DESIRE FOR THE GOOD: A PHILOSOPHICAL ROADMAP THROUGH SPACETIME

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Humankind's participation in eternity involves a desire for the good. I arrived at this conclusion after a film that I had watched piqued my interest in the rules of the universe and had challenged my understanding and experience of the metaphysical categories of spacetime and eternity.

There is original, rigorous philosophical work done in the medium of cinema, according to philosopher Stephen Mulhall. Cinema does not reduce human existence to film; it takes massive, abstract philosophical categories (of what is reality, truth, skepticism, and more) and projects them visually, temporally, and emotionally outward onto the big screen. The result is an immersive, larger-than-life experience that forges new imaginative pathways for human thought and reorients the way we think about our world.[1,2] To illustrate this, let us first examine the plot of the movie *Interstellar* (2014).[3]

Interstellar Film Plot

Humanity was facing extinction due to violent dust storms. Joseph Cooper, a former NASA test pilot, lives with his two

1 Nathan Andersen, "Is Film the Alien Other to Philosophy? On Stephen Mulhall On Film," *Film Philosophy* 7/3 (2003), https://doi.org/10.3366/film.2003.0023.

2 Stephen Mulhall, "XI—Film as Philosophy: The Very Idea," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 107, New Series (2007): 279-294, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20619359?seq=1 (accessed May 7, 2026).

3 "Interstellar (film)," Wikipedia, March 19, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Interstellar_(film)&oldid=1344261480.

children (Murph and Tom) and their grandfather on a farm. When his 10-year-old daughter, Murph, notices falling books and dust patterns in her room, she attributes them to a ghost.

Promising his children that he would return, Cooper and a team of experts leave for space with 5,000 frozen embryos in search of a new home for humankind. They travel through a wormhole (named Gargantua) near Saturn, only for Cooper to discover mid-journey that he was not coming back.

Gargantua opens up to another galaxy with potentially 12 other habitable planets. Cooper falls into Gargantua's event horizon and into a tesseract (a 4-cube or four-dimensional hypercube) made up of infinite copies of his daughter's Murph's bedroom across moments in time. Deducing that the tesseract was constructed by advanced humans in the far future, Cooper tries to communicate with Murph through Morse code by manipulating the hands on a wrist watch he gave her to send the completed data of the gravitational singularity within the black hole to solve a gravity equation. Cooper had become his daughter's "ghost." Through their communication, Murph was finally able to complete the gravitational equation and colonize a habitable planet.

Apart from the references to relativistic mechanics, this was also a story about a deep connection across spacetime between a child and her father. Although this made for an entertaining sci-fi movie, it got me thinking about our common assumptions about spacetime and eternity, and if humankind has access to eternity despite being subjected to a three-dimensional space in chronological time. If so, what does connecting with eternity look like? How can humankind connect with an eternal being in eternity? And why does this endeavor potentially involve a desire for the good? This paper seeks to serve as a sort of philosophical roadmap to help unpack and understand this

spatiotemporal phenomenon and elucidate what it takes for humankind to participate in eternity and reconnect with it.

A 3D Existence

Let us begin by clarifying the spatial dimensions. Imagine that you need to get somewhere quickly and that the fastest way to get from point A to point B is a straight line (with two vertices). So you decide to take an expressway to avoid a major traffic jam. A wormhole, therefore, can also be seen as a shortcut through space.

Now, let us duplicate the straight line. This gives us four vertices. If we draw lines connecting the four vertices, we have a two-dimensional (2D) square. Duplicate the square and connect the vertices on both squares with lines, and we have a three-dimensional (3D) cube. If we then replace each face of the 3D cube with a cube, we have a tesseract—a geometrical shape in four dimensions (4D) that unfolds to eight cubes in 3D space. A five-dimensional hypercube (known as a penteract) is formed by connecting two parallel tesseracts at their corresponding vertices.

