How to be Omnipresent

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Abstract: Attributions of omnipresence, most familiar within the philosophy of religion, typically take the omnipresence of an entity to either consist in that entity's occupation of certain regions or be dependent upon other of that entity's attributes, such as omnipotence or omniscience. This paper defends an alternative conception of omnipresence that is independent of other purported divine attributes and dispenses with occupation. The resulting view repurposes the metaphysics of necessitism and permanentism, taking omnipresent entities to be those entities that exist at all regions. This view is then shown to best accommodate attributions of omnipresence to a diverse range of metaphysical posits, like abstract entities, and a more diverse class of religious posits.

1. Introduction

Consider the claim that some entity, Ben, is omnipresent. What is the best way to understand this claim? That is, if we want to adopt an account of omnipresence according to which it is metaphysically possible that some entity is omnipresent, and that also does the most justice (or the least violence) to our pre-theoretic, intuitive understanding of what omnipresence would entail, which account of omnipresence ought we adopt?

The philosophical literature on omnipresence is vast, though largely situated in the context of Western, monotheistic philosophy of religion.[1] If there is a current paradigm example of a potentially omnipresent entity, it is probably that of the Abrahamic God. Our approach here will be more inclusive: we aim to consider omnipresence as a property that might be had by entities outside of the scope of familiar Western theistic commitments, such as numbers and other abstract entities, as well as entities like Brahman or the Dao.[2] We think that it is at least

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1 See, *inter alia*, Anselm's *Monologion* and *Proslogion* and Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, as well as contemporary discussion in Hartshorne (1941), (Swinburne 1977), Wierenga (1988), Leftow (1989), Taliaferro (1994), Wainwright (2010), Press (2013), Stump (2013, 2008), Hudson (2014, 2009) and Inman (forthcoming).

2 The omnipresence of numbers or abstract entities is controversial. On one leading view, abstract entities are distinguished by virtue of their lack of location. We take it, however, that, if one rejects such a view, the best remaining alternative is to hold such entities to be everywhere. In what follows, nothing turns on endorsing such a view, but we take it that an account of omnipresence fares better by virtue of accommodating the potential omnipresence of certain abstract entities like numbers.

metaphysically possible for some entity or entities to be omnipresent, and we aim to explore the nature of omnipresence as such. Our goal, then, is to offer an account of omnipresence deployable in a range of contexts—including, but not limited to, standard debates in the Western philosophy of religion—without being conceptually dependent upon notions peculiar to any of those particular debates. To put the matter another way, we aim to provide an account of omnipresence that makes good sense of the following kind of claim:

> (**Omni**): Omnipresence is a metaphysically distinctive feature often attributed to religious and theological posits such as God, Brahman, and the Dao; and one that might be attributable to certain kinds of abstract entities.[3]

We proceed as follows. In section 2, we introduce two more-or-less standard accounts of omnipresence: the Occupation View and the Dependence View. In section 3, we introduce a novel account of omnipresence, which we call the Existential View. In sections 4 and 5, we argue that the Existential View should be preferred over both the Occupation and Dependence Views, respectively. In section 6, we consider and respond to some objections to the Existential View. Finally, in section 7, we offer some brief concluding remarks.

2. Occupation Omnipresence and Dependent Omnipresence

One family of views interprets issues of omnipresence as issues of occupation. We can group these views together to get what we'll call the Occupation View of omnipresence. On the Occupation View, the claim that Ben is omnipresent entails that Ben occupies each and every region.

> **Occupation View:** An entity is omnipresent if and only if it occupies each and every region.

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3 Though not all interpretations of Hinduism take Brahman to be omnipresent, certain schools—such as Vishishtadvaita Vedanta—explicitly do. For discussion, see Wainwright 2012. Similarly, both the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* can be plausibly interpreted as taking the Dao to be omnipresent, with the former stating that "Way is vast, a flood / so utterly vast it's flowing everywhere" (Chapter 34; quotation taken from Hinton 2013, p. 69) and the latter stating that "[t]here's no place it doesn't exist" (Chapter 22; quotation taken from Watson 2013, p. 15).

While this claim might seem straightforward, it leaves open a wide range of questions about omnipresence. Some of the questions raised by the Occupation View concern *occupation*. For example, what is the pattern of occupation that unites Ben with each and every region? Does Ben occupy each and every region by being wholly located at each and every region like a kind of Aristotelian universal?[4] Or, in contrast, does Ben occupy each and every region by exactly occupying the sum of all regions and thereby having a proper part at each sub-region?

