

NOTHING CAN LIMIT GOD BUT ITSELF

A One-Line Foundation for Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism

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Abstract

This paper argues that the sentence above is not merely an elegant summary of Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism but its logical foundation. Every major structural claim of KEP — the kenotic creative act, the dimensional incommensurability of the unlimited God with the created order, the structural necessity of the Incarnation, the dissolution of the Problem of Evil, and the preservation of divine omnipotence — follows as a necessary consequence of this single proposition taken seriously. This revised edition adds a development that sharpens the argument at its most critical juncture: the identification of dimensionality itself as the primary form of limitation, which makes the kenotic account of creation not merely logically necessary but immediate.

Note on this edition. Gold left-margin markers identify the dimensional limitation argument and its consequences throughout; teal markers indicate the two-register Trinity revisions from the prior edition. This edition further incorporates two reconciling revisions that bring the paper into step with the system as now stated. First, the outpouring correction: the kenotic creative act is specified throughout as an outpouring — a giving-forth that fills, the divine energy dimensionally conditioned into the registers of creation — and not a withdrawal or contraction that vacates a region for an other. The discussion of the Lurianic tzimtzum is correspondingly revised: tzimtzum is presented not as KEP's own articulation but as the withdrawal-theology KEP defines itself against, sharing its diagnosis (the unlimited admits no 'alongside') while parting from it on the vector of the creative act (effusion that fills versus contraction that vacates). Second, the privation theodicy: the dissolution of the Problem of Evil is now explicitly grounded in the system's definition of evil as ontological absence rather than substance — inert in itself, threatening only in a free soul that clings to the absence rather than to God, the clinging taking the concrete form of the mind's contraction onto a finite fixation at the expense of the fullness. The full argument is given in the companion treatise, *The Definition of Evil*.

I — The Statement and Its Logical Structure

The proposition ‘Nothing can limit God but itself’ has a deceptively simple grammatical form. A subject (nothing), a modal auxiliary (can), a predicate (limit God), and a single exception (but itself). But its logical content is dense, and unpacking it reveals that it does the work of three separate philosophical claims simultaneously.

First, it is a claim about omnipotence. No external force, no prior constraint, no independent reality is capable of imposing a limitation on God. This is not merely the assertion that God is very powerful — it is the categorical exclusion of any external source of limitation whatsoever. If something outside God could limit God, God would not be the unlimited ground of all being but a very large being within a larger ontological context that constrained it. The statement rules this out absolutely.

Second, and less obviously, it is a claim about the only available form of divine constraint. If nothing external can limit God, then any limitation that exists in the divine relationship to the created order must be self-generated. God is not limited by physics, by the laws of logic conceived as independent of God, by the nature of creaturely freedom as an external fact, or by any metaphysical principle external to the divine nature. The only available source of constraint is God itself.

Third, and most consequentially, it is a claim about the structure of creation. For a created order that is genuinely distinct from God to exist at all — for anything to exist that is not simply God — the unlimited must in some sense make room for the other; and since nothing external can do this, the making-room must be self-generated. In the system’s settled account this self-generation is an outpouring rather than a withdrawal: not the divine being thinning into a vacated external space, and not the occupation of a pre-existing metaphysical room, but the act by which God freely limits itself by pouring forth, the outpoured energy dimensionally conditioned into the structured otherness of creation. This is effluence, which is distinguished from crude emanation precisely by being conditioned and bounded rather than a simple dilution of the divine substance. The creative act is kenotic by logical necessity, not merely by theological preference — and kenotic in the specific sense of an effusion that fills, not a contraction that vacates.

II — What the Statement Preserves

It preserves omnipotence without qualification. Process theology, in addressing the Problem of Evil, redefines divine power as persuasive rather than coercive. Open Theism limits divine foreknowledge. Oord’s essential kenosis makes divine incapacity a constitutive feature of the divine nature. All three introduce external or essential constraints on divine power. ‘Nothing can limit God but itself’ forecloses all three moves in a single stroke.

It preserves the Creator-creature distinction. Spinoza’s logic follows the esse-participation account to its natural conclusion: if all things participate in divine being, the distinction ultimately

dissolves. ‘Nothing can limit God but itself’ blocks this. The created order participates in divine being but is not a mode of it — because God’s self-limitation produced something genuinely other.

