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## OMNISUBJECTIVITY AND CLASSICAL THEISM ARE NOT COMPATIBLE

In several previous writings, I have explored the prospects of the compatibility of omnisubjectivity with rival models of God such as classical theism, neoclassical theism, open theism, panentheism, and pantheism (e.g. MULLINS 2020, 2021, 2023). I have come to the conclusion that omnisubjectivity is not compatible with classical theism. As Linda Zagzebski has continued to reflect on the fascinating attribute of omnisubjectivity, she has offered some defense of the compatibility of omnisubjectivity with classical theism. In this paper, I will argue that omnisubjectivity is still incompatible with classical theism. In order to argue my case, I will need to set the stage by defining some terms before turning to my arguments.

### 1. SETTING THE STAGE

In order to get this debate going, I need to define some terms. I start with the concept of God. The concept of God is that of a perfect being which is the single, ultimate foundation of reality. This much seems to be agreed upon by philosophers and theologians in the East and the West. A model of God is a unique articulation of what it means to be perfect, and what it means to be the foundation of reality.

There is a certain set of attributes that most models of God agree upon. I call these the uncontested divine attributes. These are attributes like necessary existence, eternality, aseity, maximal power, maximal knowledge, perfect

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goodness, perfect freedom, and perfect rationality. Most models of God agree on all of this, so nothing here is terribly interesting. Things get interesting when it comes to the contested attributes like timelessness or temporality, impassibility or passibility, and so on. More on those in a moment.

When it comes to being the foundation of reality, there are different ways to unpack this claim. One could affirm that the universe necessarily and eternally emanates from the nature of God, or one could affirm that God voluntarily wills to create the universe. There are two doctrines of creation that I have been able to identify across the world's religions—eternal creation and creation *ex nihilo*. Eternal creation says that God is always creating something. God always exists with a universe of some sort. This may be one eternal universe that has always existed alongside God. Alternatively, this may be an eternally successive series of universes. On this view, no individual universe is co-eternal with God, but God has never existed without a universe of some sort. Creation *ex nihilo* is different. This view says that no created thing is co-eternal with God. Prior to creation there was God all alone. Opinions vary on how to best capture this *prior to creation* state of affairs. Some say that this precreation state of affairs is timeless whilst others say that it is temporal. Yet both agree that there is some state of affairs where there is God and nothing else. Classical, neoclassical, and open theism affirm creation *ex nihilo*, whilst panentheists typically reject creation *ex nihilo* in favour of eternal creation or emanation.

This brings me back to the uncontested attribute of eternity and the need to discuss the contested attributes of God. Across the Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, to be eternal means to exist without beginning and without end. Yet eternity can come with contested notions of timelessness or temporality. To be timeless is to exist without beginning, without end, without succession, and without temporal location. Even further, a timeless being cannot stand in any temporal relations such as simultaneous with, before and after, earlier-than, later-than, or the like. Why? Because temporal relations imply temporal location and succession. Things are different with a temporal eternity. God is temporal if God exists without beginning and without end. That just follows from necessary existence. Yet a temporal God can undergo succession and have temporal location. God can exist right now. God existed before the universe began to exist. God will continue to exist forever and ever, amen.

Another set of contested attributes are immutability and mutability. God is immutable if and only if God cannot change intrinsically or extrinsically. To

change extrinsically implies succession and before and after relations. So, historically, theists who fully understood timelessness said that God cannot undergo extrinsic change. In fact, classical theists like Augustine, Boethius, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas said that God is not really related to the universe in order to avoid God undergoing any sort of relational, extrinsic changes.<sup>1</sup> Mutability is different. God is mutable if and only if God can undergo intrinsic and extrinsic changes. This is not to be confused with the silly objection that if God changes then God will cease to be God. That makes no sense. God's essence cannot change precisely because it is an essence. It is essential to God, so it cannot change. But what God freely does with His essential power can change from moment to moment, and His knowledge will change accordingly as the sum total facts of reality change in correspondence to what God is doing.

