UTRUM VERUM ET SIMPLEX CONVERTANTUR. THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD IN AQUINAS AND SWINBURNE

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Abstract. This paper explores Thomas Aquinas' and Richard Swinburne's doctrines of simplicity in the context of their philosophical theologies. Both say that God is simple. However, Swinburne takes simplicity as a property of the theistic hypothesis, while for Aquinas simplicity is a property of God himself. For Swinburne, simpler theories are ceteris paribus more likely to be true; for Aquinas, simplicity and truth are properties of God which, in a certain way, coincide – because God is metaphysically simple. Notwithstanding their different approaches, some unreckoned parallels between their thoughts are brought to light.

> Lumen autem fidei, quod est quasi quaedam sigillatio primae veritatis in mente (Aquinas, *Super De Trinitate* p.2 q.3 a.1 ad 4)

I. INTRODUCTION

Simplicity is a central concept in the philosophical theology of both Thomas Aquinas and Richard Swinburne. They both teach that, in some way, God is simple and for both of them, divine simplicity is crucial for the systematic construction of their philosophical theology as a whole. However, there is a major difference between the theories with respect to what is called "simple". Aquinas calls God "simple" insofar as God has no parts.[1] According to him, simplicity is a property of the divine being. According to Swinburne,

1 "*Deus est summe simplex*" (In Sent. 1,23,1,2), "*Nullum enim simplex habet partem*" (In Sent. 4,16,1,1,1); "*Deus autem est omnino simplex*" (SCG 1,38,6); "*Deus nullo modo compositus est, sed est omnino simplex*" (STh 1,3,7).

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in contrast, simplicity is a property of the *hypothesis* of theism.[2] Hence, for Swinburne, simplicity is a property of a linguistic entity,[3] whereas for Aquinas, it is a property of a non-linguistic entity. Aquinas and Swinburne apply the predicator "simple" in two different ontological areas. The difference in meaning is similar to the difference between an intelligent speech and an intelligent speaker.

Therefore, one might ask critically whether it makes sense to compare Aquinas' and Swinburne's doctrines of simplicity at all. Is this not like comparing apples and oranges? In my view, the difference between a simple hypothesis and a simple (non-linguistic) being makes the comparison challenging, but not impossible. In anticipation of the argument in this paper, there will still be common ground because even for Swinburne, the simplicity of the theistic hypothesis depends, in the end, on God himself being simple in a certain respect. In turn, Aquinas occasionally uses "simple" as a linguistic predicate. Hence, it seems promising to investigate the parallels and divergences in detail.

I will begin by describing Aquinas' position on simplicity. Then, I will present Swinburne's theory and begin noting parallels to Aquinas. Finally, I will attempt to arrange a panopticon of parallels and divergences between the *Ansätze*.

II. AQUINAS ON DIVINE SIMPLICITY

II.1 Having no parts — and identity theses

The basic meaning of "simple" in the context of Aquinas' doctrine of God is to be uncompounded, to have no parts. Therefore, Aquinas writes in the *prooemium* of *Summa Theologiæ*'s *quaestio* on simplicity, "*Inquiretur de simplicitate ipius, per quam removetur ab eo compositio*" (*STh* I,3, *prooem.*) — His simplicity will be investigated by which composition is taken away from Him.[4] This

2 "Theism has a very considerable simplicity", Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Clarendon Press, 1979) [=EG], 106; "the great simplicity of the hypothesis of theism" (EG 106), "theism is a very simple hypothesis" (EG 289).

3 Swinburne says, for example, "The principle of simplicity is a fundamental synthetic a priori truth", Richard Swinburne, *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth* (Marquette Univ. Press, 1997), 56.

4 Similarly, Aquinas says in *Super librum De causis*, l.28, "*Simplex autem dicitur aliquid per privationem compositionis, quia scilicet non est ex multis compositum*".

"inquisition" belongs to the larger context of the question for God's mode of being (*quomodo sit*), which we cannot fully answer but can only approach by way of "remotional theology". Because we cannot know what God is (*quid est*), we can only preclude some modes of being but cannot positively say what His mode of being is.[5] Simplicity precludes consisting of parts. God has no spatial parts, such as bodily things, and no temporal parts, such as perishable things (*pace* the 3-dimensionalists, who can form a weak notion of the "temporal part" of a perishable thing as the state of that thing at a given time). He also has no metaphysical parts, as would result from applying the binary principles of Aristotelian metaphysics to Him: no distinction of matter and form, of act and potency, or of essence and existence.

This being the kernel of Aquinas' doctrine of divine simplicity, there are more components of this doctrine, above all the (in)famous theistic identity theses:[6]

(1) God is not different from his essence;[7]

(2) God's existence is not different from his essence;

(3) God has no properties different from his essence;

and, in addition to Wolterstorff's list,

(4) All of God's properties are identical to each other.

These theses sound highly enigmatic to the average philosopher's ears: how can omnipotence and omniscience be identical, whereas power and knowledge are surely not? How can the fact that something exists be in any way identical to the determination of what it is? How can anything be identical to its properties? How can something be abstract and concrete (almightiness and a person) at the same time (Plantinga)? Has this type of doctrine not

5 On the possibility and limits of knowledge about God, see my "Philosophische Gotteserkenntnis nach Thomas von Aquin", *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 123, no. 2 (2016). On the problem of the infinity of a simple God, see my "Infinity in Aquinas' Doctrine of God", in *Analytically Oriented Thomism*, ed. Mirosław Szatkowski (editiones scholasticae 2016).

6 Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Divine Simplicity", *Philosophical Perspectives* 5, 532, (1991). Wolterstorff also distinguishes between the doctrine of simplicity and further conclusions drawn from it in particular contexts.

7 The same holds, according to Aquinas, for all simple things: "*In substantiis vero simplicis nulla est differentia essentiae et subiecti*" (*De potentia* 9,1).

completely fallen into a senseless pandemonium of category mistakes, metabases, and plain contradictions?

No doubt: the doctrine of simplicity is not simple.[8] The distinguished philosopher and Thomist Norman Kretzmann noted in his commentary on the *Summa contra gentiles* that the doctrine of simplicity is one of the most challenging parts of Aquinas' philosophical theology. He calls it "*not easy to understand or to accept*", notwithstanding that Kretzmann, a "well-behaved Thomist", finally pleads for its intelligibility and acceptability.[9] Even Aquinas himself remarked upon some difficulties with the doctrine he proposed. He attributed these difficulties to the structure of our limited creaturely intellect. Our intellect, with its general procedure of analyzing and synthesizing, is made for empirical knowledge. We cannot help but distinguish spatially what is far from what is near, distinguish temporally what is past from what is future and what is perishable from what is immutable, and distinguish ontologically changing properties from the being that changes.