If the 4th and 5th dimensions sound mind-boggling, that is because it is hard to visualize anything with more than three dimensions. However, just because we cannot visualize it, it does not mean it does not exist. If human existence is understood in terms of three spatial dimensions of length (x-axis), width (y-axis), and height (z-axis), and a 4D universe includes the temporal dimension of time, is there a world that exists outside of our three-dimensional existence that we have not yet grasped? If so, are there ways for us to understand and interact with a multidimensional world like Murph did? Or are we, as Augustine purported in *De vera religione*, according to

Roland Teske,[4] so enraptured by temporal things that we have blinkered ourselves to eternal things?

Reimagining Spacetime

In his paper on *Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession: Perspectives from Theology and the Philosophy of Time*,[5] Mikel Burley makes a compelling case for how eternal life is not so much an unending continuation of life after death but is fully actualized in one's present mortal and finite life.[6] In addition to drawing on some of Burley's sources to explain spacetime concepts and reframe our understanding of time and eternity, I would like to explore how humankind's desire for the good translates into a desire for God, who is eternity itself.

Some commentators believe that the modern debates of the metaphysics of time in eternalism, presentism, and possibilism were prefigured by the Presocratics. Heraclitus' "you can never step in the same river twice" showed the impermanence of reality and how things were always in flux, while Parmenides believed that "everything constitutes an immutable unity and nothing really comes into or goes out of existence."[7] Eternalism is the view that all times are "equally real."[8] This

4 Roland J. Teske, *The Aquinas Lecture 1996: Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1998), 31.

5 Mikel Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession: Perspectives from Theology and the Philosophy of Time," *Sophia* 55, no. 2 (2016): 145–61.

6 Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession," 145-159.

7 Ronald C. Hoy, "Heraclitus and Parmenides," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Time*, 1st ed., ed. Heather Dyke and Adrian Bardon (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), 13-21. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118522097.ch1.

8 Harold W. Noonan, "Presentism and Eternalism," Erkenntnis 78, no. 1 (2013): 219–27, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-011-9303-1.

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includes times that are normally designated as past, present, and future. Presentism is the view that "only present things exist"[9] or "only the present is real."[10] It ontologically denies existence to past events (like the dinosaurs) and to future events. "Possibilism (the growing block theory) maintains that the past and present are real, but the future comprises bare possibilities that are yet to be realized."[11] Of the three, I have opted to use eternalism as the basis for my discussion.

There are two ways, according to McTaggart[12,13] of conceptualizing positions in time: the "A-series" and "B-series." The A-series identifies positions in time as forming a series running from past to present to future. This sequential view of linear time is known as *Chronos*. It is a chronological, changing, temporal duration geometrically represented by a line.

Paraphrasing Boethius in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius writes that what has faded into the past is history, the future is mystery, and the present is a mobile, transitory moment.[14] He adds that temporal creatures (like human beings) in time do not embrace the whole extent of life simultaneously but live in the present that proceeds from the past to the future.[15] The idea of the present as a transitory moment is

9 Thomas M. Crisp, *"Presentism and The Grounding Objection,"* Noûs 41, no. 1 (2007): 90–109, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0068.2007.00639.x.

10 Noonan, "Presentism and Eternalism," 219.

11 Craig Callender, "Time's Ontic Voltage," in *The Future of the Philosophy of Time*, ed. Adrian Bardon (London: Routledge, 2013), 73. In Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession," 152.

12 John Ellis McTaggart, "I.—The Unreality of Time," *Mind* XVII, no. 4 (1908): 457–74, https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/XVII.4.457.

13 John Ellis McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence (Vol. 2)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 10-11.

14 Brian Leftow, "Boethius on Eternity," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1990): 123–42.

15 Leftow, "Boethius on Eternity," 125-128.

similar to Augustine's, who believed that the physical present is durationless.[16] The present quickly recedes into the past as soon as it moves into the future. Thus, to have any meaningful measure of time, Augustine turns to the mind in terms of memories (the past), perceiving (the present), and expectations (the future), which we will discuss later.

