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## On Certain Antinomies of Freedom: Divine Foreknowledge and Immutability

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On Certain Antinomies of Freedom:  
Divine Foreknowledge and Immutability

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from  
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by

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# ON CERTAIN ANTINOMIES OF FREEDOM: Divine Foreknowledge and Immutability

## ABSTRACT

The objective of this inquiry is to establish the compatibility of free operation in the divine essence given that God is omniscient, and immutable. As such, this inquiry differs from conventional philosophical debate surrounding the divine attributes and creaturely freedom. Chapter I will respond to the antinomy of God's foreknowledge and divine freedom, and offers a theory for divine freedom and foreknowledge compatibilism from the theory of truthmaking. Chapter II will respond to the antinomy of divine freedom and immutability, and offers a Neo-Thomist account of freedom to explain free action in the divine essence.

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## On Certain Antinomies of Freedom: Divine Foreknowledge and Immutability

The objective of this inquiry is to establish the compatibility of free operation in the divine essence given that God is omniscient, and immutable. As such, this inquiry differs from conventional philosophical debate surrounding the divine attributes and creaturely freedom. Chapter I will respond to the antinomy of God's foreknowledge and divine freedom, and offers a theory for divine freedom and foreknowledge compatibilism from the theory of truthmaking. Chapter II will respond to the antinomy of divine freedom and immutability, and offers a Neo-Thomist account of freedom to explain free action in the divine essence.

### *i. Introduction*

“What is, what has been, what will be  
A single glance of mind discerns.  
Since He alone all things can see,  
The title of true sun He earns.”<sup>1</sup>

Such euphemizes Boethius as he begins his search for a path out of the meadow of troubles surrounding God's foreknowledge and free will. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, many theologians and religious philosophers have been persuaded to endorse determinism to rationalize God's infallible foreknowledge about future contingent truths. An even greater number has been satisfied to sacrifice free will to preserve determinism in the created order. Many have also sought to disaffirm determinism to preserve human freedom, so we do not sin by necessity. Yet not as many have been filled with worry when they considered the implications of determinism for the essence of God, and asked what such a concept might entail for divine freedom. Are God's future actions determined due to the fact that God has infallible foreknowledge about His actions? Furthermore, if we believe that God is immutable, and thereby unable to change His mind at any future time, is God free to choose His actions?

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<sup>1</sup> Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*. Book 5, ch. 2: 10-15. 1999. p. 100.

This work will consist of two chapters, the culmination of which is to establish the compatibility of divine freedom in the essence of God given that God is both all-knowing, and immutable. Chapter I will address an argument for foreknowledge incompatibilism from the fixity of the past, and offers an application of Armstrong's general theory of truthmaking to resolve the *antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge*.<sup>2</sup> Chapter II will address an argument against the compatibility of divine freedom and immutability, and offers a Neo-Thomist account of freedom to analyze the nature of free action in the divine essence.

## *ii. The Antinomy of Divine Freedom and Foreknowledge*

There are at least two primary motivations for *the antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge*. Firstly, it is held that divine omniscience entails that God must have infallible foreknowledge about all future contingent truths that occur in time. If God's foreknowledge about future contingent truths is absolute, it is argued that God already foreknows the course of His future action prior to His decision to perform a given action. Consequently, God is not free with respect to His actions, since the future outcome of any divine action is fixed in His infallible foreknowledge about the action.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, it is held that the divine essence is eternal, whereby the infallible foreknowledge of God embraces all past, present, and future times. Presupposing that God is omniscient, and that He furthermore is eternal, it is claimed that God cannot change His will, since God's infallible

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, *the antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge* refers to the view that divine freedom is precluded by God's infallible foreknowledge about His future actions. Similarly, *foreknowledge incompatibilism* refers to the view by which divine freedom and foreknowledge are incompatible.

<sup>3</sup> Richard La Croix advances this view in his article, "Omniprescience and Divine Determinism", 1976.

knowledge extends to all truths about the past, present, and future.<sup>4</sup> This argument presupposes that God must possess the ability to change His mind in order to create freely, and that it is impossible for a divine agent that is eternal to effect such a change.<sup>5</sup>

“God’s eternity implies that, just as God is without beginning or end, he is also without succession or alteration, without even the capacity for alteration in regard to his nature, his ethical attributes, knowledge, and will.”<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the divine freedom and foreknowledge incompatibilist maintains that if God possesses infallible and unchanging foreknowledge about His creative activities, then God does not create freely, but of necessity, as directed by His eternal knowledge. The view by which God’s infallible foreknowledge about future contingent truths renders His freedom of volition impossible will be referred to as *divine freedom and foreknowledge incompatibilism*. Sometimes this view will be called simply *foreknowledge incompatibilism*. By contrast, the view by which divine freedom and foreknowledge are compatible in the divine essence will be called *foreknowledge compatibilism*. Given that arguments for divine freedom and foreknowledge incompatibilism have been gaining popularity in recent literature, chapter I will offer an alternative for foreknowledge compatibilism from the general theory of truthmaking. Chapter II will offer a Neo-Thomist analysis of divine freedom, and immutability.

### *iii. The Antinomy of Divine Freedom and Immutability*

The *doctrine of divine immutability* belongs to a cluster of doctrines in classical theism that has its roots in the idea that God is in a sense “perfect essence”.<sup>7</sup> This is the idea that God has

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<sup>4</sup> Isaac Dorner presents this view in his work, *Divine Immutability*. 1994. p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Tomis Kapitan advances this view in his article, “Can God Make Up His Mind?”, 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 102.

<sup>7</sup> The *doctrine of divine immutability* refers to the view that God does not change. Among medieval philosophers, St. Augustine, Boethius, St. Anselm, St. Aquinas, and Duns Scotus held this view.

perfect knowledge, which is to say that God is omniscient, that God has perfect ability or power, which means that God is omnipotent, that God is perfect goodness or omnibenevolent, that God is eternal, and finally, that God is immutable, which is to say that God cannot change. Indeed, if we presuppose that God has all of these perfections as stated above, it appears that God cannot change, because any change in a perfect agent would seem to indicate that the agent is deficient in some perfection. In *the City of God*, St. Augustine says,

“This I do know; that the nature of God cannot be deficient, at any time, anywhere, in any respect, while things which were made from nothing are capable of deficiency.”<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, if God’s inability to change is characterized in such a way that God does not change His will, then there arises a worry that this makes it impossible for God to perform a free action. After all, if God’s will is immutable, then God cannot change His will, and if God can change His will, then God’s will is not immutable. Consequently, divine immutability seems to entail that God cannot effect His will otherwise than He does. This is also known as *the antinomy of divine freedom and immutability*, which refers to the view that divine freedom is precluded by God’s inability to do anything about His future actions, because God is immutable.<sup>9</sup> Given that this antinomy is widely endorsed by modern philosophers, chapter II will seek to reconcile the two attributes via the doctrine of God as ‘pure act’, and the *virtual distinction* between potency and act as found in Aquinas’ theology.

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<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII. 1984. p. 480.

<sup>9</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 351-354.

## Chapter 1: The Antinomy of Divine Freedom and Foreknowledge

*Introduction.*

This chapter addresses an argument against the compatibility of divine freedom and foreknowledge from the *fixity of divine belief*, which states that God's essential omniscience precludes Him from freely effecting His will in creation. Part I will present *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism*, and Part II will evaluate the hard-soft fact distinction from Ockhamism as a means to establish divine freedom and foreknowledge compatibilism, concluding that this solution is insufficient. Part III will offer a solution to the *antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge* by appealing to Armstrong's theory of truthmaking. It will be argued that since objects of God's beliefs lack truthmakers about the past – and the objects of God's forebelief are not made true in virtue of a mere belief – God's beliefs are *soft truths* about the past, and not subject to the fixity of the past. Finally, Part IV seeks to make the truthmaker principle compatible with presentism, and offers a haecceity by which the presentist may ground truths about the past.

1. I. *The Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism and the Fixity of Divine Belief*

Perhaps the most pervasive argument against divine freedom and foreknowledge compatibilism arises from the principle of *the fixity of divine belief*. Essentially, arguments for foreknowledge incompatibilism that befall this category appeal to three intuitions: (1) The fixity of the past (PFP), which states that the past is fixed, that it cannot be causally affected, and that it is outside of anyone's power to change,<sup>10</sup> (2) that God is omniscient, and has perfect foreknowledge about all states of the world in all possible worlds, and (3) that essential

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<sup>10</sup> The principle of the *fixity of the past* has its origin in Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 19a: 20-25. p. 30.

omniscience together with PFP entails *fixity of divine belief* (FDB), which states that all of God's beliefs are fixed, and incapable of being otherwise than they are at any future time.

Here, it will be necessary to make explicit what is meant by essential omniscience. In the *Summa Theologica*, St. Aquinas tells us that "in God there exists the most perfect knowledge".<sup>11</sup> This means that an omniscient God must be all-knowing, for otherwise He would be lacking in knowledge, and such knowledge would not be perfect knowledge. Secondly, since omniscience is essential to God, it is not possible for God to exist and to forego His omniscience in any possible world. This implies that divine omniscience is essential to God in every possible world in which God exists.<sup>12</sup> It follows from this that God necessarily knows all truths, and no falsehoods.

From the aforementioned considerations, the argument for foreknowledge incompatibilism states that God does not have the power to do anything about His future action *A* at a future time  $T_2$ , because His belief at a past time  $T_1$  (relative to  $T_2$ ) regarding His future action *A* at  $T_2$  is fixed at  $T_1$ . The argument presupposes an essentially omniscient God who knows all true propositions in all possible worlds, and who holds only true beliefs. It also assumes a modality of time where  $T_1$  is some time earlier than  $T_2$ . *The Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism* is hereby formulated as follows.<sup>13</sup>

(P1) God is essentially omniscient and existed at  $T_1$ .

Given the above characterization of essential omniscience, it follows that

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<sup>11</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1920. Q, 14, A. 1.

<sup>12</sup> This characterization of essential omniscience is promoted by Edward R. Wierenga in his work *On The Nature of God*. 1989. pp. 36-58.

<sup>13</sup> This argument parallel to Nelson Pike's argument for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. See Nelson Pike, 1965. p. 34.

(P2) God foreknew at the beginning of time at  $T_1$  that A ‘He will create the dinosaurs’ at  $T_2$ .

(P3) God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ .

(P4) If (P3) is true and God is free not to create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ , then it is in God’s power to perform an action such that, if He were to do it, either

- i) God would have held a different belief at  $T_1$ , or
- ii) God would have held a false belief at  $T_1$ .

(P5) It is not in God’s power to perform an action such that, if He were to do it,

- i) God would have held a different belief at  $T_1$ , or
- ii) God would have held a false belief at  $T_1$ .

Therefore,

(P6) God is not free to not to create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ .

Perhaps the most critical aspect of this argument in need of recognition is that it has as one of its pillars the principle of *the fixity of the past* (PFP). Given that PFP is necessary to support (P5) of the argument, let us give it the following definition.

PFP: An agent  $S$  can (at time  $T$  in world  $P$ ) freely do  $a$  at  $T$  only if there is a possible world  $P^*$  with the same past up to  $T$  in which  $S$  does  $a$  at  $T$ .<sup>14</sup>

Presupposing that the fixity of the past is true for God’s past beliefs, then this fact together with essential omniscience entails the *fixity of divine belief* (FDB), which is to say that divine

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<sup>14</sup> This definition was proposed to me in a private conversation with Professor Philip Swenson, who has been advising this project.

foreknowledge is fixed, and that it cannot be changed even by an omnipotent being. In other words, supposing (by PFP) that God's foreknowledge about  $T_1$  is fixed at  $T$  for God, and that God's acts of willing involve temporal indexicals  $(T, T_1)$ , then God cannot change his mind at a future time at  $T_1$ , for His decision to act is fixed in the past time at  $T$ . Consequently, it is argued that God's infallible foreknowledge is incompatible with His freedom to do otherwise. Section I. II will present a classical solution to this problem by William of Ockham.

### 1. II. *Fixity of the Past and the Hard-Soft Fact Distinction*

In *Philosophy of Religion*, William Rowe considers a solution to the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom that owes its origin to 'the Invincible Doctor', William of Ockham.<sup>15</sup> Following Ockham, Rowe distinguishes between two kinds of facts about the past: some that are *simply* about the past, and others that are *not simply* about the past.<sup>16</sup> According to Rowe, only such propositions that are *simply* about the past are now necessary, because their past is now necessary, and cannot be changed. Consider, for instance, the proposition  $f_1$ : 'Socrates drinks poison in 399 BC.' Given that  $f_1$  is *simply* about the past, it expresses a hard fact about the past. It does not depend on any future state of affairs for its truth or falsity, for its truth value is fixed in the past. Such propositions, it can be argued, are fixed by the PFP, and are thus called *hard facts* about the past.

Conversely, other propositions that are not fixed in the past are *not simply* about the past. Consider, for instance, the proposition  $f_2$ : 'Socrates drank poison 2343 years before the Invasion

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<sup>15</sup> William Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion*, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

of Normandy in 1944 AD.’ While  $f_2$  expresses a fact about the past, it is *not simply* about the past. Rather it is a fact in virtue of events which occur in the future.<sup>17</sup> Since  $f_2$  implies dependence on some time in the future relative to Socrates’ drinking poison in 399 BC, we can say that  $f_2$  is *not simply* about the past. According to Rowe, facts that are *not simply* about the past are called *soft facts* about the past. Such facts, it can be argued, are not fixed by the PFP, since they are *not simply* about the past. Rowe writes:

“Our conviction that the past is beyond our power to affect is certainly true, so far as facts which are simply about the past are concerned. Facts which are about the past, but not simply about the past may not, however, be beyond our power to affect.”<sup>18</sup>

In his article *On Ockham’s Way Out*, Alvin Plantinga applies the concept of *accidental necessity* to explicate the distinction between hard and soft facts.<sup>19</sup> According to Plantinga, hard facts are accidentally necessary because they were once contingent, but became necessary *per accidens* at some point in the past.<sup>20</sup> When a proposition is accidentally necessary, it is beyond anyone’s power to restore its contingency. Propositions such as  $(f_1)$  are called *accidentally necessary* because prior to 399 BC it was not yet necessary that Socrates would drink poison in 399 BC. However, the fact that Socrates *did* drink poison in 399 BC makes the proposition now accidentally necessary.

The concept of accidental necessity owes its origin to William of Ockham, who says that for every accidentally necessary proposition about the present there is corresponding to it an accidentally necessary proposition about the past.<sup>21</sup> For example, if it is true now to say that

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Fischer, 1989. p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> William Rowe, 1978. p. 164.

<sup>19</sup> Alvin Plantinga, 1986. p. 244.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 245.

<sup>21</sup> William of Ockham, 1969. p. 89.

‘Socrates drinks poison’, and it is now accidentally necessary, then to say that ‘Socrates drank poison’ is also accidentally necessary, for it will always be true hereafter.”<sup>22</sup> By contrast, propositions about the past that lack an accidentally necessary proposition about the present, because they remain contingent on some time in the future are not necessary *per accidens*. They lack the property of accidental necessity because they are *not simply* about the past, so their necessity is not fixed in the ‘hard’ past by the principle of the fixity of the past (PFP).

Fixity of the Past (PFP): An agent *S* can (at time *T* in world *P*) do *a* at *T* only if there is a possible world *P\** with the same past up to *T* in which *S* does *a* at *T*.

By the PFP, then, hard facts about the past are accidentally necessary because there is no possible world *P\** in which their occurrence is contingent on some other time in the past. For instance, the proposition *P<sub>1</sub>*: ‘James spilled coffee at 9 am’ was ontologically contingent at 8 am, but at 9 am and at any time thereafter, it expresses a hard fact that is accidentally necessary, and will be necessary thereafter in every possible world in which *P<sub>1</sub>* is true. Conversely, soft facts about the past are not bound by the PFP since they are ontologically contingent in at least some possible world. Consider, for instance, the proposition *P<sub>2</sub>*: ‘It was true at 8 am that James would spill his coffee this morning at 9 am’. By the PFP, (*P<sub>2</sub>*) expresses a soft fact about the past because *there is* a possible world *P\** in which it was still in James’ power at 8 am to so act that coffee would not have been spilled at 9 am.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 113.

While the *fixity of the past* is a time-honored principle that holds true for all past events that have occurred in time, and has been accepted since Aristotle,<sup>23</sup> it is not so apparent that the foreknowledge incompatibilist is at liberty to apply it with equal force to God's beliefs. Indeed, many philosophers hold that God's beliefs about the past are only *soft facts* about the past.<sup>24</sup> Section II. I. will consider this solution as a response to the antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge.

### 1. II. I. *God's Beliefs as Soft Facts about the Past*

Since *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism* entails that God's knowledge about the future is fixed in the past by the *principle of fixity of the past* (PFP), and it is a worry of Ockhamism that the argument may be attributing PFP to facts that are *not strictly* about the past, it is now necessary to consider whether God's beliefs about the past are legitimately 'hard facts' about the past. In her article *Is the Existence of God a 'Hard' Fact?*, Marilyn Adams argues that God's existence is a soft fact about the past.<sup>25</sup> Even though Adams is not directly concerned with the intrinsic nature of God's beliefs, her argument is nevertheless relevant to the present inquiry if we presuppose that God's beliefs are not hard facts about the past, because God's existence in itself is a soft fact about the past.<sup>26</sup> In her analysis of the hard-soft fact distinction, Adams introduces the following *criterion* (C) for "hard" facts that are strictly about the past.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Aristotle characterizes the necessity of the past in *De Interpretatione*: "What is, necessarily is when it is; and what is not, necessarily is not when it is not," and "for everything that was, when it was it was necessary that it was." See: Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 9.25. 1991. p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Among these philosophers are Alvin Plantinga, *On Ockham's Way Out*, Marilyn Adams, *Is the Existence of God a Hard Fact*, and John Turk Saunders, "Of God and Freedom" in *Philosophical Review*, vol. 75, no. 1. Apr. 1966. pp. 219-25.

<sup>25</sup> Marilyn Adams, 1989.

<sup>26</sup> I have taken the liberty to assume that a 'soft' God does not hold 'hard' beliefs.

<sup>27</sup> Marilyn Adams, 1989.

C: “Statement  $p$  expresses a ‘hard’ fact about a time  $t$ ” = df. “ $p$  is not at least in part about any time future relative to  $t$ .”<sup>28</sup>

It ought to be noted that there are many ways to interpret Adams’ *criterion*. Only one of these interpretations – the entailment interpretation – will be addressed here.<sup>29</sup> On entailment interpretation, a proposition is a “hard” fact about the past only if it does not entail any time about the future.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, on entailment interpretation, *the criterion* renders any proposition that entails some time about the future a ‘soft’ fact about the past. According to Adams, the proposition that ‘God exists’ entails some truth about the past as well as the future, because if the proposition that ‘God exists’ is a true proposition about some time in the past, then it is also true about some time in the future.<sup>31</sup> This follows because God is everlasting, which means that God’s existence cannot be restricted to any past or future times.<sup>32</sup> Since the proposition that ‘God exists’ entails some time about the future when God exists, therefore, Adams maintains that God’s existence is a soft fact about the past.

Now, consider premise (P3) of *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism*.

(P3) God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ .

By *the criterion* (C), and relative to the actual world, one might contend that (P3) expresses a hard fact about the past. Since the proposition does not entail any future time relative to  $T_2$ , to say that ‘*God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ’ expresses a hard fact about the past.<sup>33</sup> Conversely, if

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Fischer points out that there are at least two possible interpretations of Adams’ argument: the entailment and counterfactual interpretations. For a discussion on the counterfactual interpretation, see: Fischer, 1989. pp. 86-96.

<sup>30</sup> Here: I have taken entailment to mean that if a proposition is true about the past, then some other proposition is true about the future in virtue of the proposition that is true about the past.

<sup>31</sup> Marilyn Adams, 1989. p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> By everlastingness, Adams simply means that God exists at all past, present, and future times. Marilyn Adams, 1989. p. 76.

<sup>33</sup> I have assumed that  $T_2$  expresses a fact about the past, as it does in at least one possible world.

(P3) is considered a fact about the past relative to God, it would express a soft fact about the past. Since there is a time when God exists that precedes the creation of the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ , one can contend that (P3) entails a time about the past relative to  $T_2$ . Since God also exists at a time that is later than  $T_2$  (since God exists at all times), (P3) also entails a time about the future relative to  $T_2$ . Consequently, this characterization of divine everlastingness along with *the criterion* would allow us to say that (P3) is a soft fact about the past.

Now, consider (P2) of *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism*.