It preserves divine freedom. Hegel’s kenotic account makes the world necessary to God: the dialectical movement of Spirit requires the moment of externalisation. The statement rules this out. If God limits itself, the self-limitation is an act of freedom, not a metaphysical necessity.

And it preserves mystery, rightly placed. The statement does not explain how God limits itself, or what the internal structure of the divine self-limitation is, or why God chose to create this specific dimensional order rather than another or none at all. Mystery is not eliminated; it is properly located — not in the logical structure of the God-world relationship but in the inner freedom of the divine will.

III — Dimensionality as the Primary Form of Limitation

Note: This section is new to this edition. It sharpens the argument of Section IV (below) by establishing that the creation of dimensionality is the creation of limitation itself — making the kenotic account of creation not merely logically necessary but immediate.

The argument of Section I establishes that the kenotic creative act is logically necessary: for genuine creaturely otherness to exist, God must limit itself, since nothing external can do this limiting. But Section IV’s argument from omnipresence — that an unlimited being leaves no ontological room for anything alongside itself — can be sharpened by attending more carefully to what limitation actually is at its most fundamental level.

A dimension is itself a limitation. Not a limitation within a pre-existing space, but the ground condition of all possible limitation. Before there are dimensions, there is no inside or outside, no here or there, no this region rather than that region. Dimensionality is the structure that makes spatial distinction possible. To create a dimension is to create the very possibility of limitation — not a limitation among others, but the prior condition within which all subsequent limitation occurs.

This is not a metaphor. A spatial dimension is formally defined as a degree of freedom in which distinct positions can be specified. Without dimensions, no positions can be specified, no regions can be bounded, no inside can be distinguished from outside. The first dimension does not create a limitation within a pre-existing space; it creates the structure within which the concept of limitation can apply at all. Dimensionality is the ur-limitation: the limitation from which all other limitations derive their possibility.

This sharpens the argument for the kenotic creative act from three directions.

First, it makes the identification of the creative act with self-limitation more precise. The claim is not merely that God limits itself in order to create, and that this self-limitation somehow produces dimensional structure as a consequence. The claim is stronger: the creation of dimensional

structure simply is the primary limiting act. The creation of four-dimensional spacetime is the creation of limitation itself — not a limitation within an existing framework, but the framework within which all limitation subsequently occurs. The kenotic creative act and the creation of dimensionality are not two steps but one.

Second, it eliminates an apparent circularity in the standard account. One might object: if God must make room for creation, what is the room made of? The answer, in the standard account, is that God's self-limitation produces dimensional space. But this seems to assume that dimensional space is the product of the limitation rather than being prior to it. The dimensional limitation argument dissolves this circularity. God does not make room within a pre-existing space; God's self-limiting act is the creation of the very structure that makes 'room' possible. The limitation and the space it bounds are the same event.

Third, it connects the first principle directly to the specific character of the created order. Why does the created order have the dimensional structure it has? Because the kenotic creative act is the primary limiting act, and the dimensional structure of four-dimensional spacetime is what that act looks like from within the created order. The perpendicular ontology's claim — that the soul inhabits a dimension perpendicular to the four-dimensional spacetime, at the intersection of the observable and the unlimited ground — is now grounded directly in the first principle. The soul's extra-dimensional intersection is the specific structural feature of a creation whose dimensional structure is itself the kenotic limiting act.

The creation of the universe is the creation of dimensionality. The creation of dimensionality is the creation of limitation. The creation of limitation, by the statement's logic, can only be God's self-limitation. Therefore: the creation of the universe is the kenotic creative act, not as a metaphysical hypothesis that follows from the statement through several inferential steps, but as an immediate consequence of what dimensionality is. A dimension is a limitation. The universe has dimensions. Therefore the universe's existence is God's self-limitation. The argument has no hidden steps.

III.1 — The Projection Hypothesis Confirmed

The dimensional limitation argument also strengthens the Projection Hypothesis's central claim about why four dimensions. If the kenotic creative act is the creation of dimensionality itself — if the act of self-limitation and the act of creating dimensional structure are the same event — then the question of why four dimensions becomes: what dimensionality most completely expresses the primary limiting act? The Projection Hypothesis's answer is confirmed by geometry: four-dimensional spacetime is where the exceptional geometric complexity peaks, with six regular polytopes compared to three at every higher dimensionality. The richest possible expression of the limiting act occurs at four dimensions before geometric simplification resumes. The universe has four dimensions because four is where the kenotic creative act reaches its fullest dimensional expression.