The B-series, on the other hand, regards the positions as standing in relations of "earlier than," "simultaneous with," and "later than."[17] Moreover,

> Minkowski's model of the universe as a four-dimensional manifold of spacetime coordinates, has much in common with McTaggart's B-series, for it also represents 'all events in the history of the universe' within a single picture while privileging none of them as 'present.'[18]

The A-series is deemed internally inconsistent by several philosophers and theologians (known as B-theorists). This is because it is not an objective feature of reality, but merely appears to be so from our perspective. The B-theorists and McTaggart believe that the B-series alone is sufficient for the reality of time.[19]

Now, if eternalism in a 4D block universe is like a B-series, where everything within the temporal sequence is an equally

16 Henry Chadwick, ed., *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 235.

17 Robin Le Poidevin, *Change, Cause and Contradiction: A Defence of the Tenseless Theory of Time*, 1st ed. 1991 (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991), 1, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21146-3.

18 Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession," 153 citing Dennis Dieks, "Time in Special Relativity," in *Springer Handbook of Spacetime*, ed. Abhay Ashtekar and Vesselin Petkov (New York: Springer, 2014), 93, 103. For a detailed explanation of Minkowksi's universe model, cf. Hermann Minkowski, "Criticisms and Discussions, Time and Space," *Monist* 28/2 (1918): 288-302, https://doi.org/10.5840/monist19182826.

19 Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession, 153.

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real totality of things and events spread out in an "ordered extension,"[20] that would make the quality of our existence today our eternal life.[21] Just imagine yourself holding a photo album with pictures of yourself as a child, an adult as you are right now, and a senior citizen. You would be holding all of that and seeing your life as a permanent fixture in reality. As Burley[22] suggests, this would mean that our current lives are not dress rehearsals for an afterlife, but our words and actions are being etched in the "4D architecture of the universe." Whatever you do today is permanently carved in eternity. Let us now turn our attention to eternity and an eternal being in eternity.

Eternity and the Eternal Being

Plotinus describes the nature of the eternal in the *Enneads* as:

> a partless completion, as if they were all together in a point, and had not yet begun to go out and flow into lines; it is something which abides in the same in itself and does not change at all but is always in the present, because nothing of it has passed away, nor again will anything of it come into being, but that which it is, it is... [23]

Augustine would articulate this philosophical concept of eternity as an eternal being, "a life that is complete all at once

20 Donald C. Williams, "The Myth of Passage," *Journal of Philosophy* 48, no. 15 (1951): 463, https://doi.org/10.2307/2021694; Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession, 153.

21 Burley, "Eternal Life as an Exclusively Present Possession," 153-159.

22 Ibid.

23 Plotinus, *Ennead* III, 7, 3, lines 13-23, in *Plotinus in Seven Volumes* III, trans. Arthur Hilary Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 302-05. In Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 22.

in the present without any past or future."[24] In the *Consolation of Philosophy*,[25] Boethius contrasts the way things in time live with how an eternal being lives its whole life at once. An eternal being not located in time can

> embrace its whole extent simultaneously...possesses the whole fullness of illimitable life at once and is such that nothing future is absent from it and nothing past has flowed away...it is necessary both that...it be always present to itself and that it have the infinity of mobile time present to it.[26]

Augustine's and Boethius' view of the eternal being (God) is one of omnipresence, whose experience of time is best represented geometrically by a point or dot (instead of a line), which can be infinitesimally small and infinitely large at the same time, with a consistent radius in all directions.[27] The reason for the consistent radius is so that the dot is equally present to all points on its circumference, the way an eternal being is present to all events—past, present, and future.[28]

Furthermore, since duration through time is the mode proper to things in change, Boethius thinks that eternity is the mode of duration proper to a simple point—an unchanging God. He illustrates this with a set of revolving concentric circles, which is akin to concentric spheres (i.e., revolving concentric circles in three dimensions):

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24 Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 22.

25 Leftow, "Boethius on Eternity," 123-124.

26 Ibid.

27 Bertrand Leong, "Philo 212A: Personal Takeaway from Lesson on Tuesday, February 25, 2025" (Personal Takeaway, Loyola School of Theology, Quezon City, 2025).

