

# Science, Skepticism, Scripture, and Supertasks: Replies to Torrance, Deng, Madueme, Goldschmidt and Lebens

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I would like to begin by thanking Andrew, Natalja, Hans, Ty, and Sam for their terrific papers and for their challenging comments and criticisms. I have learned a great deal from thinking about their essays, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to acknowledge that here. I would also like to thank the editors of the *Journal of Analytic Theology* for hosting this book symposium and for inviting me to offer some thoughts in response to these excellent essays. My replies are, of course, selective – what I do not address in these remarks reflects only my own limitations and book-symposium word limits, not judgments of quality.

## 1 Science and Proper Apologetics: Reply to Torrance

Torrance embarks on his essay with a polemical critique of those modern champions of science who, flattered by admirers of their genuine scientific successes, eagerly leap outside their sphere of expertise at the slightest invitation to hold forth on all manner of topics, and who, upon landing, equipped with arrogance and ignorance in equal measure, confidently and naïvely play at metaphysics and religion. *Amen* – to that.

The confidence Torrance disparages is staggering. I do not mean the confidence of physicists in their physics or of biologists in their biology or of paleontologists in their paleontology, although given the frequent reversals of fortune for a substantial number of once-popular claims in these disciplines, one wonders why the confidence isn't a little more tempered from time to time. Expertise in scientific fields is a wonderful thing, and although its fruits certainly do serve to justify (and are the only plausible source of justification we possess for) many of our beliefs on the issues in question, they can, for all that, be grossly oversold as near certainties.

I speak instead of the confidence displayed in the increasingly popular strategy of invoking science as a kind of weapon for cudgeling religion into submission, especially with no acknowledgement that the weapon was largely fashioned in a metaphysical foundry. Science is shot through with philosophy, and the currently fashionable methodological naturalism (regarded as a disposition to treat the methods of science as the only basic sources of evidence) is either unacceptably

impoverished or else misleadingly takes the phrase ‘methods of science’ to encompass somewhat more when actually invoked in practice than it does when announced as a simple corrective to outmoded religious doctrines. Consequently, disputes in which science takes a side should be approached cautiously and with sensitivity to just which metaphysical presuppositions are in play. (For a sustained discussion of the relation between science and metaphysics that takes up the point of these last few paragraphs in much more detail, please see my 2016).

One primary aim of the book was to demonstrate that what appears to be a dispute between science and religion may very well be a dispute between metaphysics and metaphysics in disguise. Moreover, if such a thesis could be defended in this most unlikely of cases – Genesiac literalism – optimism should run high that we might uncover and expose other in-house metaphysical disputes that are disrupting the dialogue between science and religion elsewhere.

Yet despite the critique we share of overweening science, Torrance does take me to task on two other issues.

To be clear, I am no literalist with respect to Genesis and neither is Torrance; each of us holds a much more modest view. Nevertheless, in his essay, Torrance graciously spots me the metaphysical arguments of the book regarding the compatibility of such literalism with contemporary science, and he does not focus his attention on the question of “the theological aptness of the Hypertime Hypothesis” with which I attempt that reconciliation. Rather, he voices a warning about engaging in the type of apologetics which is center stage throughout my discussion and proposes a view which contrasts, not just with the literalism-foil that neither of us endorses, but also with my own non-literal view articulated and defended in Chapter 3 of the book.

Torrance brings the warning he has in mind to our attention with a rhetorical question which arises in response to a “risky move” in the kind of apologetics in which my book participates, a move which consists in including a story from Scripture in its argument.” Thus Torrance:

Is it constructive to use a story from Scripture to make a specific apologetic point if it draws attention to a reading of that story that we would not otherwise want to affirm?

Elsewhere considerations of constructive use are supplemented by whether this is “the most helpful way” to proceed and whether some other way may have been “more fruitful for Christian theological reflection,” and elsewhere by whether it “draws positive attention” to a mistaken reading of the story, and elsewhere again by whether it “draws the right kind of attention to the message of the story that has been selected.”

These are different tests. One could fail them all (!) by discussing in a positive light a reading of the story that is unconstructive and both mistaken and rejected by the apologist and by not compensating for this by also discussing the correct reading of the story in the most helpful way, or, at least in a way more helpful to the reflective Christian. I plead guilty to some but not all of the charges.

*The guilty plea:* I do engage (at length and in a positive light) a version of the story that I believe to be mistaken, yet I take myself to be participating in an extremely constructive project, nonetheless. It is the project Torrance himself has in mind when he eloquently writes:

Apologetics serves to demonstrate the intellectual viability of religious beliefs in terms that an unbelieving audience can recognize . . . as such, apologetics can help unbelievers (or those struggling with unbelief) to appreciate the intellectual viability of the ordained human platforms, spaces, and words through which God is known to draw persons into a life of faith.

Of course, there are genuine risks to such a project, and Torrance reminds us of them in a Barthian accent: If this risk plays out for the worse, the apologist's audience can come to form a distorted and abstract view of God and to adopt the wrong attitude toward an encounter with Christianity, and by coming to the exchange with an intention to make "God known in terms that will satisfy the secular world," the apologist will have voluntarily left his most effective tools behind. Such an apologetics, Torrance explains,

seeks validation from that which cannot provide it. Rather than calling into question the endeavor of a particular form of human rationality, it complies with it, entertains it, and risks losing itself in the process.

Well, that's a good *prima facie* reason to refrain. And what of the case to march on? What are the risks of not engaging such a project? Here are some that seem to me to generate good *prima facie* reasons to proceed: The audience to which much of the argument in the book is addressed is already (on my view) overflowing with people who have the wrong view of God and Christianity, since they are atheists who take the pretensions of Christianity to have long been laid to rest by that overtaxed mortician – our contemporary worldview. Why? Because not having stopped long enough to appreciate the differences between Christianity's doctrines and the caricatures of those doctrines that they carry around and encumber with a grab-bag of unnecessary details picked up from a lifetime of casual interaction with Christianity, its Scripture, and its heterogeneous adherents, they regard certain elements (which they incorrectly take to be essential to the religion) to have been trounced by scientific progress. And, let this not be underestimated, they also don't want to look stupid – and what appear to be experts on both sides of the science/religion wars are ready to testify to deep and genuine disagreements in loud and easily accessible ways.

Rather than attempting to correct misreadings of doctrines or tease out nuanced versions of positions free from some negotiable and objectionable thesis that has been grafted onto them and then argue for their intellectual viability, there is some real advantage to be secured by simply allowing as much confusion and mixing-and-matching of theories on, say, The Fall and Original Sin, as you like, and then showing that even that package can be rendered consistent with contemporary

science. It's a stepping stone. This manner of apologetics doesn't "seek validation from that which cannot provide it"; rather, it simply demonstrates that there is not already a scientific refutation on the table which obviates the need for any further and refined reflection on Christianity or its God.

