

## ARTICLE

# Categorizing Representative Nondualisms

**David H. Nikkel**

### **Abstract**

Nondualism in the context of this article refers to a metaphysics where there exists one all-encompassing, all-integrating whole. This project categorizes nondualisms, those with provenances both in Asian and Western contexts, including pantheisms, according to several opposing options: (1) the whole is undifferentiated versus differentiated. The next four opposing categories relate to nondualisms with differentiation within or from the ultimate form of divinity, whether those differentiated realities be the world, nature, entities, and/or humans and other sentient beings. The issue is whether these differentiated realities (2) are divine or nondivine (3) possess some degree of indeterminate freedom or are subject to determinism (4) affect or do not affect the ultimate divine fulfillment and (5) are ontologically dependent on, or independent from, the ultimate divine. The final categorization concerns whether the ultimate divine is (6) personal or transpersonal. East Asian religions have typically conceptualized the ultimate divine as transpersonal. Little has been written on East Asian religions as pantheistic, but I will argue that Daoism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Ruism (Confucianism) warrant classification as transpersonal pantheisms. To conclude, I will propose a pantheism with both personal and transpersonal elements informed by current science.

### **Keywords**

advaita, Charles Hartshorne, nondualism, pantheism, pantheism, vishishtadvaita

In Western theology and philosophy of religion, “dualism” typically refers to two utterly different kinds of reality in a hierarchical relationship, where one reality is superior and often metaphysically foundational, while the other is vastly inferior, or even evil. The negation of dualism, “nondualism” in our context, however, refers to a metaphysics where there exists one all-encompassing, all-integrating whole. This project categorizes representative nondualisms, those with provenances both in Asian and Western contexts, including pantheisms, according to several opposing options: (1) the whole is undifferentiated versus differentiated. The recent book, *Nondualism: An Interreligious Exploration*, refers to a differentiated whole as “unity in difference.”<sup>1</sup> The next four opposing categories relate to nondualisms with differentiation within or from the ultimate form of divinity, whether the differentiated realities be the world, nature, entities, and/or humans and other sentient beings. The issue is whether these just mentioned differentiated realities (2) are divine or nondivine (3) possess some degree of indeterminate freedom or are subject to determinism (4) affect or do not affect the ultimate divine fulfillment and (5) are ontologically dependent on or independent of the ultimate divine. The final categorization concerns whether the ultimate divine is (6) personal or transpersonal. In selecting representative nondualisms for consideration, I have used a criterion relative to the first pair of opposing options, namely, whether the nondual model clearly articulates whether the whole of reality is ultimately either undifferentiated or differentiated. I grant that other scholars might make different judgments on which nondualisms to include.

Regarding this last categorization of the divine as personal or transpersonal, Western and Hindu pantheisms have conceived of the divine in personal terms. By contrast, East Asian religions have typically conceived of the divine as transpersonal—and scholars have not generally regarded them as pantheistic. However, I will contend that Daoism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Ruism (Confucianism) can profitably be classified as transpersonal pantheisms. Lastly, I will advance a pantheism with both personal and transpersonal elements informed by contemporary scientific knowledge, taking into account the Big Bang and eschewing supernatural causation of particular outcomes by the divine.

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1 Jon Paul Sydnor and Anthony J. Watson, eds, *Nondualism: An Interreligious Exploration* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023).

## Undifferentiated Nondualisms

To help frame the discussion, I will employ the Hindu terms and concepts of *advaita* and later *vishishtadvaita*. *Advaita*, literally meaning nondualism, recognizes the theologian Shankara as its primary thinker and holds that all reality and truth at its deepest or ultimate level is undifferentiated and unchanging, a one without a second. Shankara avows:

Brahman constitutes . . . the real nature of the individual soul, while its second nature, i.e., that aspect of it that depends on fictitious limiting conditions, is not its real nature. For as long as the individual soul does not free itself from Nescience in the form of duality, which Nescience may be compared to the mistake of him who in the twilight mistakes a post for a man . . . so long it remains the individual soul.<sup>2</sup>

Maya, sometimes translated as “illusion,” finds two types of interpretations under *advaita*. The less radical one does not deny the existence of ordinary reality, in the sense that there is absolutely nothing there yet we wrongly believe there is something. Rather, maya here maintains that everyday material and psychological existence is a lower level of reality blinded to its true identity as the one undifferentiated Brahman or Atman (Self or Soul). In this context “true” means deepest or most genuine. For the more radical interpretation, maya does mean the unreality of strict illusion or mere appearance. The more radical form of the monistic metaphysics of *advaita* Hinduism can be labeled as an acosmic pantheism, where everything is fully and identically divine in its essence. Relative to the more moderate form of *advaita* metaphysics, John J. Thatamanil invokes Shankara’s insistence that “under the rubric of causality,” Brahman is “the conscious and personal Lord” who creates the universe as material and efficient cause, as the undifferentiated transforms into formed realities, rejecting a thorough idealism where finite reality is illusory mental content.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Thatamanil concludes that Shankara undermines his intention to affirm the reality of the finite material world by his denial that Brahman can suffer any

2 Shankara, in *Sacred Books of the East* 34, trans. George Thibaut and ed. F. Max Muller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 185-86. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, eds. and trans. Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 171. (Paperback with text identical to original reprinted 2000 by New York: Humanity Books.)

3 John J. Thatmanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 68-69.

change, which renders the temporal world “ultimately unreal,”<sup>4</sup> while only Brahman is “truly real.”<sup>5</sup>

Yogacara or Mind/Consciousness Only (*citta-matra*) is an extremely complex school of Buddhism. Those interpreters who advance an ontology or metaphysics<sup>6</sup> can interpret *sunyata* or emptiness, which is nondual, as the one Pure Mind in which everything exists. The original purity of mind becomes defiled in individual minds, which realize their identity as Pure Mind when achieving nirvana. Thus Yogacara Buddhism so interpreted bears significant similarities to *advaita* Hinduism.