The final set of contested attributes that I wish to discuss in this paper are impassibility and passibility. Impassibility says that nothing other than the divine nature can influence God in any way. It is impossible for God to be moved or influenced by any external considerations for His beliefs, emotions, and actions. An emotion is a felt evaluation of a situation that involves (i) a cognitive representation of the situation, and (ii) an affective state of what it feels like to have that evaluation. The impassible God is said to be in a state of pure happiness that is entirely grounded in Himself. Why? To be happy is to be perfectly inline with the greatest good. God is the greatest good, evaluates Himself accordingly, and is thus perfectly happy. The claim from proponents of impassibility is that it is metaphysically impossible for God's happiness to be disturbed because it would be immoral or irrational for God's emotional life to be influenced by anything other than Himself. This is why proponents of impassibility say that God cannot suffer. Finally, proponents of impassibility say that God cannot have any emotion that is inconsistent with God's perfect rationality, perfect moral goodness, and perfect, undisturbable happiness (cf. MULLINS 2018).

Divine passibility is rather different. Proponents of passibility say that God can be moved or influenced by external considerations for His beliefs, emotions, and actions. Passibilists agree that God cannot have any emotion that is inconsistent with perfect rationality and perfect moral goodness. However, proponents of passibility maintain that it is sometimes appropriate for God to

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this and timelessness, see MULLINS (2016).

have emotions that are inconsistent with pure, undisturbable bliss. For example, if a human engages in a particularly wicked sin, the rational and moral emotion for God to have is anger. If the sinner repents, it is morally and rationally permissible for God to feel delight.

There are other contested attributes like simplicity vs unity. Simplicity was quite popular among Christians in the middle ages, whereas it has never been popular among Muslim theologians. Within Islam, simplicity has been the minority view, with the majority affirming divine unity (cf. HARVEY 2021; MCGINNIS 2022). Divine unity says that God has distinct attributes, and these attributes are coherently unified. Divine simplicity says that God does not have any attributes, properties, tropes, or anything of the sort. God does not have any unactualized potential, nor does God have distinct actions. All of the alleged distinct actions of God are really one act, and this one act is identical to the existence of God. All that might be predicated of God is really identical to God. This is somewhat difficult to conceptualize, but it becomes even more difficult when thinkers like Anselm, Maimonides and Avicenna tell us that not even conceptual distinctions apply to the simple God.<sup>2</sup>

A very important disputed attribute for this paper is omniscience. According to Zagzebski, “Omniscience is the property of having a complete and perfect grasp of all actual and possible subjective states, past, present, and future, from the first-person perspective of the possessor of the state” (2023, 119). I will have more to say about this disputed property below.

I started this discussion by saying that I wanted to argue that omniscience is not compatible with classical theism. Now that I have set the stage, I can describe the classical theistic model of God. Like most models, classical theists agree on the uncontested attributes of God. Unlike panentheism and pantheism, classical theism also affirms that God creates the universe out of nothing. Of course, this is not terribly unique since neoclassical theists and open theists also affirm creation *ex nihilo*.

Classical theism says that God has exhaustive foreknowledge of whichever universe He freely decides to create. While this helps distinguish classical theism from open theism, this is not terribly unique since neoclassical theists also affirm divine foreknowledge. What is supposed to make classical theism unique is its affirmation that God is timeless, immutable, simple, and impassible.

As stated before, Zagzebski thinks that omniscience is at least compatible with classical theism. I disagree. To state the obvious, omniscience

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<sup>2</sup> For more details on simplicity, see MULLINS and BYRD (2022).

is said to be a property, and divine simplicity says that God does not have any properties. That incompatibility is right there on the surface. Of course, it is not uncommon to see classical theists describe divine simplicity as an attribute. Which is incoherent on its face since divine simplicity would be the attribute which says that God does not have any attributes.<sup>3</sup> But the incoherence of divine simplicity is something that I have written about at length, so I shall have no more to say about it here. In the remainder of this paper, I will give some reasons for thinking that omnisubjectivity is incompatible with timelessness, immutability, and impassibility.

Zagzebski's overall strategy to defend the compatibility of omnisubjectivity and classical theism is twofold. First, she argues that the problems facing classical theism are independent of omnisubjectivity. The claim is that omnisubjectivity does not bring any new difficulties that classical theism does not already face. Second, the arguments that seek to show some sort of incompatibility fail. I will argue that Zagzebski is mistaken on both points.

## 2. HOW IS GOD OMNISUBJECTIVE?

According to Zagzebski, omnisubjectivity is God's ability to perfectly grasp all creaturely conscious states. The natural question to ask is how God gets this grasp. In earlier writings, Zagzebski took this to be God's perfect, total empathy. In her latest book, however, she wishes to offer three potential models or theories for how God gets this perfect grasp of all creaturely conscious states. These are empathy, perception, and panentheism. Since panentheism is a rival model of God, I will have no more to say about it here. My main interest is the compatibility of omnisubjectivity and classical theism. So I shall only discuss the empathy and perception theories of omnisubjectivity.