> We can speak of simple things only as though they were like the composite things from which we derive our knowledge (*STh* 1,3,3).[10]

Although Aquinas' explanation seems coherent, it is convincing only to a limited degree. Generally, it seems a bad idea to argue for a philosophical theory by appealing to our weak intellectual capacities because such an argument returns to the theory itself, making it appear the doubtable product of a weak intellect.

In his paper in this volume, Christopher Hughes addresses the comprehensibility of the doctrine of simplicity.[11] My work will complement his conclusions, focusing on the theoretical status of this doctrine within Aquinas' thought in general. To this end, in what follows, I will examine the position of the doctrine of simplicity in Aquinas' *Summa Theologiæ*. The *Summa The-*

8 Compare, in this respect, the glorious title of Christopher Hughes' book, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1989).

9 Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles I* (Clarendon Press, 1997), 124.

10 Aquinas even claims that what seems to be a category mistake is completely correct: using singular terms for God, we indicate his subsistence (his being-in-himself, not in something else); using general terms, we indicate his simplicity (*STh* I,3,3, ad 1).

11 Christopher Hughes, "Aquinas on the Nature and Implications of Divine Simplicity", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 2, 1–23 (2018).

ologiæ is better suited to this end than the *Summa contra gentiles* because it is more linearly constructed, whereas in the SCG, the arguments for a thesis sometimes accumulate in a way that makes the principles of construction of the work more difficult to see.[12]

Hence, my question is twofold. First, how does Aquinas arrive at his doctrine of simplicity, and from which other elements of his doctrine does it follow? Second, what consequences does he draw from the doctrine of simplicity? In both respects, one can make interesting observations.

II.2 The derivation of simplicity in the Summa Theologiæ

The entire *quaestio* 3 of part I of the *Summa Theologiæ* is devoted to divine simplicity. The first six articles concern different types of composition that cannot be attributed to God; the seventh article poses (and answers) the fundamental question of whether God is completely simple (*omnino simplex*).

Aquinas' arguments for simplicity begin with the concept(s) of God that were established in the *quinque viae* (STh I,2,3), particularly in the first two ways,[13] in which God is conceived as a first mover and a first efficient cause.

For example, in the first article of STh I,3, Aquinas considers three arguments that God is not a body. Not being a body is a form of simplicity because it means lacking *quantitas dimensiva* and, therefore, having no spatial parts. The arguments are as follows:

(1) God as the *primum movens immobile* cannot be a body because bodies can only move other things if they themselves are moving. This argument clearly relates to the conclusion of the *prima via*.

(2) God as the *primum ens* cannot be *in potentia*, whereas bodies, by their infinite divisibility alone, are always *in potentia*. This argument clearly relates to the first two ways (and probably also to the third and the fifth), which ascribe to God the status of a first element in a certain order.

12 It would surely fill a comprehensive book chapter to note all the major differences and similarities between SCG and STh. To justify the focus on STh, it may suffice to note the comprehensiveness of the treatment of natural theology in SCG and the pedagogical organization of STh (see Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism*, Introduction and Chapter One).

13 With respect to the third way, see my "Eine versteckte Endlichkeitsannahme in Thomas' tertia via", *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 137, no. 1 (2015).

(3) God is the most lofty being (*nobilissimus ens*), whereas even living bodies cannot be most lofty for the very reason that they obtained their lives from someone or something else. This argument hardly relates to the *quinque viae* because loftiness is not a subject of Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God. Instead, Aquinas invokes the substantial metaphysical assumption that being is objectively graded.

The arguments of the further *articuli* also begin from some form of the firsthood of God (God as *primum ens*) or from theses that have been concluded in earlier *articuli,* such as in the second *articulus,* whose conclusion is that God is immaterial. Here, Aquinas infers from incorporeality, the conclusion of the first *articulus*, that there is no *quantitas dimensiva* in God and, hence, that God cannot be a material being. From the conclusion of the *secunda via*, that God is *prima causa efficiens*, he infers that God essentially is a "first actor" (*primum agens*) who consequently must be *per se forma*, not matter.

Similarly, the next articles proceed until Aquinas pointedly asks in the seventh article whether God is totally simple (*omnino simplex*). Here, Aquinas proposes five arguments, of which I select three. The first one brings together the earlier arguments: how could there be composition in God given that all usual forms of composition are already excluded? The second argument addresses the fundamental level of ontological questions: in composed things, the parts are (ontologically) earlier than the whole, and the whole depends on its parts in the sense that if the parts did not exist, the whole would not exist, and if the parts do exist, the whole may exist or not. God, in contrast, is the (independent) *primum ens*, so He cannot have prior parts. The third argument is also fundamental: if something is composed of parts, a cause is required for the parts to form this *compositum*, whereas God as a *prima causa* cannot have a cause.

As an intermediate result, we can state that Aquinas' arguments for the simplicity of God depend first and foremost on the firsthood of God (as established in the *quinque viae*) and on further metaphysical premises, such as the objective order of degrees of being.

II.3 The implications of simplicity in the Summa Theologiæ

In the next *quaestio* of the *Summa Theologiæ*, Aquinas turns to divine perfection. Interestingly, he does not conclude perfection from simplicity — the topic of the preceding *quaestio* — but directly from God's status as the *prima*

causa efficiens and *actus purus,* as inferred again from God's firsthood in a certain order of being.

Simplicity is brought to bear for the first time when, in q.4 a.2, Aquinas argues that all perfections are united in God. Simplicity here appears on the opponent's side: does it not contradict simplicity when different perfections are assumed in God? Aquinas disproves this argument. This is also the structure of the next occurrences of simplicity in the following articles and questions. All of them are negative: does not simplicity contradict being the highest good because the clause "highest good" indicates composition by being itself composed of two linguistic parts, namely, "highest" and "good" (q.6 a.2)? Or: how could something completely simple be omnipresent — would that not require being here and there, that is, to be with one part at one place and with another part at another place (q.8 a.2)?

It is remarkable that Aquinas grounds not a single one of the divine properties whose discussion follows that of simplicity on simplicity. Instead, he aims to show that the respective doctrines are *compatible with* simplicity. One gets the impression that Aquinas would tacitly say, "I know that this lesson is especially hard for you to digest; hence, I take up the doubts connected with it one after the other and try to resolve them".

