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# Logical Pantheism

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**Abstract**

Logical Pantheism is a view according to which God could be identified with logical space, that is, with the space of all possible worlds. It differs from classical pantheism in the latter identifies God merely with the actual Universe, or with nature. There are several reasons why Logical Pantheism is considered superior to classical pantheism by its proponents. One such reason is that it helps the traditional ontological (that is, a priori) argument for the existence of God go through unproblematically. Another core reason is that it ensures all greatmaking properties as belonging to God, in virtue of it containing all possible properties. The view was put forward and defended by István Aranyosi (2013) and by Yujin Nagasawa (2016).

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Logical pantheism is the view that God is identical to logical space. It has been propounded and defended independently by István Aranyosi (2013) and Yujin Nagasawa (2016). I will focus on Aranyosi's version, as it is book-length and because the phrase "logical pantheism" is his, but the last section will be dedicated to Nagasawa's version, which he calls "modal panentheism". The main difference between them lies in their different conception of logical space: Nagasawa adopts the standard notion, namely, that of logical space as the totality of possible worlds, whereas Aranyosi has a revisionary conception of it, which includes impossible worlds, and in which it is what he calls "logical regions" (which are congenial to situations in situation theory, cf. Barwise & Perry, 1981, 1983) rather than worlds that play the role of building blocks.

## 2 | THE CONCEPTION OF LOGICAL SPACE IN LOGICAL PANTHEISM

The standard notion of logical space is that of the space of all possibilities. This, as well as the phrase "logical space", we owe to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* ([1922] 2010). However, what is usually meant by "possibilities" is *possible worlds*, and this notion first emerges in Gottfried Leibniz's philosophy, and gets fully developed in technical work in modal logics in the 20th Century by authors such as Jaakko Hintikka (1957, 1961) and Saul Kripke (1959, 1963).

In logical pantheism, Logical Space (with capital letters) is given a revisionary explication in guise of a few principles. The core ones are the following:

*Logical Totalitarianism*: Logical Space is the sum of all logical regions, the Absolute Plenitude, reflecting all possibilities.
*Logical Egalitarianism*: All objects and states of affairs in logical space have an equal claim to being.
*Existential Relativity*: To exist is to exist relative to a region of logical space.

Logical regions include possible and impossible worlds, possible and impossible partial worlds, or situations, as well as supra-world entities, like sets and sums of possible worlds. Logical Space is closed under any logical operation on any proposition whatsoever, hence it is the Absolute Everything, that is, the largest conceivable space whatsoever. This in effect, is the thesis of *Logical Totalitarianism*.

*Logical Egalitarianism* is a thesis inspired by Meinongianism and by the indexical view of actuality. Meinongianism asserts that there is a sense in which every describable object, including merely possible (e.g. the golden mountain) and contradictory ones (the round square), has some sort of being, which Alexius Meinong called "*So-Sein*" ([1904] 1960), translated as *so-being*. The indexical understanding of actuality, put forward by David Lewis (1970, 1973), asserts that "actual world" is an indexical term so that under, for example, a concretist realist reduction of modal discourse á la Lewis, in which one is supposed to quantify over concrete possible worlds, every world is actual for its inhabitants. Though superficially resembling Lewis' view, the logical pantheist system differs from it when it comes to the relationship between actuality and existence. While Lewis does have a notion of actuality that is speaker or thinker relative (the indexical analysis of "actual"), his notion of existence is absolute. As a consequence, he denies the thesis of Actualism, that is, the view that everything that exists is actual, because that would mean that only things in the space-time surrounding us and Lewis exists. However, according to the logical pantheist view, both actuality and existence are relative. Consequently, actualism is accepted in virtue of the rejection of absolute existence: nothing exists simpliciter, but everything exists relative to a logical region that depicts it as existing, hence, everything that exists is actual, given that everything is actual only relative to a logical region that depicts it as actual. This, in effect, is the thesis of *Existential Relativity*. The predicates "is actual" and "exists" pick the same entities out at each logical region. Finally, the indexical view of "actual" is or can be accepted by the logical pantheist, but as a *consequence* of existential relativity, rather than as a primitive.

## 3 | THE IDENTIFICATION OF GOD AND LOGICAL SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The preferred metaphor for Logical Space in logical pantheism is that of God's drawing board. But then the core theological thesis of the view is that God is *identical* to His drawing board. The core argument for this thesis is that it is the only thesis that makes a sound ontological argument for the existence of God possible.