(P2) God foreknew a million years ago at  $T_1$  that A ‘He will create the dinosaurs’ at  $T_2$ .

By Adams’ *criterion*, (P2) does not state a hard fact about ‘*God foreknew a million years ago at  $T_1$* ’, because it entails something about a future time relative to  $T_1$ , that is  $T_2$ , when it is actually the case that ‘*He will create the dinosaurs.*’ Since (P2) is a proposition that is about the past as well as the future (relative to  $T_1$ ), it is *not strictly* about the past. Therefore, it can be said that (P2) expresses a soft fact about the past. Furthermore, if God’s foreknowledge pertains to soft facts about the past, and only facts that are *strictly* about the past are subject to the principle of *the fixity of the past* (PFP), it follows that God’s beliefs are not subject to *the fixity of the past*. Since knowledge in God is everlasting, His beliefs entail something about the future. It follows that God’s beliefs are soft facts about the past. Consequently, one cannot infer that

(P5) ‘It is not in God’s power to perform an action such that, if He were to do it,  
i) God would have held a different belief at  $T_1$ , or ii) God would have held  
a false belief at  $T_1$ .’

This means that God's beliefs are not accidentally necessary, and that God can will His actions freely if one can consistently hold that God's beliefs are soft. Conversely, if God's beliefs are not soft facts about the past due to some internal or external restraint, then anything God wills or believes is subject to accidental necessity. The following section (II. II) will look at some critical objections to the idea that God's beliefs are soft.

### 1. II. II. *Objections to God's Beliefs as Soft Facts about the Past*

In *Foreknowledge and Freedom*, Fischer argues that Adams' entailment criterion is false.<sup>34</sup> According to Fischer, the most pressing worry concerning entailment is that it seems impossible to find any hard fact about the past that would not entail some fact about the future.<sup>35</sup> For instance, the premise (P3) '*God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ' entails (P\*) '*It will be true at  $T_3$  that God created the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* '. Since (P\*) is at least partially about some future time relative to  $T_2$ , it is a soft fact about the past. However, (P3) is a hard fact about the past. Since (P\*) is true if (P3) is true, (P\*) ought to be read as a hard fact about the past in order for Adams' *criterion* to hold. Since (P\*) is not a hard fact about the past, however, the entailment criterion fails.

In Adams' favor, one might contend that if the existence of God is a soft fact about the past, then (P3) would not be a hard fact about the past. According to Adams, the argument from the doctrine of essential everlastingness states that,

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<sup>34</sup> Fischer, 1989. p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 91.

“The existence of  $x$  is a soft fact about a time  $T$ ” = df. “ $x$  is everlasting”  
and “ $x$  is omniscient” is at least in part about a time  $T'$  that is later than  $T$ .<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, if God is everlasting and omniscient, and it is granted that God’s existence entails some future time relative to  $T_2$ , then (P3) cannot be a hard fact about the past. According to the *criterion*, then, both (P3) and (P\*) would be soft facts about the past, because they both entail some future time relative to  $T_2$ . Conversely, if one trades God for ‘Adam’, who is neither everlasting nor omniscient, and rewrites (P3) as ‘*Adam creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ’, and (P\*) as ‘*It will be true at  $T_3$  that Adam creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ’, then one might accept as an outcome of the *criterion* that (P3) is a hard fact about the past while (P\*) clearly is not. Consequently, (P3) is not a hard fact about the past. Evidently, since every proposition about the past entails some proposition about the future, it follows that there are no hard facts about the past if Adams’ *criterion* holds under entailment.<sup>37</sup> This is a serious worry for Adams’ thesis, which means that it can succeed only if it can be demonstrated that the entailment interpretation is inapplicable to the thesis.

Given the difficulties that are involved in determining the specific criteria that are necessary for a proposition to be strictly about the past, especially when all propositions that appear to be strictly about the past entail some proposition about the future, this solution may fail to inspire most proponents of foreknowledge incompatibilism. Furthermore, even if we are content to think that the hard-soft fact distinction resolves *the argument for foreknowledge incompatibilism*, Ockhamism does not provide a clear method for distinguishing hard facts from soft facts.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Marilyn Adams, 1998. p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> Alvin Plantinga. 1986. p. 248.

<sup>38</sup> Most philosophers that are friendly to the hard-soft fact distinction, including Alvin Plantinga, agree that the distinction between hard facts and soft facts about the past is not a straightforward one. See: Plantinga, 1986.

Consequently, section III aspires to produce a more straight-forward solution to distinguish facts that are fixed in the past from those that may yet be otherwise. This solution utilizes Armstrong's general theory of truthmaking to procure a response to the antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge, while working out a distinction between *hard truths* and *soft truths* about the past. It will suggest that true propositions about God's beliefs are only *soft truths* about the past in so far as they lack a truthmaker – the real-life existence of an entity in virtue of which the contents of God's beliefs are made true about the past.

### 1. III. *Truthmakers for Divine Freedom and Foreknowledge Compatibilism*

In *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge*, Linda Zagzebski states that the truth of a proposition depends on “the actuality of something that settles its truth”, and adds that the latter is necessary for something to be fixed in the past, and to be incapable of being otherwise.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Ockham says that “the truth of a proposition at all times is settled by something real or actual at some time or another”.<sup>40</sup> Yet what precisely does Ockham mean when he refers to “something real or actual”, and how are such truths fixed in the past? This section will introduce the concept of a Truthmaker - the real-life existence of an entity in virtue of which something is true - to explain the nature of truths that are fixed in the past, and that cannot be otherwise.

The ultimate goal of this chapter is to resolve the antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge by showing that God's beliefs are not ‘hard truths’ about the past, because they do not have truthmakers in the past. This means that God's creative activities are not subject to the

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<sup>39</sup> Linda Zagzebski. 1991. p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> William of Ockham cited in Zagzebski. 1991. p. 27.

fixity of the past merely *in virtue of* God's foreknowledge about them, because propositions about God's beliefs need a truthmaker – the real-life existence of an entity in virtue of which they are made true – in order to be subject to the fixity of the past, and to lack the capacity of being otherwise. In so far as propositions about the objects of God's foreknowledge presently lack a truthmaker in virtue of which the contents of God's foreknowledge are made true – God's creative activities are not fixed in the past, or incapable of being otherwise. Consequently, God is able to freely will His creation, until He has willed it.

Let us begin by considering the general theory of truthmaking. In *Truth and Truthmakers*, Armstrong argues that truth is grounded in being.<sup>41</sup> In simple terms, this means that the real-world existence of an entity in virtue of which a proposition is true is necessary to make a proposition true.<sup>42</sup> A *truthmaker*, then, is an entity in virtue of which a particular claim or a proposition is true. Additionally, Armstrong maintains that truthmakers need *truthbearers*, that is, the bearers of the predicates 'true' and 'false' that eventually make something either true or false. The original concept of a truthmaker is expounded in Aristotle's *Categories*:

“If there is a man, the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, and reciprocally – since if the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, there is a man. And whereas the true statement is in no way the cause of the actual thing's existence, the actual thing does seem in some way the cause of the statement's being true: it is because the actual thing exists or does not exist that the statement is called true or false.”<sup>43</sup>

Armstrong takes Aristotle to mean that a proposition *P* expresses a truth about the past *only if* there is some entity in the past in virtue of which *P* is true.<sup>44</sup> In *Why Truthmakers*, Rodriguez-

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<sup>41</sup> David Armstrong, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *Categories*. 1991. p. 22

<sup>44</sup> David Armstrong, 2004. p. 17.

Pereyra defends this concept and calls it the *truthmaker principle* (TM).<sup>45</sup> This principle is based on the plausible notion that the truth of a proposition is a function of reality, or some portion of it.

(TM) Necessarily, if (*p*) is true, then there is some entity in virtue of which it is true.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, the *truthmaker principle* shows that if a proposition is a function of reality, then it captures some entity in virtue of which it is true. Conversely, the *truthmaker principle* also shows that if there exists no entity in virtue of which a proposition is true, it fails to express a truth.<sup>47</sup> Many truthmaker theorists hold truthmakers to be states of affairs that consist of a particular, a property of a particular, or a relation that holds between two or more particulars.<sup>48</sup> For instance, a proposition that '*the rose is red*' is said to be true in virtue of the state of affairs consisting of some particular (rose), and the rose's having the property of being red.<sup>49</sup> States of affairs, then, are non-mereological complex entities that serve as truthmakers for merely verbal propositions.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, the main motivation behind the truthmaker principle is that truth is *grounded*. If a given proposition is true, it is true in virtue of an entity that is external to the proposition and that *grounds* the truth of the proposition in being. As Rodriguez-Pereyra describes

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<sup>45</sup> Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2005. p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> Many questions can reasonably be raised regarding TM, including how this principle accommodates negative existentials, the instantiation of property instances without property particulars, as well as what kinds of entities can serve as truthmakers. Given the limited scope of this thesis, it would be impossible to address all of these particularities here. Whether God's beliefs can serve as Truthmakers will be discussed in a later part in this chapter.

<sup>48</sup> Armstrong, 1997. p. 113.

<sup>49</sup> Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2006. p. 186.

<sup>50</sup> It ought to be noted that not all propositions need states of affairs as truthmakers. A proposition that predicates something essential of a particular need only a particular as its truthmaker. 'Socrates exists' is generally considered to be such a proposition, where Socrates alone is necessary to establish the truth of the proposition. See: Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2006. p. 192.

it, “what reality is like is anterior to the truth of the proposition, it gives rise to the truth of the proposition and thereby accounts for it.”<sup>51</sup> This is another way of saying that propositions must in a sense *quantify over* the truthmakers that make them true. A state of affairs such as ‘grass is green’, for instance, is not a truthmaker for the proposition that ‘*the rose is red*’. It is not *in virtue of* the grass being green that the proposition ‘*the rose is red*’ is either true or false. Even though it may well be the case that two propositions ‘*the rose is red*’ and ‘*grass is green*’ are both true, nothing about the proposition that ‘*grass is green*’ quantifies over the truthmaker for the proposition that ‘*the rose is red*’. For purposes of clarity, this expresses the idea that true propositions are just about the entities that make them true. Consequently, the following *truthmaker constraint* may be proposed to supplement the *truthmaker principle*.