The first positive use of simplicity is made in q.9 a.1, where Aquinas establishes divine unchangeability. In this context, one of his arguments proceeds from simplicity, namely, in all that moves (or changes / *movetur*) there must be composition, but because God is simple, he cannot move or change. However, we must remember that in q.3, Aquinas concluded simplicity from the theorem that God is an unmoved mover. Hence, it seems redundant or circular to re-conclude immovability from simplicity. However, one might consider this a pedagogic measure or a result of the net structure of Aquinas' doctrine, in which circular reasoning need not be vicious but can be valuable by stabilizing coherence.

The first non-redundant positive application of simplicity does not appear before Aquinas discusses God's uniqueness in q.11. The individuating properties that make an individuum of kind A *this A* can only be assigned to one single thing. Due to His simplicity, God is not different from his nature. This argument implies that that which makes Him *a God* is the same as that which makes Him *this God*. Therefore, there cannot be more than one God. Although this argument is not entirely perspicuous, Aquinas offers more

(and more cogent) arguments for uniqueness. For example, he concludes from God's infinite perfection, with the help of a Leibniz principle (*identitas indiscernibilium*), that two infinitely perfect beings must be identical. He thinks that a unique God is the best explanation for the fact that the world is ordered to a degree that would be unimaginable if there were several Gods interfering with each other.

In the end, we have made an interesting observation in this part: God's simplicity carries low argumentative weight in Aquinas' philosophical theology. At first, simplicity is only applied negatively; the first positive occurrence is redundant, and the first non-redundant positive occurrence is flanked by strong alternative arguments.

II.4 On the sense and the limits of Aquinas' doctrine of simplicity

According to Robert M. Burns, Aquinas' doctrine of simplicity is an unnecessary neoplatonic element of his doctrine of God that makes him stumble on his way to developing a Christian doctrine of God in a continuation of that philosophical doctrine.[14] To put it in a nutshell: how can a being that is not only in this or that respect but totally simple *be* triune (as opposed to only appear triune)? Referring to Lessing, Burns diagnoses a "broad ugly ditch" ("*ein garstig breiter Graben*") between *quaestiones* 26 and 27 of the *prima pars* of *STh*, where Aquinas proceeds from the philosophical to the theological doctrine of God. Thomas Schärtl will consider the problems of combining simplicity with triunity in his paper in this volume;[15] hence, I need not go into detail here.

What I want to note, however, is that the doctrine of the trinity is by far not the only theoretical problem that Thomas buys along with his doctrine of simplicity. For example, consider his doctrine of human perfection in the form of the *visio beatifica*. The problem is as follows: if the blessed see a God who has no parts, they need to see him completely because *"simplex si attingitur, totum attingitur"* — if something simple is touched, it is touched completely (*De potentia* 7,1 ob. 2). However, this argument cuts across Aquinas' basic assumption of negative theology, according to which it is impossible for creatures to know God completely in the sense of knowing his essence, and

14 Robert M. Burns, "The Divine Simplicity in St Thomas", *Religious Studies* 25, no. 3 (1989).
15 Thomas Schärtl-Trendl, "Divine Simplicity", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 2, 53–90 (2018).

this impossibility is not for contingent but for principled reasons. Aquinas' solution in his *Commentary to the Gospel of John* is only partially convincing: even if the complete divine being (*essentia tota*) is seen by the Blessed, it is not seen completely (*non totaliter, In Ioan.* c.1). How can it be possible to see the complete thing without seeing it completely if seeing the complete thing cannot mean seeing only aspects (=parts) of it? I must confess to the fear that I will probably not understand this explanation before I myself am in this state — *Deo volente*, I will have to be patient for some time.[16]

Let us sum up the observations we have made so far:

1. The argumentative "weight" of the doctrine of divine simplicity in Aquinas' philosophical theology is limited — at least, we have shown this for the *Summa Theologiæ*.
2. Aquinas himself admits the difficulties of this doctrine.
3. Notwithstanding its possible philosophical worth, the doctrine of simplicity leads to severe problems when it comes to central parts of Christian belief, such as the doctrine of the Trinity or Christian eschatology.

Facing these results, one is tempted to ask a question that is slightly short of being heretical: could one not simply skip simplicity? [In brackets, I add the remark that such a question would have been considered a sacrilege in neoscholasticism. The simple fact that today one can ask it in an Aquinas lecture at Innsbruck bears testimony to the open-minded Thomism for which Otto Muck, Edmund Runggaldier and other Innsbruckians set an example.] I want to leave this question open. However, I want to plead for something like a "Thomist hierarchy of truths". There are teachings of different theoretical centrality and systematic weightiness. Hence, in case of a conflict among components of the simplicity doctrine, one does not need to reject the entire doctrine but may instead distinguish between more and less important parts — and, in doubt, reject the less important ones.

In Aquinas' theory, having no parts is the central idea of the concept of simplicity, whereas the identity theses (e.g., God's being is identical to His essence, God is identical to His essence, God's properties are identical to each

16 This may be a consequence of Aquinas' view that one cannot call something simple a *totum* because it has no parts: *"totum non invenitur in simplicibus, quae non habent partes"* (In Phys. 3,11).

other) lie at the periphery. They do not follow conclusively from having no parts alone but require at least two additional assumptions: first, Aquinas' conception of God as absolutely first cause and, second, certain neoplatonic premises, such as that there is an objective order relation of grades of being ("*being nobilior*") and that having a property presupposes the existence of that property. If these two assumptions can be made, one may argue as follows: God is essentially good; hence, goodness is instantiated, and according to the second neoplatonic assumption, goodness must exist. However, if it exists, it cannot exist independently from God because then, according to Aquinas' primordial conception of God, God would not be absolutely first. Goodness, being an essential property of God, cannot be created by God because then the creator would depend on a creature. In conclusion, goodness must be dependent on God but uncreated, which means it must be a part of God or identical to him. However, because God has no parts, only identity remains.

If one would eliminate the identity theses, the greatest stumbling block for a contemporary acceptance of Aquinas' doctrine of God would be removed. By doing so, however, one would not need to abandon simplicity in the sense of having no parts. One could also prevent the derivation of identity theses by weakening other metaphysical assumptions.

