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ETERNAL OMNI-POWERS

Ben Page

Power metaphysicians are concerned with, well, powers. Theists claim interest in the most powerful entity there is, God. As such, recent work on the ontology of powers may well have much to offer theists when thinking about God's power. In this paper I start to provide a metaphysics of God's 'power,' something many definitions of omnipotence make reference to. In particular I will be interested in explicating how a power ontology can account for the strength and range of God's power, as well as showing how this account of divine power can fit with a timeless conception of God.

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1. Omnipotence

Traditionally theists have held that God is essentially omnipotent. What exactly it means for God to be omnipotent, however, has proved difficult to answer with increasingly complex definitions being given. In this paper I make no effort to contribute to this literature, rather what I'm interested in stems from the fact that many/most of these definitions include the

[1]Along with much of the contemporary metaphysics literature, I take power to be synonymous with disposition/ability/capacity. For an introduction to the metaphysics of powers see my Page, "Neo-Aristotelian Approaches."

[2]Some theists may demur at this (e.g. Pearce, "Infinite and Finite Powers," 240), but others it seems would not. For the sake of this paper, I take it that worldly conceptions of powers can teach us something about God's power.

[3]My discussion concerns what Zimmerman ("Defining Omnipotence," 85–86) calls a "Divine Power" project, since it is interested in showing a view of power to be compatible with other doctrines about God.

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notion that God has power or powers,[4] with this sometimes playing the primary role in some accounts.[5] My question concerns how we are to understand the metaphysics of these types of powers, something typically neglected in discussions of omnipotence.[6]

Before doing so let me note three things. Firstly, within this paper I shall not discuss in depth whether God has many powers or just one power that can do many things.[7] This is obviously a key question for those theists who think God is simple, but it is also important for power theorists since it speaks to whether one should think a power has one or more than one manifestation type. So whilst I may, when relevant, briefly comment on this to highlight the issue, working out what theists could say here will be the subject of another paper.[8] Given this background one should note that although I will often speak as though God has multiple powers, this is due to ease of explication since it may be that one needn't be committed to this. Secondly, I shall speak in a realist way about the powers God has throughout this paper. I do this despite once again acknowledging that it is an open question as to whether we should think God has realist powers or whether we should instead be nominalists about them.[9] Finally, whilst some are skeptical that powers can be fundamental, thinking instead that they must be grounded in a categorical base,[10] I am less so, and therefore in line with many power metaphysicians I will be happy to speak as though powers are fundamental.[11]

With these preliminaries out the way, it is worth thinking about what common features there are among definitions of omnipotence. One aspect that seems shared between most is that God's power is maximal in

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[4]E.g. Zimmerman, "Defining Omnipotence"; Oppy, *Describing Gods*, 193–226; Leftow, "Omnipotence"; Hoffman and Rosenkrantz, "Omnipotence."

[5]E.g. Byerly, "The All-Powerful"; Rasmussen and Leon, *Is God the Best Explanation*, 115.

[6]Even those conceptions of omnipotence which deny that this concept should be analyzed in terms of having all the powers (e.g. Pearce, "Infinite and Finite Powers") are compatible with the claim that God has all the powers (Pearce, "Infinite and Finite Powers," 240), and therefore some of what I say will be relevant to those views as well.

[7]Byerly's definition of omnipotence, "x is omnipotent if and only if x has all the powers" ("The All-Powerful," 21), is perhaps most readily understood as God having many powers. Oppy (*Describing Gods*, 224) raises some relevant questions but says relatively little on them. Pearce ("Infinite and Finite Powers.") gives an account where God just has power in general rather than having particular powers, but says little about what I take to be some of the key questions regarding this type of account.

[8]Page, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Power."

[9]This is something I discuss elsewhere too: see Page, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Power."

[10]Oppy, *Describing Gods*, 224–25; Leftow, "Omnipotence," 173; Leftow, *God and Necessity*, 156.

[11]Again, here I'd prefer to leave the relationship between powers and categorical properties open, since it is a rather thorny issue within the powers literature, with different terminology sometimes being used (categorical = qualitative = occurrent), and especially given views which hold that being powerful and categorical are two aspects of one thing.

some way.[12] For the purpose of this paper, I leave it open as to whether we should think of maximality as providing us with an upper limit of God's power, or whether we should think of it as having no such limit, and being what I will call limitless.[13] In any case, we can ask a further question, namely in what way is God's omnipotence maximal? Within the literature on omnipotence there appear to be two different ways of thinking about this, namely in terms of maximal strength[14] and maximal range.[15] I follow Leftow in thinking that both maximal strength and maximal range are required for an adequate conception of omnipotence.[16] How then can power metaphysics account for these features? I first discuss strength before turning to range.

2. Strength

God is maximally strong. At the very least this means that God is able to bring things about with ease. Yet what does it mean to bring something about with ease? Take myself, Arnold Schwarzenegger in his body building days, and a heavy weight. It's clear that Arnie can lift the weight more easily than I can. One reason we might say this is because Arnie can lift the weight far quicker than I can, and so takes less time in doing so.[17] Another, different reason for saying Arine is stronger, is that he lifts the weight with far less effort than I do. So whilst both Arnie and I may in principle lift the weight in the same amount of time, he does so without sweating a drop, whereas I come away drenched.

Turning to God's power we can apply these same insights.[18] God's strength is maximal in that it takes no time at all for Him bringing about what He intends, either by being simultaneous with the effect, or in virtue of Him having no temporal relation to the effect, or it takes the least amount of time possible for Him to bring about what He intends.[19] Regarding effort we can say something similar, namely that either God uses no effort to bring about what He intends or He uses the minimal amount of effort possible.

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[12]Nagasawa (*Maximal God*, ch. 3) suggests that we should prefer speaking of 'maximal' attributes rather than 'omni' attributes, since he thinks it avoids various problems.

[13]Talk of a limit here does not diminish God's greatness, as He would have the maximum level of power possible. But note that what is the maximum possible might require making trade-offs given other attributes God is also said to have; see Leftow, *Anselm's Argument*, 290–92.

[14]E.g. Wielenberg, "Omnipotence Again."

[15]E.g. Zimmerman, "Defining Omnipotence."

[16]Leftow, "Omnipotence."

[17]However, note that it will likely be the case that Arnie required much effort and time to get into shape in order to do this lifting. I will comment on this again later.

[18]Note that in both of these respects of strength, there appears to be a 'limit' on what it is to be maximal rather than it being limitless.

[19]Which answer one prefers here will depend upon how one conceives God's relationship to time and the nature of causation.

Translating this into a powers metaphysic, we should first note that powers are either dormant or manifesting.[20] When dormant, powers are not bringing about, or even trying to bring about, their characteristic effect. By contrast, when powers manifest they at least try to bring about their characteristic effect.[21] *Some* manifesting powers, however, may take some time to bring about their completed effect, whilst others take no time at all. I take it that God's power requires no time to bring about its effect, or the least amount of time possible, and that this is one way in which His power is maximal.