(TM-C) For any entity  $x$  and a proposition  $p$ , where both  $x$  and  $p$  exist,  $x$  is a truthmaker for  $p$  only if  $p$  is about  $x$  and it is only in virtue of  $x$  that  $p$  is true.<sup>52</sup>

In light of TM and TM-C, the following section III. I. will reconcile the antinomy of divine freedom and foreknowledge by showing that God’s infallible foreknowledge poses no threat to God’s creative freedom, because objects of God’s foreknowledge in creation need a truthmaker – the real-life existence of an entity – in virtue of which their existence is grounded in being.

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<sup>51</sup> Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2005. p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> This principle is modelled after Aaron Griffith’s principle of truthmaking for contingent negative truths. See: Griffith, 2015. p. 326.

### 1. III. I. *Foreknowledge Compatibilism and the Hard-Soft Truth Distinction*

Let us begin by revisiting *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism*, and by defining more carefully the types of past action that threaten God's divine agency according to this argument. Since *a)* God's beliefs cannot contradict what He knows to be true, and *b)* God had infallible foreknowledge at  $T_1$  about His future action at  $T_2$ , and *c)* PFP entails that God's belief about  $T_2$  at  $T_1$  is fixed at  $T_1$ , the argument holds that no future choice is ever possible for God, who always knows how He will act before He acts. Consequently, a key element to the success of *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism* is the principle of fixity of the past (PFP), and specifically, its applicability to God's beliefs. As has been shown, if the PFP is applicable to God's beliefs, then God's past beliefs are fixed, unalterable, and incapable of being otherwise than they are at any future time. Let us therefore consider *the Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism* in light of the *truthmaker principle*. Consider (P2).

(P2) God foreknew at the beginning of time at  $T_1$  that A 'He will create the dinosaurs' at  $T_2$ .

It is now necessary to evaluate whether premise (P2) has a truthmaker by which its truth is grounded in being. By the *truthmaker principle*, if (P2) does not capture a truthmaker about  $T_2$  at  $T_1$ , then (P2) would not express a truth about  $T_2$  at  $T_1$ . Assuredly, since it is not yet the case at  $T_1$  that God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ , the proposition that '*God foreknew at  $T_1$  that He will create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ' does not establish the truth of the proposition that '*God will create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* '. For, even though God foreknew at  $T_1$  that He would create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ , the truth of the proposition that '*God will create the dinosaurs*' was not grounded in being at  $T_1$ , but only at  $T_2$ .

Perhaps a conceivable worry of the *truthmaker principle*, and more specifically its applicability to states of affairs as truthmakers is the difficulty in limiting their scope.<sup>53</sup> In *The World of States of Affairs*, David Armstrong postulates a totality state of affairs, which consists in all that there is.<sup>54</sup> Since the divine essence encompasses all truths about the past, present, and future, there is a totality state of affairs for God's knowledge in virtue of which all true propositions, including the proposition that '*God will create the dinosaurs*' is grounded in being. Since God's knowledge at  $T_1$  contains the creation of the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ , and God's knowledge encompasses the totality state for all true propositions, God's knowledge at  $T_1$  makes it true that He would create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ . Since not every entity is sufficient to ground the truth of every proposition, however, it is necessary to introduce the *truthmaker constraint* (TM-C).

(TM-C) For any entity  $x$  and a proposition  $p$ , where both  $x$  and  $p$  exist,  $x$  is a truthmaker for  $p$  only if  $p$  is about  $x$  and it is only in virtue of  $x$  that  $p$  is true.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, according to TM-C, an entity  $x$  is a truthmaker for a proposition  $p$  only if  $p$  is about  $x$  and  $p$  is true *in virtue of*  $x$ . For instance, even though it is the case that dinosaurs existed roughly 200 m.y.a and that crocodiles exist at present, the proposition that '*Dinosaurs existed roughly 200 m.y.a*' is not made true in virtue of the existence of crocodiles at present. This is not only because there are no truthmaking relata between the real-life existence of dinosaurs and

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<sup>53</sup> A new version of truthmaking for presentism, called 'thisness presentism' will be addressed in a later part of this chapter. The theory could be beneficial for truthmaker theorists, since it dispenses with states of affairs, and postulates haecceities as truthmakers.

<sup>54</sup> Armstrong's motivation for postulating the totality state of affairs is to ground negative existential truths. If there is a totality state of affairs for the world, then negative existentials are made true in virtue of there not existing any other states of affairs. See: Armstrong, 1997. p. 196-201, and 2004. p. 53-63.

<sup>55</sup> This principle is modelled after Aaron Griffith's principle of truthmaking for contingent negative truths. See: Griffith, 2015. p. 326.

the real-life existence of crocodiles (although some may posit macroevolutionary changes between the two species), but because propositions about dinosaurs are made true by dinosaurs, not crocodiles.

This is similarly the case for God's beliefs, and God's creative activities. Consider, again, (P2). Reasonably, one may hold that (P2) is a true proposition about God's foreknowledge at  $T_1$ . However, by the *truthmaker constraint*, the proposition that 'God foreknows at  $T_1$ ' is not a truthmaker for the proposition that 'God creates at  $T_2$ '. This follows, because strictly speaking, propositions about God's foreknowledge are made true in virtue of God's foreknowledge about them, whereas propositions about God's creative activities are made true not in virtue of God's foreknowledge about them, but in virtue of God's creative activities.

Furthermore, even though God's foreknowledge at  $T_1$  is about His act of creation at  $T_2$ , the *truthmaker constraint* requires that true propositions are just about the entities that make them true. This means that propositions affirming the actual instantiation of objects of God's knowledge are made true not in virtue of a mere belief about them, but in virtue of the real-life existence of an entity that grounds the objects of God's knowledge in an extra-mental realm that is distinct from the realm of mere beliefs. Consequently, propositions about God's future creative activities need a truthmaker that differs from mere beliefs about such activities.<sup>56</sup> In an absence of the real-life existence of an entity that would ground the objects of God's knowledge in some extra-mental reality, however, (P2) fails to express a truth about 'God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ ' at  $T_1$ . Rather, (P2) merely expresses a truth about the contents of God's knowledge at  $T_1$ .

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<sup>56</sup> Armstrong has an argument that beliefs are not the sort of entities that can make anything either true or false. One might say, however, that it can be true or false whether an agent believes something to be the case, or not. Since God believes at  $T_1$  that He will create at  $T_2$ , God's belief about  $T_2$  is true in virtue of God's belief at  $T_1$ . See: Armstrong, 1997. p. 131.

In other words, since the proposition that ‘God foreknows at  $T_1$ ’ is not about the state of affairs that ‘God creates at  $T_2$ ’, God’s creation of the dinosaurs at  $T_2$  does not have a truthmaker about the past at  $T_1$ . Hence, one can infer that God’s creative activity at  $T_2$  is not subject to the *fixity of the past* at  $T_1$ . Consequently, (P2) is not a ‘hard truth’ about the past. One might also say that because it has a truthmaker at some future time ( $T_2$ ) relative to  $T_1$ , that it is a *soft truth* about the past. Unlike *soft truths* that are true in virtue of entities that exist at future times, *hard truths* are true in virtue of entities whose truths are fixed in the past. The following principle may be offered for characterizing hard truths about the past given the *truthmaker principle*.

(TM-HT) “Proposition  $P$  expresses a hard truth about a time  $T$ ” = df. “ $P$  specifies an entity  $E$  that bears a predicate  $A$  at  $T$  in virtue of which  $P$  is true at  $T$ .”

In other words, by (TM-HT), propositions that are about some future time  $T_1$  fail to express a *hard truth* about some time  $T$  that is earlier than  $T_1$ , because there is no entity at  $T$  that bears a property  $A$  in virtue of which the proposition is made true at a later time  $T_1$ . Consider, for instance, a proposition such as  $f_4$ : ‘God believes in 4000 BC that Socrates will drink poison in 399 BC’. By (TM-HT),  $f_4$  does not express a hard truth about 399 BC in 4000 BC, because it is not yet the case in 4000 BC that there is an entity, Socrates, and that he bears the predicate of ‘drinking poison in 399 BC’, which is later than 4000 BC. Consequently, while the proposition ‘God believes in 4000 BC that Socrates will drink poison’ is a hard truth about God’s belief in 4000 BC, it is not a hard truth about ‘Socrates drinks poison in 399 BC’, because it is not yet true of Socrates that he is drinking poison in 4000 BC.

Conversely,  $f_4$  does express a hard truth about God’s belief in 4000 BC, because it is true in 4000 BC that God holds the belief. As has been stated, however, the *truthmaker constraint*

requires that objects of God's belief are made true not in virtue of a mere belief, but in virtue of the real-life existence of an entity that grounds the object of God's belief in extra-mental reality. In an absence of the real-life existence of an entity that would ground the object of God's belief in some extra-mental reality in 4000 BC, however,  $f_4$  fails to express a hard truth about the proposition that 'Socrates drinks poison', because it fails to specify an entity (Socrates) that bears the predicate (drinking poison) in virtue of which the proposition is true.

Conversely, even though  $f_4$  does not have a truthmaker about 399 BC in 4000 BC, the proposition that 'Socrates drinks poison at 399 BC' expresses a truth about the actual world. Since 'Socrates drinks poison in 399 BC' has a truthmaker at some future time relative to 4000 BC,  $f_4$  can be said to express a *soft truth* about 399 BC in 4000 BC that Socrates would drink poison.<sup>57</sup> This principle applies equivalently to God's intrinsic beliefs. Thus, even though '*God foreknows at  $T_1$  that He will create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ' (P2), it is a *soft truth* about  $T_1$  that 'God will create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ '. It is a *soft truth* because the proposition in question has a truthmaker in virtue of which it becomes true; however, the truthmaker exists at some future time relative to  $T_1$ . The following definition will be useful in characterizing soft truths:

(TM-ST) "Proposition  $P$  expresses a soft truth about a time  $T$ " = df. " $P$  specifies an entity  $E$  that bears a predicate  $A$  at some future time relative to  $T$  in virtue of which  $P$  is true at  $T$ ."

It ought to be noted here that *soft truths* are contingent truths, since they depend upon the instantiation of some entity that exists in the future in virtue of which they are made true. This

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<sup>57</sup> In *Truth and Truthmakers*, Armstrong talks about truths of mere possibility by which he means truths about some future time. 'Soft truths' are ontologically stronger than Armstrong's *truths of mere possibility*, however, because future truths do have truthmakers; there is a plane of existence in which they are true even though we may not yet be able to say what specifically these truthmakers are in the present. For truths of 'mere possibility', see: Armstrong, 2004. p. 91-94.

distinguishes *soft truths* from *hard truths* that are fixed in the past. By this definition, every hard truth was once a soft truth, since for every hard truth there was a time before its existence was fixed in the past. In order to maintain openness of the future, however, it should not be assumed that strictly future-tensed *soft truths* have truthmakers in the present.<sup>58</sup> It follows that there is merely an abstract or a hypothetical sense in which future-tensed *soft truths* are true in the present, even though they may not have acquired either truth or falsity yet in the present, and we may not know what their future truthmakers will be in the future.<sup>59</sup> What can be said with certainty, however, is that hard truths about the present have been soft in the past.