Other questions raised by the Occupation View concern *occupants*. For example, if Ben is an immaterial object, can Ben occupy regions in the same way material objects occupy regions? And, if Ben is a necessary being, does Ben occupy regions in other possible worlds in the same way as in the actual world?[5]

Still other questions about the Occupation View concern the *regions* occupied by an omnipresent entity. For example, does Ben actually occupy spatial and temporal regions or, as contemporary physics suggests, spatiotemporal regions? Moreover, are regions self-subsistent entities as the spacetime substantivalist suggests? Or, is Ben somehow identical to these regions, as the spacetime supersubstantivalist suggests?[6]

As recent and careful discussions of versions of the Occupation View offered by Ross Inman (forthcoming) and Hud Hudson (2014) demonstrate, there are many ways of answering these questions about occupation, occupants, and regions. The varying answers deliver importantly different versions of the Occupation View. On some of the possible precisifications of the Occupation View, the existence of particular omnipresent entities turns out to be a contingent matter. For example, if there is a possible world consisting of a very small spherical region of spacetime wholly occupied by an iron sphere, some versions of the Occupation View will count that iron sphere as omnipresent at that world. Similarly, if there are point-sized

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4 On Aristotelian universals and their locations, see Armstrong (1978).
5 On possible views of occupation and location, see Donnelly (2010), Hudson (2006), Kleinschmidt (forthcoming), McDaniel (2007), and Parsons (2007).
6 On the ontology of spatial, temporal, and spatiotemporal regions, see Field (1984), Maudlin (1988), Schaffer (2009), Sider (2002), and Skow (2005).

possible worlds, then most versions of the Occupation View will hold any point-sized material objects to be omnipresent at such worlds. For defenders of the Occupation View, the question of what, if any, omnipresent entities could exist, turns on a series of complications regarding alien entities, the nature of occupation, and the variety of merely possible spacetimes.

Alternative views of omnipresence have mostly received second billing to the Occupation View. Perhaps the lone exception to this trend is the family of views that fall under the umbrella of what we will call the Dependence View, which holds that omnipresence is properly understood, not in terms of occupation, but as derivative upon other, more basic attributes such as omnipotence or omniscience. In turn, these basic attributes ground a relation other than occupation which holds between an omnipresent entity and each and every region.[7] Thus, we arrive at the following characterization:

> **Dependence View**: An entity is omnipresent if and only if it possesses certain more basic properties such as omnipotence and omniscience that allow it to interact (in some relevantly specified way) with each region.[8]

According to the Dependence View, an omnipotent and omniscient entity, like God, is omnipresent only in a derivative sense. On familiar versions of the Dependence View, the omnipresent entity knows what is occurring at all regions and is capable of knowingly exerting its will at each of those regions. On versions of this kind, defenders of the Dependence View render omnipresence as inseparable from the purported attributes which are the basic properties that allow it to interact with regions. (Here, we focus our attention on such standard views, leaving aside less familiar options for developing the Dependence View.) Consequently, the fact that Ben is neither omnipotent nor omniscient ensures that Ben is not omnipresent.

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7 One can read Anselm as taking omnipresence to depend more upon omniscience, and Aquinas as taking omnipresence to depend more upon omnipotence. Other accounts might take omnipotence to be dependent upon both. For discussion, see Hudson (2014, pp. 136-143), as well as Hartshorne (1941), Swinburne (1988), Taliaferro (1994), and Wierenga (1988). Nothing in our discussion turns on this debate, however; our concern, as will be made clear, is not with which attributes omnipresence depends on, but with characterizing it as dependent at all.
8 Cf. Inman (forthcoming).

We take it that, at some possible worlds, some individuals satisfy the criteria set out by the Occupation View and the Dependence View. Put differently, we grant that at some worlds, entities might stand in exotic patterns of occupation to various kinds of regions, and that, at some worlds, entities might be able to consciously exert their will at all regions. As we'll argue, however, neither analysis of omnipresence is a good candidate for understanding the ascription of omnipresence in claims like (Omni). Before turning to this argument, we begin by setting out a new account of omnipresence, which we call the *Existential View*.

