At the metaphysical level, we might say that as creation emerges out of the depths of the divine, creative love it gives external expression to that primal, internal self-expression of God found in the eternal Word. This takes us into the realm of trinitarian theology. Here is Bonaventure's view that at that level of God's primal Word of self-expression, there is but one Word. And in that one Word is contained all that the divine mystery is within itself as a mystery of self – communicative love, and all that can come to be should the divine determine to communicate itself externally. "¹

¹ Hayes pg. 7

Without over extending the connection to Neo-Platonic cosmology, we can see that central to Bonaventure's cosmology (according to Hayes), is that the Word is the basis for God's self-expression and the basis for the architecture (forms, if you will) of the created universe itself. God creates the universe using the Word as the foundation of the structure for all created things. And the Word is the expression of God's creative and communicative love.

When we look directly at Bonaventure's words we begin to see a cosmology emerge that reflects the Metaphysics of Light where the Divine Creative Light flows from the Source. As I have used the term kenosis to explain this phenomenon, we can see that as this light flows from its Source it influences the creation of successive layers of the universe. Bonaventure, explains this concept by beginning with the simplest manifestations, and traces its layers back to it's source.

In this summarizing quote we see the cosmology Bonaventure wishes to express:

"1. Even though every illumination of knowledge is internal, still we can reasonably distinguish what may be called an exterior light, or the light of mechanical art; an inferior light or the light of sense perception; an interior light, or the light of philosophical light; and a *superior* light, or the light of grace of Sacred Scripture. The first light illumines with respect to the forms artifacts; the second, with respect to *natural forms*; the third, with respect to *intellectual truth*; the fourth and the last, with respect to saving truth"²

From this quote we can conclude several things. First, to Bonaventure, God's creative process is deeply rooted in the metaphor of creative light, both through its illumination and influence over all stages of creation. Following his logic, we can see four layers of creative light. The simplest of these lights he calls the 'exterior light', the 'inferior light', the 'interior light', and ultimately the 'superior light'. To keep with Bonaventure's logic, we will explore these lights back towards its source.

The first, or 'external light which is associated with the outside experienced world, but most importantly that which feeds the body and is integral to human experience. This light is described as such:

"2. So the first light, which sheds its lights on the forms of *artifacts* – things which are, as it were, external to the human person and intended to supply the needs of the body – is called the light of *mechanical art*. "³

Bonaventure explains many manifestations of the 'light of mechanical art', but for the sake of this work, I will simply comment on its relevance to the greater metaphysical cosmology. He describes this light as, that which 'sheds its lights' of the 'forms' of the artifacts. Without expounding too deeply on the 'artifacts, it is sufficient to point out that material objects and that which the body consumes and experiences have 'forms' and these forms are illuminated by this light. According to Bonaventure's the material world not only have 'forms' that are dictated by the Word, but God's Divine Light permeates all the way to the material world.

It is extremely important to explain that although the usage of the term 'forms' is pervasive in Bonaventure's work, his model of hylo-morphism, is distinctly Trinitarian. And the distinction of Augustinian Trinitarianism with Plontinan Neo-Platonism is a subject for a different paper.

² Ibid pg. 37

³ Ibid pg. 37

We see a much deeper expression of Neo-Platonic forms when we follow his logic up a layer, to the 'inferior light'. At the next level, we see an analogy much closer to the Platonic experience of 'forms'. According to Bonaventure, the inferior light is that which it is that which allows the mind to experience sense objects through human perception and its senses.

"3. The second light, which provides light for the apprehension of *natural forms*, is the light of *sense knowledge*. This is rightly called the *inferior* light because sense perception begins with an inferior object and takes place by the aide of corporal light. It has five dimensions corresponding to the five senses."⁴

Inferior objects, along with the aid of corporal light, are illuminated in the human mind by the inferior light, and is in turn an extension of the exterior light which supports the human perception and helps support the 'forms' of external objects.

Although again it is important to distinguish Bonaventure from Neo-Platonists like Plotinus as he is a strict Trinitarian, we still see an even deeper Platonic influence when we go up another layer of the creative light, as we investigate what Bonaventure calls 'intelligible truths'. I have not gone into a deep discussion of how Bonaventure shows the Trinitarian nature of the lights they exist at each layer, but here we can see a direct explanation of the nature of the Trinity in the 'interior light'.