Another way of characterizing soft truths is that they lack a sufficient condition by which they could be classified as hard truths about the past. This is another way of saying that (P2) expresses only a *soft truth* about the past because it is not yet the case at  $T_1$  that God created the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ . In other words, the proposition that ‘God creates the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ ’ lacked a truthmaker at  $T_1$ , which is a sufficient condition to make God’s act of creation fixed in the past, over-and-done-with, and incapable of being otherwise than it is at any future time thereafter.<sup>60</sup>

In his article “*Soft Facts and Ontological Dependence*”, Patrick Todd endorses an account of soft-facthood that is similar to the concept of a soft truth.<sup>61</sup> According to Todd, however, to say that something is made true *in virtue of* some entity is to say that truth is ontologically dependent.<sup>62</sup> For instance, a friendship cannot occur in an absence of two or more friends, so the concept of

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<sup>58</sup> I owe special gratitude to my philosophy advisor, Aaron Griffith, for raising this objection.

<sup>59</sup> Whether there can be true propositions about the future is a matter of serious metaphysical debate. Given the limited scope of this thesis, it is impossible to settle this matter here.

<sup>60</sup> It must be noted that this way of characterizing the hard-soft truth distinction presumes an ontology of time where all past, present, and future times exist. An eternalist, who believes that all past, present, and future times exist and are equally real has no trouble accommodating this principle. Presentism, on the other hand, believes that only the present moment is ontologically real. Presentism will therefore be addressed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

<sup>61</sup> Patrick Todd, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 838.

friendship is ontologically dependent on some external entity (friends) for its meaning.<sup>63</sup> While there may be nothing controversial about this particular statement, it is worthwhile to notice the important asymmetry that pertains to ontological dependence, and its relation to truthmaking: while entities make propositions true, propositions do not make entities true.<sup>64</sup> A similar principle can be found in Aristotle:

“When is what is called truth or falsity present, and when is it not?  
We must consider what we mean by these terms. It is not because we think that you are white, that you *are* white, but because you are white we who say this have the truth.”<sup>65</sup>

In essence, Aristotle is saying that it is because of the way in which things occur in reality that a proposition acquires its truth or falsity, but not vice versa. Similarly, the truth or falsity of propositions concerning God’s beliefs depend on the way in which the objects of God’s beliefs stand to reality. Again, consider  $f_4$ : ‘*God believes in 4000 BC that Socrates will drink poison in 399 BC*’. Thus, it is not because God believes that Socrates drinks poison in 399 BC that ‘Socrates drinks poison in 399 BC’ is true; rather, it is because Socrates drinks poison in 399 BC that the state of the world in 399 BC can be said to have this truth. Hence, even if God essentially foreknows the state of the world in 399 BC at any time in the past (relative to 399 BC), His foreknowing the truth about the world was nevertheless a *soft truth* until it was actually the case that there was an entity in virtue of which  $f_4$  expressed a state of the world and expressed a truth. If the aforesaid is true, it follows that all of God’s beliefs are not accidentally necessary.

While many incompatibilists about divine foreknowledge and human freedom think that reality is mind-independent, not as many are willing to accept that it is independent from the mind

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> For a defense on grounding as a non-symmetrical relation, see: Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2005. p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> Aristotle cited in Trenton Merricks, 2009. p. 29. See also: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1051b, 5-8.

of God that is omniscient, and everlasting. The following discussion will therefore discuss some foreseeable objections to the (TM-HF) principle from divine decrees, and presentism.

### 1. III. I. I. *Soft Truths and Divine Decrees*

In his article “*Soft Facts and Ontological Dependence*”, Patrick Todd takes great trouble with the view that God’s beliefs depend on the external world for their truth or falsity if God is essentially omniscient, everlasting, and holds only true beliefs.<sup>66</sup> Rather than arguing against the plausible idea that human free agency is compatible with divine beliefs, however, he makes the case for divine decrees. Todd asserts that if God has decreed everything that will happen in the future, then it is not in anyone’s power to do anything other than to disclose the essence of these divine decrees in their future actions.<sup>67</sup> For instance, ‘Jones is sitting now’ would be true now because at some point in the infinite past, God had decreed it. Since there is nothing anybody can do now to make it the case that God did not declare a given decree, any such decree is a “hard fact” about the past. By the same token, divine decrees express a hard truth about the past. In this response to Todd, it may be helpful to state the *hard truth principle*, as outlined on p. 23:

(TM-HT) “Proposition *P* expresses a hard truth about a time *T*” = df. “*P* specifies an entity *E* that bears a predicate *A* at *T* in virtue of which *P* is true at *T*.”

According to Todd, God’s decrees in themselves express a ‘hard truth’ about the past: it is not in virtue of any future action that a divine decree obtains; it is in virtue of God’s decrees that a future agent acts as she does.<sup>68</sup> Conversely, by the *hard truth principle*, the obtaining of God’s

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<sup>66</sup> Patrick Todd, 2013. p. 841.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 841.

<sup>68</sup> Patrick Todd, 2013.

decree to some state of affairs in the future does not count as a hard truth about the past unless there is some entity in the “hard past” upon whom such a decree is obtaining. Essentially, the hard truth principle states that the knowledge of God alone is not a sufficient condition for something to be classified as a hard truth. Thus, even if it were the case that God has decreed at the beginning of time at  $T$  that ‘*Jones is sitting*’, it is not a hard truth about some future time relative to  $T$  that ‘*Jones is sitting*’ unless ‘*Jones is sitting*’ has a truthmaker at  $T$  in virtue of which ‘*Jones is sitting*’ expresses a hard truth about  $T$ .

Consequently, while God can decree things in the “hard past”, the obtaining of His decrees nevertheless needs a truthmaker about some time in the future, when it is actually the case that there is some entity in virtue of which His decree obtains, and expresses a truth about a state of the world. In other words, the actual state of the world in which ‘*Jones is sitting*’ is a necessary condition for God’s decree to obtain in the world, and it is a necessary condition for the definition of a *hard truth*.<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, since God is everlasting and infallible, it will be necessary to address the relationship between divine decrees, and God’s intrinsic beliefs. After all, if the TM-HT principle obtains, and ‘God has decreed’ expresses a truth about the past, then there is some entity in the “hard past”, namely God, upon whom His decree is binding. Furthermore, since God is all-knowing, there is no state of the world that escapes God’s preceding knowledge of it. Suppose, therefore, that God only issues decrees that are infallibly binding on the world of His creation.

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<sup>69</sup> Many theists may worry that divine decrees ought to be hard truths, and not open to any free instantiations in the future, because they are foreordained by God. To such objections it might be stated that God’s decrees can be soft truths about the past, and still become hard truths at some time in the future. Perhaps the relation between soft truths and hard truths in this case is such that if it is a divine decree, and it is a soft truth, it will eventually become a hard truth. Most soft truths do not function like this, however, although the definition of softness does not contradict this possibility.

This produces a stronger form of (P2) for *the Argument for Divine Freedom and Foreknowledge Incompatibilism*:

(P2) ‘God foreknew in the beginning of time at  $T_1$  that A ‘He will create the dinosaurs’ at  $T_2$ .

Presupposing that (P2) expresses a divine decree, it may be tempting to assert that it expresses a hard truth about the past, because there is an entity (God) that issues a decree at  $T_1$  in virtue of which (P2) true at  $T_2$ . Consequently, (P2) would be a hard truth about the past at  $T_1$ . Conversely, even if (P2) expresses a divine decree, it is not yet the case at  $T_1$  that there is an entity at  $T_2$  in virtue of which the proposition that ‘God creates the dinosaurs’ is true at  $T_2$ . In other words, God’s decree at  $T_1$  is not a *sufficient condition* to make it a *hard truth* that God will create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$ , because it does not specify a state of affairs that is sufficient for (P2) to express a hard truth about  $T_2$ . Consequently, even if (P2) expresses a divine decree, it may only be considered a *soft truth* about  $T_2$  at  $T_1$ .

It ought to be noted here that the soft-hard truth distinction leaves open the possibility that God may decree *contingently*, in so far as God issues decrees in accordance with the temporospatial structure of created actuality. After all, presupposing that God created the world, and that the world God created is extrinsic to God, then any divine decree, in so far as it extends to the world, should take into account countervailing considerations about the world.<sup>70</sup> Suppose God decrees, for instance, that Patrick will gain eternal life at some future time  $T$  only if Patrick doesn’t bear false witness at any time prior to  $T$ . This would leave open the possibility that Patrick may lie, and not gain eternal life at  $T$ . By the hard-soft truth distinction, God’s decree is compatible

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<sup>70</sup> By countervailing considerations, I am referring to factors about the created world that are intrinsic to the world but extrinsic to God, such as matters concerning human free agency.

with Patrick's free choice, because the proposition that 'Patrick will gain eternal life' is only a *soft truth* about *T* at any time prior to *T*.

Nevertheless, many theists may worry that human free choice cannot proceed in such a way that is incompatible with God's decrees. Given that divine decrees are beyond man's power to affect, any proposition that is about a divine decree seems to express a *hard truth* that cannot be otherwise even if the world is presently lacking an entity in virtue of which the proposition is true.<sup>71</sup> To this objection it must be stated that the property of 'being otherwise' is not a necessary condition for a *soft truth*. God's decrees can be soft truths about the past, and still become hard truths at some time in the future. Perhaps the relation between soft truths and hard truths in this case is such that if it is a divine decree, and it is a soft truth, then it will necessarily become a hard truth. Many classes of soft truths do not function like this, however, although the concept of a soft truth does not exclude this possibility.

Consequently, it is not inconsistent to think about divine decrees as soft even if they will not be otherwise. Conversely, the fact that they could yet be otherwise in some specific set of circumstances – a condition afforded them by the soft-truth attribute – means that God can decree contingently at the discretion of His will, and in accordance with free agency in creation.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, given that God decrees in accordance with His will, one may assert that God's will is not subject to His decrees; rather, His decrees are subject to His will.