On the empathy model, God's omnisubjectivity is perfect total empathy, or "a complete and accurate copy of all a person's conscious states" (ZAGZEBSKI 2023, 66). For any conscious state that one might have, God has a perfect copy of it. For example, God really understands what it is like for you, from your own first-person perspective, to have anxiety. On the perceptual model, God merely perceives that you have some particular conscious state. According to Zagzebski, this does not really seem to give God full omnisubjectivity since

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<sup>3</sup> As Rebekah Rice points out, it is confusing when classical theism talks about God's properties being identical to God, and yet also saying that God does not have any properties (RICE 2022, 105–8).

God only knows that you have some particular conscious state. Mere perception does not give God a total grasp of that conscious state (72).

In the next section I will start running some arguments for the incompatibility of omnisubjectivity and classical theism. However, I wish to note another obvious area of conflict. Impassibility says that God's beliefs cannot be influenced by things external to the divine nature. Believing things on the basis of perceiving external creatures is a fairly straightforward violation of impassibility. So the perceptual model of omnisubjectivity has two strikes against it. First, it violates impassibility. Second, it admittedly cannot give us an omnisubjective God. With that in mind, I wish to look at the incompatibility between empathy and impassibility.

### 3. EMPATHY AND IMPASSIBILITY ARE INCOMPATIBLE

The empathy model of omnisubjectivity faces a very serious incompatibility problem with classical theism. Historically, classical theists have been very clear that God cannot literally have empathy or compassion (ANSELM 2008, VIII; DAVIES 2006, 234). Before one starts hiding behind analogical predication, it is important to remember that analogical predications are literal predications, not metaphorical predications (MUIS 2011). So when the classical theist says that God cannot literally have empathy or compassion, she can take this to be consistent with either analogical or univocal predication. Both views of predication are found among classical theists.

In order to understand why classical theists take empathy to be incompatible with impassibility, one will need to know what empathy is. Take two people named Sally and Ben, and consider the following definition of empathy.

EMPATHY: Sally empathizes with Ben if and only if (i) Sally is consciously aware that Ben is having an emotion E, (ii) Sally is consciously aware of what it feels like to have E, and (iii) on the right basis Sally is consciously aware of what it is like for Ben to have E.

Knowledge of "what it is like" is a kind of experiential knowledge that is not reducible to mere propositional knowledge. A common claim is that it is through empathy that one person comes to a deep understanding of another person because one comes to have both propositional and experiential

knowledge of that person's conscious states. You come to understand that person from the inside out.

Clause (iii) is one reason why proponents of impassibility will deny that God has empathy. The idea in (iii) is that something about Ben himself is what grounds Sally's empathy. Some sort of experience of Ben is required for Sally to have empathy with Ben. Otherwise, she is not empathizing with Ben. Recall that the impassible God cannot be influenced by anything external to the divine nature for His beliefs, emotions, and actions. God cannot satisfy (iii) on pain of violating impassibility. Proponents of impassibility say that it is a good thing that God does not have empathy, because otherwise He would be influenced by things external to the divine nature (ZANCHIUS 1601, 357–58).

Another reason that impassibility denies that God has empathy is because of clause (ii). God cannot have any emotion other than pure bliss. God cannot know what it is like to have any emotion other than pure bliss that is entirely grounded in Himself. So God cannot feel with you in any meaningful sense because most of your emotions are anything but pure happiness that are grounded entirely in yourself. So whatever emotion you are feeling, God cannot empathize.

Since an impassible God cannot meet two of the three conditions for empathy, there is a clear conflict between classical theism and the empathy model of omnism. Subjectivity.

#### 4. TIMELESSNESS, IMPASSIBILITY, AND OMNISUBJECTIVITY

In a previous publication, I had argued as follows against the compatibility of omnism. Subjectivity and timelessness.

- 1) If God suffers, then God suffers timelessly.
- 2) God suffers.
- 3) So God suffers timelessly.

I gather that most classical theists will find the idea of a timelessly suffering God to be most horrendous. In fact, I cited Marshall Randles as an example of a classical theist who finds (3) to be deeply unacceptable because it conflicts with God's pure, undisturbable happiness (cf. RANGLES 1900).

