

# GOD AS GROUND? COSMOLOGY AND NON-CAUSAL CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINE

Willem B. Drees

Some theistic arguments envisage God as the 'First Cause', as a being pre-existing relative to the cosmos, all of created reality. This would answer to some extent the question 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' Such a 'first cause' view of God aligns well with natural history in cosmological and biological terms. However, at the boundaries of physical cosmology extrapolation of regular notions of time and causality seems to breakdown, while the mystery of existence remains. Perhaps, the transcendent – if such be – is to be thought of differently. Given the role of mathematics, and its independence from the physical dimensions of time and space, one might try to draw on mathematics and logic to imagine 'transcendence'? Axioms are not so much the cause of the theorems, but rather the formal ground of all subsequent theorems.

What would it mean to speak of God as ground? Do 'God as ground' theologies offer a possible way beyond the conceptual challenges at the limits of cosmology? Would it be a proper alternative for the ontological dualism of classical theism and the indiscriminate valuation of reality that seems to be a consequence of pantheism? And if one goes this route, what might be lost? It has been commented on Anselm's ontological argument (which also argues for God more along the lines of logic than of causality) that such an argument can be considered to be a proof of the non-existence of God, as the type of existence ascribed to the being 'greater than which nothing can be conceived' is similar to that of mathematical objects – meaningful but without reference.

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