*The plea of innocence:* Chapter 3 of the book is devoted to avoiding Torrance's other charge. That is, before launching into apologetics and my metaphysical, epistemological, and religious discussion of the Hypertime Hypothesis, I attempted to draw the right kind of attention to the right reading of The Fall and in a way that I hoped would be both interesting and helpful to the reflective Christian. I can be accused of getting it wrong, to be sure, but not for failing to address what I take to be the real reading and significance of the story from Scripture I've employed.

In Chapter 2 of the book, I delineate disagreements and historical positions that have been adopted on the doctrines of The Fall and Original Sin. Permit a quick summary of some of the choice points that emerge for an individual reading:

With respect to The Fall, we have open questions about whether it is to be construed as a genuinely historical event involving a first or primal sin or as a non-historical shared sense of separation; if historical – whether the sin was committed by a single individual or a uniquely positioned pair or an entire community; if historical figures – whether those individuals were supermen or brutes; if perfect specimens of humanity – whether they were the beneficiaries of preternatural gifts or simply functioning in their superb and original pristine state; if historical – whether the sin occurred a few thousand years ago or a few hundred thousand years ago; and, finally, if historical – whether the environment in which they sinned should be painted in all the brilliant colors of the Genesiac Garden or rather in the earthy colors of the African Savannah.

With respect to Original Sin, we have open questions about whether its corruption is to be construed as affecting its original agent alone or was instead transmitted to that agent's community or to that agent's progeny or both; if transmitted—whether the transmission was immediate owing to some metaphysical solidarity between that agent and all other human beings or mediated genetically by passing from one generation to the next or mediated socially by frequent example of malicious and awful behavior; and, finally, if transmitted—whether the consequence is best described as a mere privation (of the continued loss of a divine gift or preternatural power) or as an inescapable and crippling state of disordered desire tempting one to ever further sin or as a corruption of the original human character itself (a wounded nature rather than a gift rescinded) or as a desperate plunge into total depravity (2014a: 22).

In Chapter 3, first I describe how nearly everyone has abandoned the doctrine of Original Guilt, how many have reinterpreted (and, in my view, impoverished) the doctrine of Original Sin, and how many have dehistoricized (and, in my view, minimized) the doctrine of The Fall. Second, I wind my way through the choice points outlined above to a presentation of my favored reading. My considered reading (as opposed to Torrance's) is historical, yet it makes very minimal claims about that history, claims that do not challenge scientific orthodoxy. In fact, although the materials are available to bolster certain of my views on The Fall and Original Sin by appeal to contemporary science, I refrained from doing so, for as one astute thinker has cleverly remarked: "Theology married to science in one generation will be widowed in the next (Madueme 2014, 240)."

Torrance and I do disagree on the details of the correct reading, but I heartily recommend to the reader his insightful counter-proposal, which both contains truths I wish I had touched upon and insightful criticisms. He raises questions about why I am attracted to a historical reading, which I attempt to answer in that chapter by appealing to its need to play the distinctive role in a response to the problem of evil that I believe it occupies (a rather longer story than might be suggested by Torrance's essay). He raises concerns about how to avoid conflicting with contemporary science (absent the Hypertime Hypothesis), which I attempt to respond to in that chapter by showing how the minimal, historical version I endorse is not in opposition to what we know about human pre-history, evolutionary theory, or physics. He raises puzzlement about the authorship of Genesis on the supposition that it reports historical events for which there were no witnesses, to which I admit I find more plausible than Torrance the suggestion that God could (in any number of ways) provide "a record of this history to the (human) author" of the story.

Well, those are the points of resistance. Here are some concessions to round them out. Torrance emphasizes (as I did not) "our second-order place before God" as a central theme of the story and raises the absolutely fascinating subject of forbidden knowledge (i.e., "knowledge that is not proper to creaturely knowing"). I would not be surprised if many readers (like me) initially have a strong and harshly negative reaction to the topic of forbidden knowledge, and I would not be surprised if many readers (like me) change their tune once they give it a good, hard think. I recommend exploring the topic of forbidden knowledge to you and thank Torrance for reminding me of it.

Most importantly, however, Torrance thinks I have underplayed the "fundamental theological insights" the story can convey to its readers, especially on the subjects of creation, divine purposes, and God's love. He's right about that. Twice he asks, in exasperated tones – Is it really the case (as Hudson suggests) that *the primary function* of the story of Adam and Eve and The Fall is to document the occurrence of a historical event involving our first ancestors who were also persons? I did write that sentence (or its equivalent) at least three times in the course of my second and third chapters. And I stand by my thought that it is *a* function of the story (for problem-of-evil reasons noted earlier), but – *the primary function?* – how embarrassing. How would I know? Perhaps that goes to show how much more I tend to think about the problem of evil than I do about Torrance's proposed candidates for where to place emphasis: on creation, divine purposes, God's love, and God's acts of

revelation. I thank Torrance again for his gracious reminder to split my time and attention in a more balanced way.

## 2 Epistemic Possibility and Skepticism: Reply to Deng

Deng calls our attention to the fact that the science-religion reconciliation thesis that much of the book is designed to defend – “the provocative thesis”, as she puts it – depends on the Hypertime Hypothesis having the status of “a live epistemic possibility.” Moreover, she correctly notes that the Hypertime Hypothesis is not merely a claim about the existence of a hypertime series but is also a claim about the contents of spacetime blocks at hypertimes earlier than the present one. I acknowledge this by occasionally using the adjective a ‘plenitudinous’ hypertime. Her essay is largely devoted to explaining why she thinks this ‘live-epistemic-possibility’ status has not been achieved and to raising doubts about whether it will be achieved in further work.

With an eye to a charitable interpretation of the argument of the book, she proposes two different readings of the text, either of which might be thought to support the epistemic possibility claim, and then argues against each in turn. The main question at issue is – ‘Just what standard is in play?’. Does the Hypertime Hypothesis earn its distinction simply in virtue of not having been conclusively ruled out, or by our not being epistemically justified in believing that it is false, or by being a plausible metaphysical thesis, or by being at least as plausible a metaphysical thesis as some others that are taken seriously in the literature, or by promising a substantive contribution to a number of outstanding puzzles and problems, or . . . by what, exactly?

Faced with those choices, I would answer ‘by our not being epistemically justified in believing that it is false’, but I would note that it sports all of the other features on the list, as well. I certainly endorse the *comparative* claim: it strikes me as plausible as *many* a metaphysical thesis you might meet while browsing the literature today, and as the list of things it can do for us (i.e., the puzzles and problems it can solve and make more tractable) grows, the more plausible it becomes for those who see those puzzles and problems as serious and as requiring some significant response or other. That is, on behalf of the Hypertime Hypothesis I would venture the claims that we are not epistemically justified in ruling it out, that it may well turn out to be part of the best explanation for other theses that many of us take to be true (especially issues in the philosophy of religion), and that it’s in the same boat as most other metaphysical proposals (albeit a rickety, dangerously unseaworthy ship, constantly in need of bailing – but that’s all we ever find on the sea of metaphysics).