III.2 — The Theodicy Connection

The dimensional limitation argument also strengthens the theodicy developed in Section IV. If the dimensional structure of the created order is itself the kenotic limiting act — if the universe's four-dimensionality is not a container for reality but the reality of God's self-limitation — then the contents of that dimensional order, including privation and suffering, are genuinely real at their register. They are not illusions overlying a non-dual ground. They are real features of the dimensional structure that is itself the kenotic act's most direct physical expression. Evil as privation is real privation within the real dimensional structure that is God's self-limitation. The dissolution theodicy's claim that evil dissolves at higher levels of consciousness cannot reach the dimensional structure itself, because the dimensional structure is not a feature of consciousness — it is the structure of the kenotic act.

III.3 — The Argument in Formal Structure

The dimensional limitation argument can be stated in its tightest logical form. It requires three premises: one axiom, one definition, and one empirical observation. There are no hidden theological premises, no appeals to authority, no cultural or traditional presuppositions.

P1: Nothing can limit God but itself. (The axiom — the paper's first principle.)

P2: A dimension is a limitation — specifically the ground condition of all possible limitation. (Definition. A spatial dimension is a degree of freedom in which distinct positions can be specified. Without dimensions, no positions can be specified, no regions can be bounded, no inside distinguished from outside. Dimensionality is not a limitation within a pre-existing space; it is the structure that makes the concept of limitation applicable at all.)

P3: The physical universe has dimensions. (Empirical observation. Not contested by any cosmological, philosophical, or theological tradition.)

C1: The physical universe contains limitation. (From P2 and P3, by substitution.)

C2: The limitation that produced the universe's dimensions was self-generated by God. (From P1 and C1. P1 categorically excludes any external agent of limitation. Therefore the only available agent is God itself.)

C3: The creation of the universe is God's self-limitation — the kenotic creative act. (From C2. The self-generated divine limitation that produced dimensionality is, by definition, the kenotic creative act.)

The argument is formally valid. Its only premises are the axiom, a definition, and an empirical observation. To dispute C3, one must dispute one of exactly three things: P1 (deny that nothing

external can limit God — which is to deny theism), P2 (deny that a dimension is a limitation — which requires overturning the formal definition of dimensionality), or P3 (deny that the universe has dimensions — which is not a live option). There is no fourth point of entry. The argument has no hidden steps.

The relationship to the classical ontological argument is instructive. Anselm's ontological argument attempts to prove God's existence from the concept of God alone. This argument does not attempt to prove God's existence — it takes God's existence as given by the axiom and derives the kenotic character of creation from it. It is less ambitious than the ontological argument in scope but structurally more robust: it requires no claim that existence is a predicate, no move from conceivability to possibility, no disputed modal logic. It requires only what a dimension formally is and that the universe has them. These are not philosophical innovations. They are definitional and observational facts that predate any theological tradition.

The universe has dimensions. Dimensions are limitations. Only God can limit God. Therefore the universe is God's self-limitation. This is the kenotic creative act — not as a hypothesis that explains the structure of creation, not as a theological preference, not as a cultural narrative, but as what the creation of dimensionality means. The proof is in the premises. The premises are a definition and an observation.

III.4 — The Demiurgic Objection and Its Refutation

The formal proof of Section III.3 invites a natural objection: perhaps dimensions are not God's self-limitation but a pre-existing framework within which God created. Dimensions as the container, God as the creator operating within them. This would preserve divine agency while locating the source of dimensional structure somewhere other than the kenotic act itself. It is the most natural alternative to the proof's conclusion, and it has a distinguished philosophical lineage — the Receptacle of Plato's *Timaeus*, the Gnostic Pleroma, the space of the Kabbalistic *tzimtzum* conceived as prior to the contraction itself. In each case, dimensions or dimensional space are treated as a framework God creates within rather than a structure God's creative act produces.