Powers, at least on the non-reductive views I am presupposing, are also taken to be "oomphy" entities.[22] But they can also be more or less oomphy, with this sometimes being put in terms of powers being more or less intense,[23] having a magnitude,[24] or a particular strength.[25] Powers are therefore degreed or gradable in some way, such that we can say of two powers which bring about the same type of manifestation, e.g. heating, attracting, etc. that one can do so with more or less oomphyness/force than the other.[26] Given this, we can say that God's powers are maximally intense, and that due to this intensity there is no effort required by God to bring about the completed manifestation.[27]

On a powers view, there also seems to be an additional component to God's maximal strength. For whilst I've talked of the 'effort' required in terms of bringing about an effect, power theorists also think that powers need to be in particular circumstances in order to bring about their effects.[28] I take it that being in these circumstances may also require more or less effort. By way of example, Arnie had to work extremely hard to get into the right condition to lift weights with ease. Given this, I suppose that part of what it is for God to be maximally strong is that unlike Arnie He doesn't have to work hard to be in the right conditions to manifest His power.[29]

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[20]At least this is how many conceive of powers. There are, however, models, arguably Lowe's; for discussion, see Dumsday, "Lowe's Unorthodox Dispositionalism," and Marmodoro, "What's *dynamic*," where powers are never dormant and always trying to bring about their characteristic effect.

[21]I say 'trying' since a power may be prevented in various ways from bringing about its characteristic effect.

[22]Williams, *The Powers Metaphysic*, 120; O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*, 67.

[23]Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Causes from Powers*, 24–25.

[24]Anjum and Mumford, "Mutual Manifestation," 88.

[25]Marmodoro, "Dispositional Modality," 210.

[26]This use of degrees seems different from Vetter's (*Potentiality*, 85–94), where her use concerns how likely it is that a power will manifest, with a maximal power meaning that it must.

[27]Additionally, by explaining God's strength in terms of intensity it seems we allow for the possibility that there is no upper limit as to how intense God's power can be.

[28]This is often spelled out in terms of triggering conditions (e.g. McKitrick, *Dispositional Pluralism*, 113–131) or mutual manifestation partners (Marmodoro, "Aristotelian Powers," 57–58).

[29]It may still be the case that God requires certain conditions to be present for some of His powers to manifest, such as His ability to forgive sins may depend upon the fall, some type

Why is this? One reason is because God is unlike Arnie in that He is an immaterial being and therefore in order for Him to manifest His powers He doesn't have to build up the density and size of His muscles to do certain things. Given this, God's powers seem to fall under the type 'mental power.'[30] There are likely many different sub-types of mental powers, with the ones I am interested in here being those to do with agency, what I'll call agential powers.[31] As God is typically thought to be free in at least some respect,[32] I take it that His agential powers will be freely exercised. How exactly to think about these type of powers brings us into discussion with the growing literature on explaining human agency and freedom in terms of powers,[33] since God's powers seem to be like these in some way.[34]

How then shall we understand these agential powers? First, as I've already said, if we assume that God is an immaterial being, then these powers will be immaterial. Second, since these agential powers are free in a libertarian sense, then their manifesting will not be causally determined by previous manifestations. What then is it that makes these powers manifest? There are two main approaches to this question, the first claiming that the "agent is in a strict and literal sense an originator, an initiator, an ultimate source of her directly free action; she is an uncaused cause of that behavior, and one whose causing of that behavior is not causally determined."[35] As such on this view the agent in some way *causes* the manifestation themselves, through being the uncaused cause of it, and therefore the manifestation is not caused by anything else.[36] By contrast on the second approach, a view which Lowe adopts,[37] the agent does not *cause* the manifestation of this power, rather nothing does, for it is what he calls a *spontaneous power*.[38] This however does not mean that the power's mani-

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of atonement, etc. But for others, He will require no such conditions, such as His creating the world ex nihilo. However, if Leftow ("Omnipotence," 180–83) is right that omnipotence is only to do with intrinsic powers then we can ignore all of the former cases, since here I'm only concerned with omnipotence.

[30]Perhaps not all mental powers are immaterial, for if one thinks physicalism is true about humans then our mental powers are physical. But as I assume that God is immaterial, then His mental powers will be immaterial too.

[31]Hacker, *The Intellectual Powers*.

[32]This freedom is typically thought to be of the libertarian variety, although the precise nature of the libertarian account that should be adopted varies amongst philosophers/theologians. At the very least, I take this freedom to mean that God is the ultimate source of His action, even if it is debatable as to how much leeway this freedom allows for.

[33]O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*; Lowe, *Personal Agency*, pt. II, and "Substance Causation"; and Steward, *A Metaphysics for Freedom*.

[34]This parallel is especially evident if one follows Descartes in thinking that human free agency is a way in which humans bear the image and likeness of God (Meditation 4, in: Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch, *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 40).

[35]Clarke, *Libertarian Accounts*, 134; O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*, 67.

[36]Or at least nothing else is sufficient to cause them to manifest.

[37]Lowe, "Substance Causation," 160, and *Personal Agency*, 126–28.

[38]Lowe thinks he can say all the things the typical agent causalist wants to say without the drawbacks he sees with that type of view ("Substance Causation, Powers," 163–164).

festation is random, so Lowe claims, since this power is a rational power, and as such is "exercised 'in the light of' reasons."[39] The explanatory work of reasons is, however, common to both accounts, with the reasons crucially not *causing* the manifestations, but *explaining* them.[40] Whilst there is much more to both of these models than my very brief outline here, if we apply them to God we can say that God's reasons explain the manifestation of His agential power/s, with these powers either manifesting spontaneously, or because He Himself, as an agent, causes them to manifest.

In terms of effort then, God requires no effort at all in bringing about the manifestation of these powers, on Lowe's view, since they are spontaneous, and very little, or perhaps no effort on the view where He causes them to manifest. However, it seems this will be the same for human agential powers should they be immaterial. Nevertheless, we can still see some other differences. First, whilst humans may have to put in much effort both in terms of fulfilling the preconditions for having reasons, such as having relevant knowledge, weighting ones reasons, and then weighing them up, God's omniscience means He has both the knowledge required for reasons and takes no time in weighting them and weighing them perfectly.[41] The second arises given certain accounts of human agency. On these views humans can 'will' certain things, such as the raising of their arm, without their arm raising. Given this it seems that the agential powers, which I take it are to do with the will, differ from the power to raise one's arm, despite the fact that one often will trigger the other.[42] I suggest God's agential power isn't like this. After all, God, as I'm thinking of Him, doesn't have a material body, and nothing other than God can impede His power from manifesting.[43] What then are His agential powers like? I take it that there are at least two options here. We could say that God's manifested agential power of willing X is identical to God's doing X,[44] or that God's doing X is grounded in His manifested agential power of

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[39]Lowe, "Substance Causation, Powers," 165. Lowe ("Substance Causation, Powers," 164–165), and others such as Steward (*A Metaphysics for Freedom*), take the will to be what's called a "two-way power," where this is having a single power which can will or refrain from willing actions.

[40]See O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*, ch. 5; Lowe, "Substance Causation," 164–66, and *Personal Agency*, 128–32. On another view, reasons *cause* an action (Rice, "Reasons and Divine Action"). I would like to think that much of what I say here can be translated into this type of view as well, although as always, the devil will likely be in the details.

[41]Additionally, God is not an ignorant being, which may also cause some complications for omnipotence; see Leftow, "Omnipotence, Evil, and What's in God," 39–41.

[42]Lowe, *Personal Agency*, 150, and "Substance Causation, Powers," 161; O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*, 72n11.

[43]There are, no doubt, some complications here, and some finessing may be needed, especially when one thinks about how God's power interacts with human free agents. Yet, as already noted, if Leftow ("Omnipotence," 180–83) is right that omnipotence is only about intrinsic powers then this complication can be ignored given that this paper concerns merely omnipotence.

[44]Koons, "Dual Agency," 403–5.

willing X.[45] Both of these views allow it that God exerts no more effort in doing X than willing X, and since God exerts no effort to will X, He exerts none in doing X.[46]

This then provides us with an account of what it means for God to be maximally strong in terms of powers, where God's powers are maximally intense, and through being a type of agential power, require no effort in bringing about the conditions for their manifestation.