As I put it in the book:

Our delineation of skepticism along the four dimensions noted above provides us with options in glossing “is an epistemic possibility for us.” Hereafter, I will work with the following interpretation . . . human persons are not able (on their own power) to know that the Hypertime

Hypothesis is false. In other words (barring divine testimony or some such thing), we cannot (at the level of knowledge) rule out the Hypertime Hypothesis by way of our perception, introspection, understanding, imagination, memory, a priori intuition, natural light of reason, faculty of common sense, logic, astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, physics, metaphysics, or what have you. I must note that in this respect the Hypertime Hypothesis does not strike me as unique or significantly different from other metaphysical and philosophical theses. In general, I strongly suspect we are sorely deficient in philosophical knowledge and only moderately richer in philosophical justification. (2014a: 115)

Still, this is enough for Deng to state her opposition which, as noted above, is an argument by cases. I will respond by reversing the order of her presentation of the cases, since the first case contains her “main worry” and potentially contains a much more serious objection than the second.

So, *Deng’s Second Case*: Let us suppose that my defense of the provocative thesis ultimately rests on demonstrating that the Hypertime Hypothesis “is no less plausible than some other metaphysical views that are live contenders and in addition . . . can do useful work in the philosophy of religion.” Here, I’m afraid, there is a simple misunderstanding. Deng reports that the “relevant other such views are dynamic (tensed, A-theoretic) ones, especially the growing block view . . . and the shrinking block view.” I do indeed discuss dynamic theories like the growing and shrinking block, but I use them to motivate a distinct dynamic theory that stands in opposition to them as a theory about our own spacetime block, a theory that has been overlooked, a theory I christen “the morphing block” and examine at some length (2014a: 79-88). The comparative plausibility claim I endorse in those pages is that the morphing block should be taken seriously by the very same camps that take the other dynamic theories seriously; it is not a comparison between the Hypertime Hypothesis and the dynamic theories Deng here identifies. The reason I engaged in this discussion at all is that I wanted to *introduce* the Hypertime Hypothesis by noting and commenting on one of the original arguments that had been produced in its favor, namely, that it is (allegedly) required by dynamic views like the growing block. However, since I think an intriguing case can be made to show that the growing block theory (in particular) might be able to sidestep the commitment to hypertime, I thought it best to attempt to persuade my audience that another view (with similar credentials) might renew that original motivation:

At first glance, the morphing block theory seems to be in the same camp as its rival, dynamic theories. Each features recombinations of spacetime points and uncaused creation or annihilation of regions. The epistemological, moral, and metaphysical consequences of a morphing block, however, are very significant, indeed . . . even if we do not require a hypertime in order to account for the increase in volume of a standard growing block or to furnish an interval against which its rate of passage can be measured, perhaps we do need a hypertime to make sense of the

more complicated patterns of augmentation and diminishment enjoyed by a morphing block. (2014a: 86-87)

Deng protests: "It's not entirely clear why the book 'is no place to adjudicate such attempts at wedge-driving' (85), namely, attempts to show that [The Hypertime Hypothesis] is a less plausible metaphysical view than these A-theories." But, in my defense, I note once again that the passage she has quoted is only about driving a wedge between the morphing block and its dynamic cousins; the Hypertime Hypothesis hasn't really made its appearance yet. Again, the purpose of those pages was to acknowledge one sort of reason to be inclined toward a hypertime series, nothing more. The Hypertime Hypothesis can certainly be stated without any reference to a morphing block and can survive the loss of whatever motivation might be provided by invocation of a morphing block if some later attempts at wedge-driving can separate the morphing block from the dynamic theories worth taking seriously.

One last thought here. Deng's final few paragraphs suggest that she suspects the dynamic theories may be something of a lost cause, one and all. And that as their fortunes fall, the fortunes of the Hypertime Hypothesis must follow suit. I am not as pessimistic about the prospects of the dynamic theories, I suppose, but for those who are I offer the friendly reminder that the Hypertime Hypothesis and all the reconciling work it promises is also available *even if* we hold the view that every hypertime hosts an eternalist, B-theoretic, spacetime block. I illustrated the primary version of the story in my book with the assistance of the growing block because I thought it would be most intuitive and accessible when presented in that fashion. Nevertheless, I also introduced section 10 of Chapter 5 – Eternalism, Presentism, and the Hypertime Hypothesis – with these words:

Before moving on to other philosophical issues with which the Hypertime Hypothesis is interconnected, let me end this chapter with a quick clarificatory point that should cast even more light on the metaphysics at hand. In the discussion thus far, the Hypertime Hypothesis has been paired with the growing block theory (largely because it seemed to me a pedagogically effective way to proceed). But I want to dispel the sense that it must be so paired. (2014a: 107)

Those suspicious of the dynamic views, the so-called *eternalists*, may find their own B-theoretic-friendly version of the primary story in that section (2014a: 107-111).

Now, *Deng's First Case*: Let us suppose that my defense of the provocative thesis ultimately rests on demonstrating that the Hypertime Hypothesis cannot be dismissed in the same ways a number of other skeptical hypotheses can be effectively neutralized. No misunderstanding this time; I grant the supposition, and in my chapter on epistemology and the Hypertime Hypothesis, I try to show that (when posed as a skeptical hypothesis) it is more resistant to refutation than skepticisms featuring evil demons, envatted brains, inductive inferences, other minds, moral properties, yesterday-worlds, and Boltzmann Brains by working my way through a



roster of anti-skeptical strategies and arguing that they may serve to take out their other opponents but fail to undermine the Hypertime Hypothesis.

Deng expresses reservations with respect to my discussion of the strategy known as the Moorean shift. Here's that strategy doing its proper work:

*A Skeptical Argument*

*The Moorean Shift*

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|--|---|
| <p>(1) I don't know that I'm not a brain in a vat.</p> <p>(2) If I don't know that I'm not a brain in a vat, then I don't know that I have a phone.</p> <p>(3) So, I don't know that I have a phone.</p> | <p>(~3) I do know I have a phone.</p> <p>(2) If I don't know that I'm not a brain in a vat, then I don't know that I have a phone.</p> <p>(~1) So, I do know that I'm not a brain in a vat.</p> |
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I argued that whereas this sort of move (i.e., preserving the conditional and running the argument in reverse) may have promise against the envatted skeptical hypothesis, it was ineffective against the Hypertime Hypothesis, but Deng worries that I may not have given the strategy its best (or even a fair) showing. She asks us to consider the following:

*Another Skeptical Argument*

- (1) I don't know that the Hypertime Hypothesis is false.
- (2) If I don't know that the Hypertime Hypothesis is false, then I don't know that the universe is older than a few thousand years.
- (3) So, I don't know that the universe is older than a few thousand years.