While *advaita* represents the fullest or most extreme nondualism, at the same time it entails a dualism of unchanging spirit versus the temporal material world. To that effect, Thatamanil references Lance Nelson’s “dualism of nondualism.”<sup>7</sup> The soul’s realization of its identity as Atman/Brahman is concomitant with escaping any effects of the body and nature. A stark ontological difference pertains between the eternal Atman/Self and the world of finite beings.

### **Nondualisms with Differentiation**

My next classification of nondualisms involves differentiation within the whole that contravenes the ultimate formlessness or undifferentiation of the monism of *advaita*.

4 Thatamanil, *Immanent Divine*, 69–71; see also 187.

5 Thatamanil, *Immanent Divine*, 9; see also 23, 71.

6 Some contemporary scholars of Yogacara see it as concerned with epistemology and not with metaphysics or ontology. Thomas Kochumuttom, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience. A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 1. On the other hand, many do take Yogacara to make claims about the nature of reality (for example, Birgit Kellner and John Taber, “Studies in Yogacara-Vijnanayada Idealism: The Interpretation of Vasubandhu’s *Vimshika*,” *Asiatische Studien/Etudes Asiatique*, 68 [2014], 709–56).

7 Thatamanil, *Immanent Divine*, 23, 91; Lance E. Nelson, “The Dualism of Nondualism: Advaita Vedanta and the Irrelevance of Nature,” in *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*, ed. Lance E. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 61–88.

*Pantheism and Differentiated Realities as Divine*

One traditional option here recognizes the full reality of different individuals and diverse types, modes, or attributes of reality, yet refuses to make any fundamental, absolute, or clear distinction between divine and nondivine realities or between fully divine versus deficiently divine realities. This criterion yields a pantheism where the cosmos or nature is considered divine; thus the divine and nature are in some sense identical. The thought of Baruch Spinoza is often cited as the classic example of pantheism in this sense, advancing the most complex and sophisticated form of this version. I grant that some dispute whether Spinoza's metaphysics is pantheistic—claiming, for example, that it is not theistic at all, given that reverence, worship, or awe are anathema to Spinoza.<sup>8</sup> However, for our purposes, his substance monism constitutes a nondualism with differentiated, indeed, infinite attributes and modes. While Spinoza does distinguish between *natura naturans* (nature naturing) and *natura naturata* (nature natured), as well as between infinite and eternal modes versus finite and temporal ones,<sup>9</sup> still he understands the whole as divine without making any clear or explicit distinctions as to degrees of divinity of its attributes and modes.

Grace Jantzen develops a feminist pantheism where the world is of ultimate value, where “that which is divine precisely *is* [emphasis original] the world.”<sup>10</sup> rather than anything transcendent or supernatural, which she regards as entailing a dualism where masculinity reigns supreme. At the same time, she hopes that her theology enables individuals to become more divine, as her title, *Becoming Divine* suggests.<sup>11</sup> This position deviates from more traditional forms of nature pantheism in allowing degrees of divinity for human individuals, though without any postulation of full versus deficient divinity.

*Pantheism and Differentiated Realities as Not Fully Divine*

In contrast to *advaita*, *vishishtadvaita*, coined by followers of the theologian Ramanuja, holds that some difference between ultimate reality, Brahman/

8 Steven Nadler, “Baruch Spinoza,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2022).

9 Blake D. Dutton, “Benedict de Spinoza,” in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. ISSN 2161-0002, <https://iep.utm.edu/>, July 28, 2023.

10 Grace M. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 270.

11 Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*.

Atman (Self) or the God Vishnu, and finite realities is ontologically permanent. It means nondualism with a qualification or with distinctions or, with an alternative grammar, the nonduality of qualified or differentiated beings or realities. Either way, a permanent ontological difference pertains. Ramanuja avers “that, as effects are real in so far as different from their cause, the effect of Brahman, i.e., the entire world, is different from Brahman.”<sup>12</sup> Regarding souls (*atmans*), Ramanuja indicates that “the highest Self [*Atman*]” does “differ from the individual soul in the same way as the latter differs from its body.” Therefore, “Brahman which is different from the soul constitutes the Self of the soul, while the soul constitutes the body of Brahman.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, “the highest Self” has “for its body the individual souls together with their bodies.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, while human beings constitute modes of the body of God, divine reality and personhood and human reality and personhood are not identical. Many scholars East and West recognize as pantheistic Ramanuja’s theology and the *bhakti* movement of Hinduism cognate with it.

In contrast to pantheistic nondualisms with differentiated realities, pantheism entails, as part of the whole, realities understood as nondivine or only deficiently divine. Part of the *raison d’être* of Western pantheism was to do fuller justice to divine immanence, while maintaining divine transcendence of the created world. (Another aspect of pantheism’s *raison d’être* was to affirm intimate divine involvement with the world while gainsaying supernatural intervention, thereby accounting for natural science.) For Ramanuja, the human (and finite non-human) soul (*atman*) shares properties of divinity, namely eternity, in the sense of not being created in time, and consciousness, which entails being a knower. While in ignorance, the individual soul does not enjoy the bliss Brahman experiences, though upon achieving *moksha* or liberation, it does.<sup>15</sup> This does not mean absorption of the individual soul into Brahman. Ramanuja urges that “to maintain that the consciousness of the ‘I’ does not persist in the state of final release is again altogether inappropriate.”<sup>16</sup> Even in the state of liberation, the individual *atman* remains distinct not only quantitatively, as just quoted,

12 Ramanuja, in *Sacred Books of the East* 48, trans. George Thibaut and ed. F. Max Muller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), 453. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 185.

13 Ramanuja, in *Sacred Books*, 717–18. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 186.

14 Ramanuja, in *Sacred Books*, 228–29. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 183.

15 Stafford Betty, “Dvaita, Advaita, and Viśiṣṭādvaita: Contrasting Views of Mokṣa,” *Asian Philosophy: An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East* 20, no. 2 (2010): 215–24.