3. Range

Having spoken of God's strength, how should we understand God's range of power? Some suggest we should think of it as saying that God has "all the powers."[47] Given the different types of powers that have been postulated within contemporary metaphysics, I'm skeptical we should say this. For instance, some power metaphysicians make a distinction between active powers and passive powers, with the active ones being the 'doers' and the passive one's being the 'sufferers' in causal interactions.[48] Does God have both of these? It would seem not, at least on traditional conceptions of God, where God is only a 'doer' and not a 'sufferer.'[49] Another type of power recently postulated is one that plays the role of the substantial form in hylomorphic views of composition, which in some way structures an individual.[50] Again, it's not clear God has this type of power either and even if He did it doesn't seem as though He would have all of them. After all it seems *prima facie* odd to think He has the structural power of a canine, even though He has the power to create such a power within the world.[51] I could name other types of powers recently postulated that it seems unlikely God would have,[52] but I hope the point is clear that given the types of powers hypothesized by theorists, it is far from clear God has them all.[53]

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[45]Pearce "Counterpossible Dependence."

[46]If one thinks some effort must be required, then God exerts the least amount possible.

[47]Byerly, "The All-Powerful," 21. Pearce ("Infinite Power and Finite Power," 233) doesn't think omnipotence should be analyzed in this way, but thinks that having all the powers is how omnipotence is usually understood.

[48]For example, Marmodoro, "Aristotelian Powers," 74. Some might call passive powers 'liabilities,' and then claim God doesn't have any of these. I prefer passive power, since it at least sounds more value neutral. It also allows those who want to say that God can be moved by creatures can say that God has a passive power, whilst not saying He has a liability. Note, however, that this distinction is not adopted by all metaphysicians working on powers, for instance see: Heil, *The Universe*, 118–20, and Hansson Wahlberg, "Active Powers and Passive Powers," but discussion of this would take us too far afield.

[49]E.g. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, Q.9.

[50]See Marmodoro, "Power Mereology."

[51]Perhaps on deity views of modality God does have this power in *some way*. For discussion and a rejection of deity views see Leftow, *God and Necessity*.

[52]Another type is extrinsic powers/dispositions (McKitrick, *Dispositional Pluralism*, Ch.8), however if Leftow ("Omnipotence," 180–83) is right that omnipotence is to do with intrinsic powers only, these, even if had by God, couldn't be thought to characterize omnipotence.

[53]One could reply by denying that there are all these other types of powers which I'm skeptical that God has. I leave this response aside here.

Determining exactly what the range of God's power is, is therefore a rather tricky business and not something I attempt to solve here.[54] However let me raise a few points concerning how we should think about this aspect of God's omnipotence on a powers view.

God's range makes it the case that He can bring about different types of effects. Does this mean that God has a different power for each different type of effect that He can bring about? On certain views of powers, single-track views, where a power is at least partly defined in terms of a single manifestation track,[55] the answer to this would very likely be yes.[56] Thus, for every different type of effect God can bring about He would have a different power to do so. As such, God has very many powers. However, if one were to embrace a multi-track view of powers, where one power can bring about multiple types of manifestation, then perhaps God does not have many powers after all. Thus, to ascertain how many powers God has involves answering questions concerning the viability of multi-track powers and whether we have any other good reasons for thinking that God doesn't have multiple distinct powers, such as divine simplicity. As I've already said, this is something I explore in greater detail elsewhere.

Similar questions arise concerning my previous discussion of God's strength. For I said that on a powers view we ought to understand God's maximal strength as being to do with the maximal intensity of a power. However, should we think that all of God's powers are maximally intense or if there is a range of strength to God's power? *Prima facie* it seems we should think there is a range, since perhaps God's maximal intensity would prevent Him from doing more 'delicate things,' much like how a sledgehammer may be able to crack a nut, but does so by destroying the nut in the process. Does God therefore have distinct powers for each differing level of intensity of strength, as a single-tracker may have it, or once again should we allow for multi-track powers that allow God to have one power that allows for different intensities? Note that this question is distinct from the previous, since the former is to do with whether one power can have multiple manifestation *types*, whereas this has to do with

[54]For instance, whilst we would need to answer fairly standard questions to do with range, something Byerly ("The All-Powerful") does in the context of a powers view, we should also ascertain answers to less standard questions. Such as: Does God have power over modal truths? Does God determine His range of powers? If He does, how does He? And could this range have been different? Leftow, *God and Necessity*, provides some answers to these questions elsewhere, which in order are: yes (for lots of them at least, what he calls secular modal states of affairs), yes (e.g. *God and Necessity*, 295), this is a long story (you'll need to read the book, *God and Necessity*), and no (*God and Necessity*, 265; "On God and Necessity," 450).

[55]I say 'at least partly' since typically a power's definition also includes its stimulus condition, which in this case would be God's willing. I will ignore this complexity going forward. Note that Vetter (*Potentiality*, Ch.3), has a view of powers which defines them in terms of their manifestation alone.

[56]For why it is only very likely see my Page, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Power."

whether one power with a single manifestation type can manifest this power with different *intensities*. Answering this would require in depth analysis of additional questions that I cannot get into here, and so I leave this hanging too.

Let me, however, end my present discussion of God's range by noting one way in which a powers view of omnipotence can answer whether God has the power to perform evil actions. *Prima facie* support that God has such a power comes from the fact that we humans seem to have such a power, and therefore it would seem odd if God didn't also have this. Nevertheless, there are ways to deny that God has such a power. For instance, as Leftow notes, Augustine, Anselm and others took it that sinning is a sign of impotence and not of power, and therefore since God cannot be impotent He cannot sin.[57] Another suggestion comes from Morris, who argues that there is no distinct power to sin, but rather that sinning is to do with using one's powers, which are axiologically neutral, in a sinful way, something God wouldn't do. Whilst there are other options available for denying that God has such a power,[58] other theists, such as Byerly, seem to think that God has such a power.[59] Let us therefore assume that God has such a power, with what follows being one way in which we could understand it.

Powers are able to be finked and masked, where finks and masks are those things that prevent the manifestation of a power in circumstances in which it would typically manifest, but in different ways. Whilst a fink does this by eliminating the power, a mask does not. As we are thinking about God, and it seems *prima facie* odd to say that His powers could be eliminated, my interest concerns masks. Just like finks, masks come in two types, extrinsic and intrinsic, with extrinsic masks masking a power's manifestation due to something extrinsic, whilst intrinsic masks mask a power's manifestation due to something intrinsic to the object that has the power. As I take it that nothing extrinsic can prevent God's power from manifesting, I shall be concerned with intrinsic masks.

Before thinking about how an intrinsic mask may apply to God, let me illustrate how one works through thinking about Kripke's case of killer yellow, which comes down to us through Lewis. This:

> special shade of yellow, 'killer yellow,' is fatal regardless of what the colored thing may be. . . . [it] disrupts the color vision of anyone who sets eyes on

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[57]Leftow, "Omnipotence," 169. In contemporary power terminology we might say that this is a passive power, and I have already suggested God may not possess these types of powers.

[58]Morris, "Perfection and Power." For example, it may be that on what Baker-Hytch and myself call an Ockhamist account of goodness, whatever God does will count as good, and therefore He cannot sin (Page and Baker-Hytch, "Meeting the Evil," 498). One might also just deny that God has this type of power, even though it is a real one, since it is not untypical for theists to deny that God has other powers which we humans have, such as the power to walk (Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, 322).

[59]Byerly, "The All-Powerful."