"4. The third light, which enlightens the human person in the investigation of *intelligible truths*, is the light of *philosophical knowledge*. It is called *interior* because it inquires into inner and hidden causes through principles of learning and natural truth, which are connatural to the human mind. There is a threefold division of this light into *rational*, *natural*, and *moral* philosophy. That is sufficient can be understood in the following way. There is truth of *speech*, the truth of *things*, and the truth of *morals*. *Rational* philosophy considers the truth of *speech*; *natural* philosophy, the truth of *things*; and *moral* philosophy, the truth of conduct."⁵

The Neo-Platonic influence can clearly be seen in this quote. The usage of the term 'intelligible truths' is nearly identical to the Neo-Platonic usage of Intellectual Forms by Plotinus. To Bonaventure, the 'interior light' illuminates the human mind to the experience of natural truths, which he claims is 'connatural' to the human mind. But as Bonaventure does consistently, he qualifies this in the Trinitarian logic of (Word, Holy Spirit, and Father.. in his logic order). He divides the 'interior light' into three principles (as he does with each layer). 'Truth of speech' refers to the influence of the Word on intelligible truths (rational philosophy). 'Truth of things' refers to the Holy Spirit's influence on the nature of created things (natural philosophy). The 'Truth of Morals' refers to the influence of the Father on the moral philosophy of 'intelligible truths'.

This threefold Trinitarian cosmology is even more evident when he defines the fourth light, the 'Superior Light'. Bonaventure continually refers to this light as the light of Sacred Scripture, and is the source of true illumination. From this quote we can see his return ultimately to a Trinitarian Source and an completion of the perfection of the light at its Source.

"5. Now the fourth light, which provides illumination with respect to *saving truth*, is the light of sacred Scripture. This light is called superior because it leads to higher things by

⁴ Ibid pg. 39

revealing truths that transcend reason, and also because it is not acquired by human research, but comes down from the “God of Lights” by inspiration. While in its literal sense it is one, still, in its spiritual and mystical sense, it is three-fold, for in all the books of sacred Scripture, beyond the literal meaning which the words express outwardly, there is a three-fold spiritual meaning, namely, the allegorical, by which we are taught to believe concerning the divinity and humanity; the moral, by which we are taught how to live; and the anagogical, by which we are taught how to cling to God.”⁶

This light being closest to the source is in turn likened to its nature relative to its ‘saving truth’. It is not accessible through human reason and is the reconciling light that transcends the logical human perception as is the experience of soteriological light. Again Bonaventure draws the connection of this Light with the Trinity. The ‘allegorical’ nature of this Light illuminates the mind to the nature of the divinity of the Word and humanity, the ‘moral’ which illuminates the Laws of the Father, and the ‘anagogical’ by which we are reconciled and reunited to God through the Holy Spirit.

The beauty of his Trinitarian model of the Metaphysics of Light is summarized in this quote from Bonaventure (and on a personal note is the most profound statement in the *Reductio*).

“Therefore the whole of sacred Scripture teaches these three truths: namely, the eternal generation and incarnation of Christ, the pattern of human life and the union of the soul with God. The first is concerned with faith; the second with morals; and the third with the ultimate goal of both.”⁷

Along with the Metaphysics of Light, where all beings find its source of existence down to the material world, Bonaventure explains the threefold Trinitarian nature of this light. The Word provides the rational and structural foundation of all things in creation. The Father provides the moral foundation, and the Holy Spirit provides the unifying foundation that allows all things from the base of the lights to find its reunion with the source of Light.. God.

⁶ Ibid pg. 45

⁷ Ibid pg. 45

Paul Davies' Emergent Complexity

Teleology without Teleology: Purpose through Emergent Complexity by Paul Davies⁸

Central to Process Theology, is the concept of Emergent Complexity. I will begin by explaining Paul Davies' model of Emergent Complexity, and give a more in depth explanation of Emergent Complexity as I go into Philip Clayton's model. However, it is important to point out here that although Paul Davies associates himself with Process Theology, his primary field of study is Physics and he is a Professor of Physics at Arizona State University. He is not primarily a Theologian, but his views are supported by his own expertise in Physics.