For the record, I think both that (1) is true and (3) is false in this argument, and thus I don't endorse premise (2) either in the book or now. But *that's* not Deng's point. It's not the complaint that I endorsed (2) and can be Moored; it's that I *should* be willing to endorse (2) and thus expose myself to a Mooring. (She correctly anticipates resistance to (2) with the words "if you think this betrays a misunderstanding of [the Hypertime Hypothesis], hold that thought." Fair enough: thought-on-hold for now.)

Before confronting her main challenge, I wish to register one complaint: Deng writes, that the Hypertime Hypothesis challenges "our claim to knowledge about a specific range of claims about the past, such as that the universe is older than a few thousand years." To be clear, it doesn't challenge that claim at all. It offers no challenge whatsoever to claims about what the past was like or how far it extends. Earlier in her essay, Deng gives this point the correct gloss: What the Hypertime Hypothesis adds to the thesis of a succession of hypertimes is the claim that "the hyper current [spacetime block] has a past accurately described by the relevant sciences, while another one (a hyperprevious one) has a past accurately described by Genesis." What I maintain that we don't know is that there is not such a succession of hypertimes hosting other spacetime blocks thus described; what I repeatedly

concede to the opposition that we do know is *whatever* our present science has to tell us about our past.

Of course, Deng may be willing to spot me that that's what I intended, but then raise a worry about relevance: the "heart of the problem," she indicates, is explaining why talk of these other hypertimes and their spacetime blocks is germane to the problem before us:

Suppose I said that there is a copy of our (or a relevantly similar) spacetime block at a hyper-schmevious hyper-schmime. But none of our statements about time connect up with that other block. Only statements about hyper-schmime do. This would raise some questions, including what I mean, and why I brought it up. That is, what does hyper-schmime have to do with anything we were talking about before, which, importantly, did not include hyper-schmime?

*What has hypertime to do with time?* That's a good question. Here is part of the answer: I'm not sure how much hyper-schmime has in common with the Hypertime Hypothesis, but perhaps it shares this important characteristic with the latter: The very spacetime that we inhabit (and so the times that are its slices, so to speak) are present at different hypertimes. Accordingly, it's not true that "none of our statements about time connect up with that other block" . . . they connect up by telling us what those very items, those numerically identical times, were like at earlier hypertimes. Recall the days in which it was popular to think that spatial points endured through time. Invoking different times would enable us to reconcile what would appear to be conflicting stories about the contents of a spatial region by indexing those contents to different times. So, too, invoking different hypertimes (or hyper-schmimes, if the analogy is complete) enables us to reconcile what would appear to be conflicting stories about the contents of a spacetime block by indexing those contents to different hypertimes. I don't think that spatial points do, in fact, endure, but that's not the point. On the hypothesis in play, the spacetime blocks *can* hyper-persist across an interval of hypertime. Thus, providing us with the full biography of a time is what hypertime has to do with time.

Deng can push back: Even if that sort of relevance is conceded, we need more. Consider:

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|---------|---|
| (Young) | The universe is only a few thousand years old (at the time we presently call 2017).   |
| (Old)   | The universe is older than a few thousand years (at the time we presently call 2017). |

The religious doctrines allegedly to be reconciled with our modern worldview by way of manipulating a metaphysical backdrop certainly seem to endorse (Young) against the scientific endorsement of (Old). So let time and hypertime be related in the way noted above. All we have to show for it is

(HyperYoung) The universe hyperwas only a few thousand years old (at the time we presently call 2017).

(Old) and (HyperYoung) are compatible, maybe so. But what has their compatibility to do with anything in the science/religion wars? I think this question embodies the most significant worry that emerges from Deng's insightful reflections, and (to avoid repetition in these replies) I will return to this final issue in my attempt to address a related (and expanded) worry raised by Madueme in the next section.

### **3 Sham and Scripture: Reply to Madueme**

Madueme calls me a stud in the very first line of his essay; it makes up for a lot of bullying and other name-rhymes I suffered in middle school. I am grateful to offset those traumas. But then, pleasantries over, he raises several challenging and exciting issues in his critical review. I thank him for these, too, and in this section I'll try to say something about his remarks concerning the skeptical problem, Scripture and tradition, and the nature of God.

Madueme acknowledges that he finds congenial my thesis that science has not refuted many of the religious positions that it is so often reported to have permanently removed from serious discussion, but his main reservation is not with the thesis I hope to defend so much as it is with the manner of its defense. As he states in his conclusion:

The real problem for Hudson is that he chose to test run this thesis by defending a fascinating-but-flawed metaphysical approach to time conjoined to the fall and original sin.

To be fair, I don't find any case against the Hypertime Hypothesis itself in the essay, and (despite the exact wording in this quotation) I suspect that Madueme is less concerned with showing that the philosophy of time is flawed and more concerned with arguing that even if the Hypertime Hypothesis were true, it is not equipped to do the work I have envisioned for it in this context. That charge is supported in several ways which I will condense and discuss under three headings (and from my point of view) in order of increasing significance.

*First, with regard to skepticism:* Worries about the local skepticism I defend with respect to the Hypertime Hypothesis are preceded by a pessimistic prediction; a large percentage (perhaps the majority) of my intended audience will not understand the Hypertime Hypothesis and its applications, dismissing it as "too complex and metaphysically counterintuitive." Madueme notes that "Hudson disagrees with this line of critique." I don't, I suppose, disagree that many will not (take the time to) understand the hypothesis and dismiss it on such grounds, but the quotation he offers in support of my disagreement, read in context, instead conveys that I predict most people who come to understand the Hypertime Hypothesis will take it to be "a bit of fantastical, speculative metaphysics, more suitable as a source of science fiction than

for engaging seriously with ourselves and the world (2014a: 115).” What I *disagree* about is that this is the right attitude to adopt for those who do come to understand it. My disagreement is founded on what a powerful tool for engaging seriously with ourselves and the world it can become when construed as a skeptical hypothesis. “A powerful tool,” I say, but decidedly not “the panacea for all the theologian’s woes.” Although the Hypertime Hypothesis yields interesting reflections on The Fall as well as on omnipresence, eternity, and a handful of atheistic arguments (all discussed in Chapters 7-8 in the book), it no more serves as a cure-all for the theologian’s ills than Darwin has made it possible to be an intellectually satisfied atheist: intellectual satisfaction for the atheist requires more than a naturalistic explanation of a set of observations about the history and diversity of life forms, and robust health for the theologian requires more than an enriched account of God’s relationship to time and immunity from a sampling of atheistic arguments. In each case there are, after all, a handful of other considerations to be accounted for.