> it; and it disrupts all other brain processes as well, thereby causing instant death. . . . This color does not typically cause color experience. It never does, and never could so long as we retain our vulnerability to it."[60]

Killer yellow, therefore has the power to cause color experience but it never does, since it also has the power to kill humans and does so before they ever have the chance to experience the color. As such, killer yellow's power to kill intrinsically masks its power to cause a color experience. The power it has to cause this experience is not removed, as in the fink case, since the case seems to allow that humans could overcome their deadly vulnerability to killer yellow, and as such this power is just prevented from bringing about its manifestation of a color experience since killer yellow's power to kill masks it.[61]

Turn now to God. Something similar can be said in His case, for we can claim that He has the power to do evil, but that this power is intrinsically masked by something else, and as such the power to do evil never manifests. What then would prevent this manifestation? I suggest it would be something like God's essential goodness. If this is right then even though God may be in the appropriate conditions to manifest His power for evil, it will necessarily fail to manifest due to another aspect of His intrinsic nature, namely His essential goodness, which masks it.[62] Hence on this view we have a conception of God with the power to do evil, but ultimately He is never able to bring about evil.

Let me briefly note two potential worries one might have with this suggestion. The first is that we shouldn't think there are powers which are necessarily and intrinsically masked. That is, although we happily acknowledge that powers can exist whilst dormant, we should remove from our ontology all of those powers that never will or never can manifest. One reason for thinking this is due to the Eleatic principle, which says only that which is causally powerful is real.[63] The response here would be to deny the Eleatic assumption in this case and claim that in *this instance* we have other reasons, such as those previously given, for the postulation of such powers.[64]

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[60]Lewis, "Naming the Colours," 333.

[61]For some more examples of intrinsic masks see Ashwell, "Superficial Dispositionalism," and Molnar, *Powers*, 93.

[62]An interesting question here is whether a mask needs to be another type of power or if it can belong to another ontological category. I'm unsure, but if it had to be another power then one would need to show how God's goodness could be explained in terms of powers. I try and explain some types of goodness in terms of powers elsewhere (Page, "Power-ing up") and one could perhaps extend it to account for God's goodness, depending upon how this is understood (Murphy, *God's Own Ethics*).

[63]Vetter and Busse, "Modal Dispositionalism," also worry about this, but the reason they do so is that it causes problems for Vetter's (*Potentiality*) theory of modal dispositionalism.

[64]Byerly ("The All-Powerful") gives another type of response to God having powers to do evil, but also relies on the thought that there can be powers that will not manifest. Leftow, too, seems to allow for this; "Omnipotence, Evil," 51–56.

The second concern says that God's powers should never be prevented from manifesting, and yet the story I've told says He is prevented. I reply by saying that whilst it may be that we should think nothing *external* prevents God's power, hence there can be no extrinsic masks, I think we should allow that there can be *internal* preventers. One reason for this is that there seem to be other cases where we are happy to say that God's nature in some way prevents other things from being the case, such as in cases where God's nature rules Him out from having the power to make contradictions be true.[65] Since here we have something internal to God making it the case that He is prevented from bringing something about and given that the internal nature of God doing such a thing is rarely seen as problematic, I say that my story shouldn't be thought of as problematic in this respect either.

4. God's Timelessly Manifesting Powers

I turn now to discuss how we can think of God's powers manifesting if He is timeless. I do this since I take it that if God is temporal,[66] His powers would likely manifest in a way *similar* to how ours manifest, given that we are temporal beings with powers, and so thinking about why His powers bring about their effects at particular times doesn't seem too difficult. For suppose God has a power which brings about the Red Sea parting when it manifests, and another power which brings you into existence. God chose to manifest His power to part the Red Sea at a particular time, and assuming it takes no time at all for Him to manifest a power and for the power to bring about its effect, this power was manifested at the time the Red Sea was parted, being dormant beforehand.[67] God's power to create you was dormant at this time, but at some later time God decided to manifest this power, and as a result you were created at the time God manifested this power. As such, if God is temporal then we can easily explain why God's powers bring about their effects at specific times.[68]

Things, however, seem less simple on a timeless conception of God. The reason for this is due to what Hasker calls "the most essential attribute of

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[65]See: Leftow, *God and Necessity*, 134, 344, 386; "Omnipotence, Evil," 57.

[66]I take it that undergoing temporal succession is sufficient for being temporal. Those who think God is in time think that God undergoes this type of succession. Divine timelessness, by contrast, denies that God undergoes this type of succession, and that God has no intrinsic or extrinsic temporal relations.

[67]If it cannot happen at the same time, then it will take the least amount of time possible, as I've said previously in the paper.

[68]There seem to be two prominent views in the literature for understanding what happens in the transition of a power being dormant to manifesting. The first view has it that a power jumps from being one power to being a new one (e.g. Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Causes from Powers*), whilst the other claims that the very same power changes the state it is in, that is going from being dormant to manifesting (Marmodoro, "Aristotelian Powers"; "Power Mereology"). On either of these accounts it seems something of the power changes, with this causing potential trouble for a timeless God. For the rest of the paper, I'll assume Marmodoro's account for ease.

divine timeless eternity," namely that "there is no such thing as change [in eternity], and therefore no temporal succession."[69] Accordingly, it must be the case that God wills everything in His single eternal present rather than successively at different times. Nevertheless, the effects of God's eternal will, such as the Red Sea parting and you existing, do occur at different times within creation. Unlike before, one can't appeal to God manifesting His powers at different times to explain why the power's effects happen at different times, since this would require God to exist at different times, and His intrinsic powers to change in some way, going from dormant to manifesting, with divine timelessness ruling this out.[70] Rather, on divine timelessness all the powers God manifests will either be timelessly manifesting or timelessly dormant, with the question then becoming why do the effects of these manifestations occur at different times within creation?

Before suggesting how we might answer this, let me head off two potential worries. Firstly, one may think the question I've asked is out of place until a prior question has been answered, namely how a timelessly manifesting power could bring about a temporal effect. Whilst I agree this is an important question, I take it that this is just a more specific form of the general question as to how timeless causes can bring about temporal effects. As such it doesn't raise an additional difficulty for a *powers account* of omnipotence, which is what this paper is focused on.[71] The objection I seek to answer, however, is specific to this account, since it is about the *manifestations of powers*, and this only needs to be addressed if one endorses a powers account of omnipotence. As such I'll largely ignore the more general question about timeless causes bringing about temporal effects here. Doing so shouldn't be thought particularly problematic either, since it's standard practice to assume things for the sake of argument so that one can address additional questions; after all I've not argued for God's existence here nor that creation is contingent but rather assumed both, albeit unobjectionably, given what my aim is. One can therefore read what follows as answering how God's timelessly manifesting powers bring about effects at different times, under the more general assumption that timeless causes can bring about temporal effects. For if we can't provide a good answer as to how God's eternally manifesting powers can bring about effects at different times, then this will give us some reason for thinking that divine timelessness doesn't fit well with a powers view of omnipotence.

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[69]Hasker, "Eternity and Timelessness," 768.

[70]Timelessness at least rules out intrinsic changes. There is a debate as to whether it also rules out extrinsic changes, something I'll comment on later.

[71]Note, too, that a powers theory can adopt several different accounts of causation, something which will be evident from what I say below. Therefore, a powers theory will only be ruled out on causal grounds, if there is either no satisfactory account of a timeless cause bringing about a temporal effect, or that all satisfactory accounts are incompatible with a powers theory. The latter question is specific to a powers account of omnipotence, but since it relies on the former more general question, I'll largely ignore it here.