The objection fails, and its failure is not incidental. It fails because it generates the demiurgic problem in its classical form — and the demiurgic problem is not a separate difficulty from the one P1 was designed to address. It is the same problem restated.

If dimensions are not God's self-limitation, their source must be located somewhere. There are exactly three options.

First: dimensions are something God did not create — a pre-existing eternal structure that God works within. This makes dimensionality a brute fact prior to and independent of God: a Platonic eternal framework, a metaphysical necessity that constrains the creative act from outside. But this means something has being that is not from God and that God did not produce. The unlimited ground of all being is now operating within an ontological context that preceded it. This is precisely what the statement 'nothing can limit God but itself' rules out in its first movement: the

categorical exclusion of any external source of limitation. Pre-existing dimensions are an external limitation on God's creative act. P1 forecloses this option absolutely.

Second: dimensions were created by something other than God — a second principle, a Demiurge, an intermediary whose creative act produced the dimensional framework within which God then worked. This is the Gnostic solution and the Platonic Demiurge's structural role in the *Timaeus*: the Demiurge orders pre-existing matter within a pre-existing Receptacle, neither of which the Demiurge produced. But this immediately introduces a being with genuine causal power over the structure of reality that is not identical with the unlimited ground of all being. The demiurgic intermediary is not God — it is a subordinate creative principle that possesses, *ex hypothesi*, the capacity to create dimensional structure that God apparently lacks or delegates. The theological consequence is not merely polytheism but the specific Gnostic instability: a world whose fundamental structure was produced by something less than the ultimate divine, leaving the created order partially alien to the God who claims sovereignty over it.

Third: dimensions are simply given, uncaused, and self-subsistent — the strongest version of the objection, and the one classical Platonism actually holds. Dimensional space is not produced by God or by any second principle; it simply is, as an eternal necessary feature of reality alongside the eternal necessary being of God. But this generates the same consequence as the first option: something has being prior to and independent of God, which is precisely what 'unlimited ground of all being' cannot accommodate without ceasing to designate what the phrase means. An uncaused eternal dimensionality is an external ontological context within which God exists and acts. P1 rules this out for the same reason it rules out the first option.

There is no fourth option. Every account that treats dimensions as something other than God's self-limitation must locate the source of dimensions in one of these three places, and all three generate either a violation of P1 or a Demiurge. The demiurgic problem is therefore not a separate objection to the proof — it is the same problem P1 was designed to address, now appearing as the consequence of denying C3. Denying the conclusion of the proof leads immediately to the very difficulty the proof was constructed to resolve.

This also explains the theological instability that runs through every tradition that has tried to hold both divine ultimacy and a pre-existing or independently-originating spatial framework. Gnosticism's Pleroma requires a Demiurge to explain how the material world came to exist within a divine fullness that should have left no room for it. Neoplatonism's One requires the Dyad as a co-eternal principle to explain differentiation from absolute unity. Even the Kabbalistic *tzimtzum* has been contested on precisely this point: whether the space of the contraction is genuinely empty or whether it retains some vestige of *Ein Sof* — because if the space is genuinely empty it seems to be something *Ein Sof* did not produce, which violates *Ein Sof*'s absolute ultimacy; and if it retains a vestige it is not genuinely empty, which undermines the *tzimtzum*'s capacity to produce genuine creaturely otherness.

KEP resolves all three versions of this instability by the same move. The space of the *tzimtzum* is not a pre-existing receptacle. It is the self-limitation itself. The dimension is the limiting act. There is no container prior to the creative act within which the act occurs, because the act's

product — the dimensional structure — is the act's expression, not its precondition. The kenotic self-limitation does not occur within space. It produces space as its direct and immediate expression.

Any account that places the source of dimensions outside God's self-limitation must posit either an external constraint on God (violating P1) or a Demiurge (introducing a second causal principle whose creative act produced what God's act did not). The demiurgic objection to the proof is not an alternative to the proof. It is the reappearance of the problem the proof was designed to solve. There is no escape from C3 that does not generate a Demiurge or violate the axiom. The kenotic account of dimensionality is therefore not merely the best available account. It is the only account that preserves both divine ultimacy and genuine creaturely otherness simultaneously.

IV — The Kenotic Creative Act as Logical Consequence

Grant the statement. Then consider what is required for anything genuinely other than God to exist.