3. Existential Omnipresence

Quantifier-domain restriction is a fact of life. But, in the business of metaphysics, unrestricted questions, asking after the entirety of reality, are commonplace.[9] When, for example, we investigate the ontology of time, we can ask two kinds of questions: (i) *temporally restricted ontological questions*, which ask about what exists at a given time, and (ii) *temporally unrestricted ontological questions*, which ask about what exists *simpliciter*. So, while some views about temporal ontology might provide the same answer to temporally restricted ontological questions about the present, these answers are compatible with radically different answers to temporally unrestricted ontological questions: some, like the orthodox presentist will deny, while others like the orthodox eternalist will affirm, the existence of dinosaurs and moonbases.

A tacit assumption of most debates about the ontology of time is that the correct answer to temporally restricted ontological questions varies across times. It seems, for example, that, while dinosaurs once existed, they no longer exist and that, while moonbases will someday exist, they do not exist yet. According to permanentists, this is a mistake: facts about what exists at a given time are invariant. This is because, according to the permanentist (at least of the A-theoretic variety), it is always the case that everything always exists.[10] Moonbases and dinosaurs

9 Though we are comfortable with completely unrestricted quantification, not everyone is. For more on this topic, see the various discussions in Rayo and Uzquiano (2007).
10 We assume this A-theoretic conception throughout, though permanentists are free to abandon the assumed view of tense. Similarly, we assume that permanentists take talk of "existing at a time" at face

presently exist; however, they are not presently concrete entities.[11] The important question, for the permanentist, is not which entities exist when, but *which entities are concrete when*: dinosaurs exist now but were only once concrete, and moonbases exist now but will only someday yet to come be concrete. For the permanentist, the nature of entities changes radically over time, but the stock of what exists is a fixed matter. In this way, if permanentism is true, temporally restricted ontological questions (when not reinterpreted as questions about what is concrete) and temporally unrestricted ontological questions are properly answered in the very same way.

Permanentism is a striking view for a few reasons, but, among its more notable commitments is a thesis about the connection between existence at a time and occupation.[12] A natural stance about temporal ontology is the following principle regarding existence at a time and occupation:

Temporal At-Occupation (TAO): x exists at a time t if and only if x occupies

some region at t.

The intuition behind (TAO) is that facts about what exists at a time are determined by facts about what things occupy the regions that exist at that time. Since permanentists hold that dinosaurs and moonbases presently exist but deny that these objects presently occupy any region, permanentists deny (TAO). According to permanentists, facts about the occupation of regions do not fix facts about what exists at a time. Instead, facts about what exists at a time are fundamental; they resist explanation or analysis in any more basic terms.[13]

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value and so do not analyze it away in terms of, say, occupying a region at a time. For example, one version of necessitism—the modal analogue of permanentism—owing to Linksy and Zalta (1996) takes our ordinary talk about existence at worlds to be systematically conflated with talk about being concrete at a world. On permanentism, see Williamson (2013, pp. 24-25). Thanks to an anonymous referee here for marking the distinction between A-theoretic and B-theoretic permanentisms.

11 Of course, permanentists of a certain sort might want to deny that dinosaurs presently exist but hold that the entities that *were* dinosaurs do. (The same goes for the entities that moonbases *will* be.) This particular axis of variation among permanentist options won't matter much for present purposes. Thanks here to an anonymous referee.

12 For ease of presentation, we assume a distinction between times or temporal regions and spaces or spatial regions. The view we defend here requires no such distinction.

13 The fact that occupation facts do not fix existence facts does not, of course, entail that the latter are fundamental, but, for our purposes, we will assume that such facts are indeed fundamental. Thanks here to Bradley Rettler.

Permanentism has a modal analogue in necessitism, defended in Williamson (2002, 2010, and 2013). Intuitively, facts about what there is could have been different. Some things that actually exist could have failed to exist. Conversely, there could have been some things that do not actually exist. But, despite common intuitions to the contrary, necessitism claims that the domain of entities is modally invariant. In the language of possible worlds, the necessitist holds that the domain of quantification does not vary from world to world, since, at any given world, each and every possible entity exists. According to the necessitist, Wittgenstein's twin sons are only contingently concrete entities. At the actual world, they are non-concrete, but, at another world, they are concrete. But, regardless of world, these entities exist in some state or other and the fact that these entities exist at a world is fundamental.