Nevertheless, one might be unsatisfied with this assumption, and protest that since powers are standardly thought to be involved in causation, some type of positive model for thinking that a timeless cause could bring about a temporal effect is required before answering the question I've posed.[72] However, given the context I don't think a positive model is required, but rather at most all one needs to do is show that there are no persuasive reasons for thinking this type of causation is impossible.[73] The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, in thinking about omnipotence I take it that one should think all actions are within omnipotence's range until one is given a good reason to think otherwise. For as Alston remarks, it may be that "we are in no position to determine 'how' He does what He does. [And yet] If there are no logical impossibilities in the supposition, it is within the divine power."[74] Secondly, as theists hold that God is in some way beyond our full comprehension, we shouldn't expect to be able to know every metaphysical detail about Him, and so long as there is no contradiction in the supposition, even if one were to appeal to mystery here, that would seem acceptable.[75]

With this as background, as far as I can tell, it hasn't been shown that a timeless cause bringing about temporal effects is impossible, and at most what has been shown is that *certain accounts of causation* rule out timeless causes bringing about temporal effects.[76] Yet a defender of timelessness will not accept these accounts, such as the claim that *all* causes *must* be temporally prior to their effects, and it's unclear how wide their acceptance is more generally.[77] Note also that recently there has been much interest in providing accounts of causation which do not require time at all, since the fundamentality of spacetime has been questioned.[78] So to make sense of timeless causation, some have therefore suggested a counterfactual account, with Leftow having previously argued that this understanding of causation could be employed to make sense of how a timeless God brings about effects in a temporal world.[79] If a powers theorist wanted

[72]A referee seems to have this concern, as does Mullins, *The End of a Timeless God*, 106–7.

[73]This is Chalmers's positive and negative conceivability respectively; see "Does Conceivability Entail Possibility," 149–56.

[74]Alston, *Divine Nature*, 159–60. Both Alston (*Divine Nature*, 159–160) and Wierenga (*The Nature of God*, 198) make this point regarding how a timeless cause might bring about a temporal effect.

[75]See Pawl (*In Defence*, 89) for discussion.

[76]A reviewer comments that Mullins's suggestion that "If God is eternally causing *X* to exist, then *X* eternally exists" ("The Divine Timemaker," 220), would be problematic for my claim that a timeless God can bring about temporal effects. I agree that it would if this premise was true, but I think it isn't for multiple reasons. Sadly, due to space I cannot outline those here, but I do elsewhere (Page, "O Precreation").

[77]Mullins ("The Divine Timemaker," 224) claims causes must be temporally prior. However, Paul and Hall don't require this of causation but call cases where the cause is not temporally prior to the effect "special cases" (*Causation*, 67).

[78]See: Baron and Miller, "Causation in a Timeless World," and "Causation 'Sans' Time"; Tallant, "Causation in a Timeless World"; Baron, Miller, and Tallant, *Out of Time*, ch. 8.

[79]Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, 245, 292–95. Note that a world that is fundamentally non-temporal with time arising from it may provide some positive conceivability for the claim

to, they could employ such an account, since many take it that powers provide the truthmakers for counterfactuals.[80]

Alternatively, one could claim that causation is primitive, with this approach gaining popularity since reductive analyses seem doomed to fail.[81] Yet if one goes this route then it seems open for one to hold that a primitive non-temporal causal relation can hold between eternity and time, with power theorists being able to take this route through claiming that causation is a primitive relation of production and powers are primitively oomphy, or productive, entities.[82] As far as I can tell, this isn't impossible and I suspect we can model it on "weak" island universes, although this will have to wait for another occasion.[83]

It therefore seems to me that we don't have compelling grounds for thinking it impossible that a timeless cause brings about a temporal effect,[84] and therefore given the presumed range of omnipotence I take it that we should think it possible until we are given strong reasons to think otherwise.[85]

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that it is possible for something timeless to cause something temporal without appealing to the divine case, whilst not being "based on analogies involving temporal agents and temporal effects" (Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, 107). Further discussion will have to wait for another occasion.

[80]For instance, see: Heil, "Real Modalities" 103; McKitrick, *Dispositional Pluralism*, ch.4; and Jacobs, "A Powers Theory."

[81]This is the conclusion of Schaffer, "Review: Cause and Chance," 872–73, and Paul and Hall, *Causation*, 249.

[82]Leftow, "Presentism, Atemporality," 190n45, suggests causation as a primitive relation of production.

[83]See Bricker, *Modal Matters*, 110, for discussion on weak island universes. Note that we can also model timeless to temporal causation using the popular formalism of structural equation models. (See Woodward, *Making Things Happen*, for discussion of this formalism). Additionally, this formalism can also be used to model grounding relations (Wilson, "Metaphysical Causation," and Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image"), and since it is sometimes suggested that God's relationship to the world was more traditionally taken to be one concerning ontological or existential dependence (Cohoe, "There Must Be A First," 839n4; Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation*, 12), we might prefer to speak of a timeless God being related to the world in this way rather than causally, given contemporary understandings of causation. If we do then we might appeal to work that suggests that temporal phenomena can be grounded in something timeless (Wilson, "Explanations of and in Time"), as powers can be thought to stand in grounding relations too (Trogdon, "Inheritance Arguments," 195), with this perhaps providing the basis for understanding how temporal entities can ontologically depend on a timeless God.

[84]With even Hasker (*God, Time, and Knowledge*, 152–55), a regular critic of timelessness, affirming this.

[85]One might try two other arguments for thinking such causation is impossible. Firstly, one might argue that if one adopts the 'causal likeness principle,' then timeless causes can only bring about timeless effects. Yet it's highly debatable that one should adopt such a principle (Yandell, "A Defense of Dualism," 551–52; Rickabaugh and Moreland, *The Substance of Consciousness*, 276–77), with this especially being the case for theists since they typically claim a spaceless God can bring about spatial effects. Secondly, one might suggest that causal relations hold between 'events' and that there can be no atemporal events. However, Leftow, who adopts such a view of causation (*God and Necessity*, 303n8), blocks this by arguing there are atemporal events ("The Eternal Present"). One could reply in another way by contending

Turning to the second initial worry, one might claim that if something timelessly manifests, we shouldn't think it is a power. Powers, it might be thought, must be able to move from one state to another and if they can't then they don't deserve the name. This claim, however, has two different readings. For it might assert that powers must be able to *temporally* change states or instead that powers must be able to *modally* change states. I don't see any reason to affirm the former, and timelessly manifesting powers can allow the latter. My reason for this stems from examples where I think it is intuitive to say that there is a power, even though it permanently temporally manifests. For instance, it seems possible that someone has a power to get angry when certain conditions are manifested, with one of those conditions being whenever they are close to their conjoined twin. It also seems possible that this person permanently has a conjoined twin, and therefore they are in the unfortunate position of permanently being angry since this power will permanently manifest. I think we should consider this to be a power. Whilst it may permanently temporally manifest, we can still make sense of it being active and inactive modally, since it is contingent that this power permanently temporally manifests, because it is a contingent fact that they are permanently connected to their conjoined twin.[86] Similarly, I think we can make sense of powers which timelessly manifest, with these powers doing so contingently.[87]

Let us therefore return to our question, namely how we are to understand a timeless God's eternally manifesting powers so that they bring about effects at different times within the created world. To make progress on this, I need to address something I have so far left ambiguous, namely the relationship between a manifestation and an effect. The relationship between the two is often ignored by power theorists, but there are two positions in the literature, one holding that the manifestation and effect produced are identical whilst the other claims that the manifestation and effect produced are distinct but connected. It seems to me that if a powers view of omnipotence is to be viable to an advocate of timelessness, then unless one adopts a wholly extrinsic account of divine action,[88] one will need to adopt a view where the manifestation and effect produced are distinct,[89] since if they are identical then God's timeless manifestation

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that substances are the correct causal relata, with this being a widely held view, although not required, amongst causal powers theorists (e.g. Steward, *A Metaphysics for Freedom*, 197–247; Lowe, "Substance Causation"; *Personal Agency*; Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Causes from Powers*, 106–29).