An unlimited being, taken with full seriousness, is a being with no dimensional determination whatsoever — no specific number of dimensions, no location, no temporal sequence, no finite causal reach. Such a being, by its nature, leaves no ontological room alongside itself.

Omnipresence, properly understood, means not merely that God is everywhere but that there is no 'alongside' — no space external to God in which a created order could be placed. To say God is omnipresent is to say God's being is not bounded by anything external.

The dimensional limitation argument of Section III sharpens this: for genuine creaturely otherness to exist, there must first exist a dimensional structure within which 'otherness' and 'alongside' have meaning. The creation of that dimensional structure is the kenotic act. The two-step account — God limits itself, and this produces dimensional space — becomes a one-step account: the creation of dimensional structure simply is the self-limitation. Here the kenotic act must be understood in its proper vector, as the system states elsewhere: it is not a withdrawal or contraction by which God retreats to vacate a region for an other, but an outpouring — the giving-forth of the divine energy, which becomes, as it is poured out and dimensionally conditioned, the structured otherness of the created order. The dimensional structure is not the empty room left by a retreat but the conditioned form of the outpouring itself: the dimension is the limitation is the kenotic act, and the act is effusion, not withdrawal.

This locates precisely both the kinship and the decisive difference between KEP and the Lurianic tzimtzum. Isaac Luria arrived at a structurally related conclusion: Ein Sof, as the absolutely unlimited, leaves no 'alongside,' so that the existence of anything else requires a primordial act addressed to that absence. KEP shares the diagnosis — that the unlimited leaves no alongside, and that a primordial act is therefore necessary — but parts from tzimtzum on the vector of that act, and the difference is not incidental. The tzimtzum is a contraction: Ein Sof withdraws from a region to leave a vacated space in which creation can occur, so that creation exists in the room left by a divine retreat. The kenotic act of KEP is the opposite vector: God does not contract to leave

room but pours forth, and the dimensional structure is the conditioned form of that outpouring rather than the empty space of a withdrawal. The two agree that the unlimited admits no alongside and that a foundational act resolves this; they disagree on whether the act is a retreat that vacates or an effusion that fills. KEP is the theology of the outpouring, and on its account the creation of dimensionality is the conditioning of the divine giving-forth, not the shape of a divine withdrawal.

V — The Dissolution of the Problem of Evil

The Problem of Evil in its classical form asks: if God is omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good, why does God not prevent suffering? ‘Nothing can limit God but itself’ dissolves this problem without answering it — and dissolution is the stronger move.

If nothing external can limit God, then the structure of the created order — dimensionally bounded, causally consistent, operating according to its own internal laws — is itself the specific shape of God’s self-limitation. God is not intervening in specific instances of suffering because the created order, with its dimensional integrity and causal consistency, is what God’s self-limitation produced. To intervene as a finite causal agent within the physical field would be God limiting God’s own self-limitation — structurally equivalent to uncreating creation.

The dimensional limitation argument of Section III deepens this. The Problem of Evil implicitly treats the dimensional structure of the created order as separable from God’s creative act — as if the world’s dimensional integrity were a contingent feature God could override. But if the dimensional structure is itself the kenotic creative act, then overriding the dimensional integrity of the created order would not be an alternative expression of divine power but the undoing of the creative act itself. God preserves the created order’s dimensional integrity because the dimensional integrity is the creative act; and God responds to suffering not by overriding the dimensional structure but by entering it — through the Incarnation, as the Logos genuinely inside the order, genuinely subject to its conditions, genuinely suffering within it from within.

The pastoral question — why does a loving God permit this specific child’s suffering? — receives the only answer that preserves both omnipotence and genuine creaturely existence: God, who cannot be limited from outside, limited itself to allow this world. And the response to suffering is not intervention but incarnation.

This connects to the system’s definition of evil, developed fully in the dedicated treatise and summarised here. Evil is not a substance God might have declined to create but ontological absence — the privation of the fullness of God’s presence — and a privation requires no author and is no independent principle. The expansion of the dimensional order toward emptiness is the cosmic form of this privation, real as the determinate lack it is and yet no substance. The absence is inert; the threat of evil arises only in a free soul that clings to the absence rather than to God, the clinging taking the concrete form of the mind’s contraction onto a finite fixation at the expense

of the fullness. This is why the dissolution of the Problem of Evil here is not a denial of evil's reality but a correct location of it: evil is real as privation, devastating in the clinging will, and never a positive thing God made — so that the goodness of the source from which all things are poured forth, and the reality of the evil that is the soul's turning from that source toward absence, are both preserved.