This is a valid argument, so one must check to see if it is sound. Premise (1) seems fairly straightforward. Whatever a timeless God is doing, He is

timelessly doing. Since there is no succession, no series of moments, in the life of a timeless God, He is simply doing whatever He is from a single, timeless moment. So the only other premise to consider is (2).

What should be clear is that (2) is incompatible with impassibility since it is impossible for an impassible God to suffer. Previously, I took (2) to be a straightforward entailment of omniscience, and thus took omniscience to entail a denial of impassibility. This is because Zagzebski herself had said so. According to Zagzebski in her earlier work, “a person cannot empathize with an emotion or a sensation without feeling the emotion or sensation because a copy of an emotion is an emotion, and a copy of a sensation is a sensation” (2008, 242–43). Any copy of a creature’s emotional suffering will be emotional suffering. As Zagzebski puts it, “a perfect copy of pain is surely ruled out by impassibility, as is a copy of every other sensation or emotion, whether positive or negative. A perfectly empathic being is affected by what is outside of him” (2013, 44–45). In light of these comments, I understood Zagzebski to already be denying impassibility because of her affirmation of omniscience. I also understood her to be affirming (2) in my argument. But allow me to give further justification for affirming (2).

As I see it, a perfect copy of a creature’s emotional suffering would quite obviously disturb God’s perfect bliss. It does not seem coherent to say that God is timelessly experiencing perfect, uninterrupted happiness whilst also timelessly experiencing a perfect representation of emotional suffering, turmoil, and pain. Moreover, in copying a creature’s conscious states, God is being moved or influenced by something external to Himself for His beliefs, emotions, and actions. Hence, an omniscient God cannot be an impassible God. So the affirmation of omniscience leads to (2). Given this, we get the conclusion to (3) in my argument.

However, it seems that Zagzebski has changed her mind, which often happens as one engages in sustained philosophical reflection on difficult topics. In her new book, she tries to defend the compatibility of omniscience with timelessness and impassibility. As far as I can tell, there are two sorts of strategies here to deal with my objection. First, deny premise (2). Second, accept the conclusion, and say who cares because the temporal God is worse off than a timeless God. I will take each in turn.



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## 5. DOES THE OMNISUBJECTIVE GOD SUFFER?

Say that one wishes to reject (2) of my argument. How would that go? Zagzebski says that it all depends on which model of omniscience one has in view. My argument assumes the empathy model of omniscience because that is the one employed by Zagzebski in her earlier work. In her recent book (2023, 99), she says that if one affirms the perceptual model of omniscience, then God can grasp all creaturely suffering without Himself suffering. The idea seems to be this. If God is merely perceiving that you are suffering, this need not entail that He is suffering along with you. In which case, a classical theist who wishes to affirm omniscience can reject (2) of my argument.

Personally, I find this to be an unsatisfactory defense of omniscience, impassibility, and timelessness. This is because the perceptual model does not actually give us an omniscient God. As Zagzebski herself notes, the disadvantage of the perceptual model is that it prevents God from fully grasping the subject as a subject (103). In developing the perceptual model, she notes that the model breaks down when it comes to the case of feelings. God being aware that you are in pain is not the same as consciousness of the way pain feels (72). As I understand Zagzebski's point, mere perception does not actually give God the phenomenal knowledge of what it is like to be you. In which case, this is not a model of omniscience at all. This is a serious problem for the compatibility of omniscience and classical theism. The failure of the perceptual model to deliver on phenomenal knowledge cannot be used as a means to defend the compatibility of omniscience and classical theism. The failure in the perceptual model is precisely what prevents it from being a case of omniscience. So I see this as a dead end when it comes to cogently rejecting (2).

Since the perceptual model fails to deliver omniscience, the only option left is empathy. As stated above, empathy of suffering entails suffering. Zagzebski admitted as much in her previous work, though she has changed her mind. In her recent attempt to reject (2), she says that empathy involves an imagined copy of suffering. She claims that this need not involve God suffering. Zagzebski states, "Empathizing with suffering is imaginative suffering, which is not suffering" (99).