[86]Marmodoro ("Power Mereology," 113–14) provides other examples of powers like this from contemporary physics and calls this type of power an 'intransitive power.'

[87]I'm unsure that this modal condition is required (Vetter, *Potentiality*, 90–94), for already in this paper I've given a view where God has a power which necessarily cannot manifest, and therefore cannot change states, namely His power to sin, and yet it doesn't seem obvious to me that this doesn't deserve to be called a power. See also my, "The 'Power'-ful Trinity."

[88]I discuss this elsewhere in Page, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Power."

[89]Molnar (*Powers*, 195), Anjum and Mumford ("Mutual Manifestation," 87), and Marmodoro ("What's dynamic," 2), are all examples of power theorists who hold this view.

which happens at no-time will produce an effect at no-time.[90] With this distinction made, it seems at least possible that a timeless manifestation can produce a temporal effect.[91] How then should we explain how these timelessly manifesting powers can bring about effects at different times? Here the advocate of a powers view of omnipotence has a few options before them.

Firstly, they could hold that God's powers are such that they are directed towards bringing about an effect at a particular time. So rather than God having a power to bring about X, God has the power to bring about X at t_1, a power to bring about X at t_2, etc. If we take all of these to be distinct powers, then God has very many powers indeed. One could perhaps mitigate this explosion through adopting a multi-track view here, such that there is one power that has multiple tracks, each directed towards bringing about a specific effect at different times.[92] But one might also be unperturbed by God having very many powers. Whichever view is taken, we can provide an answer as to why God brought about an effect at a specific time and not at other times, for God eternally manifested the power 'to bring about X at time t_{20},' and not the power 'to bring about X at time t_{19}.'

One might, however, push back, and claim that if the identity of a power is determined by what it is directed at producing, such as 'effect X at t_{20},' then the power itself is temporal and as such cannot be had by a timeless God. However, I think we should question whether having a temporal designation makes a power temporal, for it is questionable that a power inherits the same features that it produces. To see this consider an alternative case, namely the power my highlighter has to turn white paper yellow and note that it would be a mistake to think that the power itself is yellow. So too in substantial generation, it would be a mistake to think that the powers which generate substances, which by hypothesis are non-substances, are themselves substances. Yet given that we deny the inheritance here, it is highly questionable that we should think that a power with temporal designation in its definition is itself temporal.[93]

A second option a power theorist might take is to think that God's powers are modally individuated rather than temporally individuated.

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[90]Perhaps on Leftow's Anselmian view, where events in time exist in both time and eternity, this also wouldn't be an issue, for God could act and effect that which exists in eternity, with this influencing what occurs in time (*Time and Eternity*, 245). For more on Leftow's Anselmian view see my "Timelessness à la Leftow."

[91]Making this distinction raises questions for my case of intrinsic masking above, for should one think the mask happens at the point of the manifestation or point of the effect? If at the point of effect, then God manifests the power to do evil but His effect is masked. Some might not like what this would imply about God. The best I can suggest is that a perfectly rational being, in this case God, would not attempt to manifest a power He knew could never bring about its effect, and so God's power to do evil would never in principle manifest.

[92]As noted previously, I discuss the issue of multiple manifestation types elsewhere: Page, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Power."

[93]I thank Tim Pawl for a helpful discussion.

Perhaps God just has a 'bring about all of W1' power, where W1 is a possible world. God timelessly manifests this power and as a result W1, and all it contains, time and all, is produced. Thus take our world, God timelessly manifests His power to make actual this world and the effect is that the world and all within it exists. Since a possible world contains all times, this power will be able to produce all times, and all that occurs at these times. God's speaking to Abraham happens at t_{1000}, not at t_{10}, simply because that's what happens in this possible world, with God's manifesting power timelessly producing this state of affairs.

Let me suggest one final option that power theorists have available to them.[94] Here they might suggest that a timeless power's effect occurs at a particular time because certain conditions need to be met in order for the power's effect to occur. Given this they can say a particular effect occurred at time t_{10}, because at t_{10} the conditions required for the effect to occur were present, whereas they were not present at t_9. A worry about this type of view is that other conditions are required in order for God's power to bring about its effect and given that these conditions are extrinsic to the power in question, it might be thought that these powers can't be those to do with omnipotence, since an omnipotent being's actions shouldn't be able to be frustrated.[95] The best we can do here is suggest that in the cases we are interested in, namely those not to do with human agents libertarian free actions, the other conditions are also brought about by God's powers, such that even though extrinsic conditions are required to bring about a power's effect, these conditions are also brought about by God. Given God's omniscience it doesn't seem like it would be problematic for Him to set up the world in such a way that the conditions required for a power to bring about an effect are ordered so that the effects occur when God desires.

I think all the options I've listed are compatible with God being timeless and the world eternalist or God being timeless and the world being presentist, when one appropriately understands what this would be like.[96] Nevertheless, one might worry that given my distinction between a power's manifestation and the effect the power brings about, God's timeless powers will be said to change extrinsically, since at some times God's powers will satisfy the description of bringing about a certain effect, whilst at

[94]This is not to suggest that these are the only options a power theorist could employ.

[95]See Leftow ("Omnipotence," 173) for discussion. One might wonder what this power is doing whilst it is manifesting and yet waiting to bring about its effect. I'm not sure you should think it is doing any more than waiting for the appropriate conditions, but if one thinks it should be then perhaps one could employ the idea of a multi-stage power (Marmodoro, *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects*, 130–33; Marmodoro and Grasso, "The Power of Color"), with this being a type of power which can have stages of activation, albeit where the stages do not require that the power itself changes.

[96]For eternalist views see: Rogers, "Anselmian Eternalism"; Mawson, *The Divine Attributes*, 24–29. And for presentist views see: Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, and "Presentism, Atemporality"; Page "Presentism, Timelessness, and Evil."

other times they won't satisfy this description even though they manifest timelessly.[97] For those who think a timeless God cannot undergo such a change, this may be problematic.[98]

I am, however, skeptical that a defender of timelessness should be concerned here. To see why, let me provide a case that I think is parallel, in ways relevant to the question at hand, to a timeless God's relationship to the world. First, think of what Lathan and Miller call a one-instant world, with this being a single slice of reality that has no internal temporal relations, much like that of a timeless God.[99] Suppose I exist in this world and am 5ft tall. Given that there is only one instant in this world it will be permanently true that I am this height. Now imagine that this world is actually one universe in a Lewisian Island universe.[100] As such there are multiple spatio-temporally isolated universes, and therefore there are no extrinsic temporal relations between these universes, much like how a timeless God has no temporal relations to our temporal universe.[101] Suppose we focus our attention on one of these universes which has a typically presentist structure.[102] This universe has two people in it, Jack and Olivia, with Jack getting taller over time and Olivia getting shorter. Suppose then that at t_1 in the typically presentist universe Jack is 4ft and Olivia 6ft. Given this, in the presentist world it is true to say that Jack is smaller than me and Olivia is taller than me. Time moves on in the presentist world and now at t_{10} Jack is 6ft and Olivia is 4ft. At t_{10} in the presentist world it is now true to say that Jack is taller than me and Olivia

[97]It's clear that no intrinsic change in the power takes place on all the views I've given.