III. DIVINE SIMPLICITY IN RICHARD SWINBURNE'S PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

In Richard Swinburne's philosophy, "simplicity" is a central term not only in the doctrine of God but in all contexts in which the assessment of theories plays a role. The general function of simplicity as a criterion for theories is pointedly displayed in the title of Swinburne's 1997 Aquinas Lectures at Marquette University, "*Simplicity as Evidence of Truth*".[17] Swinburne's basic thesis, which he occasionally calls the "*principle of simplicity*", claims that among two explanations that explain the data equally well, fit equally well with our background knowledge, and have an equal range of application, the simpler one is more probably true. Swinburne presents evidence for this thesis in the form of many illustrative examples from the history of science. In this paper,

17 These considerations have been published in Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification* (Clarendon Press, 2001).

however, I want to focus chiefly on the role of the criterion of simplicity in Swinburne's philosophy of religion.

III.1 The function of the simplicity of the divine hypothesis in the overall project of The Existence of God

In his famous book *The Existence of God,* Swinburne argues that theism is probably true. In the course of his main argument, a version of Bayes' theorem is crucial:

$$P(h/b.w) = P(h/w) \text{ x } P(b/h.w) / P(b/w).$$

This formula reduces the probability, *P*, of the theistic hypothesis, *h*, given certain evidence, *b,* and background knowledge, *w,* to the a priori probability of *h*, $P(h/w)$, and its explanatory power, $P(b/h.w) / P(b/w)$, that is, the factor by which the hypothesis increases the probability of the evidence.

Swinburne examines a series of arguments for theism, such as cosmological arguments that infer God's existence from the existence and order of the universe or arguments from history. In all cases, he concludes that the arguments are good C-inductive arguments from *b* to *h* (i.e., *h* increases the probability of *b*, $P(b/h.w) > P(b/w)$). Hence, the quotient of the two values is greater than 1. Were it 1.2, for example, the instance of Bayes' theorem would read

$$P(h/b.w) = P(h/w) \text{ x } 1.2.$$

Hence, the probability of the theistic hypothesis, given the evidence and the background knowledge, would chiefly depend on its a priori probability $P(h/w)$.

In general, the a priori probability of a theory depends on three criteria: (1) the fit with the background knowledge *w* (the partition between evidence and background knowledge being arbitrary to some degree), (2) the broadness of the range of applications of the theory, and (3) the theory's simplicity. In cases where the background knowledge consists only of tautologies (for instance, in the case of answering the Leibniz question of why there is anything at all), the a priori probability of the hypothesis reduces to two factors: the range of application and simplicity.[18] Swinburne subsumes both of them under "the inner probability of theism". For wide-ranging theories such as theism, the range of its application and its simplicity work against each other because theories that refer to a great many phenomena need to be consonant

18 Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 65.

with more states of affairs and background theories and hence must be much more complex than theories that apply only to a limited area of reality.[19]

Now, we are able to see the central role of simplicity in Swinburne's *Ansatz*: The simplicity of the divine hypothesis determines its a priori probability, and this a priori probability, in turn, determines the overall probability of theism given that there are good C-inductive arguments for theism.

Two decisive questions emerge:

1) Why is simplicity a criterion or identification mark of truth (why *simplex sigillum veri*, as Swinburne likes to say)?

2) Is the theistic hypothesis simple?

Because my focus in this paper is on philosophical theology, I want to make only a short remark on the general question 1): because Swinburne aims at the probability of the truth of theism, the theistic hypothesis must be simple in exactly the same sense as is presupposed in the criterion. Hence, it would not be sufficient to apply the criterion of simplicity to theism without taking into account the sense in which theism is "simple". Therefore, the guiding question for the following investigation must be as follows: *in which sense* can we say that the theistic hypothesis is *simple*?

III.2 What is simplicity?

Swinburne explains in many places his understanding of the simplicity of a hypothesis. The paradigm for his understanding of hypothetical explanations is an explanation in natural science:[20]

> A theory is simple in so far as it postulates few mathematically simple laws holding between entities of an intelligible kind (EG 52).

An explanation or theory is simple insofar as it

19 In his earlier works on the philosophy of science, Swinburne claimed that in case of theories with an abundant range of application — such as "*theories of everything*" — the simplicity criterion may overrule the range criterion.

20 Swinburne explicitly claims that the conception of simplicity that is known from explanations in the natural science is relevant here. One cannot ignore it in the philosophy of religion because "our understanding of when one theory is simpler than another is very much the product of our scientific and mathematical upbringing" (Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 56).

> postulates few entities (as few unobserved planets as possible), entities of few kinds (few kinds of fundamental particles), few and simple kinds of powers and liabilities (EG 84).

In cases of personal explanations, in contrast, we seek

> an explanation in terms of the agency of as few persons with the most general intentions, beliefs, and capacities which fit with other postulated intentions, beliefs, and capacities into as simple a picture of the agents as we can get (EG 85).

A supposition

> is more probable insofar as it is simple, that is, postulates a few constant intentions, simple ways of acquiring beliefs, and unchanging capacities (EG 62).

Hence, simplicity means at least three things: as few as possible assumptions that are as simply stated as possible and are about objects that are as simply structured as possible. A theory is simpler (and thereby more probable) if the objects one is committed to accept by accepting the theory are fewer and of fewer, more common, and simpler kinds. Simplicity, then, is a matter of the complexity of a theory and of its *ontological commitments*. Swinburne's version of Occam's razor has two sides: *ontological parsimony* and *syntactic simplicity*. Both determine the simplicity of a theory. Syntactic simplicity is a necessary companion of ontological parsimony because not only the number but also the (syntactic) complexity of (terms for) entities is relevant for (the) simplicity (of a theory). If the number of things alone determined the degree of simplicity, then a theory that explained something by appeal to a pair (a,b) would count as simpler than a theory that explained the same by appealing to the two things a and b separately — and that would be counterintuitive because explaining by the pair (a,b) (i.e., by one entity instead of two) saves one entity only superficially. On the contrary, it even seems slightly more complex to explain something by a pair instead of its elements.

For both sides of *Occam's razor,* we find parallels in Aquinas. Regarding *syntactic simplicity*, one might think about the Aristotelian theorem that the shorter proof is the better proof.[21] Aquinas presents this theorem and its justification approvingly in his *Commentary to the Posterior Analytics*:

21 Ceteris paribus, the proof "which derives from fewer postulates or hypotheses-in short from fewer premises" (Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora*, ed. G. R. G. Mure, The works of Aristotle translated into English v. 1 (Clarendon Press, 1928), l.1 c.25, 86a–b.