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<sup>71</sup> I thank Professor Philip Swenson, who has been advising this project, for raising this objection in a private conversation.

<sup>72</sup> Whether divine decrees can be issued contingently rather than absolutely is open to debate. Presupposing that God honors free agency, it is reasonable to say that some decrees could potentially be willed contingently, whereas others could be willed absolutely. While the soft-truth attribute can accommodate both absolute and contingent decrees, however, it alone cannot determine which divine decrees are such that they cannot be otherwise. This would need more theological debate than can be afforded in this project.

“It is not, therefore, because things are or will be, that God knows them, but it is because He knows them and wishes them to be, that they are and that they will be.”<sup>73</sup>

In conclusion, God’s creative freedom is not threatened by divine decrees, and God remains free to effect His decrees in accordance with His will.<sup>74</sup>

#### 1. IV. *Presentism and Truthmaking*

The objective of this section is to reconcile the *hard truth principle* with a time-honored ontology of time: presentism. In short, presentism is the thesis that the present time alone is ontologically real, whereas past and future times are not. In other words, nothing has existence that is not in the present.<sup>75</sup> As a consequence, the implications of presentism to the *truthmaker principle* are boisterous: if the past does not exist and the entities that existed in the past do not exist, then TM does not capture anything in the past in virtue of which anything pertaining to the past can be said to be true if presentism is true. According to John Bigelow, the charge that presentism is incompatible with something like the *truthmaker principle* arises from *the argument from relations*, which is stated as follows:<sup>76</sup>

- 1) All relations are existence entailing.
- 2) Relations sometimes hold between two entities only one of which exists in the present.

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<sup>73</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 67.

<sup>74</sup> While the challenge from divine decrees as presented by Todd may not hold for divine freedom, which is the focus of the present inquiry, it remains a matter of some philosophical controversy to demonstrate its compatibility with human freedom.

<sup>75</sup> For a defense of presentism by two honorable contemporary presentists, see: Arthur Prior, 1970, and John Bigelow, 1996.

<sup>76</sup> Bigelow, 1996. p. 36.

3) Some things exist which are not present.<sup>77</sup>

Bigelow grants premise 1 to the challenger of presentism, and takes it as an a priori truth that a relation must exist between two existing things that abide in some relation to one another. For instance, in order for a causal relation to hold between a cause and effect, “both cause and effect have to exist”.<sup>78</sup> Certainly, no presentist would deny that fire is the cause of wood transforming into ashes, or that flooding is the effect that is caused by heavy rain. In both cases, the existence of the effect directly points to the existence of its cause. Yet how can it be granted that both the cause and effect exist if the cause is in the past, and only the effect exists in the present? In his response to this question, John Bigelow convenes the ancient Stoics - all of whom subscribed to presentists ontology - to explain how truths about the past can be grounded in being when the past does not exist. In the following passage, the famed skeptic Sextus Empiricus speaks:

“Those who make such statements [that a scar in the present is a sign of a wound which is past, or that a wound in the present is a sign of a death which is future] do not realize in fact that, though the past and the future are different, the sign and its object, even in these cases, is a present thing of a present thing”<sup>79</sup>

In Bigelow’s interpretation of this passage, causal truths are explained in terms of presently existing true propositions about the past.<sup>80</sup> Thus the proposition ‘this fatal wound will cause this man to die’ is true in the present in virtue of there having been a wound in the past causing the man’s present condition, which makes true the proposition that ‘the man will die’ in the present. Consequently, causation is seen as a relation between two presently true propositions rather than as a relation between things occurring at times.<sup>81</sup> Consider, for instance, the proposition  $s_1$ :

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<sup>77</sup> For the sake of clarity, I have expressed Bigelow’s argument in numeric form.

<sup>78</sup> John Bigelow, 1996. p. 39.

<sup>79</sup> Sextus Empiricus *quoted in* Bigelow, 1996. p. 42.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>81</sup> John Bigelow, 1996. p. 42.

*'Socrates drank poison'*, and *s<sub>2</sub>: 'Socrates will die'*. According to Bigelow's characterization of causal relations, cause is not prior to its effect: both cause and effect are present propositions.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the causal relation holds between the true proposition that Socrates drank poison, and the true proposition that Socrates will die.

It is, perhaps, a conceivable worry of Bigelow's characterization of causation that, if there exists no entity that bears the predicate of 'drinking poison' in the present, what grounds the truth of present-tense properties such as *'the world being such that it was true in 399 BC that Socrates drank poison'*? If the world is presently such that it is floating free of entities that make a proposition true, what makes the proposition presently true? It seems reasonable to look for some entity that bears the property of 'drinking poison' to ground the truth or falsity of the proposition.

Thus, in order to support his thesis that there can be true propositions about the past even in an absence of presently existing entities about the past, Bigelow asserts that *"truth supervenes on being"*.<sup>83</sup> Effectively, this principle states that truth depends on the way that the world is, and events that have taken place in the past are true because they convey something about a state of the world in the past which was true in the past, and remains true in the present. According to Bigelow, then, there need not be an entity existing in the present to make true a proposition about the past; what is only necessary is that the state of the world is such that there once existed such an entity.<sup>84</sup> Bigelow elucidates:

"The past no longer exists; yet there is a sense in which the past can never be lost: the world will always be one with the property of having once been thus and so."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>83</sup> John Bigelow, 1996. p. 38.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 47.

Hence, what makes true the proposition that '*Socrates drank poison in 399 BC*' now is the property of the world being such that Socrates did drink poison in 399 BC. As such, it is not necessary that there presently exists an entity that drank the poison; what is only necessary is that the state of the world was once such that there existed an entity in virtue of which the proposition is still true in the present. This is similarly the case for the presently true past proposition that '*Socrates existed*'. That '*Socrates existed*' is true in the present not because there presently exists an entity, Socrates, but because it is a present property about the world that it is a world in which there once existed an entity, Socrates, and in which he drank poison in 399 BC.

Yet even if '*Socrates existed*' had a truthmaker in a past state of the world in virtue of which it was true that Socrates existed, what grounds the truth of the proposition in the present? Recall that, according to Bigelow, there is something about being upon which truth supervenes.<sup>86</sup> This is another way of saying that what is true depends in some way on the way things are in reality. However, there does not appear to be anything about the present state of the world that depends in some way on the truth of the proposition that '*Socrates existed*' in the past. After all, even if it were a property of the world that Socrates existed, why presume that the property about Socrates' existence can continue to permeate its existence into some other state of the world, where Socrates now does not exist?

Therefore, there persists a worry that Bigelow's supervenience principle may not suffice to ground truths about the past in the present, since it denies the present existence of some entity upon which truth supervenes. After all, the proposition that '*Socrates existed*' would not seem to supervene on any presently existing Socrates, nor any properties that were fundamental only to

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<sup>86</sup> John Bigelow, 1996. p. 47.

Socrates. Furthermore, given that the world would not appear to undergo any immediate change even if God had just created the world 5 minutes ago, and Socrates' having never existed, it is reasonable to suppose that any property of the world consisting in 'Socrates having existed' is not an essential property of the world. In contemporary philosophical literature, this is known as *the grounding objection*.<sup>87</sup> In his article "Presentism and The Grounding Objection", Thomas Crisp elucidates:

"Consider the contingent truth that dinosaurs existed. What present things are such that the proposition that they exist entails the proposition that dinosaurs existed? Isn't it possible that things be just as they presently are and there have been no dinosaurs? It would seem so. But if so, then no present things are such that the proposition that they exist entails the proposition that dinosaurs existed"<sup>88</sup>

However, according to Arthur Prior, it would be a mistake to conjoin truths about the past with truths about the present.<sup>89</sup> In his article, "*The Notion of the Present*", Prior asserts that since the pastness of an event does not exist in the present, it does not need a presently existing entity to make it the case that it was a fact in the past – what is only necessary is that there once existed such an entity. Facts about the present, conversely, are grounded in the present existence of some entity.<sup>90</sup> In Prior's own words:

"The pastness of an event, that is to say its having taken place, is not the same thing as the event itself; nor is its futurity; but the presentness of an event *is* just the event."<sup>91</sup>

Prior maintains that for a past event, its past presentness and its present pastness just correspond to its pastness, whereas the present existence of an event just corresponds to the

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<sup>87</sup> For a thorough discussion of presentism and the grounding objection, see: Crisp, 2007.

<sup>88</sup> Crisp, 2007. p. 91.

<sup>89</sup> Prior, 1970. p. 249.

<sup>90</sup> Prior, 1970.

<sup>91</sup> Prior, 1970.

presentness of the event.<sup>92</sup> That is to say, although Socrates' past existence isn't now present, nevertheless its present pastness together with its past presentness; its having taken place in the past for having *once* had a truthmaker about the present is a part of the state of the actual world in the present, and will be a part of the actual world at every moment in the future until the end of time. Thus, the fact that '*Socrates drank poison in 399 BC*' is a fact about the past that was once 'present' in 399 BC, and it does not need a truthmaker about the actual present *unless* it is the case that Socrates is drinking poison in the actual present. Indeed, it would appear to be a mistake to attribute the existence of some entity in the actual present as a truthmaker for any state of affairs that took place in 399 BC.

If, however, the present moment alone is fundamentally real, and neither the past nor the future exists, it would appear that there is no ontological difference between the past and future. Consequently, it appears that the presentist is at pains to distinguish between hard truths and soft truths about the past, there being no real difference between the ontologies of either the past or future. To assist the presentist out of this predicament, the following may be offered as a *Hard Truth* for presentism: where  $P$  refers to some proposition, and  $E$  refers to some entity that bears a predicate  $A$ , and  $T_{pp}$  refers to a time that was present at some time in the past leading up to the present.

(TM-HT) "Proposition  $P$  expresses a hard truth about a time  $T_{pp}$ " = df. " $P$  specifies an entity  $E$  that bears a predicate  $A$  at  $T_{pp}$  in virtue of which  $P$  is true at  $T_{pp}$ ."

As such, the presentist can say that *hard truths* about the past are truths about a time that was once present, which means that hard truths have the additional property of past presentness

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<sup>92</sup> Prior, 1970. p. 247.

( $T_{pp}$ ), which marks them as carriers of truths about past entities. Consequently, the presentist can apply the TM-HT principle by pointing to some entity that bears a given predicate, or performs a given action, at a time in the past, and that furthermore has a property of past presentness at  $T_{pp}$  that is prior to or simultaneous with the actual present in the actual world.