[98]Mullins (*The End of the Timeless God*, 51) is someone who thinks this. These changes are sometimes called 'mere Cambridge changes,' where these changes involve a change in extrinsic relational predicates rather than a change in monadic intrinsic predicates. Nevertheless, there is something of a debate as to *exactly* what a Cambridge change is (Helm, "Are 'Cambridge' Changes"; Ruben, "A Puzzle"), and so to avoid confusion let me state that all I contend here is that some predications made in time about God can change their truth value without resulting in God being temporal.

[99]See Latham and Miller ("Time in a One-Instant World," 145; Leftow *Time and Eternity*, 31.) Latham and Miller also call this a 'stopped presentist' world ("Time in a One-Instant World," 145), and in many respects this is similar as to how God's timeless 'eternal present' is sometimes conceived. Swinburne ("God and Time," 216), however, has argued that due to timelessness being like an instant, a timeless God is incoherent since he suggests instantaneous states of affairs are impossible. I think this is a mistake, with Leftow providing multiple examples of instantaneous states of affairs ("The Eternal Present," 25–32; McCann, *Creation*, 243–244n18). Alternatively, one could follow McCann and suggest that timelessness is not like existing at an instant (*Creation*, 2012, 53) or agree with Leftow that we can make some sense of this instant having some type of duration, which would appear to solve Swinburne's worry (*Time and Eternity*, 112–146; "Presentism, Atemporality," 186).

[100]Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 71–72.

[101]Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, 22. For more on this way of modelling a timeless God see my ("Presentism, Timelessness, and Evil"; "Timelessness à la Leftow"; Leftow, "Presentism, Atemporality"; *Time and Eternity*).

[102]One doesn't have to assume presentism here, I just do so since it is usually considered incompatible with timelessness (e.g. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, 30) and therefore the most extreme case to examine.

is smaller than me. From the point of view of the presentist world I have undergone an extrinsic change, since different descriptions are true of me at different times. But I have undergone no intrinsic change, since that is ruled out by my world being only one instant long. Interestingly, from my perspective in my one-instant universe, it will permanently be the case that I am taller than Jack and shorter than Olivia at time t_1 of their typically presentist universe, and taller than Olivia and shorter than Jack at time t_{10} of their typically presentist universe.[103] That is, from my intrinsically and extrinsically timeless existence, nothing changes whatsoever, I timelessly satisfy all the descriptions I ever do. Yet due to this we can see that my changing descriptions, from the perspective of the typically presentist world, does nothing to make it the case that I in any way change so as to be temporal.

As such, translating this back to God and His powers, I don't think the descriptions we make in our temporal world concerning the effects of God's manifesting powers will in any way imply that He is temporal. That is, we can say it is true that the *effect* of God's eternally manifesting power to part the Red Sea is past, even though for the Israelites as they were walking through the Red Sea it was true to say that the effect of God's eternally manifesting power to part the Red Sea was present. These descriptions can be the case from our temporal vantage point, even though for God in eternity it is permanently the case that the power's effect occurs at the time it does in our temporal world and that this truth, from the perspective of eternity, which has no temporal relation to our time, never changes.[104] Therefore, I take it that a defender of timelessness should not be concerned by our changing temporal descriptions concerning the effects of God's timelessly manifesting powers.

This thought experiment provides a positive reason to think that such changes are compatible with divine timelessness, but one might insist, as a reviewer does, that these types of changes are incompatible with divine timelessness. It's not clear exactly what the positive argument for this claim is,[105] as well as what is problematic with my thought experiment above, but it is sometimes contended that some important historical and contemporary figures think that timelessness rules out God from undergoing any extrinsic change.[106] This is merely an appeal to authority, and although the authorities appealed to might be highly influential, they may be wrong. However,

[103]To understand the relationship between island universes and time see my (Page, "Presentism, Timelessness, and Evil"; "Timelessness à la Leftow"; "Are Multiple Temporally Unconnected"; Leftow, "Presentism, Atemporality").

[104]I set out the truths in question in more detail in Page, "The Creation Objection," 179–80. See also Leftow, "Presentism, Atemporality," 189–191.

[105]Perhaps one might worry that extrinsic changes imply that God exists in distinct events, but this seems a mistake: Leftow, "Eternity and Immutability," 62–66; and Helm, "Are 'Cambridge' Changes."

[106]Mullins (*The End of a Timeless God*, 50) and an anonymous reviewer suggest this.

I think it's far from clear that many did think this.[107] For instance, Boethian scholar Marenbon claims that Boethius allowed God to undergo Cambridge changes, Teske says the same regarding Augustine, Visser and Williams say the same of Anselm, and Leftow makes the same point about Aquinas.[108] However, my rebuttal also based on authority may not persuade, and according to one reviewer they provides "nothing more than intentional handwaving . . . ignoring all of the actual medieval textual evidence." Let me therefore comment, albeit briefly, on some relevant evidence in Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas which should provide some reason to suppose that they would agree with me that some predications made in time about God can change their truth value without requiring that God is temporal.

In book V, chapter 16 of *De Trinitate* Augustine allows that truthful predications about God change, such that at some times it was true for the Israelites to say that God was Lord even though it was not true at other times, with much the same being said of God being our refuge. To illustrate this, Augustine employs the analogy of money, saying that the money does not change when it is called a price or a pledge, and contends that when we speak of things 'relatively' this will imply no change in the nature of the thing spoken about. With this distinction in hand, Augustine goes on to claim that God can be spoken of 'relatively,' writing "Therefore that which begins to be spoken of God in time, and which was not spoken of Him before, is manifestly spoken of Him relatively."[109] Thus, in saying that it is now true that God is our Lord, when it wasn't true before, we speak 'relatively' about God. Nevertheless, immediately after this assertion Augustine notes that this change shouldn't be thought of as referring to any change in God's accidents. This might lead to some head scratching if we do not understand Augustine's usage of the term 'accident,' since Augustine does not understand 'accident' in the same way the term 'property' is used in contemporary philosophy, despite these sometimes being conflated. For Augustine an accident "is something that inheres in a subject" and can therefore be thought of as some ontological doodad something possesses.[110] Understood this way, a timeless God cannot change its 'accidents,' since it would be intrinsically one way and then another. However, in contemporary philosophy properties are that which "can be *predicated* of things . . . [and] are often called *predicables*,"[111] and therefore a change in

[107]For example, Leftow writes, "it has been standard at least since Augustine to handle the Change of Property Problem via the distinction between genuine and what have become known as 'mere Cambridge' changes"; *Time and Eternity*, 309.

[108]For Boethius see: Marenbon, *Boethius*, 85–87, and "Relations in Earlier," 44–47; for Augustine see: Teske, "Divine Immutability in Augustine," 235, 240n17, and "Properties of God"; for Anselm see: Visser and Williams, *Anselm*, 106; and for Aquinas see Leftow: "God's Impassibility," 176.

[109]Augustine, *De Trinitate V*, 1; translation in Klima, *Medieval Philosophy*, 258.

[110]Teske, "Divine Immutability," 7.