Still, Madueme rightly asks, what is the alleged payoff of construing the Hypertime Hypothesis as a kind of local skepticism? My answer is that when we come to realize that we are not in a position to justifiably reject that hypothesis, we must admit that we are also not in a position to endorse a widely-alleged conflict of supposedly contradictory propositions endorsed by science and religion. One quibble: Madueme writes,

The Hypertime Hypothesis enables us to be skeptical about our spacetime because for all we know the past may be completely different from what we think it is.

To be clear, I would not endorse that particular gloss on the matter. The Hypertime Hypothesis is more resistant to refutation than other local skepticisms precisely because it *does not* generate any skepticism about our spacetime or raise any obstacle to our beliefs about the past being straightforwardly and in each detail true. Unlike its skeptical brethren, it is willing to be instructed on those matters in every particular by contemporary science. I prefer Madueme’s earlier choice of quotation: this hypothesis “is intriguing and powerful largely in virtue of what it adds to reality [i.e., facts about spacetime blocks at different hypertimes] rather than in contesting what this or that subfield of science has to say about the local spacetime’s characteristics (2014a: 28).”

*Second, with regard to Scripture and tradition:* Surely the metaphysics underlying traditional Christian doctrines is underdetermined by Scripture and tradition, and Madueme concedes as much. Here, though, he forcefully claims the problem is that tradition is silent on the Hypertime Hypothesis – “no major Christian tradition has ever adopted the metaphysical thesis Hudson is commending” – and even worse, tradition and Scripture rule out that hypothesis as an interpretation of “those foundational events of the biblical narrative.” On the grounds that the church fathers confessed a different doctrine of The Fall (a historical rather than a hyperhistorical one) and were followed in this by nearly all Christians near and far, past and present, tradition and Scripture stand firmly united against this rescue mission undertaken on their behalf. To suppose otherwise is to risk the integrity of

Scripture. Moreover, Madueme observes, Jesus and Paul talk freely about the goings on in the Garden while quite innocent of hypertime and its reconciliatory superpowers. How could this be so – if (as the Hypertime Hypothesis would have it), those events never happened but only hyperhappened? Finally, eschatological worries follow hard on the heels of this concern, and the whole affair threatens to “destabilize redemptive history.”

Let me say that those are terrific concerns, well-articulated. Here are my thoughts on them.

On tradition and precedent – I am wary of venturing out into claims about just which issues tradition has and hasn’t weighed in on. I don’t have anything like the requisite expertise to do so. I will (in an amateurish way) remark in passing that there are interesting points of contact between hypertime and Origen (as I note at 2014a: 192n). Moreover, Boethius and Aquinas each offer beautiful metaphors that lend themselves very naturally to a portrayal of the relation between hypertime and time (see the discussion at 2014a: 158). But far more tantalizingly, there is (to my ear) a deep connection with Anselm’s view of eternity (see 2014a: 159). The Anselmian view is especially rich and suggestive, and thus, perhaps, in response to the charge of no historical precedent, my discussions (at 2014a: 153-160) of the role of hypertime in providing an analysis of eternity, and of two species of simultaneity (found in various stages of development in Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas), and of an arena in which God’s creativity can be exercised without all the machinery of atemporal agency are worth a second and even a third look.

On eschatology and redemptive history – some of the same moves enabled by the Hypertime Hypothesis (and some new ones, besides) are available (and worth teasing out to see where they lead) when addressing eschatological questions, and although I did not take up this theme in the book for more than a sentence or two, I have shown what can be done on this score elsewhere (see my 2017).

On Scripture – this is the obstacle, as I understand Madueme’s line of thought, that there is just no getting around. Suppose Paul makes an explicit, past tense claim about Adam. Suppose Jesus makes explicit reference to how things were *at the beginning*. On the face of it, these are claims about history, not hyperhistory. The fact that hyperhistory (if there were such a thing) contains this or that plenitude seems irrelevant to the doctrine of The Fall, a doctrine that unproblematically reports a past event. Enrich the philosophy of time if you will, but when it comes to the details and implications of The Fall – to recall Deng’s voice – “What’s hypertime have to do with it?”

Without the conceptual resources to distinguish claims about what is true at times earlier than now (in the hyperpresent) from what is true at those same times (in the hyperpast), all such simple, past-tense claims will be incomplete inasmuch as they lack an explicit index that *matters* in the evaluation of their truth or falsity. Literalists may nonetheless insist that such claims still manage to assert that a special event occurs at an earlier time and are thereby to be interpreted as Scriptural commitments to realism . . . referencing actual *happenings* rather than depicting ways things could have been or mythologizing in the interests of other purposes. But recall, on the Hypertime Hypothesis, the very same times reappear at different hypertimes,

and merely to say that an event occurred at an earlier time leaves the relevant index open.

Perhaps the *default* view should be that simple past-tensed sentences are to be evaluated against the contents of the spacetime block that is present *hypernow*, but default views are defeasible, and one perfectly good reason to entertain the index 'hyperthen' instead is that you take yourself to know that the index 'hypernow' would lead to a conclusion that you already know to be false.

The reasoning goes like this: Paul utters a statement, S, in context, C. Paul's statements in C about S's subject matter enjoy a special kind of authority. But S is expressed in the simple past tense – say, for example – “Adam walked the Garden.” Why no further fancypants indexing to hypertimes? Well, for at least this reason: Paul didn't have access to the thesis that would suggest that there might be anything more to say in order to express a particular proposition. And now we, the beneficiaries of Paul's pronouncement, would like to know what has been expressed by S. Suppose we are spotted (without argument) two additional controversial theses we've insisted on: first that Paul was attempting to offer a literal, historical report in uttering S, and second that Paul's authority on this matter in this context should incline us to believe that the report is true. *Problem*: On the default reading of the omitted index (which we may be aware of whether Paul was or no), we have an implication of S that we take ourselves to know is false. *Solution 1*: Give up on that earlier claim that we thought we knew to be true and go to war with science. *Solution 2*: Argue that we have good reason to overturn the default reading of the omitted index and cast the realism about the Garden walk as a report about what occurred at an earlier time *at an earlier hypertime*.

The current point I wish to press, is that if a theologian is pre-committed to the realism and authoritative theses, there are options: conflict with science or the Hypertime Hypothesis, and neither science nor the (perhaps inerrant but incomplete) portions of Scripture that seem to address the matter, successfully forbid pursuing the latter option.

If the reader would glance back to the last paragraph of Section 2 above, she will see that, in a similar vein, the current suggestion is that the theologian committed to literalism is in a position to claim that it is the proposition (HyperYoung) rather than (Young) expressed by the incomplete declarations from Scripture and tradition, and thus that the conflict between (Old) and (Young) can be resolved – as it should be – wholly in favor of the scientifically established (Old). Religion has a horse in the race, to be sure, but it is not (Young). *Can be resolved . . . maybe*, but why would any theologian actually pursue this strategy?

