EVOLUTIONARY THEODICY, REDEMPTION, AND TIME

by Mark Ian Thomas Robson

Abstract. Of the many problems which evolutionary theodicy tries to address, the ones of animal suffering and extinction seem especially intractable. In this essay, I show how C. D. Broad's growing block conception of time does much to ameliorate the problems. Additionally, I suggest it leads to another way of understanding the soul. Instead of it being understood as a substance, it is seen as a history—a history which is resurrected in the end times. Correspondingly, redemption, I argue, should not be seen as an event which redeems some future portion of time. God's triumph is over all of history, not just some future temporal portion.

Keywords: growing block view of time; Jürgen Moltmann; Wolfhart Pannenberg; redemption; Robert John Russell; Christopher Southgate

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If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.

T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," from *Four Quartets*

In this essay, I will explore a particular conception of time put forward by C. D. Broad and assess whether an adoption of his view might help to ameliorate some of the problems that evolution poses for belief in the God of classical theism.[1] I will conclude that Broad's "growing block" conception of time does, indeed, help to ameliorate the evolutionary problem of evil. Additionally, I shall propose that this view of time offers another way of understanding the soul. I will suggest that the soul should be identified with an individual's past (or parts of it), and that the whole of a sentient being does not emerge until it is combined with the present, unfolding moment—a moment which is hugely expanded to include the whole of its past. God can redeem the past since it never goes out of existence, and redeemed histories combine with a widened consciousness which is able to bring the past to life again.

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Before we start, I need to explain what I shall mean by the word "redeem" in this essay since the word will be repeated throughout. The word has a rich variety of meanings, cognate terms, and connotations including ransom, liberation, propitiation, expiation, purification, sacrifice, reconciliation, atonement, and satisfaction.[2] All of these words are themselves subject to fierce dispute. I will have to bypass the complexities here and simply briefly define what I shall mean by redemption because otherwise the essay will become impossibly long. By the redemption of time and the individual events in time, I shall (at least) mean that the significance of events and the way they interweave together are made beautiful. This will be a complex, often terrifying beauty—an awesome beauty, a fascinating and mind-reeling, stupendous beauty.[3] Given some of the things which constitute history this is hardly surprising—it can hardly be expected that the beauty will be pretty. I will also argue that redemption must be *personal*. By that I mean that the beauty has to be appreciated by the sentient participants in history. It is not good enough to redeem the past if those inhabitants of the past are in no position to see its transformation. I shall argue that if history is thought to carry on existing (in a sense yet to be defined), then there is the possibility of God making something beautiful out of history's travails. I hope what I mean shall become clearer as the essay proceeds.

Let us briefly explore the problems that evolution creates for believers in the God of classical theism—a God who is perfectly good, omnipotent, and omniscient. First, there is the enormous problem of animal suffering. When human suffering occurs, we can speculate that it might be the case that the suffering does the sufferer some moral good. Rational beings like us can learn from times of suffering (although, of course, we might learn to be more bitter, more morally fallen). But there is at least the possibility that it will enable us to be better people—more able, for example, to understand ourselves and others.[4] Christianity has certainly emphasized the significance of human suffering. It asks us to take up our cross and follow Christ—one who suffered an excruciating death and whose suffering achieved salvation. But with animal suffering, it seems totally different. A gazelle brought down, perhaps inexpertly by a young, inexperienced cheetah, learns little as it dies in agony. Animals, we think, just do not have the capacity to become morally better when they suffer. Their suffering gets them nowhere. It just seems to be suffering. C. S. Lewis explains the problem with characteristic acuteness: "The problem of animal suffering is appalling; not because the animals are so numerous . . . but because the Christian explanation of human pain cannot be extended to animal pain. So far as we know beasts are incapable of either sin or virtue: therefore they can neither deserve pain or be improved by it" (Lewis 1940, 117; quoted by Southgate 2008, 41).

This apparently pointless suffering is bad enough, but we have found out that such suffering has been going on for millions of years. Long before humans appeared on the scene, animals were suffering, dying, and becoming extinct. Difficult questions abound. Why does God allow such suffering? Why would God have allowed the world to contain millions of years of animal pain and misery? What was the point of the dinosaurs if they were doomed to die out?

There has been much interest in this topic in recent years. Theologians and philosophers such as Christopher Southgate, Holmes Rolston, Arthur Peacocke, John Haught, and Ian Barbour have tried to see what sense, if any, a believer can make of the millions of years of animal suffering that long preceded the appearance of anything like human beings.[5] One significant problem that is addressed is what we might call the lostness of past things and events. The dinosaurs, for example, have died out. They are gone. They are extinct. The biosphere once contained the values inherent in the existence of the dinosaurs, but no longer. As Southgate puts it: "each of the massive number of species which has gone extinct is a loss of value within the biosphere itself" (2008, 40). We will call this problem the *problem of value loss*.[6]

A related and equally important problem is this: How can God redeem what has been *lost*? If past events are no longer present can they truly be redeemed? If a dinosaur was lost in the remote past, and its life was one of "all suffering and no richness" (Southgate 2008, 40), then how can it be redeemed? Surely there is nothing God can do in 2015 (or later) to redeem a dinosaur which existed in the Jurassic period? Surely it is far too late. Surely only things which *exist* can be redeemed or made beautiful. Dinosaurs do not exist. Therefore, they are unredeemable. We will call this problem the problem of the *unredeemability of the past*. (It is precisely this problem that Eliot grapples with in the poem quoted in my epigraph.)

Now it might be thought that this is only a pseudo-problem for the Christian faith with its belief in some kind of afterlife. It might be asserted that God can make up for that suffering if that individual lives on in a blissful future existence. But this does not seem to be adequate. Having one's present life made whole and beautiful to make up for suffering in an earlier temporal stage might make one feel better when that happens, but it does not seem to do anything for those earlier stages. If they are past and gone, how can any change now do anything at all to influence them? Does God redeem the *whole* of a life or merely its latest temporal portion?

It is a cherished part of the theistic outlook to assume the universe has a point—an end to which God's energies are directed. We then have another problem. Why did not God just bypass the whole sorry mess, and instantly create that to which evolution is heading? If we assume, for example, some kind of "vale of soul-making," Irenaean theodicy, and we are meant to grow from our suffering and so become morally impeccable,

then why did not God bypass the often horribly painful evolutionary process and just create the end-product? If God is able to do all that which is logically possible and there is no contradiction in human-like beings that are morally impeccable and are happy to worship God forever, then why the messy process of getting there? We sometimes cannot help but think that a more efficient, kinder God would get there faster—indeed, instantly by a mere word. If "let there be light and there was light" then why not "let there be saints and there were saints"?[7] Indeed, if we take stories of angels seriously then God has, perhaps, instantly created beings of almost impervious moral impeccability who are rational and happy to worship God forever. If the instantaneous creation of morally impeccable human-like creatures is possible, surely God is able to instantly create every species variety as well. Why does God need the wasteful, messy process of evolution? What is the point of that protracted process? We will call this problem that of *instantaneous creation*.