> *caeteris paribus, illa demonstratio est dignior, quae procedit ex paucioribus petitionibus aut suppositionibus aut propositionibus* (Aquinas, *Expos. Post. Anal.*, lib.1 lect.39). [22]

Seeking parallels, we must not overlook the different context, however: considering a shorter proof to be a better proof is not the same as considering a more parsimonious theory to be more probably true.

Regarding the ontological side, we can find a parallel between Swinburne and Aquinas in the philosophy of nature. Aquinas uses the principle "*quod potest compleri per pauciora principia, non fit per plura*" — what can be effected by fewer principles does not happen by more.[23] One must note, however, that Aquinas uses this principle only in a strongly limited way.[24]

All this does not mean that simplicity is a simple concept. Rather, many questions remain open, such as what exactly makes a thing, a type of thing, a description, or an underlying semantics simpler than another one.[25]

22 Notably, Aquinas calls the shorter proof "more noble" (*dignior*) and, a little later, "more excellent" (*potior*).

23 STh p.I q.2 arg.2; the principle is used in the context of a later refuted *argumentum*, but Aquinas does not dispute it in his answer or elsewhere, as far as I know. In SCG III, 70 he explains how the same effects can be ascribed to both a natural cause and God. There, he introduces a similar principle, also in the context of the (refuted) *argumenta*: "*natura non facit per duo instrumenta quod potest facere per unum*" — nature does not make by two instruments what could be made by one. Here, too, Aquinas does not dispute the principle but shows that it is not inconvenient to consider God and a subordinate actor (*agens inferior*) acting in the same situation because they both act in different ways (*alio modo*).

24 See Alan Baker, "Simplicity", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford Univ., 2016), who coins a principle of parsimony saying "*that—other things being equal—it is rational to prefer theories which commit us to smaller ontologies*"; additionally, see Quine, Willard van Orman, *Theories and Things* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 144ff.; furthermore, John J. C. Smart, "Ockham's Razor", in *Principles of Philosophical Reasoning*, ed. James H. Fetzer (Rowman & Allanheld, 1984); W. M. Thorburn, "The Myth of Occam's Razor", *Mind* XXVII, no. 3 (1918).

25 Gerard J. Hughes, "Towards a Rehabilitation of Aquinas's ‚Third Way'", in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Godehard Brüntrup and Ronald K. Tacelli (Kluwer Acad. Publ, 1999), 113, notes how hard it is to find an adequate definition of "good explanation". Some criteria are beyond dispute, such as consistency and matching the data, whereas others are unclear, such as simplicity. Moreover, simplicity is defined differently depending whether one focuses on the characteristics or the number of the postulated entities of a given theory.

III.3 The simplicity of the theistic hypothesis

Swinburne's variation of the theistic hypothesis reads as follows: at every time, God exists; He is conceived as a completely mental person who is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient and completely free and is the personal ground of being, that is, the end point of all personal explanations of the fact that there is something at all. This hypothesis is simple, according to Swinburne, because

a) it postulates only one person of one kind (and not several persons of several kinds), and

b) this type of person is particularly simple.

Hence, we finally see a fundamental parallel between Swinburne and Aquinas: notwithstanding that simplicity, according to Swinburne, is a property of a hypothesis, this hypothesis is simple insofar as the entities it postulates are of a simple type. Hence, the simplicity of the divine nature is also decisive for Swinburne.

Exploring the limits of this parallel, one might ask whether "simplicity" as used by Swinburne as a property of the (concept of) the divine being means the same as "simplicity" as used by Aquinas. Does Swinburne mean that God has no parts? Do any identity theses hold according to his view?

Swinburne himself formulates b) as follows:

> Theism postulates God as a being with intentions, beliefs, and capacities, but ones of a very simple kind, so simple that it postulates the simplest kind of person that there could be (EG 93–94).
>
> Theism thus postulates a person of an incredibly simple kind — one with such capacities, beliefs, and intentions, that there are no limits (apart from those of logic) to his capacities, to the extent of his justified true belief, and of his choice of intention (EG 95).

Here, we must immediately note a difference from Aquinas: simplicity in Swinburne is a gradual concept; it can be used in a comparative form ("simpler than …"). This is not compatible with Aquinas' sense: whether something has parts is a yes/no question, not a question of more or less.

Why does Swinburne hold that omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly free persons, who are the ground of being, are simpler than the finite persons we are acquainted with? According to Swinburne, power, knowledge, and freedom are gradual properties. Formally, they are (at least) two-place relations: they apply to a person P in a certain degree g. "Power(P,0)" means that P has no power; "Power(P,∞)", in contrast, means that P has infinite power.[26]

Having infinite power is simpler than having power to a finite degree, says Swinburne, because in the case of finite power, one needs an additional explanation of the individual degree of power: why does the person have exactly the degree of power she has and not a little more or less? The extremes of zero power and infinite power do not demand a similar type of additional explanation, Swinburne claims.[27] Furthermore, because a person with zero power is no person at all,[28] only infinite power remains as a possible extreme value. Hence, persons with infinite power are the simplest possible kind of persons. Thus, God is a person of a particularly simple type because he has the properties relevant for personhood, such as having intentions, beliefs, and capabilities, each to an infinite degree, and such an infinite degree is the simplest possible degree. Thus, this is Swinburne's argument.

III.4 Vulnerabilities of Swinburne's argument

We can obtain a good understanding of the vulnerabilities of Swinburne's position by considering the following simplified version of Swinburne's argument:

(1) The theistic hypothesis postulates a person with infinite power, infinite knowledge, infinite freedom, etc.

(2) Persons who are infinitely powerful, infinitely knowledgeable, infinitely free, etc. are the simplest possible persons.

(3) Ultimate explanations have to be personal explanations.

(4) The theistic hypothesis is an explanation (for the existence of the universe).

(5) The theistic hypothesis is the simplest (actual) ultimate explanation.

(6) The theistic hypothesis is probably true.

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26 We may leave open the exact nature of the ordering relation between the degrees. It will probably be anti-symmetrical and transitive, but it need not be total. In Swinburne's eyes, however, it must have a unique minimum and maximum, namely, 0 and ∞, which are comparable to all other degrees.

27 "A finite limitation cries out for an explanation of why there is just that particular limit, in a way that limitlessness does not" (Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 94).

28 Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 94.

Swinburne claims that (5) follows from (1)–(4) and (6) follows from (5) according to the *principle of simplicity*.