For this reason, the necessitist rejects the modal analogue of (TAO),

Modal At-Occupation (MAO): x exists at a world w if and only if x occupies

some region at w.[14]

Within the permanentist and necessitist frameworks, entities exist at times and worlds, but not by virtue of occupying parts of worlds or temporal regions. Rather, the fact that an entity exists at a world or time is fundamental and it is not reducible to any more basic notion.

The Existential View of omnipresence, which we will defend, repurposes the metaphysics of permanentism and necessitism by selectively applying its commitments to the case of space (or spacetime). We start by rejecting the spatial (or spatiotemporal) analogue of (TAO) and (MAO):

Spatial At-Occupation (SAO): x exists at a region r if and only if x occupies some

(proper or improper) subregion of r.

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14 For those who think that numbers are unlocated yet actual, the denial of (MAO) will be mandatory. Other views might attempt to distinguish a plurality of notions of entities "existing at a world." For discussion, see Lewis (1986: 96).

Instead, following the permanentist's treatment of existence at a time and the necessitist's treatment of existence at a world, we allow entities to exist at a region without occupying that region. Put in terms of *existence at a region*, we can characterize the Existential View as follows:

> **Existential View**: An entity x is *omnipresent* if and only if for any region r, x exists at r.[15]

According to this view, to be omnipresent is just to exist at every region. And, just as the permanentist takes facts about existence at a time to be fundamental, we take facts about what exists at a region to be fundamental. Moreover, following Quine, we assume that talk about what exists and talk about what there is are interchangeable and that both are properly regimented in terms of existential quantification. Correspondingly, talk about what exists at a region is equivalent to talk about what there is at that region, where the things there are at a region are just those things within the domain of the quantifier when restricted to that region. The things that exist at that region are therefore all and only those things that there are, quantifying restrictedly over that region. Accordingly, an equivalent formulation of the Existential View is as follows: an entity x is *omnipresent* if and only, for any region r, x is within the domain of the existential quantifier when restricted to r.

The Existential View primarily repurposes the machinery that the permanentist and necessitist use to characterize the relationship between entities and times and worlds, respectively. And since the Existential View relies upon an analogous view about the relationship between entities and regions, the Existential View is intelligible if necessitism and permanentism are. Similarly, the proposed analysis of what it is to be omnipresent is informative and analogous to analyses of what it is to be *necessary* or *permanently existing* that necessitists or permanentists might themselves offer.

The Existential View requires no restrictions on the kinds of entities that might be omnipresent and, as we'll see in the next section, it handily avoids awkward questions about

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15 On this characterization, omnipresent entities are relevantly analogous to *necessary* entities and *permanently existing* entities.

occupation and regions faced by the Occupation View.[16] The Existential View also delivers a suitably full-blooded view about where omnipresent entities exist. Suppose, for example, that *Rm* is the maximal spatial region. On the Existential View, an omnipresent entity exists at *Rm* as well as at each and every sub-region of *Rm*. Omnipresence therefore differs importantly from what we might call *maximal presence*, which involves an entity existing at only the maximal spatial region and not any of that maximal spatial region's sub-regions.

Importantly, the Existential View does not require the full-blown spatial analogue of permanentism or necessitism, according to which facts about what exists at regions are invariant. Such a view would entail, among other things, that all the world's active volcanoes exist—though as mere non-concrete entities—at your house. Instead, the Existential View consists of two primary commitments: (i) the rejection of (SAO), which claims that facts about what exists at a region are fixed by facts about what occupies that region—in contrast, the Existential View holds that omnipresent entities exist at regions even without occupying those regions; (ii) that an entity is *omnipresent* if and only if it exists at each and every region.

Beyond positing non-concrete active volcanoes at your house, there is another reason to reject the full-blown spatial analogue of permanentism and necessitism: such a view would make *all* entities omnipresent, thereby negating the claim that omnipresence is a metaphysically distinctive property. We are inclined to think that, in saying that Ben is omnipresent, we are saying something truly noteworthy about Ben, rather than something trivially true of all entities. We therefore reject the full-blown spatial analogue of permanentism and necessitism, and instead adopt the more conservative view according to which it is *possible* that *some* entities satisfy the criteria set out by the Existential View. The truth of the Existential View neither stands nor falls with the truth of permanentism and necessitism—theses we ourselves reject as

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16 One might, however, defend various restrictions. For example, one might hold that, while existence at a region does not require occupation, an entity that exactly occupies a region R therefore exists at R. Given this restriction, any entity that exactly occupies every region would, in virtue of existing at every region, qualify as omnipresent.

implausible—but instead depends only on the intelligibility of the spatial (or spatiotemporal) analogue of some of their adopted machinery.