Anselm of Canterbury is credited with the discovery and first formulation of the ontological argument, in his 1078 work *Proslogion*. The argument aims at proving the existence of God based exclusively on conceptual, a priori known premises. God is defined as the greatest conceivable being (GCB); then it is argued that if GCB did not exist in reality, only in thought, then there would be another conceivable entity, E, such that it exists both in thought and in reality. But then E is truly the GCB, hence, God exists. It is virtually universally agreed that the problem of the Anselmian ontological argument is that it merely proves that *if* God exists, *then* God exists necessarily. However, an improved version, put forward by Charles Hartshorne (1941) and by Norman Malcolm (1960), uses the above-mentioned valid conclusion of the old argument (*viz.* that if God, exists, God exists necessarily) as a *premise*. It states that God is conceivable, hence God exists at a possible world; therefore—since God exists necessarily, if he exists—God must exist in *all* possible worlds; a fortiori, God exists actually.

The argument, as later formulated by Alvin Plantinga (1978, p. 215), assumes S5 modal logic, namely the axiom: $\Diamond\Box p \supset \Box p$ (or equivalently: $\Diamond p \supset \Box\Diamond p$), $\Diamond p$ means "it is possible that p", and $\Box p$ means "it is necessary that p". For the

formal version, let us denote by *g* the proposition that there is a maximally great being. The argument can be formulated as follows:

1. $\Box(g \supset \Box g)$
2. $\Diamond g$
3. $\Diamond \Box g$ (from 1, 2)
4. $\Diamond \Box g \supset \Box g$ (axiom 5)
5. $\Box g$ (from 3, 4)
6. $g$ (from 5)

A shorter version of the argument can be formulated, based on Brouwer's system B. The Brouwer axiom states that $p \supset \Box \Diamond p$, which is equivalent to $\Diamond \Box p \supset p$, so the argument becomes:

1. $\Box (g \supset \Box g)$
2. $\Diamond g$
3. $\Diamond \Box g$ (from 1, 2)
4. $\Diamond \Box g \supset g$ (Axiom B)
5. $g$ (from 3, 4)

The problem with this revamped ontological argument is that given the strong modal epistemological implication of premises 1 and 2, namely, $\Diamond \Box g$ (i.e. 3.), it is now doubtful that 2. is really justified. By modal epistemology here we mean that claims of knowledge possibility are grounded in conceivability. Justifying the belief in partial conclusion 3. implies that one can conceive of a *necessary* god. But this would further imply that one cannot conceive of a godless world, which appears dubious. We could easily conceive of a completely empty world, or a world containing a small piece of mud and nothing else, etc. Furthermore, the two competing claims—that one can conceive of a necessary god and that one can conceive of an empty world—are not on the same footing when it comes to epistemic fundamentality; more exactly, the first one involves iterated modal operators ($\Diamond \Box g$), whereas the second one is innocent since it is non-iterated ($\Diamond g$), This, in effect, is the modal depth objection to the modal ontological argument: that it is easier and more innocent to claim that one can conceive of a godless world than to claim that one can conceive of a necessary god. The latter claim would involve conceiving that it is inconceivable for there to be a godless world.

Logical pantheism is a solution to this problem. Since Logical Space is closed under negation, even the logical region obtained via the negation of GCB's existence is itself a proper part of Logical Space. Equating God with Logical Space answers the modal depth objection because Logical Space is constructed in such a way that it is absolutely necessary and at the same time it does not conflict with the conceivability of logical regions at which there is no "old school" (that is, theistic) god.

## 4 | HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

Classical pantheism identifies God with nature or with the Universe, whereas logical pantheism identifies God with the space of all possibilities, which is Logical Space as understood according to the core theses explained above. It is not obvious that either classical or logical pantheism is satisfactory from a classical theistic point of view, but, anyway, that was never the main motivation for such view to begin with. Rather, it is the thought that giving up the requirement that God be a person has certain advantages. Identifying God with Logical Space can accommodate several

divine attributes that classical theists subscribe to. Considering a relative of Logical Pantheism, namely, a pantheism that identifies God with the set of all Lewis-style, concrete possible worlds, Graham Oppy (1997, p. 329) writes:

> Consider the modal-realist view mentioned above. Everything that can be done is done by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part – so there is a sense in which this being is omniscient. Every possible virtue is possessed by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part – so there is a sense in which this being is omnibenevolent. (Not quite the traditional sense, of course. After all, every possible vice is also possessed by some part of the thing of which everything is a part – so, in the same kind of sense, this being is omnimalevolent. Moreover, this remains true even if lots of apparently possible evil worlds are deemed impossible.) Every thing is located in the thing of which every thing is a part – so there is a sense in which this being is omnipresent. Provided that one is prepared to allow temporal parts into one's ontology, one can also get a sense in which the thing of which every thing is a part is omnitemporal. And so on. (Perhaps you could even make a case for the claim that the sum of possible worlds is a being than which no greater can be conceived: after all, on this view, there is no greater being to have conceptions of!)

While Oppy's tone seems to indicate sarcasm, the implications he is correctly describing are embraced as *benefits* of views in the same family as Logical Pantheism. Logical pantheism's special and revisionary notion of Logical Space, however, is a further addition to a pantheistic notion of God, one that is arguably congenial to some historical precedents of attempts to formulate a conception of God as being "beyond existence and nonexistence" or transcending all descriptions and binary oppositions, even the opposition "transcendent/immanent". Aranyosi (2013: ch. 7), perhaps overly speculatively, considers the following philosophers and theologians of the past who put forward such a conception, and hence anticipate Logical Pantheism: Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Frithjoff Schuon, Paul Tillich. I will only briefly review the first three of these authors here.

*Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite* (AD 5th–6th centuries), was a Neoplatonist mystic who put forward a view of God as being "beyond assertion and denial". What he meant was that neither the cataphatic, or positive way of describing God, i.e., by ascribing positive predicates to Him, which was the orthodox teaching of Christian theology, nor the apophatic one, or negative way, which asserts that one can describe God only as what God is not, that is, by ascribing negative predicates, which was the view of the early Christian Neoplatonic school, is appropriate as they both limit God's greatness. The following two quotes express this idea eloquently:

> … nor does It belong to the category of non-existence or to that of existence; … nor can any affirmation or negation apply to it; for while applying affirmations and negations to those orders of being that come next to It, we apply not unto It either affirmation or negation, inasmuch as it transcends all affirmation by being the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and transcends all negation by the pre-eminence of Its simple and absolute nature – free from every limitation and beyond them all." (*Mystical Theology*, V trans. Rolt [1920] 2004)

> For instance, they say concerning the Divine Unity, or Super-Essence, that the undivided Trinity holds in a common Unity without distinction Its Subsistence beyond Being, Its Godhead beyond Deity, Its Goodness beyond Excellence; the Identity, surpassing all things, of Its transcendently Individual Nature; Its Oneness above Unity; Its Namelessness and Multiplicity of Names; Its Unknowableness and perfect Intelligibility; Its universal Affirmation and universal Negation in a state above all Affirmation and Negation … (*The Divine Names*, II.4, trans. Rolt [1920] 2004)

Logical Totalitarianism is a model that could explain these puzzling assertions by Pseudo-Dionysius. Everything thinkable is relative, according to him; God from this point of view must be beyond the thinkable, because whatever

is thinkable is thought in terms of affirmation and negation, but God is supposed to perpetually transcend these. God is the only non-relative item, not even a being or non-being, which are themselves relative. Pseudo-Dionysius also claims in other places that God is both immanent and transcendent, which, again, is congenial to the idea of Logical Space as conceived by logical pantheism (cf. Rolt [1920] 2004, p. 15).

Meister Eckhart (c.1260–c.1327), German Dominican theologian and mystic, was considered a heretic and censored in his time. Eckhart was influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius, and his writings contain paradoxical seeming statements meant to emphasize both the transcendence and immanence of God, such as that whereas of created things you can assert a difference, that is, something that differentiates them, of God you can only say he is, so he is indistinct (Turner, 2009, p. 132). Eckhart emphasizes the transcendent aspect of God, with God's unique mode of being (absolute as opposed to relative) but he always couples such claims with claims that God is also immanent. Such passages have always been interpreted as expressing the ineffability of God, a characteristic claim of mystics. However, the desert Eckhart is talking about "stretches out immeasurably", so it looks as though it is something all-encompassing, but itself existing not in time and space, being beyond these categories.