Paul Davies attempts to draw a thin line between two types of God's influence on Emergent Complexity, Interventionism and Non-Interventionism, by creating a unique Uniformitarian model. All of which, incidentally, I will be arguing against. In Paul Davies model it important to understand the state of modern Quantum Physics. Unfortunately, the explanation of Quantum Physics is well beyond the scope of this work, all inquiries into the specific Laws of Quantum Physics will need to be referenced outside of this work.

The basis for Interventionism in regards to modern science, is that God may act at the atomic level causing changes at will on the macroscopic level by tweaking the nature of the universe by directly influencing the paths and behavior of the Quantum world. Davies explains the basics of this form of Interventionism as such:

"a. According to one form of interventionism, God acts as something like a physical force in the world. God moves atoms and other objects about to achieve God's purposes, but to do so God must violate the physical laws revealed by science. To be explicit, if a particle would naturally follow trajectory X, then as a result of God's intervention it contravenes the laws of physics and follows trajectory Y. If God intervenes at the atomic level, we may call this "bottom-up" action, since the effects at the atomic level may percolate up to the macroscopic realm where they may result in events such as those recorded as miracles in the Bible"⁹

This form of Interventionism requires two principle Theological truths. The first is Omnipotence and the second is Omniscience. The deepest irony that I find to be the most disturbing of this presumption is that the onus for the brutal and horrible nature of the 'competition of species' in Darwinian Evolution is then placed on God. In other words, evolution is then placed in the hands of God's intervention and all the horrors of genetic evolution are then a product of God's will. Without a full discussion of Theodicy, this calls into question the Omni-benevolence of God, and this for me is unacceptable if we are to understand God as truly benevolent. In terms of Omniscience, this would imply that God also knew that the intervention of certain quantum tweaks would lead to the horrors of Darwinian Evolution, neither are acceptable to my interpretation.

On the other hand, Quantum Indeterminism allows for the physical universe to have autonomy in its creation, thereby alleviating the onus upon God to create the

⁸ Clayton, P. (2004). *In whom we live and move and have our being: Panentheistic reflections on God's presence in a scientific world.* pg. 95

⁹ Ibid pg.97

horrific system of Darwinian Evolution. However, more importantly it undermines the same principles of Omni-benevolence and Omniscience by suggesting God simply created a universe that would be beyond the direct reach of its own will and love, or as Davies calls it, 'provides a loophole through which God might act in the world without violating (at least the letter of) the laws of physics". Davies explains Indeterminism as such:

"a. One option is to locate the effects of God's acts at the atomic level where quantum physics pertains. Here the concept of unique, casually closed particle trajectories melts away. Instead, quantum indeterminism permits a range of possible trajectories consistent with the law of physics. The future forces at work; instead, nature is ontologically indeterministic. This indeterminism provides a loophole through which God might act in the world without violating (at least the letter of) the laws of physics."¹⁰

As a way to bridge Interventionism and Indeterminism, Davies proposes a Uniformitarian model by which God, maintains and continually guides the progression of the universe, but places a balanced trajectory without a specific outcome. In other words, God allows the autonomous indeterminism of quantum and evolutionary principles, but God is present without influencing the trajectory of the universe based on God's own will. The onus of evolutionary and human will is then placed on the agents of change (ie. quantum and free will actions). Davies further explains this model as such:

"b. In its more uniformitarian view of divine agency this approach as to God's initial choice in emphasis on God's continuing role of creating the universe afresh at each moment, though without in anyway bringing about particular events which nature "on its own" would not have produced. "¹¹

It is in this next quote, where I agree with Davies. He presumes all complexity emerges as a subset of possible outcomes and that consciousness is proof that self-organizing and emerging systems are responsible for things like consciousness and the nature of the human mind. But more importantly he suggests that the self-organizing principles of life and consciousness must somehow align with divine and cosmic principles. As I will show this lays the groundwork for what Philip Clayton calls Strong Emergent Complexity, but as I will also show, in order to accept both a bottom-up self-organizing, and cosmic top-down causality, one must accept a system which allows for the possibility for both self-organization and the possibility of complex life to emerge in the universe itself as principles of the universe itself.