4. The Case for the Existential View Over the Occupation View

Having now presented the Existential View and the Occupation view, we consider three lines of argument for preferring the former over the latter.

According to relationalists, spatiotemporal regions depend upon (or are identical to) relations that hold among objects. If there were no objects of the relevant sort, there would be no spacetime regions. According to substantivalists, spacetime regions do not depend for their existence upon objects. Spatiotemporal regions can, for example, exist without any objects. Finally, according to supersubstantivalists, objects depend upon (or are identical to) spatiotemporal regions. On such a view, objects of the relevant sort cannot exist without spacetime regions.[17]

While familiar lines of argument for and against these views appeal to a priori considerations, one might reasonably treat spacetime regions and their putative occupants as empirical posits. And, like other empirical posits, such entities would be plausibly counted as contingent. Given the contingency of the relevant entities, a natural conclusion is that relationalism, substantivalism, and supersubstantivalism, if true, are only contingently true.

For each of these views, the corresponding ways in which the Occupation View accommodates omnipresence will differ significantly. While the substantivalist posits a fundamental relation of occupation that holds between an omnipresent entity and the regions it occupies, the supersubstantivalist requires something like the constitution of, or identity between, that entity and spacetime. In addition, the relationalist must explain omnipresence in terms of the relations between the omnipresent entity and other entities. It looks, then, like the

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17 Here, we're running together certain variants of substantivalism and supersubstantivalism that differ not only about whether the notion of dependence figures into their proper formulation but also over whether the relation between objects and regions is one of identity or something more like constitution.

Occupation View of omnipresence is either (i) highly disjunctive, holding that omnipresence consists in an entity possessing one of very many quite different kinds of spatiotemporal properties in certain kinds of worlds; or (ii) tethered to a contentious view about the necessary truth of empirical claims regarding the nature of spacetime. Moreover, since the varieties of substantivalism, supersubstantivalism, and relationalism proliferate quickly, we think that this disjunctive version of omnipresence turns out to be *highly* disjunctive—that is that ascriptions of omnipresence end up involving a highly complex property of being related to some kinds of regions in a certain way in some worlds or being related to perhaps other kinds of regions in a different way in other worlds, and so on. Indeed, such a view is expressible only by fixing upon the space of possible views about the nature of spatiotemporal regions, objects, and their relations. Since we think it is a vice of theories to be highly disjunctive in this way and, since we see no offsetting virtues, we have grounds to prefer the Existential View to the Occupation View.[18]

A second line of argument for preferring the Existential View issues from the neutrality it preserves regarding principles about occupation. Recall, for example, that, on some versions of the Occupation View, omnipresence requires that an object be wholly located at the maximal spatiotemporal region, but not wholly located at each sub-region. In contrast, other versions of the Occupation View hold an omnipresent entity to be wholly present at each and every region much like an Aristotelian universal. We agree that the latter version of the Occupation View better accommodates intuitive notions of omnipresence. After all, the former view, along with some auxiliary mereological assumptions guarantees, that, necessarily, there is an omnipresent entity: the universe. Since omnipresence is, as discussed in the previous section, a more interesting metaphysical feature—at least in the sense that the existence of any actual

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18 Those who accept (i) that God is omnipresent, and (ii) that omnipresence is one of God's essential attributes will most likely find it objectionable that one of God's essential attributes be so highly disjunctive and expressible only by fixing upon the space of possible views about the nature of spatiotemporal regions, objects, and their relations. Those who accept (i) and (ii), then, have all the more reason to be wary of the Occupation View.

omnipresent entities should at least be taken as controversial—we think that latter account is preferable to the former. At the same time, we're uncertain whether entities can exhibit the pattern of location typically ascribed to Aristotelian universals. For example, a plausible view about the occupation and mereological structure of objects takes any object that occupies distinct regions to have parts at those regions. But, if that's right, the best version of the Occupation View requires highly contentious commitments about occupation and mereology. We also hold that it's implausible to think that the pure sets exhibit this pattern of occupation, which would too easily rule out the very possibility that mathematical entities are omnipresent. For this reason, we think the Existential View enjoys virtuous neutrality regarding these questions of occupation and location and is therefore preferable to the Occupation View.