Whereas premise (4) is supported by much of the religious narratives and theological theory and can be accepted for the sake of analyzing the concept of simplicity, premises (1)–(3) need to be discussed. Let us begin with premise (1). Is it entirely unproblematic to conceptualize the theistic God with infinite degrees of gradual properties? Does it make sense to presuppose one single maximum value "infinite"? Could there not be several maximum values or infinite configurations of power? What if it is only possible to have one of the following two powers: to create a stone that is too heavy to be lifted, or to exist necessarily? Having the power to do both seems incoherent, as the discussion about paradoxes of omnipotence have shown.[29] Or, to take another example, one can only realize one of the two options: to create beings whose actions one cannot fully control, or to have perfect foreknowledge in the strict sense of knowing-in-advance. Postulating both seems to imply postulating the impossible, as the discussions about foreknowledge and freedom have shown.[30] Finally, might it not be the case that power can be infinitely increased, such that for every degree of power, there is a greater one? This would preclude the existence of one degree of power called "infinite".

This implies a problem for premise (2). We face the following dilemma: EITHER "infinite" is one value among others. Then, the same type of explanation is required as in the case of finite values, namely, why a magnitude is of this particular value and not of any other one.[31] Then, however, Swinburne's

29 From the abundant literature on (paradoxes of) omnipotence, see, for example, Anthony Kenny, "The Definition of Omnipotence", in *The God of the Philosophers*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), ch. 7; C. W. Savage, "The Paradox of the Stone", *The Philosophical Review* 76, no. 1 (1967); Peter T. Geach, "Omnipotence", *Philosophy* 48, no. 183 (1973); Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz, "Omnipotence", in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Lawrence Moonan, "Omnipotence", in *Philosophy of religion: A Guide to the Subject*, ed. Brian Davies (Cassell, 1998).

30 From the abundant literature on freedom and foreknowledge, see, for example, William L. Craig, *Divine foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Theism: Omniscience* (Brill, 1991); Linda T. Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1991); Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action", *The Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965); Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiæ*, V,3.

31 I do not have a full theory of possibly different infinite configurations of power. I take it as not very plausible to assume that the degrees of power are linearly ordered, let alone that they have a clearly defined maximum at a value called "infinite". In cases of finite power, we do not think that each of two concrete realizations of power are comparable (which chess piece has more power, the knight or the bishop?). A simple maximum is also implausible because the conception of omnipotence as "being able to do everything" does not work (compared with the discussions about the paradoxes of omnipotence).

most central argument for the simplicity of the theistic hypothesis would fail. OR "infinite" is not a particular value but some type of short-hand name for a complex hypothesis about transcending all finite values. In this second case, in a sense, there would be less to explain than in the case of finite degrees (i.e., one does not require an explanation for the particular degree). However, an additional *explanandum* emerges: how something could ever belong to a type of entity, persons, for which it is typical to have certain properties in finite degrees without even having one of these properties in a finite degree. If it is, for example, characteristic of persons to have certain capabilities (such as the capability to have intentions) to a certain degree, how could something be a person whose capability to have intentions is infinite in the sense that there is no particular degree to which it has those capabilities?

A second problem for premise (2) is as follows: even if the degrees of power are linearly ordered, one might still ask whether it is really simpler to be infinitely P than to be P to a certain finite degree. Swinburne's distinction of two separate questions, whether the degree is finite and what exactly its value is, suggests that an additional explanation is needed for the second question independently of whether the first is answered. However, this distinction seems misleading.[32]

A third problem for premise (2) is as follows: in cases of mesoscopic phenomena, we usually consider mesoscopic explanations simpler than microscopic explanations. Who would seek refuge in nuclear physics to explain

32 To see that, *ceteris paribus*, no additional explanation is required, consider an analogy to the everyday event of retirement. In some jobs, one retires at age 65; in others, at age 67; in others, one can go on working for as long as one can and wishes to. The difference is explained by reference to the corresponding laws and collective and individual agreements. Other than these regulations, it would be completely in vain to ask for a further explanation that retirement (usually) takes place at exactly this value (65 or 67) besides the fact that there is a compelling retirement age. The retirement age is fixed by exactly the same regulations that fix the compulsion to retire in a certain kind of job. The question of an additional explanation of the age of retirement is as little an additional explanatory question as is the question of the finitehood of a value giving the question of its value. Of course, one might ask what sense a certain regulation makes or how it was motivated. However, the complexity of the regulation is independent of both of these questions.

the behavior of a fluttering student before his exams? I think that even if the student's behavior were reducible to atomic physics, we would prefer mesoscopic explanations because of their greater simplicity. However, mesoscopic explanations use finite measures and capabilities. Persons with finite degrees of power are the only type of persons we are acquainted with, whereas the conception of infinite power requires a considerable amount of abstraction. One might take the discussion about the paradoxes of omnipotence to show that even if there is a coherent conception of omnipotence, it would require considerable effort to formulate it coherently. Does this not show that omnipotence is a much more complex concept than finite power? Do not all these arguments raise doubts regarding whether Swinburne is right in claiming that having certain properties in infinite degrees is simpler than having them in finite ones?

Finally, a last problem for premise (2): even if we admitted that it makes sense to speak about infinite degrees of properties and that infinite degrees are the simplest ones, the question would remain regarding whether one really needs all the properties in question.

Let us assume that a certain type of thing, A, is usually characterized by three independent attributes A_1, A_2, A_3. (This means that $Ax \leftrightarrow A_1x \wedge A_2x \wedge A_3x$ holds.) Then, it seems unavoidable to call the type A' that is defined only by A_1 and A_3 (i.e., for which $A'x \leftrightarrow A_1x \wedge A_3x$ holds) syntactically simpler than A. Is it so clear that this case does not threaten the simplicity of the theistic hypothesis?

Aquinas would surely understand the syntactical part of this question. He also knew the concept of an *enuntiatio simplex* or *praedicatio simplex*.[33] A simple predication is a predication of "*unum de uno*". This might be rendered in modern terminology as the predication of one predicate and one singular term. Hence, Aquinas would understand the question of whether "$A_1 \wedge A_3$" is simpler than "$A_1 \wedge A_2 \wedge A_3$". However, I know of no places where and no reasons why Aquinas would take this type of syntactic simplicity as an indicator of truth.