In light of this principle, consider the *Argument for Foreknowledge Incompatibilism*. (P2) states that ‘*God foreknew in the beginning of time at  $T_1$  that He will create the dinosaurs at  $T_2$* ’. Appealing to TM-HT, the presentist can respond that God does not have the property of ‘creating the dinosaurs’ at  $T_1$ , which is to say that God’s creation of the dinosaurs at  $T_2$  lacks the property of past presentness at  $T_1$ . Given that God’s act of creation acquires the property of past presentness not at  $T_1$ , but at  $T_2$ , (P2) does not express a hard truth about the creation of the dinosaurs at  $T_1$ . At  $T_1$ , however, (P2) expresses a hard truth about the state of God’s knowledge at  $T_1$ , which lacks a necessary condition for grounding truths about God’s acts of creation at  $T_2$ , because the latter is lacking the property of past presentness at  $T_1$ .

Consequently, the presentist can demonstrate that the truth conditions of  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  are not the same in (P2) even if the past and future are ontologically unreal. And she can do so because  $T_2$  refers to a time that lacks the property of past presentness at  $T_1$ , which in turn has the property of past presentness at  $T_2$ . Since God’s act of creation at  $T_2$  describes a future state of affairs relative to God’s foreknowledge at  $T_1$  – which is not ontologically equivalent to God’s act of creation at  $T_2$ , God’s act of creation can be called a *soft truth* about the past at  $T_1$ .

In order to clarify the soft truth attribute, it may be helpful to consider a more straightforward proposition,  $d$ : ‘*It is true today that Jace will eat ice cream tomorrow at 1 pm*’. Where ‘today’ refers to the actual present, and ‘tomorrow’ refers to a time in the future, the presentist can respond that the proposition expresses a hard truth *only when* it is actually the case

that *d* has the additional property of past presentness relative to the actual present. Since it is not the case that ‘tomorrow’ has the property of past presentness relative to today, *d* expresses a soft truth about the past, and Jace is free to eat or not to eat ice cream at 1 pm tomorrow, even if it so happens that he should find himself eating ice cream at 1 pm tomorrow.

Since presentism holds that past entities do not exist, however, there persists a worry that the presentist is unable to provide sufficient grounding for the existence of properties of past entities in the present.<sup>93</sup> After all, if there is no longer an entity that serves as a carrier of its past properties, what grounds these properties in being? It is a worry of many truthmaker theorists that properties existing without entities that make them true correspond to ‘brute facts’ – propositions that are in no way explained by or reducible to anything in reality that would make them true.<sup>94</sup> While the *truthmaker principle* cannot exclude the non-existence of brute facts, nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the truths we express ought to be grounded in being. Consequently, the aim of the following is to ground truthmakers for presentism by offering a haecceity – a unique principle of individuation - as a foundation for truths about the past while maintaining the openness of the future.

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<sup>93</sup> For a plausible solution to this problem, see: Markosian, 2012.

<sup>94</sup> This objection is discussed in greater detail by Sider, 2001.

### 1. IV. I. *Haecceities as Truthmakers for Presentism*

This section will introduce a theory that has in recent literature become known as *haecceitist presentism*.<sup>95</sup> The concept was originally introduced by Simon Keller in his article “Presentism and Truthmaking”.<sup>96</sup> The purpose of this writing is to offer a more precise account of Keller’s haecceitist presentism in order to ground the existence of past properties for presentism. While Keller postulated that ‘haecceities’ come into being at times, it will be argued here that haecceities are eternal, and are made actual in virtue of their ‘suchnesses’ that occur at times. Given that haecceities exist at all times, however, they can ground truths about past entities that occur at times.

The concept ‘haecceity’ owes its origin to Duns Scotus, and it is in this meaning that I intend to apply the term here. According to the Subtle Doctor, our perceptions about the world have a fundamentally real foundation. This means that anything that participates in being has an ultimate nature, or “thisness” that is intrinsically unique to every individually existing entity, which cannot be shared by any other individual entity.<sup>97</sup> Scotus thinks that it is in virtue of this unique ‘thisness’, or a *haecceity* that an individual thing can be identified as the very thing that it is, and distinguished from all other individual things.<sup>98</sup>

Yet perhaps most fundamentally, Scotus introduces ‘haecceity’ to explain individual unity in existing things. Even though the material form of every existing being is subject to decay, and undergoes change from one moment to the next, Scotus thinks that there must be an ultimate nature to every individual thing that explains its continuity from one changing moment to the next. In an

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<sup>95</sup> Ingram, 1996.

<sup>96</sup> Keller, 2004.

<sup>97</sup> Gracia, 1994. pp. 286-298.

<sup>98</sup> Duns Scotus, 2003. p. 119.

absence of my ultimate nature, for instance, surely there would be no part of me that is the same today as compared to 25 years ago, and yet I continue to have memories from times long past, and people appear to refer to me as the same existing thing even though there surely is not a single living cell in my material form that has remained the same between now and then. Thus, it must be the case, according to Scotus, that even though material form is impermanent, and changes with time, every existing entity has an ultimate nature, a “thisness” that persists through time.

“This entity therefore is not matter or form or the composite insofar as each of these is a “nature”, – but it is the ultimate reality of the being which is matter or which is form or which is the composite, so that wherever something is common and nevertheless determinable, even though it involves one real thing, we can still distinguish further several formally distinct realities, of which this formally is not that; and this formally the entity of singularity that is formally the entity of a nature.”<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, according to Scotus, an entity that is altogether “this” is atomically singular, which means that it is not subject to division, and is not open to multiple instantiations.<sup>100</sup> This means that the “thisness” of me can only be manifest in me, and the “thisness” of Socrates is only manifest in Socrates. That is to say, “Socrates-ness” will never exist in me, and no matter how much I wish to be wise, although I can become wise, I can never become wise in like manner as Socrates is wise. According to Scotus, this is because the haecceity of “me” is intrinsic to me, and the haecceity of Socrates is intrinsic to Socrates.

Given that the haecceity of ‘Socrates’ is an individual constituent of fundamental reality, it is not dependent on instantiation in any presently existing thing. In other words, “Socrates-ness” can exist independently of the matter that was Socrates, and I can formulate propositions about Socrates in the present even though the haecceity that is Socrates is not being instantiated in the

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<sup>99</sup> Duns Scotus *cited in* Gracia, 1994. p. 290.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

present. A haecceity, then, is a singular constituent of ultimate reality; it has no temporal nor spatial parts, and so can be envisioned as an entity that exists independently of any temporo-spatial parts. Consequently, a haecceity can exist regardless of whether there exists an individual entity that is presently instantiating it.

In his article “The Virtues of Thisness Presentism”, David Ingram endorses a modified account of Scotian haecceity as a principle of grounding past truths in light of presentism.<sup>101</sup> According to Ingram’s Thisness Presentism, presently existing ‘thisnesses’ or haecceities serve as surrogates (or ‘proxies’) for truths of past entities.<sup>102</sup> Hence, if haecceities exist, the presentist can posit a truthmaker for truths that have the property of past presentness in virtue of an entity that supervenes on being in both the present and the past. Ingram gives ‘thisness’ the following definition:<sup>103</sup>

“For a given x, x’s thisness is the property of being (identical with) x”

It is a matter of some metaphysical dispute, however, whether a haecceity has independent existence, or whether it needs some physical entity in order to exist.<sup>104</sup> Whereas Scotus thought that haecceities have eternal existence independently of material instantiation, the ‘thisness presentist’ postulates that ‘haecceity’ is ontologically dependent on the initial existence of some entity that instantiates it.<sup>105</sup> This allows the presentist to say that it is true about 400 BC that Socrates existed, but it is not true about 500 BC that the same Socrates existed. Conversely, if haecceities are eternal, and ‘Socrates-ness’ is eternal, it would be a truth about the past in 500 BC

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<sup>101</sup> Ingram, 2016.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 2869.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> For a compelling argument that there are ‘thisnesses’ of past entities but no ‘thisnesses’ of future entities, see: Robert Adams, 1979. pp. 5-26.

<sup>105</sup> Instantiation in this sense is taken to mean the property of ‘becoming manifest’ in the world, or being made actual by the existence of some particular in virtue of which a haecceity is being manifest in the actual world.

that Socrates-ness existed. Hence, if Socrates-ness is the property of being identical with Socrates, it would then follow that it was a *hard truth* about the past in 500 BC that Socrates existed.

Consequently, the presentist ought to say that haecceities cannot exist uninstantiated. David Ingram maintains that a particular ‘thisness’ of an entity depends on its initial instantiation for its existence. This means that there would be no ‘thisness’ of Socrates, for instance, if Socrates had never existed.<sup>106</sup> According to Ingram, however, while the initial existence of an entity is necessary for the existence of its thisness, the loss of an entity does not entail the loss of its ‘thisness’.<sup>107</sup> Hence, once a ‘thisness’ is instantiated in some entity, it ceases to be dependent upon its entity, and can continue existing independently of it.<sup>108</sup> This means that the proposition ‘*Socrates existed in 400 BC*’ can express a truth about the present even though the physical form that was then Socrates does not now exist. Rather, what makes the proposition true in the present is the haecceity of Socrates that came into existence with Socrates in 470 BC, and that still continues to permeate its existence into the present.

Even though this principle is plausible, it seems equally plausible to postulate that if ‘thisness’ is defined in such a way as to be dependent upon an initial instantiation for the initiation of its existence, it ought to be equally dependent on a continued instantiation for the continuation of its existence. After all, the function of a haecceity is to preserve constancy in a world governed by impermanence, and change.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, unlike the material form that instantiates it, a haecceity does not undergo change. Conversely, it would seem to necessitate a certain kind of change for a haecceity to forgo its initial dependence on a material form, and to become utterly

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<sup>106</sup> David Ingram, 2016. p. 2873.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Duns Scotus cited in Gracia, 1994. p. 290.

independent of it at a later time. Thus, if ‘Socrates-ness’ is initially dependent on the real-life existence of Socrates, there may be no ‘thisness’ of Socrates that survives the death of Socrates, and no ‘thisness’ that the presentist is at liberty to pursue as a carrier of truth of past entities. In order to adopt haecceities as truthmakers that carry their truths across times, then, the presentist ought to say that haecceities are eternal rather than temporal.