A third line of argument for the Existential View over the Occupation View turns on the connection between occupation or spatial location and the notion of material or physical entity. On some views of the distinction between material and immaterial entities, if an entity occupies a spatial region, it is properly counted as a material entity.[19] It looks, then, like the Occupation View entails that any omnipresent entity is thereby a material entity, once granted the assumption that occupying a spatial region suffices for being material. This seems the wrong result in the case of pure mathematical entities, and probably also in the case of God.[20] And, while one might take this as grounds for tinkering with extant accounts of what it means to be a material entity, or for introducing an occupation relation defined on both material and immaterial entities, an alternative response is to hold that a suitable account of omnipresence should make the matter of omnipresence orthogonal to the material-immaterial distinction. Since the Existential View avoids any commitment to claims about occupation, it preserves the coherence of views on which physical or material entities are distinguished by their occupation

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19 On materiality and occupation, see Markosian (2000).
20[20] Hudson (2014, pp. 152-153) struggles with this problem, which he calls the problem of incorporeality: "how can something occupy a region and fail to have a body?"

of spatial regions but where non-physical or immaterial entities like mathematical entities or God are nevertheless omnipresent.[21]

5. The Case for the Existential View over the Dependence View

We've seen reason to prefer the Existential View to the Occupation View. None of the lines of argument examined in the previous section, however, tell against the Dependence View. Again, on such a view, an omnipresent entity is truly omnipresent in only a derivative sense: it is first omniscient and omnipotent, and hence aware of all goings-on and able to consciously exert its will in all regions. Putting aside difficult questions about what it is to *be aware at a region* and what it is to *exert will in a region*, it is plausible to suppose that the friend of the Dependence View can adequately characterize her view in a manner separable from what the actual ontology of spacetime and regions turns out to be. Since the view doesn't trade in the notion of occupation at all, it is also neutral with respect to the occupation relation, as well as questions of what kind of entities can occupy what kind of regions. The friend of the Dependence View, then, can avail herself of all of the lines of argument we've offered so far in favor of the Existential View over the Occupation View, to make a plausible case for, not just the Existential View, but the Dependence View as well.

While we think that this is all correct, there is at least one strong argument for the claim that the Existential View should be preferred to the Dependence View: the Existential View allows us to characterize the aforementioned mathematical entities, as well as other potential posits such as the Dao, as omnipresent, and the Dependence View does not. This is an instance of a more general problem faced by the Dependence View: since it takes omnipresence to be derivative of omnipotence and omniscience, it presupposes that only agents—specifically, willful agents possessing awareness—could be omnipresent. We take this to be an unnecessary

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21 See, *inter alia,* Hudson (2014) and Inman (forthcoming). Note that, on Hudson's (2014, pp. 151-153) account, some puzzles remain: the *problem of timelessness* ("how can something occupy a region and be atemporal?") and the *problem of co-location* ("how can two numerically distinct things each occupy the same region?"). By eschewing talk of occupation, the Existential View avoids these puzzles.

restriction imposed by the Dependence View, with the view tacitly assuming a particular religious framework when trying to adjudicate issues of a property that is certainly not unique to that framework, as demonstrated by *prima facie* sensible sentences such as (Omni).

We take it to be a virtue of the Existential View that it avoids any such restrictions, and does not tie our understanding of omnipotence too closely to any particular religious framework. Even if we doubt that mathematical entities or entities such as the Dao are omnipresent, as long as we think that it is not a category mistake to ask if they are, we have reason to prefer the Existential View.

6. Objections to the Existential View

We've defended a novel framework for making sense of claims about omnipresent entities, and argued that that framework is preferable to other extant frameworks. We'll now consider some arguments against this account of omnipresence.