One answer that is proposed (at least to the problem of value loss and instantaneous creation) is that Darwinian evolution (natural selection) was the *only way* God could create the sheer variety and diversity of animal life. Christopher Southgate is a highly nuanced defender of this kind of proposal in evolutionary theodicy. He says, "We can say . . . that given what we know about creatures, especially what we know about the role of evolution in refining their characteristics, and the sheer length of time the process has required to give rise to sophisticated sentience, it is eminently plausible and coherent to suppose that this was the only way open to God" (Southgate 2008, 30).[8]

A problem that immediately arises from such a strategy as this is that it appears to make creaturely suffering a means to an end. We seem to have animals and their suffering as mere instruments, and so it threatens to portray God as a ruthless user of animal suffering. The dinosaurs, for example, do not seem to have any value in themselves; they are merely a necessary part of the path to humanity. To be sure, God aims for something beautiful and worthy, and God sees that the means are unavoidable (since it is the only way), but it is hard to avoid the image of God as the rather callous, utilitarian calculator who carefully ensures that the cost of millions of animals' suffering is worth it.[9]

The "only way" argument seems to make the millions of years of planetary formation and biological evolution merely a useful process, but little more. Much of history becomes a stage that had to be gone through in the quest for creaturely embodied selves and eventual sophisticated sentience. We can add this as a fourth problem: we will call it the *problem of instrumentality*. What we need is an account which makes plausible the claim that these long years are valuable in themselves—creatures continue to be loved and cared for by God for their own sake.

There are then four significant problems that the believer might feel she needs to address:[10]

(1) The problem of value loss.
(2) The problem of the unredeemability of the past.
(3) The problem of instantaneous creation.
(4) The problem of instrumentality.

We can note that the problems appear greatly exacerbated by the immense temporal distances involved. If animal suffering were momentary—a mere flash of pain or a brief cry of terror—then the problems would surely not appear as great. But animal suffering has been happening for so long—for lengths of time which we can barely comprehend. Again, if the dinosaurs were not so temporally remote, surely the problem of the unredeemability of the past would appear less acute. God does not seem to have time on God's side. But we shall now do as promised and explore an account of time which may offer the believer a way of lessening some of the problems in evolutionary theodicy.

The Growing Block Conception of Time

In 1923 C. D. Broad published an important work, *Scientific Thought*. It lays out a radically new conception of the nature of time, one which probably goes against our pretheoretical ideas about time's nature. Many of us (at least in the Western world)[11] are implicit presentists—*we usually think of the present as the only part of reality that is fully real*. The past, we think, has been but is no more; likewise, the future is not yet real. The future is still to come, and so we live and move and have our being solely in the present. To be sure, we remember the past, but it is no longer real—at best, it has a ghostly, semiexistent status.[12] But it fully exists no longer. We can, of course, look forward to the future, but because it is not yet present, it is not yet real.[13]

One of the problems with presentism is that reality is reduced to a thin sliver or slice.[14] Nothing is real except the present moment, which as Augustine recognized (see note 19), is liable to be successively divided into the vanishingly small. Think, then, of God observing what exists. It is certainly *spatially* extended. It is a vast arena of galaxies and suns and moons and comets and asteroid belts. The divine eye roves hither and thither across the immensity absorbing its richness. However, if presentism is true, time seems much of a disappointment after this. It is just so *thin*. Compared with the vast, extended arena of space, the temporally real barely amounts to the very edge of a razor blade. Is God's creation so fulsomely glorious if it is confined to the present moment—if the temporally real is so insubstantial? We can understand this problem to be that of the problem

of value loss, but in a particularly acute form—at every moment, literally *everything* is lost. The past self, for example, simply is no more. There is a dizzying ontological vulnerability which is theologically problematic.

We might ameliorate this "thin" conception of time by thinking of God's memory of the past. Unlike our fading visions of the hithertofore, God's memories of the past are entirely sharp. Saint Peter's love for his Master is as clear in God's memory as God's present perception of Pope Francis' adoration of the Savior. In this sense the past is as real as the present. But is this satisfactory? God *remembers* what Saint Peter did, but it is not Saint Peter's real actions and personhood which are the subject of God's attentions, but a simulacrum—a mere memory or divine representation that was caused by Saint Peter long ago. Saint Peter's real, past actions are no more—they literally do not exist at all. According to the strict tenures of presentism, the real is confined very narrowly indeed. It is hard to resist the image that the present moment is a fleeting thing doomed to almost instant annihilation, and time is forever slipping from God's fingers. Again we see the problem of value loss, and also see the problem of the unredeemability of the past. If God only has the memory of Saint Peter's past actions to work with, how are those very past actions to be redeemed? Saint Peter denied his Master three times, but that action literally no longer exists—how then can it be changed in any way?

Broad's conception of time treats the past entirely differently, and offers us, I think, a more promising model of God's relationship to the past. Broad invites us to consider what kind of change is involved when an event, E, changes from being present to being past. He rejects the reply that this is an intrinsic change in the temporal properties of E, for then we are forced into an "ineffective circularity." He says, "The changes of things are changes *in* Time; but the change of events or of moments of time from future, through present, to past, is a change *of* Time. We can hardly expect to reduce changes of Time to changes in Time, since Time would then need another Time to change in, and so on to infinity" (Broad 1923, 64–65). We cannot say, in other words, that E *once* had the temporal property of futurity, *then* had the property of presentness, and *subsequently* acquired pastness. The temporal words, "once," "then" and "subsequently," which give the direction of the change of temporal properties, have in turn to be analyzed. But there seems no way to do this without bringing in a super-time, but then we have in turn to bring in a super-super time—an "ineffective circularity."[15]

Broad concludes that the change when E is said to change from future to present to past cannot be intrinsic. That leaves relational changes. Broad explains that there are "two different senses in which an entity can be said to change its relational properties. One example is when Tom Smith, the son of John Smith, becomes taller than his father. An example of the second is where Tom Smith ceases to be the youngest son of John Smith, and becomes

the last son but one." What is the difference between these two species of relational change? In the first case, there is the essential involvement of an intrinsic change. Either the son and/or the father changes in height. In the second, no intrinsic change takes place—the change occurs because a new entity enters the scene—John Smith's new baby. Which one of these two types of relational change is the one which we should understand time to have? Broad says an event's change from presentness to pastness is to be understood as of the second kind. In his own words:

> Now it is obvious that the change that happens to an event when it ceases to be present, and becomes past is like the change of Tom Smith when he ceases to be the youngest son of John Smith; and the continuous retreat of an event into the more and more remote past is like the successive departure of Tom from being the "baby" of the family as John Smith (moved by the earnest exhortations of the Bishop of London) produces more and more children. (Broad 1923, 66)

Note what Broad is saying here. The past continues to exist. Nothing intrinsic happens to any past moment. What we mean by its being past is that it is not the latest slice. As new slices or increments of the universe become real, it recedes further, but not one iota of its reality is diminished. So any event E is not lost—doomed to fall into nothingness to only survive as a simulacrum in God's memory. It continues to be. There is no diminution in its reality.