Nicholas of Cusa's account of God as the "Not-Other" appears to be convoluted at first sight, yet, arguably not far from to the way logical pantheism accounts for Logical Space:

> Not Other is not an other, nor is it other than any other, nor is it an other in an other – for no other reason than that it is Not Other, which can in no way be other, as if something were lacking to it, as to an other. For an other which is other than something lacks that than which it is other. But Not Other, because it is not other than anything, *does not lack anything nor can anything be outside it. (De li Non Aliud/On the Not Other*, 1462, ch.6, quoted in Hopkins, 1987) (*My emphasis*)

According to Nicholas, God is a plenitude, it is not "an other" whatsoever. To be "an other" means to be distinct and distinguishable in perception, imagination, or in mere conception, and God is beyond all such distinctions. Nicholas emphasizes that to be "an other" is to lack something relative to something else, which means that all existents except God are relative existents; this is akin to the thesis of *Existential Relativity*. God, on the other hand, is the only item that exists absolutely, an absolute plenitude that does not lack anything. This, however, does not mean that God is transcendent. God manifests all over the domain of relative existence.

In all these accounts, the idea put forward is that of a notion of divinity that is neither simply the same as the Universe [as in classical pantheism], nor having a completely transcendent aspect [as in classical theism]; furthermore, there does not seem to be any obvious or orthodox way to try to formalize the ontology that seems to be assumed by these authors. The list is, of course, not exhaustive and it is not supposed to offer a detailed scholarly argument, but rather to point out that there as been a notion of God in the history of philosophy that is not easy to understand unless we revise some standard views about ontology and modal space.

## 5 | CRITICISM

Criticism of Logical Pantheism have targeted either the formal, ontological, non-theological foundations, or the theological part, that is, the plausibility of it as a theology.

One of the complaints is that although the idea of having the most inclusive pantheism possible is original and radical, the view, as formulated, is silent about the apparent implication that this most inclusive, completely unrestricted correspondence between what can expressed by one's language and logical regions leads to paradox, such as the Liar Paradox. Thus, Daniel Bonevac (2014) argues that Logical Totalitarianism suggests an analogy with theories of truth, propositions, properties, and sets, which raises the worry that Logical Space is not well-defined. As Tarski (1956, pp. 164–165) pointed it out, the universality of natural languages, that is, their ability to talk about anything that can be talked about, is the source of the liar paradox.

Benedikt Paul Göcke (2015), on the other hand, finds fault in Logical Pantheism being unable to offer a non-question begging argument for existential relativity, that is, to the view that existence is not absolute.

Finally, Brian Leftow (2016) finds it hard to accommodate Logical Pantheism with the idea of worship, which seems to be a requirement for divinity:

> Istvan Aranyosi argues that we think an impersonal pantheist deity fails as an object of worship because it does not elicit appropriate emotions. But as he sees it—Sufism being his main example— worship is of two sorts: exoteric, which is merely the following of certain rules, and "esoteric," the worship of (p. 74) "experts" in worship, which is the pursuit of mystical experience.22 This, he says, is "about a psychological-spiritual state of the subject who worships ... not about any cognitive-theoretical construct ... the main focus is a state to be reached by the worshipper." The state's content is beyond description; so no description of a deity could be worse or better at articulating its content; and so a pantheist "object" for it is as good as any other. Aranyosi might say, then, that construing worship as talking-to is too bound to exoteric practice; "true worship" is beyond speech.

> Well, mystics themselves would be surprised to hear that they aim only at a psychological state. They would say that they aim at union with God, and that a description of God is integral to the pursuit. This is true even of the Sufi prayer Aranyosi instances, which consists largely in recitation of names (canonical descriptions) of God. His other example, Christian Palamism, involves a verbal formula invoking Christ and His mercy. Prayer, whether the Sufi *dhikr* or the Palamist Jesus prayer, is talking to. So the mystic pursuit Aranyosi sees as "esoteric" worship is no exception to the talking-to account. Again, in the Christian mystical tradition more generally, meditation on the nature of God and the life of Christ plays a central role in leading up to the union experience (Leftow, 2016, pp. 73–74).

All these criticisms point to the fact that the ambition of a revisionary account, with respect to both the formal-ontological and the theological aspect needs more elaboration and discussion of potential dangers of incoherence.