Here is Davies summation of these principles:

"Among the infinite variety of possible laws will be a subset – some assert a very small subset – that permits what we would now call self-organizing complexity to emerge in the universe. One example that has been much discussed is the complexity associated with life and consciousness. The existence of these phenomena imposes rather stringent restrictions on the values of the fundamental constants of nature and on the cosmological initial conditions. If the laws of physics and the structure of the universe were not rather similar to the actual state of affairs, than it is unlikely that life and consciousness, at least as we at present understand them, could exist."¹²

¹⁰ Ibid pg. 98

¹¹ Ibid pg. 99-100

¹² Ibid pg. 103

Philip Clayton's Mind & Emergence, From Quantum to Consciousness

Philip Clayton is one of the most prominent minds of our time in the field of Process Theology. Incidentally, he is someone I someday hope to study with or under at Claremont University. However, maybe ironically, I have also found disagreement with many of his assertions. I will begin by explaining his model of Process Emergent Complexity.

Clayton begins his model by declaring that Monism is the most acceptable term to define the relationship of matter to the source of matter's creation. He explains his position in this quote:

1. Monism

"There is one natural world made, if you will, out of stuff. Some have suggested that everyone who accepts the premise is a materialist. Although the Greek concept of matter (hyle) was sufficiently broad to be unobjectional, "materialism has taken on some limited connotations since the Enlightenment, largely because the Descartes and the Cartesians set its cognate, matter, in opposition to mind in a way the Greeks would never have done. For this reason, I suggest using Monism as the most neutral word available".¹³

On this point I agree with Clayton. If I had the time in this work I would like to extend this argument to explain, that if we accept the Metaphysics of Light analogy, we must therefore accept the physics extension that Matter and Energy (including light) are of the same substance and in turn different phases of the same metaphysics.

Clayton's next point is where my perspective begins to diverge from his argument. Clayton sets the stage to argue that Complexity must be 'top-down' as hierarchical complexity seems to be dictated not by the 'parts' but by a different hierarchy.

2. Hierarchical complexity

"This world appears to be hierarchically structured: more complex units are formed out of more simple parts, and they in turn become the "parts" out of which yet more complex entities are formed."¹⁴

As I will show hierarchical complexity is more likely a bottom-up process by which universal forms are imprinted on the simpler 'parts'

Clayton goes on to advocate Emergent Monism as a process by which all complexity emerges as the process of one universe (through the example of evolutionary biology):

3. Temporal or emergent Monism

"This process of hierarchical structuring takes place over time: Darwinian evolution (and some forms of cosmological evolution) move from the simple to the more complex.

¹³ Clayton pg. 60

¹⁴ Ibid pg. 60

Because new entities emerge in the process, I join Arthur Peacocke in advocating the label Emergent Monism.”¹⁵

I actually agree with this point, but I disagree on his following point. Clayton goes on to presume that this complexity must therefore be top-down causality, meaning... the complexity is caused by an external downward influence:

6. Downward causation

“It is ontological: the world is such that it produces systems whose emergent properties exercise their own distinct casual influences on each other and on (at least) the next lower level in the hierarchy. If we accept the intuitive principle that ontology should follow agency, then cases of emergent casual agency justify us in speaking of emergent objects (organisms, agents) in natural history. *Emergent properties* are new features of existing objects (e.g. conductivity is a property of electrons assembled under certain conditions); *emergent objects* become centres of agency on their own behalf (cells and organisms may be composed of smaller particles, but they are also objects of scientific explanations in their own right).”¹⁶

I fundamentally disagree with this perspective. I feel that if we follow a Platonic view of forms communicated to the simpler ‘parts’, it is something closer to Davies Uniformitarianism, where there is not a downward causation, but a universal cosmic set of forms that the universe emerges within.