Well, the Hypertime Hypothesis possesses remarkable *scientific flexibility*, inasmuch as it is prepared to countenance nearly any current feature or future development in science. (And, for the record, I have never said that religion has nothing to learn from science or that science, standing upon the right metaphysical

foundations, is incapable of imparting knowledge that theorizing – religious or otherwise – should respect; I simply argued that many more achievements of this kind have been claimed than have been earned.) For all its ontological extravagance, the Hypertime Hypothesis also boasts a surprising amount of *metaphysical neutrality*. (That is to say, substantive theses can be defended when presupposing hypertime which require significant and highly controversial metaphysical claims to secure in its absence. For a tour of such metaphysical neutrality see my 2017).

In short, *tradition and Scripture seem to say that certain things happened*. That much is common ground. An increasing majority of believers produce some paraphrase that undermines the appearance of straightforward historical report and find sufficient meaning in the relevant passages all the same (see Torrance's essay). But to those who want to hold fast to the element of a recounting of actual events, I say that science alone doesn't prevent you from doing so and that Scripture and tradition can be read in the genre of historical report on these matters without also decisively coming down in favor of history as it is hypernow as opposed to how it was hyperthen. Once the conceptual resources to draw a sharp distinction between the options are on the table (and the Hypertime Hypothesis has set *that* table), the scientific flexibility, metaphysical neutrality, and explanatory power of that hypothesis can be invoked (by such a theologian) as the best means to identifying the truthmakers of the incomplete (but perfectly true) reports to be found in Scripture.

*Third, with regard to God and the divine nature*: Full disclosure – I loved thinking about this section of his essay in which Madueme examines pointed comparisons between my book and one of its mid-nineteenth-century cousins.

“You have not allowed for the wind, Hubert,” said Locksley in *Ivanhoe*; “or that had been a better shot.”

So begins the infamous *Omphalos* by Philip Henry Gosse. Hubert's failure in Scott's novel and the then-contemporary science's failure (on Gosse's view) consisted in overlooking relevant elements that spoiled otherwise excellent calculations. Hubert had properly accounted for distance, angle, and force, but he had forgotten the wind. The science of the 1850s had properly attended to suggestive biological and geological features of life and land, but in attempting to infer from this evidence the age of the world, it had failed to adjust for prochronism (Gosse's term for God's having brought many marvelous things into existence quite recently with the mere appearance of age). And – *the point of the comparison* – modern science has blossomed, with Astronomy, Physics, Geology, Paleoanthropology, Genetics, and Evolutionary Biology providing an incredibly sophisticated and nuanced portrait of our world and its history, but in drawing from this evidence the conclusion that there is no sacred Garden and no event of any ancestral pair walking its paths, it has failed to allow for hypertime.

Gosse's *Omphalos* was, I believe, spectacular and creative and a failure. I confess a sympathy for the strategy, however. His prochronism attracted, understandably, a terrific amount of attention, and was nearly universally rejected for a variety of different reasons. Here's a popular but bad reason: In constructing a scenario consistent with all the current and future deliverances of science, the theory

is unfalsifiable, and if unfalsifiable it is to be rejected as a serious candidate for a correct description of the world. A first mistake is in thinking that if unfalsifiable by scientific means, then unfalsifiable *full stop*; why endorse such a myopic conditional as that? A second mistake is in drawing the conclusion that a thesis is false from the premise that it cannot be shown to be false; what an odd dialectic that is. Here's a second bad reason (drawn from the close of the review quoted in Madueme's discussion):

[Such theories] are idle speculations, fit only to please a philosopher in his hours of relaxation, but hardly worthy of the serious attention of any earnest man . . . we do not think that the cause of religion is served by these attempts to remove difficulties by metaphysical subtleties.

If the complaint is lodged against the *particular* metaphysical subtleties Gosse is foisting on the world, I suppose I am in agreement. If the pronouncement is a *general* ban on doing metaphysics when contesting a scientific refutation of a religious claim (the threat to the serious attention of earnest men notwithstanding), I can't see any reason to take it seriously, especially since science is (as I noted earlier) already shot through with metaphysical commitments. When science is distributing objections, metaphysics is certain to be found at the party already.

Here is (what I, at least, take to be) a good reason to reject Gosse's prochronistic hypothesis. In Chapter 6 of the book, I examine a series of skeptical hypotheses including one species of local skepticism I name Yesterday-Worlds Skepticism, although I there focus on Bertrand Russell's brute-fact version, rather than Gosse's theistic version. In that chapter I argue that anti-skeptical strategies (e.g., those advocated by Moore and Reid) have real bite against a Gosse-style proposal but prove toothless against the Hypertime Hypothesis. I cannot repeat those reasons here and will simply direct the interested reader to that discussion. Still, I will note that even if one agrees with the familiar refrain that Gosse's view is unfalsifiable on scientific grounds, it is nevertheless, as I attempt to show, subject to refutation on philosophical grounds (and perhaps on theological grounds, as well).

Finally, here is one potentially significant point of comparison between Gosse's approach and my own, an observation that Madueme touches on twice. In creating life forms with the mere appearance of age or in preserving one piece of a spacetime block from an earlier hypertime and embedding that very piece in a substantially different spacetime block at a later hypertime, God would engage in deception on a monumental scale. But as God is no deceiver, neither strategy can go forward. This charge of divine deception can be met in either of two ways.

First, one can argue that no deception would be practiced upon us if the world really were structured and fashioned as the requisite theories would have it. I think the charge of deception has somewhat more force against prochronism than against the Hypertime Hypothesis, but even in the former case I think it has to be handled delicately in order to be persuasive. It would take me too far afield to travel further in this direction, but here's an interesting tidbit to help refine the charge for those inclined to pursue it: Wittgenstein once famously asked a pupil why it had been such a longstanding belief that the sun orbited the Earth and received the answer – *because*



*it looks that way* – to which he replied – *and how would it look if the Earth orbited the sun?*

Second, one can argue that we are not in a position to declare justifiably that God does not practice deception when it suits the divine purposes to do so. Although (in the case of the Hypertime Hypothesis at least) I endorse both of the strategies for reply, (perhaps surprisingly) I take this second to be the more promising of the two. Here, in a nutshell, is the idea:

If there is a morally obligating reason for God to deceive us, then we are deceived, for God always does what he ought. If there is no morally justifying reason for God to deceive us, then we are not deceived, for God never does what he ought not. If there is a morally justifying reason for God to deceive us, then either we are or are not deceived depending on God's other purposes. (adapted from my 2014b)

The increasingly popular and widely discussed view known as Skeptical Theism provides the theist with a very effective defense against a variety of arguments for atheism grounded in considerations about evil, but it also imposes costs for the theist elsewhere. As a proponent of Skeptical Theism, I argue at length (in my 2014b) that we are utterly in the dark about which of those three antecedents from the conditionals stated above is satisfied, and consequently, that we are not in a position to declare justifiably that God does not practice deception when it suits the divine purposes to do so. Before dismissing the Hypertime Hypothesis on grounds of deception, I would encourage the reader to get hold of, consider, and reflect on the line of reasoning there defended.