16 Ramanuja, in *Sacred Books*, 6a0-70. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 180.

but qualitatively in certain ways, sharing in neither the omniscience of Brahman in knowing all that has transpired in time nor the supreme power of Brahman in keeping souls in existence eternally.

Parallel with Shankara and *advaita*, some mind-body dualism persists in Ramanuja's thought. The individual soul takes on various bodies in transmigration. The soul controls the body, in the sense that its actions or karma, whether good or bad, produce appropriate consequences. Finally, in some *bhakti* traditions, with moksha the atman leaves behind the body for good. Influenced by those *bhakti* traditions and by *advaita*, Keith Ward posits that for Hindu thought "bodies exist to enable the karma of spirits to be worked out. The body is the instrument of the self, more like clothing than like skin."<sup>17</sup> A statement by Ramanuja could lend support to Ward's interpretation: "Any substance of which a sentient soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purposes and which stands to the soul in a totally subordinate relation, is the body of that soul."<sup>18</sup> In a countervailing *bhakti* afterlife tradition, however, heavenly bodies allow the soul to enjoy Vishnu and his gardens in Vaikuntha, post liberation and post karma.

The term "panentheism" is of Western coinage, arising during the reign of German idealism and Romantic idealism, some trajectories of which produced both pantheists and panentheists. Karl Christian Friedrich Krause is generally credited with this coinage in 1828. As Philip Clayton notes in objection to crediting Krause, Friedrich Schelling did already use the term "*Pan+en+theismus/theism*" in his 1809 *Essay on Freedom*.<sup>19</sup> However, Schelling never did adopt the term as a general label for his theological project, while Krause adopted it to refer to a type of theology. For our purposes here, a crucial point is that for Western panentheists, influenced by either German idealism or process thought, humans and other sentient beings, though included within God, are not fully divine by nature. Having introduced process theology, I will broach that its affirmation of ultimate ontological independence from God of nondivine realities, as well as its position that unit occasions of experience are included in God only when they become past, raise the question of how fully nondualistic process theism is. I will address this question later in the appropriate section. The etymology of *pantheism* is "all [is] God or divine," while that of *panentheism* is "all [is] in

17 Keith Ward, "The World as the Body of God: A Panentheistic Metaphor," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 65.

18 Ramanuja, in *Sacred Books*, 424. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 183.

19 Philip Clayton, "Pantheisms East and West," *Sophia* 49, no. 2 (2010), 183.

God.” Using the spatial metaphor “in,” the world is included in or part of God, but God transcends the parts, which are nondivine. Schelling, Fechner, Whitehead, Hartshorne, Tillich (acknowledged as panentheistic by Tillichians), Peacocke, Clayton, and other panentheists make this clear in their writings. First, they do not label or identify the world or humans as such as divine. Krause constitutes an exception, identifying the world as a divine organism. Second, they maintain a qualitative ontological distinction between the creatures and God, wherein the world and humans possess neither omnitemporality (in the sense of continuing to exist through the ongoing succession of all time) nor an aspect independent of time (such as Whitehead’s primordial nature of God or Hartshorne’s abstract pole of the divine character), omniscience, nor supreme power universal in scope; wherein the including whole differs not only in degree but in kind from the included parts. Again, Krause is an exception: while the world at present is not fully divine, it will eventually progress to become identical with God. I will also mention that process theology explicitly denies the classical theological concept of divine foreknowledge, where God’s knowledge covers all of time. Rather, for them omniscience and divine omnitemporality entail that God has complete knowledge of the past, but not of the future insofar as it is yet to be determined. Furthermore, supreme power for Western panentheists does not mean omnipotence in the sense of all-controlling power; but rather that God influences but does not determine all events. Western panentheists strive to find a middle course between the overemphasis, in their view, on divine transcendence of classical theism and pantheism with its affirmation of the world and its constituents as divine.

However, some thinkers either ignore the explicit statements of panentheists and/or reason that being part of God is equivalent to being divine in oneself. Raphael Lastaster and Purushottama Bilimoria represent the first type, while John Polkinghorne represents the second. Lastaster and Bilimoria directly state that “the world is divine” constitutes a basic characteristic of panentheism.<sup>20</sup> Polkinghorne, while recognizing that panentheists regard the world and humans as nondivine, still fears that being “part” of God entails their divinity.<sup>21</sup> (Lastaster and Bilimoria may implicitly assume this conclusion.) For Western panentheists this type of reasoning commits an error of logic, that of composition, for an included part does not necessarily share any given attribute of the whole. My left big toe does not

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20 Ralph Lastaster and Purushottama Bilimoria, “Panentheism(s): What It Is and What It Is Not,” *Journal of World Philosophies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 51–52.

21 John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 90, 92.



have a sense of humor. A (quasi)materialistic or (quasi)substantialist picture of divinity seems to underlie the identification of an included part as divine. Lastaster and Bilimoria write favorably of the “possibility of the universe as ‘divine stuff’”<sup>22</sup> and the possibility that the world is “made of a deity’s very substance.”<sup>23</sup>

As with Ramanuja, Western panentheists—as well as theists who reject the panentheistic label—may hold that humans can become divine in some sense, even if not divine prior to an ultimate fulfillment. Schelling proclaims that “pantheism is true” when God is All in All.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Polkinghorne admits to an “eschatological pantheism”<sup>25</sup> analogous to Ramanuja’s conception of *moksha*, where persons eternally and joyfully in God’s presence might be said to fully participate in divinity.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Niels Henrik Gregersen endorses such a model under the phrase, “soteriological pantheism.”<sup>27</sup> The whole Eastern Orthodox tradition, heavily influenced by mysticism and encapsulating itself in the epigram, “God became human so that we humans might become divine,” can also fall under such an eschatological pantheism. Note, though, that even in these versions of fulfillment, humans do not possess full divinity in the sense of possessing God’s knowledge of the past, power that influences all events, or relationship to time.