28 James J. O'Donnell, review of *Review of The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy, Boethius*, by Boethius et al., *The American Journal of Philology* 98, no. 1 (1977): 77–79, https://doi.org/10.2307/294005.

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> The inmost one comes closest to the simplicity of the center.. .God.. .the relationship between the ever-changing course of fate and the stable simplicity of providence is like that between that which is coming into being and that which is, between time and eternity, or between the moving circle and the still point in the middle.[29]

Since the point or dot can be expanded infinitely to subsume the mode of duration, the eternal being and eternity are one and the same (divine simplicity). In terms of coherent (compatible) divine properties, this simplicity flows from incorporeality because God has no parts or divisions. Hence, in terms of unity, God is one. God is incorporeal and has no body (except in the case of Jesus Christ). Therefore, God can be omnipresent, where even the soul is immaterial. This incorporeality and divine simplicity of God point to His immutability (not changing with time). He does not age as humans do in temporal, linear time since he is also incorporeal and is not affected by anything outside of Him. He is impassible (without pain, suffering, or emotion). But in the weak sense of his immutability and impassibility, God can allow Himself to be affected, but only in the way and to the extent that He allows.[30] Since I am considering God purely from a philosophical lens here, I refer to God as understood by philosophers without the theological underpinnings of the God of Christians, who, in Jesus Christ, suffered and died for our sins.

Since God is an eternal being capable of full illimitable life where neither past has flowed away, nor future is absent from, events for God do not unfold chronologically the way they do for human beings. God can interact simultaneously with past

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29 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Victor Ernest Watts (London: Penguin Books, 2003), book IV, prose VI, p. 105. In Leftow, "Boethius on Eternity," 132.

30 Louis Catalan, "Omnipotence: Divine Properties" (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, March 10, 2026).

and future events in the eternal, all-encompassing present. This, in contrast to linear time or *Chronos* (symbolized by the line) is *Kairos* or opportune/appointed timing (symbolized by the dot).

This provides a key understanding of God's divine nature and interaction with the world. If God (like Cooper, whom I analogize to share God's perspective on time in the tesseract) can access multiple streams of time simultaneously and concurrently as part of His divine existence, and if God could communicate to humans in a way we can understand in the context of our three-dimensional world, how would this communication look like? How will we recognize these communications in *Kairos*?

When Cooper fell into the tesseract, he was able to view infinite copies of his daughter's Murph's bedroom across moments in time (past, present, and future). Returning to Mulhall's film theory,[31] a Mulhallian understanding of this scene would explain how film spatializes time by turning temporal succession into a sequence of frames. Human beings are temporal creatures inside time, yet capable of reconfiguring and reimagining our relation to it. Cinema's power to reorganize experience and reflect on its own ontology allows us to fathom a glimpse (though poorly) of how an eternal being like God could view reality. To emphasize human temporality, time here was turned into a navigable sequence when it was represented as a physical three-dimensional space inside a five-dimensional reality. Cooper could see and influence his daughter, select and revisit scenes (like a spectator to a film), but not be present to her in a shared moment. He eventually figured out that a force (such as gravity) could be exerted across spacetime. Using gravity and Morse code to transmit

31 Mulhall, "XI – Film as Philosophy: The Very Idea," 283-294.

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quantum data in binary to his daughter through a wristwatch, Cooper realized that his role was to communicate with a three-dimensional world (Earth) to save it from its impending destruction. Now, if gravity were the force that transcended spacetime, could an eternal being like God communicate with us via exerted forces in our three-dimensional existence in a way that we can understand? How would these forces play out in our reality?

Falling into Time—a Distension of the Mind

As temporal beings "thrown" in time, human beings, according to Augustine, experience time as a distension of the mind.[32] The Latin verb form of *distendó*[33] means to stretch out, lengthen, extend, or swell. It also means to "hold apart."[34] Hence, time is described as a stretching out, extension, or swelling of the mind (*distentio animi*), which I explained earlier to consider our past (memories), present (perceiving or immediate awareness), and future (expectations). Time is the mind's ability to perceive order. Augustine draws

> a parallel between the distension of time and the extension of bodies – as a body swells in three dimensions, time swells out in a fourth dimension. Augustine refers to the

32 Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 29.