Personally, I struggle to understand this. It looks like a rejection of omniscience to me. I understand the general point that when one person empathizes with another, that need not involve the empath agreeing with the

perspective of the other. However, I do not think that this helps one affirm omnisubjectivity and reject (2), the claim that God suffers. For example, say I empathize with a deeply immoral person like a sadist who enjoys torturing innocent people. I really come to understand the sadist's perspective from the inside out. I really feel what the sadist is feeling, and deeply grasp why the sadist feels that way. I can come to grasp the sadist's perspective and still disagree entirely with the sadist's delight in torturing the innocent. In fact, my deep grasp of their delight will bring me subsequent feelings of disgust. My disgust is partially grounded in my grasp of what it is like for the sadist to delight in torturing the innocent, and partially grounded in my own moral evaluation of the situation.

Notice something important in this case. My disgust arises from grasping the sadist's delight. I really do feel the delight of the sadist, though I disagree with the sadist. If I did not feel the delight of the sadist, I do not know how I could meaningfully say that I had a full cognitive grasp on the sadist's delight. I want to say the same thing is true in the case of suffering. If I do not know what it feels like to suffer, then I am struggling to understand how I can claim to have a full cognitive grasp on the phenomenology of suffering. Since it is metaphysically impossible for the impassible God to suffer, I find it impossible to claim that such a God can have a full cognitive grasp on the phenomenology of suffering.

Since omnisubjectivity demands a full cognitive grasp on the phenomenology of suffering, I find myself returning to the conclusion of Zagzebski in her earlier work. A copy of pain is painful. Otherwise, I lose my grasp on how it is a genuine copy. An empathetic copy of your suffering is painful. If God is omnisubjective, then I see no way to coherently reject (2) of my argument. An omnisubjective God is a suffering God. If an omnisubjective God is a timeless God, then God timelessly suffers. That is a suffering that never began to exist, and never ceases to exist. That is not something that your typical classical theist is going to accept.

#### 6. WHO CARES? IS TIMELESS SUFFERING REALLY ANY WORSE THAN TEMPORAL SUFFERING?

The first strategy for dealing with my argument was to find a premise in the argument to reject. I have argued that there is no plausible premise to reject. What about the second strategy for dealing with my argument? One could

accept that God timelessly suffers, and then say who cares. Zagzebski says that it is no big deal if God timelessly suffers since God also timelessly feels joy, happiness, and so on. Further, it is no worse a problem than a temporal God suffering. In fact, she suggests that the suffering of a temporal God is worse than that of a timeless being whose suffering exists for only a single, timeless moment. According to Zagzebski (2023, 99), a temporal and passible God will suffer for a very long time, and will never forget the suffering.

As you might anticipate, I disagree. When it comes to divine temporality, God's emotional life is constantly changing as He is appropriately responsive to the values and ever changing tensed facts of the world. Prior to creation, God is in a state of bliss. When God freely decides to create our particular universe, God knows that this universe will contain suffering, and that He will suffer in solidarity with His creatures. He does not ask us to undergo any hardship that He Himself is unwilling to participate in. God also knows that His project of befriending humanity is going to be worth it in the long run, so He is willing to suffer with creation in order to achieve His goal. Once God has achieved His goal, both God and creatures will enjoy everlasting happiness. Sure, there is divine suffering along the way as Zagzebski points out. However, the suffering is temporary, and pales in comparison to the weight of eternal glory that awaits us on the other side of the eschaton.

What about the God of classical theism? Things are very different. To start, the suffering of a timeless God never begins and never ends. God is in a state of eternal suffering. That is different from the divine temporalist position which says that God's suffering began to exist, and will come to an end. I find this to be significantly better than a timeless state of eternal suffering. At the very least, a temporal God can say, "Thank goodness that is over." That is not something that a timeless God can say.

#### 7. ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS AND THE RATIONALITY OF GOD'S EMOTIONAL LIFE

This whole business of a timelessly suffering God raises a problem for the rationality of God's emotional life. Thus, omnisubjectivity does create a unique problem for classical theism that it would not otherwise face. Here is why. Our emotions are typically justified by tensed facts.<sup>4</sup> Tensed facts are facts

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<sup>4</sup> For a full defense of this claim, see PEARSON (2018).

about what is happening right now, what has happened in the past, and what will happen in the future. These are not the sort of facts that can justify the emotions of a timeless being since these are necessarily temporal facts that change over time.

The emotional life of a temporal divine being is justified by what is happening right now. His emotions are going to be perfectly appropriate to the situation. When a sinner repents, God rejoices. When an innocent suffers, God will be angry or sad. Once the final judgement has come about and all is set right, God will be happy.