### **Deterministic or Indeterministic Differentiated Realities**

The next pair of opposites is determinism versus indeterminism and free will. Here I am using free will in an indeterministic sense, that is, not all intentional actions are wholly predetermined by antecedent conditions. Such indeterminism does not deny that antecedent conditions influence the range of possible decisions or that antecedent conditions may wholly determine some actions. It does ginsay that indeterminism means that all decisions

22 Lastaster and Bilimoria, “Pantheism(s),” 54.

23 Lastaster and Bilimoria, “Pantheism(s),” 59.

24 F. W. J. Schelling, “Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen (1810),” in *Historischkritische Ausgabe, reihe II: nachlass*, bd. 8, ed. V. Müller-Lüneschloss (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2017), 283–84.

25 Tillich was the first to use the phrase “eschatological pantheism.” Paul Tillich: *Systematic Theology* 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 421.

26 Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding*, 90–91, 94.

27 Niels H. Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Pantheism,” in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 24–27.

are arbitrary. This sense rules out compatibilism or soft determinism, where all actions are determined but “free” if they are voluntary—without external compulsion. Indeterminism of course figures crucially for whether a theology is open. Along with the desire to affirm a more immanent God than does classical theism, Western thinkers who identify themselves as pantheists (or who are generally recognized as pantheistic) share the impulse to affirm some indeterminism, especially indeterministic human free will as a key distinction between God and the world, a distinction that classical theism usually rejects. Indeed, for Charles Hartshorne a definition of pantheism must include some mutual indeterminate freedom for both God and the world.<sup>28</sup> Romantic idealism in particular embraced organic and affective understandings of the relationship between God and world, reacting against Enlightenment mechanism and logical necessity. Schelling, recognized by Hartshorne and William L. Reese in *Philosophers Speak of God* as the earliest modern pantheist,<sup>29</sup> penned a long essay on human freedom.<sup>30</sup> Disassociating himself from Hegel’s fatalism, Schelling stipulates that the uncaused divine groundless ground acts in freedom rather than from rational necessity, while humans share in freedom to the extent that they possess the ability to choose good or evil.<sup>31</sup> In *The Ages of the World*, Schelling writes the following regarding nature’s submission to the divine spirit: “But just because nature is only voluntarily subjected, it always contains in itself the possibility of deviating again from that order, and of returning into a life of its own that is turned away from God.”<sup>32</sup>

Ramanuja’s *vishishtadvaita* also affirms indeterminate freedom. Because Ramanuja regards the world as a self-expression of God and God as the ruler of the world, Ward takes Ramanuja’s notion of freedom to be mere

28 For example, Charles Hartshorne, “Pantheism” and “Transcendence,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945).

29 Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 233–34.

30 F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

31 Andrew Bowie, “Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (2023). URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/schelling/>>.

32 F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. F. de Wolfe Bolman, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 154–55. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, eds. and trans. Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 238.

compatibilism rather than indeterminism.<sup>33</sup> Yet the following words from Ramanuja appear to support some indeterminate human freedom:

The inwardly ruling highest Self promotes action in so far as it regards in the case of any action the volitional effort made by the individual soul, and then aids that effort by granting its favor or permission (*anumati*); action is not possible without permission on the part of the highest Self. In this way (i.e., since the action primarily depends on the volitional effort of the soul), injunctions and permissions are not devoid of meaning.<sup>34</sup>

Ramanuja adds an analogy to a joint property, where one owner wants to sell to a third party: when permission has been given, the selling “is after all his own doing, and hence the fruit of the action (reward or anything) belongs to him only.”<sup>35</sup> God’s causative role involves keeping the soul in existence and concurrence with the soul’s decisions, but nothing here suggests a lack of indeterminate freedom for the individual. Other interpreters, both East and West, recognize indeterminism in Ramanuja.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to panentheists, pantheists generally support determinism. That everything is a mode of one divine reality, as in Spinoza, would seem to push in that direction. Spinoza himself asserts that “in the nature of things nothing contingent is granted, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature for existing and working in a certain way.”<sup>37</sup> Most nature pantheists concur with Spinoza, also probably finding no room for indeterminism regarding macro events within the laws of nature. Grace Jantzen’s feminist pantheism constitutes a counter to this, given her support for indeterminate free will.<sup>38</sup> Hegel presents an interesting case for our purposes. Like Spinoza, Hegel upholds necessitarianism and determinism. In the past, I judged Hegel to be pantheistic on the grounds that his determinism meant that finite beings are mere modes of the divine. However, my ruminations here on whether realities included in God are

33 Ward, “World as Body of God,” 63-65.

34 Ramanuja, in *Sacred Books*, 557. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 184–85.

35 Ramanuja, *Sacred Books*, 557. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 185.

36 For example, Clayton, “Pantheism(s),” 188; Arun Singh, “Social Philosophy of Ramanuja: Its Modern Relevance,” *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (2001): 495–96.

37 Spinoza, *Ethics and De Intellectus Emanatione*, trans. A. Boyle (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1913), 23–24.

38 Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*.

divine or nondivine complicate matters. Hegel does not label as divine the world or human beings. Additionally, God realizes an ultimate self-consciousness internally through the Trinity quite apart from the world, according to Hegel. At this point, I am willing to agree with Hartshorne and Reese that Hegelianism “is equivocal on the issue between pantheism and panentheism,”<sup>39</sup> or to phrase it differently, Hegel is neither a pantheist nor a panentheist—Hegel is Hegel.<sup>40</sup>

### **Differentiated Realities as Affecting or Not Affecting Divine Fulfillment**

The next pair of contraries concerns whether decisions by what is differentiated from, while within, the ultimate divine affects that ultimate divine. This figures crucially into how relational a theology might be. Ramanuja answers “no” to this question. God exists in unchanging and complete bliss whatever creatures might choose. He declares, “the highest Brahman, although entering into the ‘effected’ condition, remains unchanged.”<sup>41</sup> On the question of whether Brahman suffers, Ramanuja gainsays the notion: “The individual soul being thus connected with the highest Self as its body, its attributes do not touch the highest Self.”<sup>42</sup> Thus Brahman is “endowed with the power of immediately realizing all its purposes, in eternal possession of all it wishes.”<sup>43</sup>

Western panentheists, on the other hand, answer “yes” to the question of whether the events of the world and experiences of individuals affect God in some way, with process thinkers doing so most emphatically. Romantic idealist Fechner rhetorically asks about God:

Should there be nothing involuntary (though for itself voluntary) in relation to this highest will in his consciousness? Then indeed there will be no individual beings in God; for this alone makes them

39 Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 177.