33 Oxford University Press, "Oxford Latin Dictionary," 1968, http://archive.org/details/oxford-latin-dictionary.

34 James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 29, 35.

> three-dimensional swelling of a body by the Latin term *tumor*, which has the same negative connotation in English.[35]

If Augustine sees time as a swelling of the mind, Immanuel Kant saw space and time as structures in the mind that are necessary to organize sensory experience.[36] He proposed that space and time are not independent realities, but rather *a priori* forms of human intuition.

Augustine clarifies that time is not co-eternal with God, as it is a creature, but that all temporal processes find their origin in the creator who made time.[37] Although Augustine considers time as part of eternity, by describing time as a distension of the mind,[38] he seems to allude to the descent into time as a sort of folly: "The distendedness that is our temporal condition is not merely the being of creatures; it is also our condition of being separated or having fallen away from the One."[39] Our

35 Teske, Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine, 29. Cf. Augustine, *De vera religione* 30, 56: *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (CCL) 32, 223, where Augustine contrasts things which are beautiful in places and times with the equality and unity known only to the mind which "*nec loco tumida est nec instabilis tempore*." Also, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II, 5, 6: *Patrologia Latina* (PL) 34, 199, where Augustine describes the soul's fall through pride in terms of a swelling into external things: "in exteriora per superbiam tumescens...." He also describes this so-called swelling in the following: *De quantitate animae* 14, 24: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL) 89, 160: "*Tumor enim non absurde appellatur corporis magnitudo*." Also in *De quantitate animae* 19, 33: CSEL 89, 172: "*Namut in corpore tria sunt genera incrementorum, unum necessarium,... alterum superfluum,...tertium noxium, quod cum accidit, tumor vocatur....*"

36 Andrew Janiak, "Kant's Views on Space and Time," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2022, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2022), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/kant-spacetime/.

37 Chadwick, *Confessions*, 229.

38 Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 29.

39 Henri-Irenee Marrou, *L'ambivalence du temps de l'histoire chez saint Augustin* (Montreal-Paris: Institut d'etudes medievales, 1950). In Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 31.

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being in time then, it seems, is a penalty for sin like Adam and Eve's fall from grace in Genesis.[40]

In *De vera religione*,[41] Augustine says, "We have come down into temporal things, and by love of them we are kept from eternal things...And so, though places offer us things to love, times steal from us what we love." Following Augustine's train of thought, our condition as temporal beings not only makes us prone to simply viewing time in a chronological, linear fashion, but when we love the temporal life and pursue it as an end in itself, we inevitably miss out on perceiving eternal things.

Following from Kant and Augustine, if time is intuited in our minds as a commodity (for example) and is distended to organize sensory experience, then to quote Henri Bergson in his essay *Time and Free Will*,[42] "We live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we are acted rather than act ourselves." Patrick Nogoy adds that,

> Accelerating lived experiences muddles the existing and existence of things. It has been the greatest theft of wisdom in these times, in favoring productivity and efficiency. We live instead for time, not realizing that time is the twin of our being. It is we who pass away when we say time passes away.[43]

40 Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 31.

41 *De vera religione* 24, 45: CCL 32, 215: "*In temporalia devenimus et eorum amore ab aeternis impedimur.*"; 35, 65: CCL 32, 230: "*Loca offerunt quod amemus, tempora surripiunt quod amamus.*" In Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 31.

42 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1960), 231.