## 6 | NAGASAWA'S VERSION

Yujin Nagasawa's Modal Panentheism (2016) consists of two theses: (1) that God is the totality of possible worlds. (2) All possible worlds exist to the same extent that the actual world does. Nagasawa works, in effect, with an ordinary conception of logical space, as the space of *standard* possible worlds, and assumes a Lewis style indexical account of actuality as well as a concretist possibilism, according to which all possible worlds exist and are concrete, like the actual world.

He mentions the ontological argument and Anselm's definition of God as the GCB in the context of how that could serve as a prompt for one's acceptance of modal panentheism:

> If our world is a four-dimensional object consisting of space and time, then perhaps the totality of all possible worlds is equivalent to logical space or a five-dimensional object consisting of space, time, and modality. God, according to this view, is the most encompassing being because it extends maximally in space, time, and modality. Nothing can extend further than such a being.

> [...] one strategy that could motivate modal realism in this context would be to construct an argument similar to the ontological argument: That than which no greater can be thought is, according to modal panentheism, the totality of all possible worlds. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that some of the worlds in the totality of all possible worlds do not exist. It then follows that another totality can be

thought that is greater than the totality of all possible worlds. Such a totality is thought to encompass all possible worlds and all of these worlds are thought to exist. However, it is contradictory to say that a being can be thought that is greater than the totality of all possible worlds because the totality of all possible worlds is, by definition, that than which no greater can be thought. (2016: 94)

So, whereas Aranyosi argues for Logical Pantheism as the view that *would* make the ontological argument go through, unlike the theistic notion of God, under which this argument is unconvincing (thus being prim facie suspicious of the classical theistic use of ontological argument), Nagasawa seems to stress the acceptability of at least the Anselmian notion of God as GCB, and argue that his modal panentheism is derivable from it: "we can derive modal panentheism—perhaps counterintuitively—from the Anselmian definition of God, which is widely accepted among traditional theists" (Nagasawa, 2016, p. 91).

Nagasawa then argues that modal panentheism can account for all the great making properties of God characteristic of classical theism. He points out, however, that there is a version of the argument from evil that seems to be special to modal panentheism:

"The Problem of Evil for Modal Panentheism: Modal panentheism says that God is identical with the totality of all possible worlds. However, the totality of all possible worlds includes all possible instances of evil, including the very worst possible instances of evil, and God is not an evil being. Therefore, modal panentheism is false." (2016: 101)

Nagasawa thinks that this new problem of evil is worse than any previous version that was marring theism (2016: 103).

Aranyosi, on the other hand, while aware of such an apparent problem (2013: 143), thinks that, on the contrary, the right interpretation is that the problem does not really arise in Logical Pantheism. According to him, there are countless logical regions, with a vast range of quantities and qualities of evil occurring relative to them, so there is nothing to explain about the actual world, since the latter is simply one of these many regions. The actual world is neither the best conceivable logical region, nor the worst, and this is not surprising given the infinite number of regions with varying degrees of evil. We inhabit this region, and it is necessary that such a region exist, otherwise Logical Space would not be complete. Furthermore, unlike in classical theism, there is no need for a theodicy. Evil is necessary, and our world has a certain amount of it. If God is identical to Logical Space, the argument goes, then there is no problem of evil at all; it does not arise.

These two very different responses indicate the difference in the starting point and the agenda of the two authors. Nagasawa seems to be more concerned with satisfying structures of classical theism, whereas Aranyosi appears to promote a revisionary approach, even if that conflicts with classical theist requirements or even with orthodoxy in more basic domains, such as the account of modality and logical space.

## 7 | CONCLUSION

Logical Pantheism appears to be a prima facie coherent new version of pantheism. Whereas traditional pantheism identifies God with nature or the universe, Logical Pantheism identifies God with logical space, either conceived classical as the set of all possible worlds, or non-classically as the set of all logical regions, as explained above. The view appears to have several advantages over traditional pantheism, such as that it offers an interpretation of the Anselmian notion of God as the GCN that supports the ontological argument as acceptable and even uncontroversial. However, it also seems to bring about new problems, such as a seemingly more damaging argument from evil, given that if God is identical to logical space, then God contains not only actual evil, but even the most horrible conceivable evils. Time will tell if the view enjoys further development and more detailed analysis.

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