40 Karl Krause describes both Schelling’s and Hegel’s positions as “panentheistic” in 1828. Harald Atmanspacher and Hartmut von Sass, “The Many Faces of Panentheism: An Editorial Introduction,” *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1032. Cited by John Culp, “Panentheism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (2023).

41 Ramanuja, *Sacred Books*, 142. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 183.

42 Ramanuja, *Sacred Books*, 228-29. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 183.

43 Ramanuja, *Sacred Books*, 403. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 183-84.

particular creatures in Him, that his higher will can be stimulated in particular ways through their inferior will and impulse.<sup>44</sup>

For Fechner this means that God suffers:

What would he be if he looked upon our misery merely from the outside, as we look upon the misery of a beggar in rags to whom we throw a penny? In truth, however, he feels all our grief just as do we, only with the difference that he also at the same time feels in advance the turning and redeeming and overcoming through pleasure.<sup>45</sup>

Alfred North Whitehead sets the tone for process panentheism with his description of God as “the fellow sufferer who understands.”<sup>46</sup> (Though for process theism, since there is more good than evil in the world, the world process overall makes a positive contribution to the divine life, indeed increasing divine fulfillment with each new moment of the universe’s existence.)

The above quote from Fechner suggests that, for him, particular creaturely decisions affect God, who overcomes them in their particularity and realizes the fulness of that overcoming in the future. However, other German idealists write more ambiguously on how creaturely decisions in time might—and might not—affect God. Cryptic remarks by Schelling call into question whether creaturely decisions and actions truly affect God, despite his claiming that suffering is necessary for God to achieve the highest consciousness: “Succession and concatenation, dissoluble in human life, is indissoluble in the divine life. God is in continual exaltation...everything retrograde is against God’s nature...succession in God is a real one, and yet not therefore one which has occurred in time.”<sup>47</sup>

Hegel, for his part, posits the necessity of the Idea manifesting itself in nature and history for full divine consciousness, yet also regards God as eternally complete in the self-realization of the immanent Trinity. One can

44 Gustav T. Fechner, *Zend-Avesta: Oder ueber die Dinge des Himmels und des Jenseits, vom Standpunkt der Naturbeschreibung* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1922), 244–45. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 253.

45 Fechner, *Zend-Avesta*, 249. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 254.

46 Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929; corrected ed., eds. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 351.

47 Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 149-50. In *Philosophers Speak of God*, 238.

find a similar ambiguity in Tillich on this issue. He does declare that the world process and humankind's part in it make a significant difference for the fulfillment of the divine life.<sup>48</sup> At the same time he refuses to renounce divine impassibility.<sup>49</sup> He often claims that the divine life is beyond the separation between potentiality and actuality. In particular, he expounds the "doctrine" that, to the extent creaturely occurrences and decisions involve negativity—falling short of the divine intention, of their essence—God purges the negativity and makes up the difference, so to speak. Thus, the divine eternal life includes "the positive content of history" plus "fulfill[ment] in its potentialities" of what fell short of its essence in its historical actuality.<sup>50</sup> The takeaway I draw is that the world in time in general is necessary for maximal divine blessedness, but that the particular happenings and decisions within creation do not add or detract from the fulness of divine beatitude for Tillich.

### **Ontological Dependence or Independence of the Differentiated Realities**

Another pairing of opposites concerns whether that which is differentiated from the ultimate divinity is ontologically dependent for its existence on the ultimate reality in an absolute sense (namely, that nothing could exist at all in any sense without the causal power of the ultimate). Ramanuja's *vishishtadvaita* and *bhakti* Hinduism answer "absolutely yes." German idealist pantheists hold that the world is ontologically dependent on God for its very existence. Clayton, influenced by both German idealism and process thought, goes so far as to support creation from nothing (The German pantheists may permit creation without a beginning in time and/or for the world to come from the divine substance in a diminished form.) On the other hand, Whitehead, Hartshorne, and other process thinkers strongly disagree. They contend that indeterminism and free will cannot exist without some ultimate ontological independence from God of creaturely unit occasions of experience. Whitehead believes that if God were upholding the very existence of occasions, then God would override indeterminate freedom, and his pantheistic model would transmute into a pantheism. The

48 Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, 398, 422, 423.

49 Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, 404.

50 Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, 397-406; quotations, 397; Paul Tillich, "Part 5," in *The Kingdom of God and History*, ed. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), 113, 141, see also 127, 142.

German idealists and Clayton obviously reject this Whiteheadian contention. Whitehead is clear that both divine and finite occasions of experience manifest the ultimate metaphysical principle of creativity or creative synthesis, each such occasion possessing some ultimate independence of existence. As a principle in Whitehead's metaphysics, creativity is not an independent existent but a constituent of all concrete reality.<sup>51</sup> Thus, God is not ontologically dependent upon creativity as a higher power. Conversely, the ontological possibilities of our universe do depend upon God, resulting from a nontemporal decision by the divine primordial nature that determines which possibilities out of all potentiality are available to our universe.<sup>52</sup> However, possibility here is only abstract rather than the source of concrete actuality. For concrete realities—unit occasions of experience—constitute their own ultimate source in terms of their bare existence, rather than God. They then receive more particular possibilities from which to choose, as they prehend the just prior unit occasion in their particular “society of occasions” along with the divine initial aim for that new occasion.