The steadfast reality of the past is in stark contrast to the reality of the future because, as Broad explains, the future has no reality.[16] The future is simply nothing at all. The present is not present because it precedes some future events F, G, H, because there are literally no future events with which to have this relationship. It is the present simply because there is nothing toward which "it has the relation of precedence" (Broad 1923, 66). Reality is growing bit by bit as new events occur, as fresh slices come to be. The forward edge of the block is continuous becoming.

Now, if this is true, it might open up ways we can understand the immense tracts of time which seem, under the presentist view, to be merely instruments to get from A to B. The past is still there, unaffected intrinsically by the accumulation of further slices of reality. Let us concentrate on one part of history. A sabre-tooth tiger cub is born, lives to adulthood, and eventually dies on the Russian steppes. In one sense it is lost. Its existence is certainly not contemporaneous with our own. But from the divine perspective—surely the more significant perspective—it is "still" there.[17] All that has happened is that more reality has accumulated in the growing block. Has the cub, therefore, been lost? Certainly it has been lost to the present biosphere, but if we extend the biosphere to include its past—which is just as real as the present—then can we say that it has gone? Surely not. It (timelessly) continues to be. And what is true of the single cub is true

of the species—it too continues to exist alongside other things and events contemporaneous with the Oligocene through to the Pleistocene epoch.

The divine eye can rove over so much more under this model. Recall that the spatial extent of reality seemed to be so rich and full compared with the barely substantial reality of the hairsbreadth present. But now it is full, growing, expanding; fresh increments of reality coming to be; existential newness being continually created by God.[18] God knows the past just as God knows the present. Furthermore there is no longer the ontological tyranny of the present, thin moment. We have the accumulation of the hithertofore. God loves the past. God knows the cub and God knows the species. He continues to know all that has been because it still is. Each thing has value in its own continuing existence, rather like each scene in the Bayeux Tapestry is valuable, not just the very last tableau. It is valuable in the way the last page of a book cannot be really understood on its own. The first page is also required, and indeed, in a good book, the first page is not merely an instrument to get to the last. It is valuable as a part.[19]

The *actual* cub is now a permanent part, not of God's memory, but of God's perceptions. It is the actual cub which is seen and known by God. The cub has not been discarded as a used but now useless part of reality. Perhaps this helps us to see the past as no mere instrument. Of course, part of the cub's story is that through its existence other events were made possible, and so, if we concentrate wholly upon its contribution toward future happenings, it can be seen as instrumental but never merely instrumental, because the cub continues to be and continues to be valued, not just as a precious memory, but as a divine perception.

If we accept Broad's conception of time, we have, I think, helped to show that no species is ever really lost, and so have helped to answer at least part of the accusation that evolution involves the loss of value. We have also at least lessened the charge that the past is a mere instrument to get to the present. Since the past timelessly continues to be, it can continue to be valued for its own sake.

Let us now turn to problems with the growing block conception.[20] As we look at these problems, we shall also be able to address the more difficult question of the unredeemability of the past.

Evil Eternalized or Time Redeemed?

In his excellent book *Time and Eternity* (2001), William Lane Craig forcefully expresses a worry over the theory of time called eternalism or the static theory of time—the view that the whole of reality—past, present, and future—exists timelessly in a kind of Parmenidean changelessness.[21] If that is so, then, Jesus continues to be on the Cross:

> On the static theory of time, evil is never really vanquished from the world: It exists just as sturdily as ever at its various locations in space-time, even if those locations are all earlier than some point in cosmic time. In a sense, Christ hangs permanently on the cross, for the dreadful events of A.D. 30 never fade away or transpire. The victory of the resurrection becomes a hollow triumph, for the spatiotemporal parts of Jesus that were crucified and buried remain dying or dead and are never raised to new life (Craig 2001, 214).

We can, of course, apply the same problem to Broad's view. Under his conception, the future is nothing at all, but the past including all its horrors still haunts reality. We preserve, not just the wonder of every past sunrise, but also all the evils that have afflicted the world. At least, if we are presentists, the past has gone and possesses no reality, but, if we adopt the growing block conception, horrors are apparently made permanent.

Let us look at this problem by turning to our problem of the unredeemability of the past. We need, I think, to turn the accusation of the presentist around and ask, *if past horrors do not exist any more can they be redeemed?* If the past is doomed to nonexistence we might breathe a sigh of relief,[22] but also realize that now nothing—not even God—can do anything about what they are since they do not exist. Even God cannot affect the literally nonexistent. But if the past continues to be—just as robustly as the present—then can we be so sure that it cannot be changed? This might strike the reader as absurd. The past cannot be changed she will say. If E has happened, then, nothing in the world can change the fact that E once occurred.

However, we know instances of the present affecting the past—not exotic examples using time travel—but ordinary humdrum examples. Think of a woman contemplating a cup. She is thinking of its significance, not just its present significance, but also its significance as the cup that was used by her husband. As he drank from it yesterday at 4:00 pm it was just a cup—ordinary and rather insignificant. Now it is the next day. He died during the night, and this was the last cup he ever drank from. Subsequent events have affected the past. The cup as he drank from it at 4:00 pm yesterday is imbued with a significance it did not have then. If only she had known she would have looked at that past event with different eyes. The present has changed the significance of the past.

This seems to me to an entirely familiar kind of change but the presentist might object that it is not literally the past cup that is being affected, but the widow's *present* memory of the cup. As she looks upon her memory of the cup she sees that it is *now* imbued with a new light. The remembered cup and the present cup can be affected, but the literal nonexistence of the "past cup" ensures that "it" cannot be affected. This is a difficult area, and one we are not likely to solve in a short essay, but we can say this: one of presentism's main problems is reference to past events. We want,

for example, to be able to say that it was true that Socrates taught Plato, but if Socrates and the teaching of Plato literally do not exist, we seem to have a nontruth or even a meaningless pattern of letters purporting a meaning.[23] Presentism, we may say, does not seem to take the past with enough ontological seriousness. But what is a problem for presentism is only a problem for evolutionary theodicy if presentism is accepted.