Are all divine predicates that make up the concept of God in classical theism needed? Given that the theistic hypothesis explains the world or certain features of the world (premise (4)), would it not be possible to construct a

33 For example, see Aristotle, 1 *Perih.* 8d&g, 2 *Perih.* 2c, *Prior Anal.* 14g, *Prior Anal.* 33c.

simpler explanation by excluding one or the other divine predicates from the definition of God?[34]

Swinburne seems to give a partial answer to this question when he claims that a person without beliefs or power would not be a person. This is partially convincing given that one holds on to premise (3), according to which one is in need of personal explanations of the world. The additional conditions to be perfectly free and the creator of the world, however, seem not to be essential properties of persons. Hence, the question is as follows: could there not be types of beings that are simpler than the theistic God that offer an equally valid explanation (for example, a demiurge-God who is unfree insofar as he *must* arrange the world; an omnipotent, omniscient, but impersonal ground of the world; or an omnipotent but completely ignorant being. On the basis of Swinburne's own criteria, all these hypotheses seem to be simpler than or at least as simple as the hypothesis of classical theism)?[35]

This problem could be avoided only by emphasizing the inner unity of the divine attributes. God is not just a person who also happens to have some additional properties A, B, and C, with respect to which one may ask whether they could be omitted to produce a simpler hypothesis. In contrast, the attributes would have to be such that they are all enforced by the concept of God, just as having beliefs, intentions and capabilities is enforced by the concept of a person.[36]

It seems that Swinburne has remarked on the problem of the inner unity of the divine attributes. In *The Existence of God,* he took pains to show "how

34 Some philosophers of religion think, for instance, that omniscience follows from omnipotence because whoever is able to bring about every possible state of affairs is also able to bring about that he knows everything there is to know — and he will do so, because knowledge broadens the range of applications of his power.

35 One must check, of course, whether the ceteris paribus condition is fulfilled in the cases mentioned in bracket above, that is, whether the alternatives can explain the explananda equally well as theism. Ad hoc, it seems possible to tell an appropriate story in almost all cases. If one really wants to justify the maximal simplicity of the theistic hypothesis, one has the burden of proof to exclude all these alternatives.

36 Swinburne's view of the inner unity of the divine properties is not unproblematic, however. When, for example, he argues that a perfectly free and omniscient being must also be perfectly good and *hence* cannot change its character (e.g., Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Clarendon Press, 1993), 212), he presupposes that there is only one possible state of infinite or perfect goodness (otherwise, even a perfectly good being could change, for example, by switching between different perfect states). This presupposition seems dubious.

the divine properties which [he has] outlined fit together" (EG 93). In his 1994 book *The Christian God,* he extended his theory of God and changed the concept of God to mean "*pure, intentional, unlimited power*". Therefore, what we have here is only one predicator, "power", that is qualified by some modifiers. I think the main reason for this adaption of the concept of God is indeed the problem of the unity of the divine attributes. A God is no longer a being with certain unconnected properties A, B, C, and D — such that one could subsequently ask how interconnected they are — but a being that has *one* (if internally structured and modified) property F.[37]

In Aquinas' doctrine of God, one can locate a similar problem with respect to the relationships between different characterizations of God, for instance, the different characterizations in the *five ways*. Aquinas develops several divine attributes in the context of these arguments. However, why is the *prima causa efficiens* identical to the *prima causa finalis*?

Let us return to Swinburne's argument and its premise (3). On closer inspection, this premise turns out to be like an uncovered cheque. Swinburne argues — convincingly, in my eyes — that explanations in the natural sciences cannot be ultimate explanations. How can it be concluded from this argument that only personal explanations can be ultimate explanations? To infer this, an additional premise is necessary, namely, that there are no more than these two types of explanations. It is almost commonplace that there are only two types of explanations: natural-scientific and personal. How could it ever be shown if it were true? Is it not at least imaginable that there are, for instance, "world-spirit explanations" that operate with a non-personal ultimate principle?

III.5 A side view of the doctrine of the Trinity

Is there something like a predetermined breaking point between theism and trinitarianism if one advocates a strong doctrine of simplicity like Aquinas

37 This indicates the unity of the divine attributes without implying that the same kind of unity was not there from the beginning. On closer inspection, one can diagnose the tendency to indicate the unity of the divine attributes already in Swinburne, *The Existence of God*. There, Swinburne makes use of the classical definition of theism, but then he introduces the following shorthand for the theistic God: "Let us call a person who is omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly free, perfectly good, and creator of all things a personal ground of being" (EG 92).

and Swinburne? Are they able to integrate trinitarianism coherently into their theistic frameworks?

Swinburne tries to show that the hypothesis of a triune God is not more complex and complicated than the original theistic hypothesis.[38] Hence, trinitarian theology has an a priori probability similar to that of theism.

One might object to Swinburne that all trinitarian theories we know (such as the trinitarian theology of Richard of St. Victor) are, in fact, quite complicated. Swinburne counters such an objection with an attempt to derive the whole trinitarian doctrine from the assumption of God's moral perfection. Moral perfection or being absolutely good is an essential predicate of God. The many elements of a trinitarian doctrine are complex implications of this basic concept. A simple hypothesis, however, is not complicated just because it has complicated implications.[39] Swinburne's move is only partially convincing. A coherent notion of simplicity must not leave "semantic" complexity out of account. It must consider not only how complicated the syntactic descriptions of objects are but also how these syntactic claims are semantically evaluated. Otherwise, one could turn every complicated explanation into a simple one just by semantically hiding the complex elements as parts of the definition of an artificial new term, say, "surprise", thus bringing the formerly complex theory into the very simple form of only postulating the existence of a "surprise". Hence, the complexity "behind" seemingly simple trinitarian terms must be taken into account, and it is no longer obvious that trinitarian theism is simple at all.

IV. CONCLUSION: A SYNOPSIS OF PARALLELS AND THEIR LIMITS

Aquinas and Swinburne talk about simplicity in their doctrines of God — Swinburne about the simplicity of theories, Aquinas about the simplicity of God. Even for Swinburne, however, the theistic hypothesis is simple because it postulates few persons (that is, one) of an allegedly simple kind. This makes the hypothesis simpl*er* than others — a comparative that does not figure into Aquinas' understanding of simplicity, according to which the exclusion of *compositio* is bivalent. According to Swinburne, God is a person of

38 Richard Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 33.
39 Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 33–34.

a simple kind because infinite degrees of properties require less explanation than finite degrees.