Whitehead famously characterizes European philosophy as “consist(ing) of a series of footnotes to Plato.”<sup>53</sup> Hartshorne concludes that Plato himself never unifies the Ideas or Forms inherent in an unchanging God with the world soul, though Plato points to their unification as in Whitehead and process thought.<sup>54</sup> For Plato, however, in addition to falling short of nondualism with respect to the divine, finite souls as well as matter possess ultimate ontological independence. While process thought rejects any Platonic mind/matter dualism, one might see a kind of dualism in the ultimate ontological independence of God and the world. The world is outside of God in terms of its ultimate cause. This possible problem is aggravated by the position that creaturely unit occasions as events and decisions are not included in God in the present but only when they become past. Hartshorne disagreed with Whitehead on this issue for much of his career, holding that “prehension of contemporaries” was possible. However, Hartshorne later concluded that God does not prehend or know a unit occasion as it is deciding, only after it makes its decision.<sup>55</sup> This would seem

51 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 20–21, 31, 225.

52 Alfred N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 178–79; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 522.

53 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 39.

54 Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 54–57.

55 Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophical Method* (LaSalle IL: Open Court, 1970), 109, 110, 115, 220; Charles Hartshorne, *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935–1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 3, 103.

to raise the question of how completely process pantheism warrants the nondualism label in the sense of an integrated all-encompassing whole. For present reality is always external to God. We might label this a time-lagged nondualism or pantheism.

### Personal or Transpersonal Ultimate Reality

Finally, I will consider the issue of whether the ultimate form of divinity is viewed more as personal or transpersonal. Clearly, *advaita* opts for transpersonal, with the ultimate understood as undifferentiated consciousness. In a different way, Western nature pantheisms regard the divine as transpersonal. The pantheisms of Ramanuja and Western thinkers clearly opt for a personal ultimate. I will contend that we can profitably conceive of the category, transpersonal pantheisms, to apply to some forms of Asian religions. Hartshorne and Reese in *Philosophers Speak of God* associate the acronym ETCKW with pantheism, where the letters stand for “God as Eternal-Temporal Consciousness, Knowing and Including the World.”<sup>56</sup> A transpersonal pantheism would forgo consciousness and knowing as descriptors. However, they can affirm the ultimate divine reality as having eternal and temporal dimensions as well as including the world. Moreover, they can affirm this ultimate divine reality as being the source of the temporal world, in contrast to the process perspective on ultimate origins.

In particular, I will argue that Daoism and some forms of Mahayana Buddhism, which greatly influenced each other in China, as well as some of the Ruist (Confucian) tradition, may helpfully be regarded as transpersonal pantheisms. As suggested earlier, such labeling and classification are uncommon and not well-developed. While the Dao (the “Way”) for Daoism functions in various contexts, metaphysically speaking it is the source of the universe. One very influential passage of the *Dao De Jing*, employing a personal metaphor for this transpersonal ultimate, refers to the Dao as “mother” of the “myriad things” of the world, which are its “manifestations.”<sup>57</sup> Another verse refers to the Dao as the “mysterious female,” which is “the root of heaven and earth.”<sup>58</sup> Yet another verse describes the Dao as “born before heaven and earth, silent and void . . . being the mother of the world.”<sup>59</sup> Nature is the prime manifestation of the

56 Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, xv.

57 D. C. Lau, trans., *Lao Tzu: Tao te Ching* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 1:1–3.

58 Lau, *Tao te Ching*, 5:17.

59 Lau, *Tao te Ching*, 25:56.



Dao, while human beings must behave appropriately to be in harmony with the Dao. This means “acting” through *wu wei*, nonaction, to go with the flow of nature rather than forcing things. Water is a metaphor for both *wu wei* and the Dao. In relation to the Dao, water points to its undifferentiated nature as compared to its manifestations.

It is clear that, for Daoism, the Dao, while in some respects unchanging, does not exist in some transcendental realm apart from the world, but is immanent in and includes its manifestations. However, Bin Song quotes Joshua R. Brown and Alexis McLeod, who do not regard presence in a realm apart as necessary for transcendence: “Concepts of transcendence are meant to capture the idea that there are different orders of existence, some of which are outside of or in important ways not subject to the states and conditions of the orders of existence and the rest of the sensible world are subject to.”<sup>60</sup> An example Brown and McLeod offer is that, while the Dao is immanent in the process of growth and decay, “the process of growth and decay is not itself subject to the process of growth and decay.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, the Dao meets a fundamental feature of a panentheism, that the divine includes but is more than the world. Hartshorne and Reese, for their part, opine that Daoism is “at least vaguely favorable to a nontruncated dipolar view of the Supreme.”<sup>62</sup> I have argued that the evidence for categorizing Daoism as a transpersonal panentheism is stronger than Hartshorne and Reese allow.

With respect to Buddhism, the early form of that religion that has survived, Theravada, is world-denying in the sense that enlightenment, concomitant with nirvana (literally extinguishing [the flames of desire]), means escaping samsara and its suffering. Mahayana Buddhism and its foundational thinker Nagarjuna turned this orientation of Theravada on its head, encapsulated in his dictum that “samsara is nirvana, nirvana is samsara.” (This world-affirming orientation allowed Buddhism to spread to China, Korea, and Japan, which valorized nature and human society.) Theravada and other early forms of Buddhism generally (though not exclusively) understood nirvana as an unconditional, supernatural, or extraordinary state of being. Theravada had no interest in developing

60 Joshua R. Brown and Alexis McLeod, *Transcendence and Non-Naturalism in Early Chinese Thought* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 185; quoted in Bin Song, Review of *Transcendence and Non-Naturalism in Early Chinese Thought*, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (March 2021).

61 Brown and McLeod, *Transcendence in Early Chinese Thought*, 151; quoted in Bin Song, Review.

62 Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 34.

additional concepts to convey the nature of ultimate reality or the ultimate nature of reality.