The God of classical theism is not able to be appropriately responsive to tensed facts precisely because that involves change, succession, and being moved by something external to the divine nature. If God's emotional life is influenced by what is happening right now, then God cannot be timeless, immutable, nor impassible.

The problem of a timeless being possessing knowledge of tensed facts is a topic that has been discussed to death. A closely related well-known problem for classical theism is trying to figure out how a God without succession could possibly interact with a world filled with succession. Zagzebski (2023, 92) says that there are various models of how a timeless God can interact with a temporal world. She says that if these work, then they can help omnisubjectivity as well. Though she admits that these models might not work.

The problem is that the models she gestures towards do not work. For example, Zagzebski refers to Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann's ET-simultaneity defense of timelessness (92).<sup>5</sup> It is well known that Stump and Kretzmann's ET-simultaneity is explanatorily vacuous. The main objection from classical and non-classical theists is that the model literally explains nothing about how a timeless God could interact with a temporal world. The model merely asserts that a timeless God can interact, but without any explanation.<sup>6</sup>

What is often not pointed out about this model is that it is so sparse on details that it does not even attempt to explain what ontology of time it is working with. Does it affirm presentism, eternalism, a growing block, a moving

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<sup>5</sup> She also refers to the work of Brian Leftow on time and eternity, which is notoriously difficult to understand. For example, Katherin Rogers rejects Leftow's view because she cannot understand it. Zagzebski also gestures towards Rogers' work, which I do find to be sufficiently clear. However, I have elsewhere argued that Rogers' account of God and time does not succeed (MULLINS 2016, chap. 6).

<sup>6</sup> The literature on ET-simultaneity is quite large, with most coming to the conclusion that the theory explains nothing. For a recent summary of this literature, see DENG (2018, 20–25).

spotlight, or something else? No one knows.<sup>7</sup> So ET-simultaneity has a glaring hole at the heart of the theory. This is one of many reasons why classical theists like Hugh McCann do not feel any sympathy towards ET-simultaneity. According to McCann, ET-simultaneity “is both unnecessary and misguided” (2012, 53).

As I have argued in *The End of the Timeless God*, there are no coherent working theories for how a timeless God can interact with a temporal world. In the 17th century, Pierre Gassendi offered a similar complaint. He expresses a dissatisfaction with the fact that no defender of divine timelessness has explained how a successionless eternity could be coexistent with the successions of time, and states they will continue in this failure until the second coming. Proponents of timelessness have not bestowed “one serious thought upon the consideration of it; for had they, doubtless they must have found their Wit a loss in the Labyrinth of Fancy, and perceived themselves reduced to this Exigent: either that they had fooled themselves in trifling with words not well understood; or that they had praecariously usurped the Quaestion” (CHARLETON 1654, 80). While I might put things in less dramatic terms, I agree with the sentiment of Gassendi’s statement.

Of course, at this point, Zagzebski can say that this is just a series of independent problems for timelessness. Omnisubjectivity is not adding any new problem. Again, I disagree. The problem that omnisubjectivity brings with it is the irrationality of God’s emotional life. On classical theism, God is in a state of pure bliss that is grounded entirely in Himself. All of His knowledge is self-knowledge. God’s emotional life is not responsive to creatures, but rather only responsive to Himself. As stated before, the claim is that God’s essence is the supreme value in reality, and it would be irrational to have an emotion grounded in anything less than the greatest good (cf. SILVERMAN 2013; WITTMANN 2016). Since God’s emotion of pure happiness is grounded entirely and only in the greatest good (i.e. Himself), His emotion is perfectly justified.

Here is the rub. Omnisubjectivity demands that some of God’s emotions be grounded in things external to the divine nature. God is supposed to be moved and influenced by creatures to varying degrees for His emotions. Zagzebski explicitly agrees with this point in her recent book (ZAGZEBSKI 2023, 98). Well, that is not compatible with impassibility. Further, there are two unique problems for timelessness that come from omnisubjectivity. First, causation. Second, the rationality of God’s beliefs.

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<sup>7</sup> I have personally asked Stump which ontology of time she is working with on several occasions and I have never received an answer.

I start with causation. A fairly standard causal principle is that causes are temporally prior to their effects. Some philosophers do argue for the coherence of causes being simultaneous with their effects, but all the cases I know of involve that state of affairs being put in place by a temporally prior cause. For example, it is sometimes said that a capstone simultaneously holds the other stones in place. Of course, the capstone was previously put in place by the builder, so the whole event in question has a cause that is temporally prior (SWINBURNE 2016, 155–61).