43 Patrick Nogoy, *Touching Love: Thoughts and Stories* (Pasay City: Paulines Philippines, 2016), 113-114.

What does this look like in our reality? We desire maximum results within the least amount of time, sacrificing health, cutting back on sleep, or drinking more coffee to stay awake to complete our work, chores, and assignments. We advocate for larger and faster crop yields, experience more traffic jams as we rush from place to place, and produce more carbon emissions—all due to the perceived lack of time. With the introduction of smartphones and AI, increasing expectations and accelerated lived experience, we experience physiological changes as a result of environmental degradation and lifestyle stressors that cause tumors and cancer. It is no wonder that we feel so burnt out and scattered. The more we try to hold things together, the more we find that our identity is fracturing. Modern anxiety caused by a cognitive overload forces us to multitask while maintaining a cohesive sense of self, leading to an inevitable entropy of personal identity.[44] If *distentio animi* refers to the mind stretching out over time, the *distentio* here is morphed "to sunder" (to pull to pieces). One literally cannot hold everything together. Left to its own devices, the human mind stretches out, but the person is sundered. Things start dropping and falling apart. The mental stretch pulls a person's soul to pieces in a mental entropy.[45] For Paul Ricoeur, the secret passage of time colludes with our decaying memories.[46] Just think of forgetfulness, ageing, death, and the fleeting passage of time: the more we master, the more we lack. We cannot bring ourselves to completion.

But what time lacks is temporary. In an eternal state, one needs to let go and surrender. To move away from *distentio* to

44 Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 35-37.

45 Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 37.

46 Paul Ricœur, "Memory — Forgetting — History," in *Meaning & Representation in History*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (Brooklyn, NY: Berghahn Books, Inc., 2008), 16.

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extensio (ordering oneself inside and outside of time) and *intentio* (an intense concentration on intention) toward reconnecting with an eternal being not bound by earth's decay.[47] Such an opportunity is made possible only if we are free and desirous to pay attention to and recognize the myriad ways in which we are participating in the eternal being who is one with eternity, even though ours is a limiting essence in the participation of God's divine existence. Contrary to Augustine's view of the fall, which brings disharmony to nature, I am inclined to Irenaeus' theodicy, which emphasizes living in a challenging existence as an essential part of our evolutionary growth and maturation as creatures. So it is with one's desire, striving, and actualizing that one grows from encountering eternity, which I will explain more later. That said, both Augustine's and Irenaeus' approaches are key to understanding our place as temporal creatures participating in a growing but limited way in the eternity of an eternal being.

God as Efficient Cause for our Being

Human beings' descent into time (according to Augustine) may be compared to the Platonic world of senses, and eternity to Plato's world of forms. Human beings have some idea about immutable forms, as we were once part of the world of forms. We participate and reflect these forms in particular ways. For Aristotle, the forms are here in particular beings, and the manifestation of human form is the intellect and will. But our material embodiment in the world of senses made us forget our knowledge of the forms. Aquinas (who followed Aristotle and Augustine) would educate us in recovering this forgotten knowledge of "superlatives" (what is most beautiful, most noble, the Highest Good, and more) that is used to make comparisons. Though Augustine would proceed to discard Plato's world of

47 Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 35-36.

forms, he would now see these as residing in the mind of God. Hence, any human desire to reconnect with the Highest Good is a desire to connect with the mind of God.

Using Aquinas' Theory of Participation, we may shed light on humankind's participation in the perfect form of an eternal being (God) as well as the ontological structure of shared beings to ground both the similarities and distinctions or multiplicity of each being's limiting mode in sharing this eternal being's perfection and goodness. According to Aquinas, God's existence is his essence, and one of God's actual perfections is to exist. Therefore, human beings' existence is good because, based on Aquinas' argument on the Gradation of Qualities, God is the efficient cause of all beings' existence. We each have "a limited share in the unrestricted existence of God who is Pure Being, the Highest Good, and also the Final Cause (end) of beings.

But why can we not access eternal things in their entirety from the beginning? And why can we only gain access to eternity sometimes and not all the time? Irenaeus' approach (mentioned earlier) clues us in on this. He says that the creature is brought into existence at an epistemic distance in the cognitive dimension from God (the creator).[48] For if human beings were to be immediately conscious of the full scope of eternity and eternal things, not only would this result in a disproportion between creator and creature, but the creature would have no freedom in relation to God, and not be able to exist as an independent, autonomous person.[49] Think of a fire and a wooden beam. The wooden beam becomes hot due to its proximity to the fire. But place the wooden beam in the fire, and it risks being consumed by the latter. So it is with God

48 Michael Stoeber, *Evil and the Mystics' God: Towards a Mystical Theodicy* (London: Palgrave MacMillan UK, 1992), 54-55.