Mahayana, on the other hand has developed concepts such as the *dharmakaya* (translated as the “truth-body”), the Buddha-nature, and *sunyata* (usually translated as “emptiness”). The *dharmakaya* contrasts with the Buddha’s physical body and the Buddha’s psychic, miraculous, or celestial body. While there are several Buddhist terms usually translated as “Buddha-nature,” the one to focus on for our purposes is *buddhadhatu*, which can more literally be translated as “Buddha realm” or “Buddha substrate.” All things have the Buddha-nature. *Sunyata*, an important concept for Nagarjuna, means that everything is empty of its own permanent nature, essence, or power of existence; rather, all particular things derive their nature in interdependence with other things, even from the whole of formed reality. I must emphasize the tremendous variety of interpretation of these concepts through Mahayana Buddhist history. For some these terms are just epistemological and soteriological. Most scholars of Nagarjuna’s thought interpret *sunyata* to mean there is nothing grounding the interconnected whole—all is simply empty. I do grant that this was Nagarjuna’s own understanding. For some other Buddhist thinkers, what these terms convey is too mysterious to enable or deny ontological or metaphysical claims. Nevertheless, for still others they convey ontological/metaphysical meaning.

Mahayana Buddhism in China, most notably Chan Buddhism, was significantly influenced by Daoism’s understanding of the Dao and came to regard *sunyata* as the transpersonal formless source of all forms. Here the formless—or what in some aspect is unconditioned—is not separated from the formed, due to the mutual immanence of samsara and nirvana. This outlook became popular in the Japanese version of Chan Buddhism: Zen. The Kyoto School of Zen embraced such an understanding, where *mu* or nothingness is not a privation of being, but a site and force of indeterminacy where beings take on determinate form. Enlightenment under such a metaphysics enables one to realize the true relationship of the *dharmakaya* to one’s own body, the Buddha-nature as one’s own nature, and *sunyata* as the ultimate source of the interdependence of one’s own being with all things. To add metaphorically to a remark above: the formless is the source of all forms, silence is the source of all sound, darkness is the source of all light.

In the wake of the Parliament of World Religions in 1893, Soyen Shaku attempted to explicate Buddhism for an American audience. While acknowledging that Buddhists usually avoid the term *God*, he declares that Buddhism “has certainly a God, the highest reality and truth, through which and in which this universe exists.” He suggests: “To define more exactly the

Buddhist notion of the highest being, it may be convenient to borrow the term very happily coined by a modern German scholar, “panentheism,” according to which God is  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$  καὶ ἕν (all and one) and more than the totality of existence.<sup>63</sup>

Philip Clayton doubts the profitability of applying “panentheistic categories to most Buddhist thought,” especially as Buddhism “moved further from the classical Indian traditions.”<sup>64</sup> As implied above, I counter that one can apply some panentheistic categories to some Buddhist thought. The world-denying tendency of Upanishadic Hinduism combined with the Buddhist concepts of *anatman* (no self) and *anatta* (no selfness for all things) did preclude the possibility for a divine ultimate source of the world for centuries, until the development of Chan Buddhism. Clayton does acknowledge that others allow room for panentheistic categorization. He quotes, for example, Francis Cook:

The Buddhist ultimate . . . is immanent because it is nothing other than what we see before us; nor does it transcend the world either spatially or temporally. However it is transcendent *qualitatively* as that numinous nature of things which is the object of religious practice and the content of enlightenment. The numinous quality is not just things as *things* but the way in which these things be and become. Therefore, to see the Buddha is to see the *true nature* of all *dharma*.<sup>65</sup>

After traveling to Japan and dialoguing with many Zen Buddhist scholars of the Kyoto School, Tillich was so moved that he confessed that he should begin again his theological work.<sup>66</sup> That sentiment becomes much more comprehensible if Tillich understood Zen Buddhism as a type of transpersonal panentheism. Of course, in what he did publish, a transpersonal pole of God comes out strongly in his identification of God as being-itself and the ground of being.

Ruism or Confucianism also incorporates the panentheistic essentials that the divine cosmic order, *Tian* (Heaven), encompasses yet is more than

63 Shaku Soyen, *Zen for Americans: Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*, trans. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (La Salle, IL: Open Court), 25-26.

64 Clayton, “Pantheisms East and West,” 188, n. 6.

65 Francis H. Cook, “Just This: Buddhist Ultimate Reality,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 9 (1989): 139, emphasizes Cook’s. In “Pantheisms East and West,” 188, n. 8.

66 Krister Stendahl, “Foreword,” in Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994; original work published 1963), vii.

the world. Bin Song harkens back to Confucius (*Kongzi*), the seminal thinker of Ruism, and his concept of Oneness. Song goes on to highlight the interpretation and development of Confucius' Oneness by medieval Neo-Confucianist Wang Yangming.<sup>67</sup> Bin Song encapsulates the Ruist *Tian* as “the all-encompassing field and source” of everything<sup>68</sup> and “all-encompassing, constantly creative cosmic power.”<sup>69</sup> Ping-Cheung Lo, informed by modern Neo-Confucian thinkers Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and Tu Wei-ming, argues that Heaven (*Tian*) is the transcendent divine not separated from the world, but rather immanently manifesting or expressing itself in the world, especially in human beings as they strive for ultimate transformation.<sup>70</sup> Ping-Cheung characterizes Tang's thought in this way: “Heaven is not self-sufficient... The work of Heaven is unfinished, and can be finished only by human beings. Heaven's role is to start and human beings' role is to bring it to fruition. Human beings are co-creators with Heaven.” Ping-Cheung adds that Tang endorses Whitehead's metaphysics in this context.<sup>71</sup>

For the sake of closure, I will address an earlier pair of contraries with respect to Daoist, Mahayana Buddhist, and Ruist pantheistic nondualisms, having already indicated the ontological dependence of the world on the divine. With regard to the (non)divinity of the included, Daoism and the Mahayana concept of *sunyata* tend to support the nondivinity of the included particular manifestations. On the other hand, the Mahayana concepts of *dharmakaya* and the Buddha-nature tend to support the included particulars' divinity or potential divinity. Among Ruist thinkers, Tang and Mou regard humans as sharing the divine nature of Heaven,<sup>72</sup> Tu upholds the potential divinity of humans through self-cultivation,<sup>73</sup> while Song avoids

67 Bin Song, “A Ru (Confucian) Theology of Nondualism in Light of Kongzi and Wang Yangming,” in *Nondualism: An Interreligious Exploration*, eds. Jon Paul Sydnor and Anthony J. Watson (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 243–60.