Christianity—a profoundly historical religion—insists on the robust reality of past events. Given this, it seems to me that it must be those very events that must be redeemed, not just highly accurate mental representations in the divine mind. If we think of the significance of the Cross, we see now that it was/is the ultimate redemptive moment. When Christ died on the Cross it was "just" the death of an innocent man—the disciples had to go through the agony of Easter Saturday. But subsequent events change the cross to the Cross. Christ's vindication in the Resurrection changed the significance of the very event of the crucifixion. We might ask this, does any Christian think that once the Cross was over and done with it becomes immune from God's power, or does she think that salvation history is a living, breathing thing?[24]

If we adopt Broad's model, we have this (or at least its possibility): *as new events come to be, the past is literally changed*. This is a deep change, not a surface one. If we were to film events and replay them over and over, the play of light upon the screen would remain the same. But this is not how we live our lives. We see more than plays of light—we see into things.[25] We see significances, not just the physical movement of material items. The past is dynamic in its significance, and, indeed, any subsequent change in significance need not be permanent. Let us return to the example of the widow's cup. She finds out her husband is not dead—a mistake has been made. He joyfully returns. Now his drinking from that cup at 4:00 pm has taken on a new, more complex nature. It is imbued with a complex set of meanings. And subsequent fresh slices of divinely motivated reality might change things further.

If the past exists then God can change its significance by bringing about events in the present. It seems to me that if this is the case, then, we can say that animal suffering can be redeemed by events which unfold in the future. All in all, then, we have (at least partial) answers to the problem of value loss (they are not lost), the unredeemability of the past (there can be redemption for events long over and done with), and the problem of instrumentality (extinct animals continue to be loved by God, not just as precious divine memories).

What though of the problem of "instantaneous creation"? The answer must now be obvious. The length of time itself (the block) is a growing value; it is valuable in itself as a growing amount of reality (trees, mountains, dogs, people, events, discoveries . . . all the matter of history). Every

historian values the block, and is glad that it exists. If we had no history, and had just come to be, there would be a lot less value.[26]

The idea I am putting forward can be more adequately understood and appreciated if we look at another account of the relationship between God and eternity. In *Time in Eternity* one of Robert John Russell's main concerns is to hold together two apparently irreconcilable views of time (Russell 2012). He wants to defend an eternalist conception of time where all of time exists from God's perspective, but he also wants to preserve the temporal flow of past, present, and future—what Russell calls its "ppf structure." This reconciliation appears impossible since we have, from the divine perspective, homogeneity or wholeness, while in the temporal flow of past to present to future we have distinctions or fragmentation. We also have an apparently contradictory mix of stasis and flow. In order to reconcile all this, Russell takes inspiration from Wolfhart Pannenberg's remarks upon the relationship between time and eternity. Pannenberg says that in eschatological time our lived, flowing time is taken up and given a unity in the all-embracing wholeness of eternity, but this is a unity where temporal structure is not lost. Pannenberg says that in eternity the temporal *distinctions* in our lives are preserved, but these temporal units are no longer *separate*. We have distinction without separation.[27]

Since Russell's book is a theological expansion and exploration of Pannenberg's eschatology, Russell tries to show how we could understand Pannenberg's notion of distinction without separation. Russell identifies distinction as time's ppf structure. Each moment is unique in having its own set of relations to the rest of time. For each moment, *t*, its past is determinate, while its future is yet to be and indeterminate. This structure, says Russell, is "part of the goodness of creation, and it is to be preserved eschatologically by eternity." Thus eternity is "not a 'timeless now' in which all moments are stripped of their unique ppf structure and conflated into a single, all embracing present" (Russell 2012, 153). Time's structure is good and preserved, but the separateness or fragmentary character of time is not preserved. By separation or fragmentation, Russell means the fleetingness of the each moment—the fact that each present moment "sinks forever into the past, while a new moment takes its place" (2012, 153). Time's fragmentation means that part of time is lost to us every moment—the past is no longer something we can truly have a relationship with, but is eaten up by time's devouring appetite. In eternity, however, time's distinctions—each moment's relations to its temporal predecessors and successors—are preserved but each past moment will then be present to eschatological consciousness. Russell calls this *copresence* and explores its nature using three metaphors: one uses a mathematical model employing non-Hausdorff manifolds, another the concept of

entanglement in quantum physics where spatially distant elementary particles seem nevertheless to be present to each other; the third metaphor is the "open stacks" library.

It is this latter metaphor that I wish to explicate and relate to my own position. Russell asks us to envisage a huge library which contains the books of our lives. There is more than one book relating our life histories because each book relates our life stories from a particular perspective or point of view. Think of three particular days—day A could be the event of your first birthday, day B could be the day you first fell in love, and day C is the day of your retirement. From book A's perspective, the events of days B and C lie long into the future, while from the perspective of book B, A lies firmly in the past and C is still to come. For day C, however, both A and B are in the past. In Russell's own words: "Say, for example, you read the entire book written from the perspective of day A . . . Only one year is past and definite, and the rest of your life extends throughout this book as mostly unknown" (156).

Russell now uses this metaphor to give us some idea of how we live our earthly lives in the here and now without the benefit of copresence. In our current temporal situation, we have the good of distinction but also the evil of separation. In this present mode of existence, therefore, we must imagine the stacks in the library are closed. The rules of access to the books of your life are strict: the books are available only one at a time, and are only to be read in temporal order. Furthermore, you cannot skip ahead to a future point of view without having read all the intervening books. Finally, once a book is read it must be put back on the shelves and can never be reread. Russell explains how the separation of the temporal units of our lives is illustrated by these strict rules:

> The rule that you can read only one book at a time separates the days of your life from each other and gives them to you piecemeal, *ad seriatim*, epochal. The rule that each book must be read in temporal order without skipping ahead or turning back and the rule that a book can never be read a second time together lead to the "not yet and inaccessibility" of our experience of the future and the "never again and irretrievability" of our experience of the past. (Russell 2012, 156)

The open stacks library (which illustrates our eschatological lives) has a more playful set of rules: here the books can be read in any order, as many books as you like can be withdrawn, you can "skip ahead" so you can read book C without reading A and B, and you can reread the books as many times as you wish. Now here, says Russell, we still have the distinctions (or ppf structure of time) since we have each point of view's relations to its temporal predecessors and successors, but now separation has been overcome by the playful openness of the library's rules. The access to the books is now not restricted. A particularly important consequence of this

openness is that it creates rich hermeneutical and interpretive possibilities denied by the fragmentation engendered by the closed library's strict rules. We can read day B and read it in the light of the next day's events and then "jump" to day M many years in the future and look at the combination of the two day's events as if they were present to each other. New surprising insights emerge as we read our lives from many temporal perspectives. Each day is, then, present to us in eschatological time. Eternity does not destroy time, but embraces it and by so doing makes all of it present, and fragmentation is gone forever.