49 Stoeber, *Evil and the Mystics' God*, 54-55.

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(Creator) and human beings (creatures). If we were to come too close in our bodily 3D reality to God, our bodies (and minds) may not be ready to handle the multidimensional complexity that God is. This cognitive dimension may also be understood in the sense that human beings are free to exist within a three-dimensional space where God, as a multidimensional being, is not overwhelmingly evident. This is similar to how Cooper found himself in a familiar and navigable three-dimensional space within a five-dimensional reality as a physical dimension crafted by advanced humans (Cooper's astronaut predecessors) who were his pathfinders.

Desiring and Connecting with the Highest Good

Desire is a movement of attraction. Aristotle and Aquinas believe that all things desire the good. Beings are good not only because they exist, but also because they possess a potential perfection based on the nature of what they are. It is a dynamic existence that Aquinas talks about that desires the good. Just as a plant bends toward the sun (phototropism), human beings are inclined to strive for what is good and for self-actualization after their basic needs have been met (Maslow's hierarchy of needs). Aquinas says that "All things desire (or are attracted to) God himself by desiring their perfection (actualization)." We are all looking for God, ultimately by trying to fully actualize ourselves and fulfill our potential.[50]

The goodness of God here does not refer to a moral goodness, but the desirability of beings for God, as God exceeds the most profound grasp of human comprehension. He is beyond the criteria of human morality. He has no obligations (since there is no being superior to Him) and no virtues or

50 Louis Catalan, "Divine Omnibenevolence" (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, March 17, 2026).

vices (since there are no dispositions that can be acquired or lost). Hence, God is immutable.[51]

Only God is the Highest Good because He has no risk of failing to exist due to His unrestricted existence as pure being. God has no potential perfections, since all His perfections are actual. He is Pure Act (actus purus), This also explains why he is immutable and therefore in a state of full actualization: All his perfections are actual. There is nothing potential in God. The desire to realize one's potential perfection is fulfilled when one is in a similar state of full actualization based on the kind of being that one is. The immediate desire to actualize one's potential perfections expresses one's ultimate desire for God. As a final cause, God attracts all beings towards Him as their ultimate end (telos). God, then, is good because He is desirable. He is the Highest Good (summum bonum). What living beings desire about Him is to be in a similar state of full actualization that only God is in.[52] Therefore, humankind's participation in eternity essentially involves a desire for the good.

"A case in point (which also addresses the question of 'when do we access eternity?') is this true story[53] related to me by a friend who met a Christian missionary while on a flight. He was a Cambodian child prisoner-of-war (POW) in the late 1970s. Caught by Pol Pot to instill fear and obedience in his parents, he was one of 40 children made to suffer (at night) so that their parents could hear their cries. Their fingernails were plucked from their fingers, and cigarette butts were stubbed out on their bodies. The now Christian missionary had a recurring dream where the events of his past would replay themselves,

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Bertrand Leong, "Philo 212A: Eternity, Providence, and Good According to Boethius Applied to Intergenerational Healing" (Unpublished Paper, Loyola School of Theology, May 6, 2025).

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and he would experience the pain and suffering of the torture every night. However, desiring the freedom of the children (the highest good in that particular situation), he managed to transcend his own pain and suffering to comfort the souls who were still there—returning each night in his dream to rescue one child for 40 nights until all the children were freed, and his dreams of the ordeal ended."[54]

Although it stands to be argued from a psychological standpoint that rescuing the children could also be considered a traumatic response to recover a sense of agency from a terrible ordeal, we can see how the missionary's desire for the good of saving souls was a transcendent and transformational encounter beyond the usual confines of 3D spacetime, which also gave him a sense of closure and peace. But what was remarkable about his experience was (i) the repeatability of his dreams (given the fact that he cannot consciously construct his own dreams) and (ii) that there was a co-immediacy between him and his dream, the knower and the known. To take a leaf from German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's relational model of knowing, knowing is seen as a mode of existence and not an activity that can be turned on or off at will. In paying attention to what his recurring dreams were telling him, desiring the Highest Good, and responding accordingly, the Christian missionary (the dreamer) was forever changed by them (his dreams).