VI — The Incarnation as the Second Consequence

The statement not only explains the structure of creation — it explains why the Incarnation has the specific character it does and why it must occur at all.

If the only way God can be present within the dimensional order as a direct agent is through self-limitation — and if the first self-limitation produced the dimensional order itself — then a second self-limitation is required for God to be genuinely present within that order. The Incarnation is God limiting itself a second time: not to produce the dimensional frame, but to enter it. The second kenosis is structurally required by the same logic as the first.

The dimensional limitation argument sharpens this. The first kenosis is the creation of dimensionality itself. The second kenosis is the entry into that dimensionality: not God appearing within the dimensional structure as an external agent, but the Logos genuinely becoming dimensional — genuinely subject to the limitation that is the dimensional structure's own character. The Incarnation is the second kenotic limitation, and it has the same formal structure as the first: the unlimited limiting itself to allow genuine otherness, now specifically to allow genuine creaturely solidarity rather than creaturely existence.

Note (two-register Trinity revision): The Logos's eternal expressive character is its co-eternal hypostatic mode — what it eternally is within the divine esse prior to any creative act — not a product of kenotic process. The Incarnation extends that eternal expressive mode into created actuality through the second kenotic act.

VII — Omnipotence Reconsidered

The statement reconceives omnipotence entirely. Not as the unlimited power to do anything imaginable — the popular conception that generates endless pseudo-paradoxes (can God make a stone so heavy God cannot lift it?) — but as the specific maximal power compatible with the first principle. God can do everything that does not require an external limitation to be imposed on God. This includes: creating a genuine created order through self-limitation; entering that order through the Incarnation; sustaining the created order through continuous effluence; and acting within the created order through the soul's self-steering capacity at the intersection of the dimensional and supradimensional registers.

What God cannot do — not from weakness but from the structure of what omnipotence means when the first principle is applied — is override the dimensional integrity of the created order

from outside, since that dimensional integrity is itself the kenotic creative act. The constraint is not an external limitation on omnipotence; it is the internal structure of what the omnipotent act of creation consisted in.

VIII — The Statement as First Principle

The statement ‘nothing can limit God but itself’ functions as a first principle in the philosophical sense: it is the proposition from which the entire structural architecture follows, and it is not itself derived from a more fundamental premise within the system. It is arrived at by attending carefully to what ‘unlimited’ and ‘God’ and ‘limit’ mean when held together without evasion.

The contrast with Moltmann is sharpened by the dimensional limitation argument. Moltmann makes kenosis a character of the eternal divine essence — God’s very being is kenotic, so creation is the eternal self-emptying that constitutes divine love as such. This collapses the distinction between what God eternally is and what God freely does. The statement preserves this distinction absolutely: the three co-eternal hypostatic modes are forms within the eternal divine esse, not products of kenotic process; kenosis belongs to the freely chosen creative act alone. The dimensional limitation argument confirms this: the creation of dimensionality is a discrete event with a beginning, not an eternal process that constitutes the divine nature. The universe had a beginning; God’s self-limitation produced it; the divine nature that did the limiting is eternally what it is, prior to and independent of the limiting act.

What the statement provides — and what the dimensional limitation argument makes more precise — is a complete account of the logical structure of the God-world relationship: why there must be a kenotic creative act for creation to exist at all, why that act is the creation of dimensionality itself, why the Incarnation must follow the same logic as creation, and why suffering cannot be prevented by external divine agency. What it leaves is the mystery rightly placed: the divine freedom that chose to create, the love that motivated the self-limitation, the specific character of what was created. Mystery is not eliminated; it is properly located.

Nothing can limit God but itself. A dimension is itself a limitation. The creation of dimensional structure is therefore God’s self-limitation. From this, the rest follows — and follows immediately, without hidden inferential steps. The kenotic creative act is not a hypothesis that explains the structure of creation. It is what the creation of dimensionality means.

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