[111]Orilia and Paoletti, "Properties." Teske's ("Divine Immutability") also provides numerous references for understanding Augustine's understanding of accidents and provides a very helpful discussion on relative predications concerning God.

properties doesn't require an addition or a subtraction of an Augustinian accident. In other words, for a predication, '*s* is F,' to go from being false to being true, it is false that *s* needs to undergo some ontological change.[112] If we understand property talk in this way, then Augustine would allow that there are some predications about God which become true at certain times, for this implies nothing about changes in God's being, or God having accidents, as Augustine understands them.[113]

Much the same goes for Anselm. In chapter 25 of the *Monologion* Anslem writes that some relations "are known to bring about no change at all in the thing of which they are said by beginning or ceasing to be present in."[114] He then gives a classic example of height, saying that my relationship to another's height can change without there being any change in me. Anselm's conclusion from this is that "among the things that are called accidents, some do imply a degree of mutability, whereas others in no way destroy immutability."[115] Admittedly, perhaps in deference to Augustine, Anselm goes on to say that these accidents which do not destroy immutability should be thought of as things "improperly called accidents," whilst accident is properly used for those things that causes a change in something.[116] Nevertheless, Anselm thinks that God's supreme nature "does not reject being sometimes described in accordance with those accidents that in no way oppose his supreme immutability," and therefore he too would not think that what I've said about the temporal effects of God's eternally manifesting powers would imply that God is temporal.[117]

Finally, consider Aquinas and what he says in *Summa Theologica* I, q.13, a.7, ad. Here he claims that some temporal predications can be made of God since they imply no change in God, providing a non-theological example of a column being on the right side of an animal, where there is no change in the column but only in the animal.[118] Applying this to God, so long as the change in question doesn't imply any intrinsic change in God, then these predications can be made truthfully about God, much like those concerning the temporal effects of God's eternally manifesting power.

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[112]Posthumous predications provide one such example to show this is the case; for some discussion of these types of predications see Ruben, "A Puzzle."

[113]Whether he, and Anselm and Aquinas who follow, would be fine with a powers view of omnipotence more generally is another question and would require that it is compatible with divine simplicity, something I seek to address in Page, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Power."

[114]Anselm, *Monologion* 25, translation in Williams, *Anselm*, 35.

[115]Anselm, *Monologion* 25, translation in Williams, *Anselm*, 35.

[116]Anselm, *Monologion* 25, translation in Williams, *Anselm*, 36; Visser and Williams make the deference claim, see *Anselm*, 274n7.

[117]Anselm, *Monologion* 25, translation in Williams, *Anselm*, 36.

[118]Note that this is pretty much parallel to the example of a change Mullins says classical theists will deny of God, namely where Mullins is related in space to Cambridge's faculty of Divinity in two different ways, with their being no intrinsic change in the faculty (*The End of the Timeless God*, 154).

Before concluding, let me comment on one final scholar found in the contemporary sphere, namely Paul Helm, since he is an authority often appealed to as someone who thinks Cambridge changes are incompatible with timelessness.[119] Helm, an ardent advocate of timelessness, at one point writes, "An individual is immutable in the required sense if no temporal or spatial changes apply to that thing, not even temporal or spatial 'merely Cambridge' changes."[120] I'm not convinced that this passage means to rule out *all types* of Cambridge changes, given other things Helm says. For instance, in the same book Helm later notes that the distinction between "real" and "merely Cambridge" changes enable a defender of timelessness to overcome Wolterstorff's claim that changing predications concerning God imply that God is temporal.[121] Additionally, Helm's more thorough discussion of immutability talks of "real changes," as opposed to "merely Cambridge changes," with the former being the problematic type of change.[122] Elsewhere Helm writes that, "Not every kind of change is ruled out by immutability or impassibility; suppose, on thinking of him, a person comes to fear or rejoice in God. Something is true of God now that was not true of him before, namely that God is now feared by that person."[123] And in another location Helm claims that merely thinking about the number seven for five minutes in no way entails that the number seven is temporal, even though at some times it will be true to predicate of the number seven that it is being thought of, and false at other times, with this being used as a parallel for thinking about a timeless God.[124] Turning back to the initial quote in question, it is worth noting that after describing what a real change is, where, when concerning temporality, this is "when the duration of an object is extended," Helm claims that the "only way in which new temporal changes occur is when one or other of the individuals in the relation begins to exist."[125] A sentence later he turns back to mere Cambridge

[119]Mullins (*The End of the Timeless God*, 51n30; "Classical Theism," 87) and a reviewer specifically mention Helm to back up their concern about what I claim in this section. Mullins also cites Deng (*God and Time*, 35–36) in support of the claim that an immutable and therefore timeless being cannot undergo an extrinsic change (Mullins, "Classical Theism," 87). However, what Deng claims is compatible with an immutable God changing extrinsically, with this being something she has confirmed in personal correspondence. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, 153–54, also appeals to Chisholm and Zimmerman, "Theology and Tense," as providing an argument as to why a timeless God cannot undergo a Cambridge change, but as I show in Page, "The Creation Objection," 178–179, this appeal is also mistaken.

[120]Helm, *Eternal God*, 19.

[121]Helm, *Eternal God*, 44–45; Wolterstorff, *Inquiring about God*, 153.

[122]Helm, *Eternal God*, 86–87. Helm also frequently speaks of 'real' change as being the type of change a timeless God cannot undergo in *Eternal God* (74, 106, 171, 234, 250), and elsewhere distinguishes 'real' change with mere Cambridge change: *Reason in the Service*, 120.

[123]Helm, *Reason in the Service*, 242.

[124]Helm, "Response to William Lane Craig," 162. To take two other examples, the number of apples in a basket, say six, may change from time t_1 and t_2 as Jack and Olivia have a snack, but this doesn't mean that the Platonist about numbers must claim that the number six changes from being one way to being another, thereby becoming temporal. Similarly, the children go from being ravenous to satiated, but this doesn't show Platonic realism is false, because we don't need to say that 'hunger' goes from being one way to another.

[125]Helm, *Eternal God*, 19–20.

changes writing, "The creator is immutable to the extent that he does not have even 'merely Cambridge' temporal and spatial relations with any other substances much less real changes. There is nothing that is at any time some distance in time from the creator or in space at any distance in space."[126] Here it seems like what Helm is most interested in denying, like all advocates of timelessness should, is that God stands in some temporal distance relations to creation, claiming that any type of change that requires these type of relations needs to be denied of God. But the cases I've described do not require that God has temporal distance from things, and neither do Helm's about fearing God and thinking about the number seven. Given this it seems to me that in the disputed passages, Helm should be taken as thinking that there can be different species of "merely Cambridge" changes, and that a timeless God cannot undergo the "temporal or spatial" variety, with these being those that would mean that God stood at a temporal or spatial distance from something. Since the changes I'm interested in don't require this, I think even Helm would allow that our changing descriptions of the temporal effects of God's eternally manifesting powers does not make Him temporal.[127]

Given this, I don't think what I've claimed here about God's eternally manifesting powers and their effects in time should be problematic for an advocate of divine timelessness. It may be that some advocates of timelessness dislike what I've said here, but this just shows that classifying vast swathes of thinkers into one monolithic group, like classical theism, and then generalizing as to what the group thinks, whilst sometimes helpful in teaching contexts, is very often unhelpful since it may lead us to think that all thinkers within this group think the same about the classical attributes and related metaphysical issues, for which they surely don't.

5. Conclusion

Contemporary work in the metaphysics of powers, so I've suggested, can help us understand what God's power is like. As I said from the outset, this is only a starting point as much more about God's power needs to be explored, with this being especially the case if one holds to divine simplicity. Yet for now I hope to have shown how we can understand God's strength in terms of a power ontology, how He could have evil powers that are always masked, and finally that a powers view of omnipotence can make sense of a timeless God bringing about effects at particular times.[128]

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[126]Helm, *Eternal God*, 20.

[127]Admittedly, Helm often says that the Cambridge change distinction is a difficult one (*Eternal God*, 45) and one he doesn't fully understand (*Reason in the Service*, 390), so we can avoid this language and speak as I have done above.

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