Mediums Across Spacetime

Recall that at the start, Cooper realized that he could exert a force (like gravity) to communicate with Murph across spacetime. Gravity in this case, was the medium for their communication. In the case of the Cambodian missionary stuck in a

54 Ibid.

oneiric time loop of his ordeal as a POW, the medium was his dreams. Other mediums could be things like *déjà vu* and prayer.

Déjà vu refers to a feeling of already having experienced a present situation. It can be understood in a variety of ways. It can be seen as a form of *anamnesis*, a recalling from a prior life (using Plato's theory of forms),[55] a fragmentation of memories or a participation in a multiverse of worlds due to quantum physics,[56] or from Henri Bergson's idea that the coexistence of the past with the present behaves like a shadow to the body,[57] among other explanations.

For prayer, it is in prayer that theists or believers seek to communicate with God (the eternal being). And at Mass, Catholics participate in the Eucharist where the eternal sacrifice of Christ is made present. All these examples would all make for intriguing topics for future philosophical and theological discourse. But whether it is prayer, prophecy, a deep desire, an unfulfilled promise, or love that enables us to reach above and beyond into eternity, the striving of human beings for self-actualization and the Highest Good entails a journey that takes us across and beyond the immediate confines of our three-dimensional existence.

Summary and Conclusion

As a philosophical exercise inspired by the movie *Interstellar* (2014), I asked if it is possible for humankind to have access to

55 Olugbenga Ebenezer Oloidi and Paul Olorunsola Folorunso, "Is Plato's Recollection Thesis a Déjà Vu?" *International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Management IJHSSM* (Ado-Ekiti) 4, no. 6 (2024): 1118–25.

56 Big Think, "Michio Kaku: What Is Déjà Vu?" *Big Think* (YouTube), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks_UHmaZcSg.

57 Sam Woolfe, "Bergson's Theory of *Déjà Vu*," *Sam Woolfe*, October 27, 2025, https://www.samwoolfe.com/2025/10/bergsons-theory-of-deja-vu.html.

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eternity despite being subjected to a three-dimensional space in chronological time. And if so, what does this look like, and how can we connect with an eternal being in eternity? Then, plotting a philosophical roadmap, we explained the spatial dimensions and made a case for eternalism in the B-series where past, present, and future are seen in totality. Then, from the perspectives of Boethius and Augustine, we made a geometrical representation of God as a point or dot where neither past nor future has escaped from the eternal present. God may also be represented as a sphere when one considers how the eternal being can be infinitely expanded to take in all of eternity. These contrast with the chronological image of time as a line, which human beings are subjected to according to Augustine, who sees time as a distension of the mind and the falling into time (which is part of God's creation) as a penalty for sin. However, this view is challenged by Irenaeus'theodicy. While Plato's world of forms and Aquinas' Theory of Participation shed light on humankind's participation in the perfect form of an eternal being (God), the Irenaean approach helps us see why the creature, though participating in the eternal being, is free to exist at an epistemic distance in the cognitive, three-dimensional space where God is not overwhelmingly evident. I touched upon human beings' deep desire for actualization of the highest good, which is God, and qualified that the 'good' here refers not to a moral good but the desirability of God whose nature and essence is inherently good in itself. Thus, humankind's participation in eternity requires a desire for the good, like in the account of the Cambodian missionary, to realize one's actualization and uncover new, unexplored ways of reconnecting with eternity.

Although there are many examples (*déjà vu*, prayer, prophecy, and more) that challenge the conventional idea of time as a chronological A-series, one thing is clear: that the striving

of human beings for self-actualization and the Highest Good entails a journey that can take humankind beyond the immediate confines of its three-dimensional existence into eternity.

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