## **4 Supertasks and Hypertenses: Reply to Goldschmidt and Lebens**

Goldschmidt and Lebens fruitfully explore a brief suggestion (made towards the end of my book) about how hypertime might play a role in our thinking about the afterlife, and in their essay, they present and critically evaluate three accounts of how God might change the past in accordance with keeping a certain “radical eschatological promise.”

The gist of the first of these three accounts is sketched in a passage of mine which serves as their departure point:

Although it does not now lie in anyone's future, perhaps some hyperday, every tear may be brushed away in the most permanent of ways, with pain and suffering not merely being a thing of the past but instead belonging only to hyperhistory. (2014a: 193-4)

Goldschmidt and Lebens find this suggestion wanting – first, because (as they correctly note) it “holds God hostage to hyperhistory” in the sense that it denies God

the ability to permanently delete evils from the pages of hyperhistory, and second, because an evil which is hyperpast but not past is still an *actual* evil for all that. Hyperpast evils damage their subjects and blemish creation, all the same – just not now, before, or hence.

They then suggest that there are other approaches that might yield better results and put forward two specific proposals in the hopes of demonstrating that such improvement can be had. The first proposal (which retains a robust commitment to hypertimes and to their inhabitants) is dubbed ‘The Hyper Hierarchy’ and the second (which eschews genuine hypertimes but endorses primitive hypertense operators) they christen ‘The Scene Changing View’. Each of the new proposals escapes both of the criticisms lodged against my original Hypertime Hypothesis (briefly hinted at in the passage above), and whereas The Hyper Hierarchy leaves them with a puzzle they admit they are not yet prepared to solve, The Scene Changing View not only allegedly has all the advantages with no extra costs, it also can be re-invoked to provide a new and intriguing theory of the atonement, and thus earns the distinction of being their “preferred view” in the end.

Those with no sympathy for hypertime or for hypertime tenses may watch from the sidelines, but I suspect that for the hypertime enthusiast this will turn out to be only a two-way contest between my original Hypertime Hypothesis and The Scene Changing View.

I will restrict my comments in the remainder of this reply (with one exception) to providing reasons to think The Hyper Hierarchy approach is not a genuine competitor, after all. *Here’s the exception:* Even if it should turn out that The Scene Changing View allows me – in the words of Goldschmidt and Lebens – “[to] make [my] point about the current state of the debate between literalists and scientists without infringing upon the radical eschatological promise of a new and better past,” that fact does not immediately rule in its favor. Perhaps both the original Hypertime Hypothesis and The Scene Changing View will share the advantage of showing that the debate between literalists and scientists is a metaphysical (rather than a scientific) one. And perhaps The Scene Changing View may lay sole claim to the advantage of securing God’s freedom with respect to the hyperpast. But then again (given its robust commitment to hypertimes and to their inhabitants) the original Hypertime Hypothesis may lay sole claim to a string of other advantages – many of which are on display in Chapters 8-9 of the book – including providing contributions to the puzzles of omnipresence, eternity, divine agency, creation (general and particular), the problem of evil, and the problem of the best. All sorts of enticing advantages await weighing!

To begin, just a nod of appreciation to Goldschmidt and Lebens for the subject matter now set before us: *supertasks and hypertime – my cup of tea!* The following quotation contains the substance of The Hyper Hierarchy idea:

A proposal: God can complete an infinite sequence of tasks, deleting all traces of E [a particular evil] from time, hypertime, hyperhypertime, and so on. For evil to be eradicated from every level, this supertask cannot be undertaken in time or in any level of the hypertime

hierarchy. The supertask must instead be atemporal, not in time, hypertime, hyperhypertime, etc.

Here are four thoughts about this proposal on supertasks – on Possibility, Completion, Atemporality, and Deleting.

*Possibility:* Whether “God *can* complete such a sequence of tasks” depends on whether such a sequence is metaphysically possible. Not even omnipotence has power over the impossible. We may concede that such a sequence is (at least) logically possible, and we need not be distracted by any questions of nomological possibility, since those are questions that may arise within a spacetime at a hypertime but not about the sequence of hypertimes or of hyperhypertimes. Still, metaphysical possibility is not a default setting, and perhaps it would be best to place emphasis on the epistemic possibility of the metaphysical possibility of the imagined scenario in the sequel.

*Completion:* Whether “God *can complete* such a sequence of tasks” depends on how we understand the term ‘complete’. Consider a familiar supertask: at 1pm the lamp is switched on, at 1:30 it is switched off, at 1:45 on, at 1:52.30 off, at 1:56.15 on . . . and . . . zeno the series. When, exactly, is the series complete? ‘At 2pm’ is one perfectly good answer, for 2pm is the limit of the series, the first time at which every step is strictly past. And what is the state of the lamp at completion? Well, if that’s a way of asking for the state of the lamp at 2pm the answer is underdetermined. The constraints on the series will certainly tell us the state of the lamp at every time after 1pm and arbitrarily close to 2pm (on the earlier side), but it is also consistent with the lamp’s being on at 2pm or with the lamp’s being off at 2pm or with the lamp’s not even being in existence at 2pm (or with there not even being such a time as 2pm!). We might also entertain the answer ‘the series is complete at the interval beginning at 1pm and continuing up to but not including 2pm’. That is a perfectly good answer, too. No answer prior to 1pm is appropriate (since the series hasn’t then yet begun to exist), no moment between 1pm and 2pm will do (since the series isn’t at any such moment finished), and there is no least interval to privilege (since for every interval between 1pm and 2pm there is a shorter one containing all the later times). And what is the state of the lamp at completion (in this, our second interpretation of that phrase)? Well, it’s both on and off during that interval; better yet, its state is determined precisely for any instant in the interval you might care to select. But once we entertain the notion that the time of completion of the series is the entire interval in question, no answer of the form ‘on’ or ‘off’ is admissible.

Now consider Goldschmidt and Lebens’s proposed supertask. When, exactly, is the series complete? This question calls for a time (whether a moment or interval) as an answer, but we know in advance that no such answer will do. On the envisioned scenario, *every* time at a hypertime at a hyperhypertime (and so on through the relevant infinite-index) is *internal* to the series and thus not available to serve as the time of its completion. It may be better (rather than *when*) to ask *what* it is for the Goldschmidt-Lebens series to be complete. This question does admit of a good answer, one important component of which guarantees that each time reappears in distinct hypertimes, which themselves reappear in distinct hyperhypertimes, with no upper limit to the hierarchy. For any number of hypertime-prefixes, you can always

ascend hyperhigher! Accordingly (and significantly), there is nothing analogous to our 'at 2pm' answer in the case of the oscillating lamp; there is no first hyper-location which serves as the *limit* of the Goldschmidt-Lebens series. Rather the Goldschmidt-Lebens series is (quite unlike a continuous temporal or hypertemporal series) countably infinite in structure, just one hyperlayer after another. By default, what it is for the series to be complete is just for the hierarchy (thus described) to be a feature of the actual world. No more, no less.