Objection One: Claims about omnipresence are claims about "presence," and, for this reason, inseparable from claims about regions and occupation. Since the Existential View focuses only on existence at a region but does not involve the occupation of regions, it is not a tenable way of interpreting claims about omnipresence.[22]

Response: This objection alleges that the Existential View changes the subject, implausibly recasting talk about location in terms of talk about existence at regions. We think this objection proceeds from dialectically unstable terrain. First, familiar claims about God's omnipresence are commonly packaged with apparently contradictory assertions about God's lack of any presence whatsoever—see, for example, Anselm, who has stated that "the Supreme Being exists in every place and at all times" but also "exists in no place and at no time." In this

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22 This objection applies to the Dependence View as well, since it takes God's omnipresence to be a matter of God's distinctive capacities rather than a claim about which regions God occupies.

respect, we think that there is no especially robust body of discourse that an account of omnipresence is duty-bound to square with.[23]

Additionally, we think that, even if we do take common discourse about omnipresence seriously, there's evidence that the Existential View is a viable interpretation of claims about omnipresence. We think, for example, that the best rendering of apparently contradictory Anselm-style claims is that, in asserting that God is nowhere, one can reasonably assert that God lacks any location, but that, in asserting that God is everywhere, one can reasonably assert that God nevertheless exists at all regions. Moreover, we think that this kind of mystery-mongering isn't well captured by location-driven views of omnipresence such as the Occupation View. After all, if omnipresence was about location, the only way to make sense of Anselm-style remarks is that speakers are using location talk ambiguously and intend a highly sophisticated reading of location claims in one context and a different highly sophisticated reading other contexts. We think it's more plausible that speakers intend a fairly rough conception of location in contexts where they deny God is in any place and a fairly intuitive notion of existence in other contexts. Put differently: we think that, once we take the Existential View seriously, it provides the best way to make sense of Anselm-style claims. Our response to this objection is, then, that we don't think extant discussions of omnipresence are well-regimented enough to require fidelity, but, even if we did, we think the Existential View does better than the Occupation View in making sense of their most notable feature: Anselmian doubletalk.[24]

Objection Two: The denial of (TAO)/(MAO)/(SAO) is incoherent. No sense can be made of the idea that something exists at a time/world/region without occupying that region.

Response: We're wary of claims of incoherence, but we grant that some philosophers might reasonably stick to (TAO), (MAO), or (SAO). We think, however, that many folks are

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23 For more discussion of this topic, see Hudson (2014, pp. 137-138), as well as, *inter alia*, Wierenga (1988), Leftow (1989), and Inman (forthcoming).

24 The Dependence View can also naturally account for such an ambiguity, taking some talk of God's omnipresence to concern occupation and other talk to concern the exertion of God's various capacities.

already committed to rejecting one or all of these theses in some form or other. Consider, for example, the platonist who denies the omnipresence of numbers and other abstract entities. This platonist likely holds that numbers are not located anywhere, but, even so, she will maintain that numbers exist at the actual world and every other world besides. In this way, she picks and chooses among (TAO), (MAO), and (SAO) in a way at odds with accepting the core notion of *at-occupation* that figures in each of them, since she accepts it only for times or regions but not for worlds. We think her stance is unprincipled but entirely coherent. In similar fashion, we think that, in denying (SAO), our stance is principled and entirely coherent.

7. Conclusion

We think that omnipresent entities are metaphysically possible, and that omnipresence is a metaphysically distinctive and interesting property. In addition to the commonly posited omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, agential God, we take it that there are other metaphysically possible entities of philosophical, theological, or religious interest that might plausibly lack some combination of omnipotence, omniscience, and agency but are nonetheless potentially omnipresent.

We've compared three competing accounts of omnipresence: the Occupation View, the Dependence View, and the Existential View. Whereas the Occupation View allows us adequately address some of the above considerations and the Dependence View allows us to adequately address others, neither allows us to adequately address them all. The Existential View, on the other hand, does. Furthermore, none of the objections lodged against the Existential View have stood up to scrutiny. We conclude that the Existential View provides the best account of omnipresence.

If we're right, omnipresent entities exist everywhere even though they might not occupy all (or even any) regions. At the same time, in uncoupling omnipresence from matters of occupation and dependence, we have not attempted to reductively analyze omnipresence in

non-existential terms. On the contrary, the proposed account of omnipresence is couched solely in terms of what exists at what regions. This leaves open whether the notion of existing at a region itself admits of further analysis, but, regardless of whether it is a (non-)primitive notion, it offers an apt and informative account of omnipresence.

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