One difficulty with classical theism is that it asks us to believe that a timeless cause can have a temporal effect. As I have pointed out above, no one has offered a working model of how a timeless God can bring about temporal effects. So the classical theist is asking us to deny a plausible causal principle that causes are temporally prior to their effects, and asking us to do so without offering a working explanation of timeless causes with temporal effects. That is an implausible position to be in, yet omnisubjectivity adds further implausibility. Given either the empathy or perceptual models of omnisubjectivity, God's emotions and beliefs are being influenced by the created order. What this means is that temporal causes are supposedly having timeless effects. I find it more plausible that temporal causes have temporal effects. I do not understand how a temporal cause could have a timeless effect. I dare say that this is implausible. In fact, historically, classical theists themselves saw this as implausible. Theologians like Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas are very clear that God's beliefs are only based upon Himself and are in no way based upon the temporal world. Otherwise, God would be temporal (MULLINS 2016, chap. 4). So trying to add omnisubjectivity into the mix brings about an additional implausibility that classical theists in the past would not be willing to accept.

Here is the second additional problem for classical theism from omnisubjectivity—the rationality of God's emotional life. Imagine God in His eternal now that lacks a before and after. In this single timeless present God is feeling all of the things that are allegedly responses to creation. This is a very odd picture to be sure since the successive states of creation come and go. Here is what that means. Prior to creation, there is God all alone. God is suffering in response to the atrocities of the 20th century. That seems irrational since the events of the 20th century have not happened yet. At this point, the sum total facts of reality include God and nothing else. It seems implausible to say that God is being appropriately responsive to the tensed facts of what is happening right now since the universe does not exist. Nor will it do any good to say that

God is being appropriately responsive to what will happen since a timeless God quietly literally cannot have any foreknowledge. Foreknowledge implies a temporal relation of before and after, and a timeless God cannot stand in any such temporal relation of priority. While classical theists commonly affirm that God has exhaustive foreknowledge, in their sober moments they point out that *fore* must be taken in some non-literal way (MOLINA 1988, 103). I shall not press this point here.

The problem gets worse. Imagine the sum total facts of reality after the eschaton. No more pain and suffering. Justice and peace have been achieved. The righteous are celebrating, yet God is suffering from the atrocities of the 20th century. The rational thing to do would be to no longer suffer since evil is no more and shalom has set in, but God just keeps on suffering. That does not seem remotely rational. The rationality of emotions demands that a person be appropriately responsive to reasons and values, and a major source of reasons are tensed facts. The tensed facts in this situation demand no more suffering, yet God eternally suffers. This is a deeply irrational deity. That is a unique problem that omnisubjectivity adds to classical theism.

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this paper, I have pointed out multiple areas of conflict between omnisubjectivity and classical theism. I have also argued that omnisubjectivity does bring a unique set of problems to classical theism that it would not otherwise have to deal with. These arguments could lead to several different conclusions. If one is deeply committed to classical theism, then the obvious conclusion is to reject omnisubjectivity. Personally, I am persuaded by Zagzebski's arguments for accepting omnisubjectivity. So the affirmation of omnisubjectivity gives me further reasons to reject classical theism and explore the other models of God that are well-represented throughout history and across the world's religions.

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#### OMNISUBJECTIVITY AND CLASSICAL THEISM ARE NOT COMPATIBLE

##### Summary

Linda Zagzebski argues that omnisubjectivity is compatible with a classical theistic model of God. In this paper I argue that omnisubjectivity is not possibly compatible with classical theism. In particular, omnisubjectivity is in conflict with timelessness, immutability, simplicity, and impassibility.

**Keywords:** omnisubjectivity; timelessness; immutability; simplicity; impassibility

#### WSZECHSUBIEKTYWNOŚĆ I TEIZM KLASYCZNY SĄ NIEUZGADNIALNE

##### Streszczenie

Linda Zagzebski argumentuje, że wszechsubiektywność jest zgodna z klasycznym teistycznym modelem Boga. W tym artykule argumentuję, że wszechsubiektywności nie da się pogodzić z klasycznym teizmem. W szczególności wszechsubiektywność kłóci się z beczasowością, niezmiennością, prostotą i niecierpiętlivością.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wszechsubiektywność; beczasowość; niezmienność; prostota; niecierpiętlivość