Russell's metaphor of the open stacks library is rich and suggestive. For the purposes of this essay, it is the idea of hermeneutical richness which is the most relevant. As I have said, there is no clear path from an event, E, to its significance—a whole host of other factors contribute to what we might see in E. The widow's cup changes its significance as future events come to be. Russell's metaphor of the library makes clear how different perspectives can open up new possibilities of interpretation as history is allowed to interact with itself. Similarly, I have argued that the past is open to change as a divinely motivated future is created. Russell's metaphor brings out how history is replete with interpretive possibilities. It is no closed book.

However, there is a particularly significant difference between Russell's position and the view I am advocating in this essay. Russell claims that the future from any temporal point of view is indeterminate, which may suggest his position is close to Broad's view that the future is nonexistent. What we need to do is investigate (all too briefly) what Russell means by indeterminate, and in particular whether he thinks of indeterminacy as being merely due to our cognitive limitations, or whether it is a deeper ontological indeterminacy. It is difficult to understand Russell as claiming that the future from any point of view is actually *de re* indeterminate, since it is certainly determinate from God's perspective.[28] After all, from the divine perspective, C exists just as much as A and B, so presumably when I read book A I will read about days B and C (in other words, what is subsequent to that day), but I will realize that, at the time, I did not know that this was to come. This indeterminacy comes from my temporal limitations, so *the future is in reality as determinate as the past*. This corresponds to Russell's claim that when you read book A only " . . . one year is past and definite, and the rest of your life extends throughout this book as mostly *unknown*" (my emphasis). However, this could be a little clearer. Russell seems to be making a contrast between the definiteness of the past and the indefiniteness of the future, but he does not say that the book *finishes* on your first birthday. He says, "the rest of your life extends throughout . . . [the] book." Again, I presume Russell means that when you read the book A in eschatological time, you can read the rest of your life from day A, and the story is a definite one. It is just, at the time, you did not know that these determinate events were going to be. If Russell wants to claim that

the future at day A was actually *de re* or intrinsically indeterminate, then it appears to me that Russell is forced to conceive of God as being more embroiled in time than he would perhaps wish. God, just like us, would have to watch the events unfold before the divine perspective—God would have to wait for the future events to come to be. Only when they had done so would they *become* determinate from the divine perspective. Here we would have a truly dynamic picture of time.

In the view of time I am exploring in this essay, this is precisely what we have. The future is actually indeterminate since there is nothing yet to be called the future. This indeterminacy is not due to any kind of epistemological limitation. It is due to the nature of time itself and the fact that it grows. It is the growth of time itself, as well as its interactions with itself, which creates new patterns of significance in the complexity of history. Let me try to explain this. As I have said, Russell's open stacks library is rich in hermeneutical opportunity and exploration. We can match every single day to every permutation of sets and subsets of other days, and then we can go on to explore their combinative interactions with the books of every other person's life. We can even look at fractal subunits of each day or even each hour, and explore its range of significances (Russell 2012, 160–62). However, for all its amazing combinative richness it is closed, because it is a completed whole. With an open, growing time, this is not the case. There are no bounds to the endlessness of its interpretive richness. Think of Russell's open stacks library, but imagine that each book on the shelf has its own aura, its own glow. As books are taken off the shelves and put beside other books, the union of light from each book creates new shades as the significance of one book affects another. This represents the hermeneutical possibilities changing as perspective is put alongside perspective. Surprising, beautiful color combinations are created. In the growing block view of time, however, we have an extra dimension of possibility. You are looking at the shelves and a new book is brought in. Time has grown. Immediately, all the books shine in new, hitherto unrealized ways. Brand new tinges of purple and red and green begin to glow. A missing shade of blue appears, and surprises you with its appositeness. Indeed, completely new colors, until then completely unrealized throughout all reality, come to be. We can only dimly imagine it: the endless novelty of eternity's bringing meaning upon meaning upon meaning. This is truly an open stacks library because it lets in new books.

Combine this metaphor with the idea of temporal expansion of consciousness or copresence. In the here and now the temporal range of my present attention is severely limited. I cannot take much in simultaneously. Almost immediately the thing I have just seen is not present to my consciousness, but has to be retrieved from memory. It comes back to me without the clarity it once possessed and quite often, after a short while, it is ruined. My temporal attention is confined to small fragments

of presentness. Perhaps occasionally in music and poetry my consciousness is temporally expanded so, for example, I do not hear individual notes in a piece of music but the tune. In poetry I do not hear individual words and sounds but the rhythm, cadence, and meaning. But, for the most part, our lives are broken by the limitations of our conscious attention. But in eschatological time our consciousness is allowed a widened vista. (This idea corresponds to the playful rules of Russell's open stacks library.) We will then survey the temporal whole in one unified, but complex sweep of attentiveness.[29] This does not destroy the events that constitute our timelines—after all, music is a whole made up of individual notes. Day A and B and C are there, but they are embraced in the diverse unity of a meaningful whole—a redeemed time. Our lives, often hideous and mired with filth, will be eventually transformed as the twists and turns of a growing future are created by God's powers of redemption. To emphasize the point again: I do not mean to simply imply that it is just the latest future self which is transformed as if God's power only extends to a future present moment. The *whole* history is redeemed. The same, I am suggesting, could be true for the whole history of evolution—God's love and power extend to the dinosaurs since they too are present to the divine love. As God works afresh on each new moment the divine power works to transform the past and make it a glorious whole with each new present moment.

We will now look more closely at the status of the past—that history which constitutes the majority of reality. In doing so we shall understand more of how history can combine with the latest moment.

Is the Past Dead or Alive?

When we think of the growing block conception it is hard to avoid the image of it being akin to a growing film reel with new scenes coming to be. The scenes which are no longer present go further and further from the freshest part of the ever-becoming, expanding film reel. This image contains some truth, but it is seriously misleading as a way of understanding Broad's view. In a film, only the latest scene has the spotlight going through it. It carries with it a kind of illumination that the scenes which have passed through the projector no longer possess. But this is to give the latest scene an intrinsic property of presentness which is denied those scenes which languish on the projector room floor. But Broad's conception does not allow this. There is no intrinsic property of "being the present." It is a relational property. It has ancestors but, as yet, no descendants. There is, then, no special shine or illumination which belongs to the present. A better image involving a film reel would be one where the previous scenes are still lit, and, as new scenes come to be, they are shone onto an ever widening screen. The last scene has the privilege for a moment of being at the edge of the screen, rather than being lit by any kind of special illumination.[30]

Now if we accept this, we must conclude that past sentient beings are conscious. After all, as we have seen, the past's reality is not diminished by its being past. Julius Caesar was certainly alive and conscious when his temporal slice was at the block's edge. If becoming more distant from the cutting edge of reality does not change anything intrinsically, then, past people "continue" to be conscious. Julius Caesar is, therefore, conscious and eyeing the Rubicon in a time long ago.[31]