Swinburne takes the theistic hypothesis to be part of an ultimate explanation of reality, that is, an explanation that cannot be replaced by a more fundamental one.[40] Similarly, we have seen how Aquinas derives the doctrine of simplicity from the primordial nature of God (i.e., from his being), the first element with respect to certain order relations such as (efficient or final) causality. For Swinburne, God is the actor in an *agens* explanation of reality as a whole. For Aquinas, too, God is the *primum agens*. A theistic explanation after Swinburne cannot be explained any further; a *causa prima* after Aquinas cannot have a further cause.

Swinburne allows us to draw these parallels even further. He analogizes acting persons in personal explanations and initial conditions in natural-scientific explanations, and he deliberately calls both of them "causes".

A decisive difference, however, consists in the direction of inference. Whereas Aquinas concludes from God's being the first cause that God exists and must be simple, Swinburne concludes from God's being (an element of) an ultimate explanation and being simple that God probably exists. Schematically,

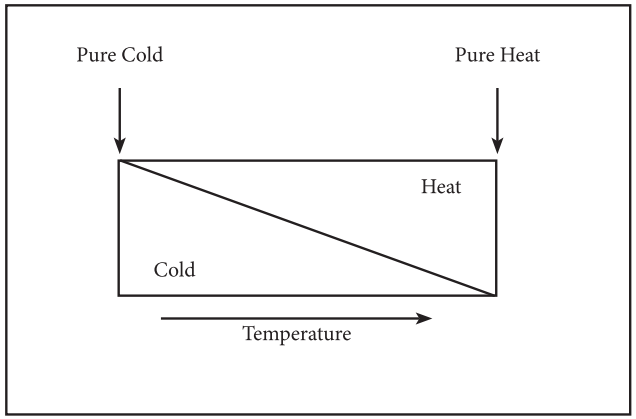
Aquinas: $\text{First(God)} \Rightarrow^* \text{Ex(God)} \wedge \text{Simple(God)}$.[41]

Swinburne: $\text{First(God)} \wedge \text{Simple(God)} \Rightarrow^* \text{Ex(God)}$.

There is, however, a special parallel to Swinburne's conception in the doctrine of God in one of Aquinas' arguments for divine simplicity, which he discusses in *Summa contra gentiles* l.I c.18. In a nutshell, the argument is about the greater nobility of the simpler. Swinburne, like Aquinas, believes that the simpler is the better / more noble (i.e., w.r.t. having a greater probability of being true). Aquinas explains his argument with the help of an analogy to fire: the "better" fire is the fire without the admixture of anything cold. Hence, Aquinas advocates a sort of dualist conception of predication: There is not only a "more or less" of heat (with which we are familiar from modern physics), but more heat corresponds to less cold and vice versa.

40 Swinburne claims to have shown that only personal explanations, not scientific explanations, can be such ultimate explanations.

41 The little star (*) indicates that the claim is not a strictly logical implication but depends on other premises and much theoretical framework that is omitted here for the sake of simplicity.



The ultimate fire, the fire of the highest perfection, is reached in the two extrema: heat without cold and cold without heat. Literally, Aquinas says,

> That, therefore, which is at the peak of nobility among all beings must be at the peak of simplicity (SCG I,18).

This resembles Swinburne's view that divine predicates are gradual in nature and, particularly, that the extrema (zero and infinity) are the simplest values. Also for Aquinas, fire without the admixture of heat is particularly simple and most perfect.

Finally, a remark about the unity of the divine attributes. For Aquinas, the divine attributes are so united that one cannot distinguish between realizations of them in God. He holds certain identity theses. For Swinburne, too, this unity is most important in holding the thesis that a being that is determined by several predicates is not necessarily less simple than a being determined by fewer attributes. As we have seen, Swinburne makes great efforts to secure the unity of the divine attributes — first by arguing for unity and later by establishing a new conception of God as "*pure, intentional, unlimited power*". Also for Swinburne, divine properties flow, so to speak, from a common source. However, this stops short of the Thomistic-Platonic identity theses. Perhaps what comes nearest to an identity thesis that is acceptable from a Swinburnean point of view is Aquinas' teaching of the identity of types of cognition: for human beings, there are different types of cognition such as *intelligentia* of principles, *scientia* of conclusions, *sapientia* of the highest good, and *consilium* or *prudentia* of what has to be done. For God, all of these are not distinct capabilities but one *simplex Dei*

cognitio (STh I,14,1, ad 2). However, Swinburne is too much of a logician if, for him, an essence could be identical to its bearer, a property could be identical to its subject, or a divine attribute could be identical to another one.

On the very last page of my paper, I need to answer the title question of my talk, *utrum simplex et verum convertantur* — whether the simple and the true are identical. According to Swinburne, they are not because they are situated on different sides of the "epistemic ditch" that separates noetic objects, such as our beliefs, from the worldly objects they are about. The *ceteris paribus* simpler theory is not simply the true theory but merely the more probably true one.

According to Aquinas, the simple and the true are not identical, either. In contrast to the transcendentals, the simple adds a further determination to the true. One can recognize this most easily by considering the transcendental "being" instead of "true". There can be a simple being and a composed being, and the composed being is no less being or being in another sense of "being" than is the simple being. (This is not as clear in case of the transcendental "true" because, prima facie, it seems to make sense to say that the true is, whereas the false is not.)

Only in the case of *God* one might say with Aquinas that simplicity and truth coincide — just because of God's simplicity. From simplicity, it follows that the different divine properties differ only conceptually but not *realiter*. This type of coincidence, however, is complex. Aquinas agrees to a doctrine of the "identity" of the transcendentals. However, he never tires of pointing to the contrast between the ways in which God is true, good, a being, and one, and the way in which creatures are so. This contrast would also be valid with respect to the simplicity of Greek atoms: their (type of) simplicity is not the simplicity of God.[42]

42 Gratulatory remark: in the second edition of the famous German encyclopedia *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (LThK), "simplicity" is explicated a way in *toto caelo* different from the explications discussed in this paper. The former Munich professor of moral theology, Richard Egenter, says (my translation), "Simplicity is ethically relevant not only as a characteristic property of primitive morality …, but it describes a moral value that is … not identical to poverty of sense, but combines chastity of nature with fullness, power, and robustness" (Robert Egenter, "Einfachheit", in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Walter Kasper and Michael Buchberger (Herder, 2009), Sp. 744-745). It is this meaning of simplicity that I presuppose when, finally, I cordially congratulate the "simple philosopher" Otto Muck on the occasion of his 85th birthday!

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