68 Bin Song, “Wealth, Justice and Spiritual Nondualism in Wang Yang Ming's Ru (Confucian) Practice,” (Paper presentation, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX, November 2021).

69 Bin Song, “Contemporary Business Practices of the Ruist (Confucian) Ethic of ‘Three Guides and Five Constant Virtues’ in Asia and Beyond,” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 902.

70 Ping-Cheung Lo, “Neo-Confucian Religiousness vis-à-vis Neo-Orthodox Protestantism,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 41 (2016): 609-31.

71 Ping-Cheung, “Neo-Confucian Religiousness,” 626, n. 9.

72 Ping-Cheung, “Neo-Confucian Religiousness,” 611–13.

73 Ping-Cheung, “Neo-Confucian Religiousness,” 616–17.

an identification of humans with *Tian*.<sup>74</sup> These three Asian pantheisms endorse indeterministic free will.

To recap this section, the Dao as the force behind and including everything; *sunyata* as the emptiness behind and including all fullness or the *dharmakaya* (truth body) as the body of, and the Buddha-nature as the substrate of, all reality containing buddhas and potential buddhas for some forms of Mahayana Buddhism; and Heaven/*Tian* as the all-encompassing creativity manifesting itself in the world, therefore, can count as examples of divine all-inclusiveness in the mode of a transpersonal pantheism.

## Conclusion

I will now summarize the major forms of nondualism and their characteristics categorized in this article. *Advaita* Hinduism and some interpretations of Yogacara represent an ultimately undifferentiated monism. Pantheisms entail differentiations with a divine whole without making any clear distinctions as to degrees of divinity of the various included modes and attributes. Most pantheisms uphold determinism. In contrast to the transpersonal nature of undifferentiated monism and pantheisms with differentiation, *vishishtadvaita* Hinduism in the tradition of Ramanuja and Western German Romantic idealist and process nondualisms have yielded pantheisms where the divine is personal. These personal pantheisms except for Fechner's concur that the included constituents do not possess the fulness of divinity of the encompassing divine, though some embrace an "eschatological" pantheism where the included subjects ultimately come closer to full divinity than in their mortal instantiations. These personal pantheisms all endorse creaturely indeterminate freedom. Finally, the *vishishtadvaita* and the German Romantic pantheisms affirm the ultimate ontological dependence of the differentiated realities for their existence, while process pantheisms—holding to the Whiteheadian-Hartshornean position on this matter—insist on ultimate ontological independence. In the just previous section, I summarized the three transpersonal Asian pantheisms on (non)divinity, indeterminate freedom, and ultimate ontological dependence.

Lastly, in the interests of advancing scholarly discussion about pantheism(s), I proffer a pantheism with both personal and transpersonal elements informed by current natural science, taking into

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74 Song, "Justice, Wealth"; Song, "Contemporary Business Practices," 895–918.

account the Big Bang and eschewing supernatural causation of particular outcomes by the divine. This version of panentheism affirms divine embodiment where an all-encompassing but differentiated reality begins with the Big Bang. Divine intelligence (in)forms structures that involve some indeterminism in a whole that includes particular configurations of energy and matter. It's a package, so to speak. While this divine intelligence is differentiated from the particulars of the universe, it does not bring particulars into existence in *ex nihilo* fashion. Empirically, we cannot get "before" or behind the Big Bang. What, if anything, "preceded" the Big Bang is sheer mystery. With its causative role involving determination of structures of the universe, the divine does not and cannot supernaturally or quasi-supernaturally determine particular outcomes of the interactions of energy and matter in the universe. This distinguishes this model of panentheism as less personalist/more transpersonal in comparison with both process and Romantic idealist models. Process theology maintains that God provides an initial aim—God's preferred option for decision/action—to each unit occasion of experience. This idea contradicts the consensus of physicists that time is continuous rather than punctuated and represents a purportedly individually specific natural process unverifiable by natural empirical methods. Moreover, if initial aims exist, humans at least appear to be problematically averse to following God's initial aims. While the Romantic idealist panentheisms eschew divine supernatural interventions, the ultimate ontological dependence of finite realities in *ex nihilo* fashion means that God *could* so intervene. This model raises nagging questions of why a caring, personal God chooses not to intervene in crucial situations (interventions that might happen in ways intelligent beings could not detect, if God wants to discourage people from counting on supernatural acts). My model is personal in positing that the divine has some awareness of the universe in its beginning and, through nonlocality, retains some awareness of everything that happens in the universe, appreciating when sentient or experiencing realities fulfill their needs and desires and sensing the feelings of these realities when they experience pain or failure. I hope my model of panentheism will encourage further thinking about panentheistic nondualisms bearing both personal and transpersonal elements for the divine in reckoning with current scientific knowledge.

**Author**

*David H. Nikkel recently retired as Professor of Religion and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and received emeritus status in April 2024. His publications include Pantheism in Hartshorne and Tillich: A Creative Synthesis (Peter Lang Publishing, 1995) and Radical Embodiment (Wipf & Stock, 2010; James Clarke & Co., 2011). Much of his current research draws on embodied cognition to theorize about the nature of religion and to refine the cognitive science of religion. He currently serves on the Steering Committee of the Cognitive Science of Religion Unit of the American Academy of Religion. Human embodiment and a pantheism that views the world metaphorically as the Body of God provide resources for respecting differences within an ultimate nondualism.*

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