If past people are conscious, then, can we be certain—those of us contemporaneous with reading this essay—that we are not living literally in the past?[32] We like to make tribute to the moment we are simultaneous with and call it the present, but could it be the case that we are living in what many future people would call the remote past? There seems nothing to prevent this possibility if we accept Broad's view. In the growing block view it is an objective matter which moment is present since it is defined as the border between the real past and the nothingness of the future, and if it is objective we may well be wrong to ascribe presentness to the "present" moment.[33] We may be living in the future's past![34]

How is this problem to be dealt with? The problem arises only if we accept that past people and animals are conscious. Are past sentient beings conscious then? My judgment is that the objective present moment, since it is on that threshold between the unpreventable past and the preventable future, has a unique certain openness.[35] It may be that it is that very openness (as a new slice comes to be) which gives the present moment the necessary spark which bestows consciousness. Peter Forrest agrees and says that it is only the objective present that has the necessary "causal frisson" to allow consciousness.[36] Think about the past cub as it exists in the block. On either side of its existence, at any time we choose, there is a closed past and a no-longer open future. Because of this, I cannot help but think of it as frozen in some way.

But if we accept this change to Broad's position another problem seems to arise. If we opt for the nonconsciousness of the past, we seem to leave no way in which the past can be fully redeemed. It seems to me that the redemption of the past should be appreciated by those whose participation made the whole possible. A redemption for a cub-remnant would be purely external and third-person—a kind of later memorial to its existence, something similar to the way war memorials honor the dead. It seems to me that redemption should be more than divinely constructed, beautiful memorials to a dead past. It makes no personal difference to a nonconscious cub-remnant if God chooses to construct such memorials.

So how can we revivify the past so that sentience can appreciate its own redemptive transformation? Christianity has usually rejected theories of the soul where it is understood to be a separate substance in its own right. It has rejected dualism, but neither has it accepted physicalism.[37] Somehow both

soul and body are constituents in the unity of a human being—such were the views of Aquinas, for example. He held that there was something that survived the death of the body, but it was something seriously incomplete. Only a human being, considered as a unity of soul and body, could be John Smith or Fred Smith. Nevertheless, Aquinas insisted, something waits to be reunited to the body in the resurrection, something incomplete, but real.[38]

I propose that the soul—the incomplete remnant—of Fred Smith should be identified with his temporal parts preserved in the growing block. What are the merits of adopting this view of the soul? Most importantly, it does justice to history. After all, much of what we are is in our past; I am a human being, but I am not temporally thin (as under the presentist conception) but temporally wide or expansive. The portion of the block which is my history is not alive, not conscious; it is incomplete. It cannot speculate, therefore, on whether or not it is in the objective present. Past portions of myself do not live and breathe any more, but *they are nevertheless essential in who I am*. These portions only come alive in the present moment when the union of my history comes together with the unfolding, conscious self. The present moment can, therefore, be seen as the animating moment where my entire history comes alive. Without the present animating principle the pattern of who-I-was is still there, because, as we have argued, the past timelessly continues to be, but it is incomplete. It is real, but dead.

In this understanding, in the resurrection God unites my incomplete self (the soul or those temporal parts of the growing block which is my timeline) to the present, unfolding moment—that which is necessary for the experience of consciousness. I come alive again. And since my past (or portions of it)[39] continue to be real, there is the possibility of its redemption. And this is a first-person, subjective redemption. I will be able to live my redeemed life, temporally spread out in some manner, and see how God has changed its brokenness to something whole and integral. Furthermore, my consciousness will be able, not just to *remember* the past, but to *see* it as it melds together with all redeemed time. Recall the idea of a widening of conscious attention. This widening of consciousness to survey whole sweeps of history reanimates that which once was a nonliving (but nevertheless real) past. As I have said, consciousness exists at that moment when a new slice comes to be. The boundary between the block and the open border of continuation has an openness which seems to be necessary for consciousness. C. S. Peirce, for example, called the present moment "that Nascent State between the Determinate and the Indeterminate" (1960, 5:459). The present is full of potential, but as consciousness is allowed to reach back into the past should we continue to think of the past as wholly determinate? Is not there an openness to transformation of significance which gives new life to that which was once to our limited, present

consciousness a dead history—real but not animated by a life? Another way to make this point is to think of the idea of the present moment and its thickness or width. Without the benefit of copresence the present moment is thin. Almost immediately an event leaves my consciousness and becomes only retrievable by an effort of memory. But with the eschatological benefit of copresence we do not look at the history as from the outside (as if on a film), but we (re)live it from the inside. It becomes part of us again. After all, it was a part of us. We became separated from it and we return to it again.[40]

We can see this idea of the *whole* of life coming to life in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. In *The Coming of God* (1996), Moltmann contrasts the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body with the platonic idea of the immortality of the soul. In the resurrection of the body the whole of a life becomes alive again. We do not have an afterlife, but a completed, integrated life which is one with our life here on Earth—what we have called our history. I quote at some length:

> If the dead are raised to "eternal life," what can this eternal life mean? Is it another life, following this temporal one, or is this temporal life going to be different? If it were another life after this temporal one, then the expression "raising" would be wrong, and death would be the birthday of that other life, so to speak. But the raising of the dead means that "this mortal life will put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:54). So something happens to this *whole mortal life*. Will this life be "immortalized," as obituary notices sometimes say? If that meant that this life from birth to death is recorded as on a video, and stored up in the heaven of eternity, that would be anything but a joyous prospect: immortalized with all the terrible experiences, faults, failings and sicknesses? . . . "[R]aising" means that a person finds healing, reconciliation and completion. To be raised to eternal life means that nothing is ever lost for God—not the pains of this life, and not its moments of happiness. Men and women will find again with God not only the final moment, but their whole history—but as the reconciled, the rectified and healed and completed history of their *whole lives*. (Moltmann 1996, 70–71, my emphases)

It may be the same with animals.[41] Those animals who have suffered and died—whose lives have been all suffering and no fulfilment—are not so much recompensed by a blissful afterlife, but rather consciousness is returned to their timelines (preserved by God), and whole lives are made complete.[42] It is, I acknowledge, difficult to see how some animals will be able to appreciate the redemptive integration of their broken lives. Perhaps animal wholeness is for rational beings such as humans and angels to appreciate and behold with wonder. However, the important point is that eternal life should be a life which integrates with present, earthly lives. If we do not think this, then it is all too easy to suppose that sentient life is only here on Earth in order to fit it for heaven—an instrumental attitude toward our present kind of existence.[43] This life here and now

and in the past should be glorified and made whole as it unites with a future, unfolding, expansive, and expanding moment. If Broad is correct, we might be able to begin to understand how Christian eschatology is about the redemption and integration of all time.

Conclusion

A summary of the argument might help. I looked at four problems that evolution raises for the believer in the God of classical theism. The problems are:

(1) The problem of value loss.
(2) The problem of the unredeemability of the past.
(3) The problem of instantaneous creation.
(4) The problem of instrumentality.