*Atemporality*: Whether "God can complete such a sequence of *tasks*" depends on whether the stages in this sequence are properly regarded as actions. Goldschmidt and Lebens make it clear that the supertask be construed as "atemporal, not in time, hypertime, hyperhypertime" and so forth. For the record, I think they should not take this as equivalent to the claim that God is atemporal (as they appear to do later in the same section), for God can be present at every time and still be responsible for the existence of atemporal structures such as the Goldschmidt-Lebens series. Nevertheless, to describe each stage in the hierarchy as the result of a divine *task* or action seems to me to risk a journey through the quicksand that surrounds discussions of atemporal, divine actions or else to misrepresent what is simply an existence dependence between an atemporal entity (on the one hand) and God and the divine nature (on the other). Fortunately, there is no real need to describe the whole affair as a supertask at all (a category usually used to mark out an infinite series of tasks each of which occurs at a prescribed time or during a fixed interval). What is promising about the Goldschmidt-Lebens series is not its careful construction, bit by hyperbit, but its complex structure which permits timelines to sport different histories at different hypertimes.

*Deleting*: The claim that such a sequence would "delete all traces of a particular evil" is the primary reason Goldschmidt and Lebens have taken a philosophical and theological interest in it. It is notable that sometimes a supertask can boast the peculiar feature of always creating more than it deletes at each stage of the sequence and yet ending up with less than it starts with. Consider the supertasker who begins with one tile at 1pm (numbered 1), then creates two tiles (numbered 2 and 3) while destroying number 1 at 1:30, then creates two tiles (numbered 4 and 5) while destroying number 2 at 1:45, then creates two tiles (numbered 6 and 7) while destroying number 3 at 1:52.30, and so on. If we lay down the constraint that no tile is resurrected at 2pm, then none of our numbered tiles can survive the supertask and appear at that fateful hour. As we saw above, however, that is *not* a characteristic that can be claimed by the Goldschmidt-Lebens series. The completeness of that series simply consists in the countably infinite, hypertime hierarchy being a feature of the actual world (rather than in reaching some limit point), and although reality is *vastly* increased (so to speak) with each step up that infinite ladder, there the original evil still sits . . . at time<sub>1</sub> at hypertime<sub>1</sub> at hyperhypertime<sub>1</sub> . . . even though it doesn't reappear at, say, time<sub>1</sub> at hypertime<sub>1</sub> at hyperhypertime<sub>2</sub>. Every step hyper-higher (as we might put it) reveals an ever greater portion of creation, but nothing already in existence is also destroyed. The original evil is as fixed and undeletable a feature of actuality as the all-encompassing series that contains it.

Goldschmidt and Lebens find a rather different problem with their proposal. As they put it:

If God atemporally deletes all evil in a supertask, then evil should already have vanished, even from our temporal point of view; the consequences of that atemporal action should already be manifest. They are not.

I do not share this particular worry about the proposal with its authors, and I suspect that it arises (mistakenly, I believe) from thinking of the *completion* of the series as analogous to our ‘at 2pm’ answer in the case of the oscillating lamp rather than as the simple actuality of the countable structure of hyperlayers.

An event’s being manifest to a subject would have to be appropriately indexed. For example, everyone concedes that ‘E is manifest to S at  $T_1$ ’ is consistent with ‘E is not manifest to S at (the earlier)  $T_0$ ’. So, too, the fan of hypertime will pronounce ‘E is manifest to S at  $T_1$  at  $H_1$ ’ as consistent with ‘E is not manifest to S at  $T_1$  at (the hyperearlier)  $H_0$ ’, and so on up the hierarchy. To say ‘the evil should *already* have vanished’ or ‘should *already* be manifest’ (italics mine) is elliptical for ‘should be manifest (to us at the present time in the present hypertime in the present hyperhypertime’ and on up the infinite-index chain). It is wholly consistent with Goldschmidt and Lebens’s scenario that our present location in the hierarchy is one where we are aware of evil in our past, even if hyperlater there are no evils in anyone’s past.

While acknowledging that the absence of all evil from the hierarchy-of-histories may not “always” be manifest, they stop short of rejecting the objection at hand, saying that “making sense of the atemporal supertask only becoming manifest to us in the future requires an account of how God’s atemporal activity connects to our temporal experience,” and they confess that “we have no such account.” One final thought – perhaps they *do* have such an account. God’s atemporal activity (as envisioned by Goldschmidt and Lebens) is responsible for the existence of the very same timeline in multiple hypertimes (and on up the hierarchy). Experience (whether of the manifest or of the opaque) is confined to a timeline: Whereas our experience is spread out in time, it is hypertime bound. Should we be fortunate enough to hyperpersist, then we hyperwill enjoy another set of experiences that are similarly spread out in time (and confined to that later hypertime). Never do we enjoy the privilege of remembering hyperearlier events, lives, evils, or whatnot. Memory is causal, causality is a relation to be found between items in a unified temporal series at a hypermoment, and thus memory is a relation across some interval of time at a single hypertime. (Maybe there is such a thing as hypercausation, too, but that is a topic for another day). The ingredients for our having any experiences at all are provided by the objects and relations present at a single hypertime, and thus God’s atemporal supertask (if there were such a thing) would connect to our temporal experience simply by furnishing an appropriate arena in which those experiences can take place (now and hence, hypernow) and by furnishing infinite additional arenas in which further experiences can take place hyperhence and hyperhyperhence. Even were we to grant The Hypertime Hierarchy and its infinitely many partitioned arenas,

each enabling a plurality of interconnected experiences, the absence of evil from the entire grand hierarchy-of-histories would never (barring divine revelation) be manifest to anyone at any particular time, hypertime, hyperhypertime and so on, for no one can peer into or remember the hyperpast from her current location in actuality.

So, although I do not share this final worry I do stand by my earlier complaint, and thus (once again) I suspect that for the hypertime enthusiast, we have only a two-way contest between my original Hypertime Hypothesis and The Scene Changing View. As indicated above, I think the Hypertime Hypothesis will edge out the Scene Changing View by way of its other advantages, but I look forward to the promise of a new theory of the atonement founded upon the Scene Changing View. Finally, I would briefly note once again that my own view about the eschatological implications of the Hypertime Hypothesis, merely hinted at in the quotation with which I began this reply, can be found in substantially elaborated form in my 2017.<sup>1</sup>

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