It seems Clayton is declaring that mind is an ‘Emergent property’ (per last quote) by claiming that all emergent properties are distinct of the simpler ‘parts’ that compose that level of complexity (ie. brain vs mind). However, he seems to agree with Davies Uniformitarianism in this next quote:

8. ‘Mind’ as emergent

“The philosophical view I propose is not equivalent to ‘dual aspect monism’, a view that traditionally implied that there is no casual interaction between mental and physical properties, since they are two different aspects of the one ‘stuff’. By contrast, the present view presupposes that both upward and downward influences are operative.”¹⁷

However, I must conclude that although Clayton advocates a top-down causality, he contradicts his own view by concurring that a bottom-up communication and uniformity must exist on both levels of complexity.

¹⁵ Ibid pg. 60

¹⁶ Ibid pg. 61-62

¹⁷ Ibid pg. 62

Kenotic Effluent Complexity

I will conclude this model with a simple thought experiment. But in order to fully appreciate this experiment we must first revisit the current Standard Model of Physics and the current Big Bang theory. Although I wish this work could have been deeper and longer, this work cannot fully explain all of the subjects I wish to explain. Let us begin at the beginning of time as we understand in Physics.

(I apologize beforehand for not having the time to create the best academic references for this explanation) The universe began as a singularity of all forces and existed without division of matter or energy. As the energy of Creation flowed and expanded into the universe in the first micro seconds of Creation, the fundamental forces of the universe began to break from the singularity of creative energy. Some research has shown that the Inflationary period was driven by the Gravitational force, but the research is inconclusive, so I will begin with the Standard Model. (I am leaving out the proof of Gravitational Waves in the Inflationary Epoch)

As the Creative energy expanded it cooled quickly (Kenosis). Through its own self limitation and cooling, the first particles began to collect from this energy. As the high energy particles lost their energy through expansion, the first fundamental force began to overtake the quarks and fermions. The quarks were soon overcome by the strength of the Strong Nuclear Force as they slowly lost energy through the expansion of the universe. These particles formed Protons, Neutrons and other Hadrons. As the Creative Energy cooled further, the fermions (Electrons) and the Protons (Hadrons), began to be overcome by the Electromagnetic Force, and the nuclei of Hydrogen began to form as the Electromagnetic Force overcame the energies of the Hadrons and Electrons.

Slowly the universe cooled (Kenosis), and Hydrogen and Helium collected in this field of new atoms. As these atoms collected the final force began to overtake the energies of these atoms. The Gravitational force began to draw Hydrogen and Helium into the orbs of collective gases we understand to be the first stars of our universe.

Before we explore the physics of nuclear fusion in the center of stars, we must first revisit one point. This fact is fundamental to physics. The first instance of complexity was formed by two principles, Kenosis and Effluence. In other words, through the self-limiting cooling (Kenosis) of the universe, the waves (Effluence) of Electromagnetic Force formed the first fundamental instance of Complexity. Therefore, unless this can be contested, Kenotic Effluence is the most appropriate terminology to describe the way in which Complexity was created according to the current science concerning the Big Bang Theory.

Here is the essence of my thought experiment. Imagine a cloud of charged particles of hadrons and electrons. Within that cloud exists an electromagnetic field. Now taking into consideration that the electromagnetic force has an infinite range, imagine that cloud spanning the full distance of the universe. Within that cloud exists, the potentiality for all levels of complexity to exist. All elements, all compounds are contained non-locally to the particles. All life all DNA and all layers of Complexity exist non local to the particles, but within this field.

I submit that Process Emergent Complexity, and all explanations of Strong vs Weak Emergence miss the fundamental fact that was first stated by Plato. All Complexity exists in Intelligible Forms, non-local to the particles, universally communicated to the particles by a universal field that Plato called the World Soul (Plotinus, "Soul"). I will stop here as I am not committed to saying that The Holy Spirit is equivalent to Plotinus' Soul, but it is clear something communicates universal complexity to simple particles.

Kenotic Effluent Complexity is therefore, a model of Creation where the Word is used as the foundation of all Complexity communicated by the forces of nature, and the universe both finds its way through Davies Uniformitarianism, but more importantly it is not an example of top-down causality, but a Platonic model where complexity 'flows' (effluence) upwards within a Cosmic order according to the Word.

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