All of these problems are at least ameliorated by adopting a growing block conception of time instead of a presentist conception. There is no loss of value since the past continues to exist. The continuing existence of the past also answers the charge that God merely uses the dinosaurs and other inhabitants of the past merely to get to the present—merely to arrive at sophisticated sentience. The past cannot be seen as a mere instrument. Also, there is at least the possibility of the past coming to have a different significance as the block grows. The present can affect the significance of the past—new interpretive possibilities arise as the block increases in extent, and so there can be a transformation of the past from often obscene ugliness to a kind of terrifying beauty. The past, in other words, can be redeemed. Furthermore, there is a lot less value if God's act of creation is instantaneous (even if this is possible). The temporal extent of beauty should complement the vastness of space. It is good that we have temporal vastness. In the final part of the essay, I suggested another way of understanding the soul. The soul of a sentient being is to be identified with its history preserved in the growing block. But this history is not alive unless it is connected to the latest slice—that border between the block and new possibilities. It is incomplete, but real. Consciousness needs the frisson and openness of the present. We are a union of the past with the latest slice of reality. A sentient being's ability to live her history is severely limited. Perhaps, I suggested, God widens our attention to include our past, so that it is made alive again. Sentient beings live again in a gloriously widening scope of interpretive attention—an increasing range of conscious vision. This increase revivifies the past and makes it dynamic as new hermeneutic possibilities are created.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to correspondence with Christopher Southgate about the "only way" argument. Two anonymous referees read the essay very carefully. Their wide scholarship enriched the essay considerably. I am thankful.

Notes

1. I will focus my attention on the Christian tradition.
2. See, for instance, Gabriel Daly's excellent account (Daly 1989, 175–93). See also O'Collins (2004, 1–22) for a brief account of the concept.
3. See Begbie 2007a, 2007b and Sperry 1992 for excellent accounts on the complex relationship between beauty, the arts, and theology. Some of the beauty will be beneath the surface—on this see Robson (2014).
4. Eleonore Stump (2012) looks at the complex ways in which narrative (and time) can interweave to create something that flourishes even in the face of horrendous evil.
5. Representative readings include Southgate (2008), Peacocke (1993), Barbour (1990), Haught (2004), and Rolston (1999).
6. In the modern world, we are now so used to hearing about the extinction of various species that we forget what a profound shock the idea was to the religious sensibilities of past thinkers. The leading naturalist of the seventeenth century, John Ray, was so perturbed by the idea that past species could have died out that he speculated that unexplored parts of the globe would reveal survivors of species thought to be extinct. He agreed with Edward Lhwyd (or Lhwud) that fossils were not the record of now extinct species but were purely a geological phenomenon (see Bowler 1983, 34).
7. The problem is expressed nicely by Southgate as a title to a part of his book, "Why Did God Not Just Create Heaven?" (2008, 5).
8. Other "only way" advocates are mentioned by Southgate (2008, 47–48). They are Attfield (2006, 109–50), Fern (2002, 288–89), and Ruse (2001, 130–38). Ruse credits Dawkins for the idea's genesis.
9. Southgate explores the problem of instrumentality throughout the book. It is the main focus of chapter 5, "Heaven for Pelicans: Eschatological Considerations." Southgate quotes Moltmann who, like Southgate, sees the need for redemption for nonhuman creatures on an individual level: "a *Christus evolutor* without *Christus redemptor* is nothing other than a cruel, unfeeling *Christus selector*, a historical world judge without compassion for the weak, and a breeder of life uninterested in victims. . . . Not even the best of all possible stages of evolution justifies acquiescence in evolution's victims" (Quoted by Southgate (2008, 83) from Moltmann (1990, 296–97)).
10. I acknowledge that there are theologians who refuse to undertake any kind of theodicy. God's ways, they say, are surely too high for mortal understanding and the believer must be content to trust and hope, not explain.
11. I am assuming that this is the case as the typical pretheoretical thinking of time in the Western world. I do not know what would be the typical understanding elsewhere, and I am reluctant to speculate.
12. Quentin Smith (2002) defends the idea that past states and future states have less and less reality the further they are away from the present moment. So, Disraeli will have a more shadowy degree of existence than Churchill. Unfortunately for both, their reality continues to diminish as the years roll by.
13. Augustine emphasizes the importance of the mind (and especially memory) in his account of time in *Confessions*, 11. (On memory—"the stomach of the mind"—see Book 10). The present moment, he reasons, has no duration since no matter how small a slice of time you care to take it can be divided up into past and future. But then do we have to conclude that time is nothing at all? But this cannot be acceptable. After all, we talk of short times and long times, and so we are measuring something. So what is time? What is it we are measuring? Time, he decides, is mental—part at least of its reality consists in our mental acts of anticipation, experience, and memory. Time is a lived thing. Augustine's account of time seems to change from the account in the *Confessions* (397–400) to a more objective view of time in *The City of God* (413–426),

although Gareth Matthews argues that the apparently different accounts are complementary. See Matthews (2005, 83–85). See also Rist (1994, 73–85), Sorabji (1983, 29–32), and Le Poidevin (2005, 24–26).

14. Instead of presentism, Robin Le Poidevin prefers the phrase "temporal solipsism." See Le Poidevin (1991).

15. J. J. C. Smart (1949) argues that any conception of change in time will require us to postulate super-times. If time flows, we must ask how fast it flows, but this speed of the passage of time can only be ascertained if there is a super-time which allows its rate of motion to be measured.

16. Arthur Peacocke agrees. He also thinks that the future has no reality, but he disagrees with Broad on the reality of the past. For Peacocke, the past is "stored in the perfect, permanent memory of God" rather than continuing to be real. See Peacocke (1993, 131–32).

17. The word "still" here must be understood in an entirely timeless way.

18. This model of time where the future is unreal seems to me to capture an important truth in the idea of continuous creation. Concentrate on this moment. Its reality is upheld by divine power, but the next moment need not come into existence. It has no existential reality at all, unless God gives it the necessary existential impetus. The next moment is entirely dependent upon God for its coming to be. This radical dependence is not easily captured under those static, eternalist views of time where the next moment is already real.

19. On the value of each part of creation, see George Tyrell's sermon "Divine Fecundity" in Tyrell (1914). There is a very clear discussion of the sermon in Daly (1989, 35–41).

20. The reader must be aware that there are many philosophical problems in Broad's conception of time that will not be covered in this essay. How big, for example, are the increments of growth in the block? In what medium does the block grow? What is the shape of the forward edge of the block—straight or curved? And can its shape accommodate the special theory of relativity? What about apparent reference to future events like tomorrow's sunrise? An excellent account of Broad's theory and its problems can be found in Dainton (2000, 136–50) and Dainton (2001, 68–79). Tooley (1997) is a more contemporary defense of something quite close to the growing block conception.

21. In Torrance (1997), the author defends the eternalist conception of time drawing his principal inspiration from Donald C. Williams's (1951) essay "The Myth of Passage." Paul Helm is another who understands the whole of reality to be Parmenidean. See Helm (1988). Craig (1998, 246–48) is a good account of the idea that God and the Parmenidean world stand in timeless immutability—a view Craig rejects.

22. The polish logician Jan Łukasiewicz expresses the wish that the past be annihilated: "Fact whose effects are wholly exhausted, so that even an omniscient mind could not infer them from facts happening today, belong to the realm of possibilities. We cannot say of them that they were but only that they were possible. And this is well. In the life of each of us there occur grievous times of suffering and even more grievous times of guilt. We should be glad to wipe out those times not only from our memories but from reality" (Łukasiewicz 1970, 127–28; quoted in Bourne 2006, 47).

23. Bourne (2006, chapter 2) tries to address this problem on behalf of presentism.

24. Think, for example, of how the wounds of Christ are treated in hymns and sermons. On the surface, they are surely rather horrible, but there is a deep beauty—a beauty created by a combination of Christ's willingness and what that ugly event subsequently achieved.

25. Wynn (2013) explores the ways in which our senses can be renewed as we are religiously enlightened. See also Kohák (1984).

26. I realize there are past horrors that seem to be beyond redemption. There are plenty of examples. Only speculation can serve us here. Perhaps there are ways beyond our comprehension whereby God can affect every past event, can redeem it all. This strikes the finite mind as implausible. Some events are surely too terrible. But at least if they are still there we have the bare chance of change. Perhaps one day God will obliterate portions of the growing block, and fulfil Łukasiewicz's desire for temporal annihilation. Perhaps this is what hell is—the permanent removal of past events from the growing block whose very life and reality always depend upon divine power.

27. Pannenberg's views of time are explicated by Russell in *Time in Eternity*, chiefly at 94–110.

28. I am not entirely sure what Russell's view of indeterminacy is. It appears he is advocating that the future is indeterminate since there are many possible future paths at any moment. For example, he says: "I will also suggest that the future event becomes present precisely as an actualization of one its many potential states and, in this way, represents what Pannenberg calls the 'arrival of the future'" (Russell 2012, 131). Here indeterminacy is being understood in this sense: although there are many determinate ways forward, it is indeterminate which one shall become actual. I find it hard to see how this view can be reconciled with an eternalist view of time except if we think of the indeterminacy being due to cognitive limitation rather than being about the actual nature of things. When precisely is it the case that the path that will come to be is in reality genuinely indeterminate? Russell appears to want to say that at any moment *in time* many paths from that perspective are possible—the one to become actual is not yet to be determined. But this indeterminacy is surely due to our epistemological limitations—the path that will become actual is seen as clear as day from the divine perspective.

29. The word "survey" is not the best. I shall argue that the past becomes alive. It is a living past. It becomes first-person not third-person.

30. However, we must be very wary of this way of understanding our relationship to our lived historical lives. We must not think of looking at those scenes from a third-person point of view. We do not spectate, but are involved in the events. In eschatological time, they are experienced from the inside as our consciousness is widened to involve the real (but hitherto dead) past.

31. Someone might object that, under the growing block conception, the problems of evolutionary theodicy are magnified. If the past is unreal and a dinosaur suffered for 10 minutes before dying, then we can truly say that the suffering has ceased because it is no longer real. But if a theist believes in the reality of the past, is she not committed to the continuation of the suffering? The dinosaur continues to suffer in the past. Its 10-minute suffering now seems to be infinitely extended. However, stated like this it is a pseudo-problem. The dinosaur cannot be said to continue to suffer for 10 minutes if the word "continue" is meant to refer to a length of time. The dinosaur cannot be said to suffer for 10 minutes for any (further) amount of time. We would have to impose some kind of super-time in which to embed the 10 minutes. But this is not required; we must suppose God's perusal of the growing block not to be in time at all. If there is an objection to the growing block theory it is that its ontology contains timelessly existing past temporal states which contain suffering, while the presentist can say that his ontology contains only what is present and contains, therefore, presumably less suffering. But here I think that we can say to the presentist, "Yes, for you past evil states of affairs are gone, and there may be a sense in which this is desirable, but equally they are entirely beyond even the divine power to redeem." As I shall argue, when the past becomes present to consciousness, the pain of the dinosaur will be reanimated, but this will be part of something that has been redeemed. The pain of the past will be subsumed by the wholeness of redemption.

32. See Braddon-Mitchell (2004, 199–203) for an account of this problem.

33. The present moment is ontologically objectively significant in a way that it is not for those who advocate an eternalist or Parmenidean view where all of time exists. Here, an indexical or subjective reading of the reference of the present moment seems adequate, and the problem does not arise.

34. Craig Bourne sees the problem of knowledge of the objective present moment as one of the main arguments for his view as against the growing block theory (which he calls no-futurism). Any dynamic theory of time must, he says, have the implication that we know that we are in the present. Any theory which does not allow this must be rejected, since, if we know anything, we know that we in the present. Presentism's main virtue is that we are guaranteed to be precisely simultaneous with an objective present.

35. I am, of course, modifying Broad's theory here. I am saying that there is something distinctive about the present—a distinctiveness derived from its being an open border.

36. Forrest (2004, 358–62) is a contemporary philosophical defender of the growing block theory.

37. There is a growing voice in contemporary analytic theology and philosophy which argues for a robust Cartesian dualism. An excellent summary of the various arguments can be found in Moreland (2008, 175–94). There is much to celebrate in this rejection of materialism, but it seems to me too platonic to be easily accommodated into the Christian vision.

38. See, for example, Geach (1969, 17–29) and Davies (1992, 215–20).

39. See note 32.

40. What about the sins of the past? Will we live these from the inside again? Surely this would be a horrible prospect. I suggest that there will be purgatorial suffering to cleanse the past of its horror. The very reliving of past sins might well be part of the horror of purgatory, but this horror is limited in temporal extent. Eventually the past sins are subsumed and transformed by their reliving and the whole that is being continuously created. As I suggested earlier, perhaps some elements of the past are just annihilated by God. On the necessity of purgatory see Brown (1985).

41. See Southgate (2008, chapter 5) on the idea of a "pelican heaven."

42. Aquinas would, of course, disagree. He would agree that animals have souls in the sense that they have an animating principle, but since they do not have intellectual powers there is nothing to survive the dissolution of the body. In the understanding proposed here, however, animals do have souls in the same sense as humans. We both possess histories preserved in the growing block, eternally held and loved by a God who redeems the past by the shaping of the present.

43. On this, see Moltmann (1996, 50).

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