While the presentist is not obliged to accept haecceities as eternal for the purposes of this thesis, she may propose eternal haecceities as truthmakers for temporal truths by attesting that the instantiation of a haecceity in some particular (here: Socrates) in the temporo-spatial realm functions as a carrier of truth about the particular in the temporo-spatial realm. This is another way of saying that even if haecceities can exist uninstantiated, the initial instantiation of a haecceity in a particular is a *necessary condition* to ground truths about entities that instantiate it in the temporo-spatial realm. Consequently, haecceities can be eternal while serving as truthmakers about entities that occur at times.

An implication of the eternalist view is that haecceities can exist uninstantiated, which would turn their existence into *hard truths* about the past. However, given that haecceities must be initially instantiated in some particular in the temporal world in order to serve as truthmakers about the temporal world, it does not affect the grounding of temporal truths about the world to postulate that haecceities can exist uninstantiated. Since the initial instantiation of a haecceity in a particular is a *necessary condition* to ground truths about a given particular, eternal haecceities can serve as truthmakers for temporal truths. Consequently, the presentist is at liberty to choose whether haecceities exist dependently or independently of an entity that instantiates them.

However, there is an additional worry that a haecceity does not suffice to ground truths about the particular that it instantiates.<sup>110</sup> For instance, the immaterial haecceity of Socrates can exist in an absence of the material attributes of Socrates, and therefore it fails to convey truths about the existence of Socrates in an absence of his material form. In order to make use of a haecceity for the presentist cause, then, a proponent of ‘thisness presentism’ may postulate that a haecceity is not a *sufficient condition* to ground all truths about entities that instantiate it, although it is a necessary condition. While it is true that Socrates-ness is not dependent on the material form of Socrates for its existence, it can be argued that the material form of Socrates is dependent on the haecceity of Socrates that is necessary for the instantiation of Socrates’ material attributes that enables their designation as uniquely ‘Socrates’. Since the material attributes of a particular do not appear in an absence of a particular haecceity, then, one may argue that there is a relation that holds between the material attributes, and the haecceity that instantiates them.

In his article “*Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity*”, Robert Adams distinguishes between an individual haecceity that is instantiated in a particular, and a particular property instance, or a ‘suchness’ that is instantiated in a particular.<sup>111</sup> Unlike a ‘thisness’ that is unique to each particular, a ‘suchness’ is a property that can be instantiated by many particulars. I will endorse the following definition of a “suchness” so as to make it distinct from a ‘thisness’ while preserving the appropriate relata that exist between them. “Suchnesses” are understood to be any such properties that are 1) capable of being possessed by various thisnesses, 2) not related in any way to one or more particular thisnesses, and 3) capable of acquiring a unique nature in virtue of a particular that instantiates them.

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<sup>110</sup> This objection was brought up to me in a private conversation with Professor Philip Swenson, who has been advising this thesis.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Adams, 1979. p. 5-26.

For instance, the property of being tall is not a property that is intrinsic to a particular ‘thisness’, but is rather a property that is acquired by a particular when it is being instantiated in physical form. Yet, while tallness is a property that is shared by all instantiated particulars, no two particular instances of tallness are the same. Given that tallness is a property that converges to an infinity of values, one may argue it impossible for a particular tallness  $x_1$  to be unique to more than one particular. Consequently, the tallness of Socrates at a time  $t$  is unique to Socrates at  $t$ , and bears a unique property relation to the particular Socrates at  $t$ .

This is similarly the case with the particular property of being wise. Arguably, wisdom is a property that can be possessed by various ‘thisnesses’ at the same time. It is not, however, a property that can ever be alike in more than one particular ‘thisness’. Although Socrates is wise, and there are many individuals that have been wise, in none of them has wisdom been the same. Consider the wisdom of Albert Einstein, and the wisdom of Socrates. Surely both are men of great wisdom, but wisdom is not, and never can be manifest in any two individuals in exactly the same way. Hence, while wisdom may be a property that can be acquired by any particular, it is a property that acquires a unique nature in virtue of a particular ‘thisness’ that instantiates it. Thus, one might say that a ‘suchness’ is a property that has both a general nature and a specific nature that is unique to each individual ‘thisness’. Accordingly, ‘suchnesses’ are qualitative properties of particulars that acquire a specific nature when they occur in a particular ‘thisness’.

Given that a particular is a composite of a ‘thisness’ and a ‘suchness’, I will offer a unique property relation to define the bond that holds between them: where  $s$  refers to a qualitative property of a ‘suchness’ that is instantiated by a particular ‘thisness’  $h$ , and  $T_{pp}$  refers to a time that was present at some time in the past leading up to the present.

Property relation (PR): “ $s$  bears a property relation to  $h$ ” = df. “ $s$  has the property of having been instantiated in an entity with  $h$  at a time  $T_{pp}$ .”

Thus, according to PR, a ‘suchness’ bears a property relation to a ‘thisness’ at a time  $T$  only when it occurs or is instantiated by an entity with a particular ‘thisness’ at  $T$ . Consider the proposition  $S_1$ : ‘*Socrates was poisoned*’. Provided that  $S_1$  expresses a true proposition, (PR) ought to establish that a) it is false at any time prior to the instantiation of Socrates’ poisoning that he was poisoned, and b) that it is true at any time after the death of Socrates that he was poisoned. By PR, the truth condition of a) is satisfied when the poisoning of Socrates is instantiated by the particular ‘thisness’ of Socrates. By contrast, b) is satisfied in virtue of the fact that the ‘suchness’ of being poisoned was instantiated by the particular at some time in the past leading up to the present; Socrates will always have the property of having been such that he was poisoned, even after the real-life existence of Socrates has ended. Thus, a unique property relation that holds between a ‘thisness’ and a ‘suchness’ at a time  $T$  expresses a *hard truth* about  $T$ . Given the particular property relation between a ‘thisness’ and a ‘suchness’, the following shall serve as a *truthmaker principle* for thisness presentism (TM-TP).

(TM-TP) “Proposition  $P$  expresses a hard truth about a ‘thisness’  $h$  at a time  $T_{pp}$ ” = df. “ $P$  specifies a ‘thisness’  $h$  that bears a property relation to a ‘suchness’  $s$  at  $T_{pp}$  in virtue of which  $P$  is true at  $T_{pp}$ .”

By TM-TP, a property relation between a ‘thisness’ and a ‘suchness’ that is instantiated at any moment in the past is fixed in the past, and therefore expresses a hard truth about the past. By contrast, a ‘suchness’ that lacks a property relation to a ‘thisness’ at some time in the past is not a hard truth about the past. Consider the proposition  $S_2$ : ‘*It is true in 2000 BC that Socrates exists in 400 BC*’. If the predicate ‘exists’ is used in reference to a ‘suchness’ that does not bear a particular

property relation to the ‘thisness’ of Socrates in 2000 BC, it is not a hard truth about 2000 BC that Socrates exists, given that there did not exist a particular (Socrates) that had a property relation to the ‘suchness’ of being alive in 2000 BC. Since it was the case that Socrates’ ‘thisness’ existed uninstantiated in 2000 BC, and the particular that is Socrates was lacking the “suchness” of being alive, it can be called a *soft truth* about 2000 BC that Socrates existed in 400 BC.

Given that *haecceitist presentism* has postulated that there exist entities in the form of ‘thisnesses’ that can ground truths about the state of the world at times in virtue of their relation to ‘suchnesses’ at times, it is a theory that is compatible with both presentism and truthmaking as outlined in this chapter.

### *Conclusion.*

This chapter has established the compatibility of divine freedom and foreknowledge via the truthmaker principle, which states that the real-world existence of an entity in virtue of which something is said to be true is necessary to make something true. Since God’s foreknowledge is not identical to the created actuality which proceeds from God’s foreknowledge, it follows that God’s forebelief cannot ground truths about the objects of His belief. Consequently, divine foreknowledge does not impose necessity on the objects that are willed, and God remains free to will them until He has willed them. A weakness of this theory is its applicability to truths about past entities, particularly if it is presumed that the past does not exist. Therefore, proponents of presentist ontology are encouraged to adopt the concept of a haecceity to ground the existence of past truths. Given that *haecceitist presentism* is at least internally coherent, it succeeds at making the truthmaker principle compatible with presentism.

## Chapter 2. The Antinomy of Divine Freedom and Immutability

### *Introduction.*

“God is not human, that he should lie,  
Not a human being, that he should change his mind.  
Does he speak and then not act?  
Does he promise and not fulfill?  
I have received a command to bless;  
He has blessed, and I cannot change it.”<sup>112</sup>

This chapter aims to resolve *the antinomy of divine freedom and immutability*, which states that God’s unchanging essence makes it impossible for God to perform a free action. Part I will elucidate the doctrine of divine immutability, and its relation to the doctrine of God as *pure act*, which is necessary to sustain freedom given God’s immutability. This will be followed by two objections to the doctrine of immutability. Finally, Part II will offer the *virtual distinction* as found in Aquinas theology as a solution to the *antinomy of divine freedom and immutability*. Given that there is a *virtual distinction* between potency and act in God’s pure actuality, it will be shown that God remains free to effect His will in creation even if God is unchanging.

### 2. I. *The Doctrine of Divine Immutability*

In classical theism, *the doctrine of divine immutability* refers to the view that God cannot change. With regard to time, the capacity for change in God is excluded by God’s eternity, and God’s existence as a necessary being. With regard to space, God’s omnipresence means that God

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<sup>112</sup> Numbers, 23:19-20.

does not change place.<sup>113</sup> For St. Augustine, the main motivation for the doctrine that God does not change is that the power of changeability requires an *efficient cause*.<sup>114</sup> This follows because in order for something to undergo change, there must be a prior source effecting the change.<sup>115</sup> Given that changeability arises from prior causes and conditions, changeable things lack self-existence, as they come into being and pass away dependently on external causes. Conversely, the divine essence does not proceed from causes, being itself the first cause of all changeable things.<sup>116</sup> Since God is the first cause for the chain of dependent causes without being itself a dependent cause, therefore, God has no efficient cause, and since an efficient cause is necessary for change, this means that God does not change.<sup>117</sup>

Among contemporary philosophers, a common objection against God's immutability is that, if God's inability to change is characterized in such a way that God does not change His will, then there arises a worry that this makes it impossible for God to perform a free action.<sup>118</sup> After all, if God is immutable, then God cannot change his will, and if God can change His will, then God's will is not immutable. Since God is immutable, however, it seems that God cannot effect His will otherwise than He does. It follows God does not create anything freely, but from the necessity of His ever-actual, and fully self-subsisting being.

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<sup>113</sup> Isaac Dorner, 1994. p. 102-103.

<sup>114</sup> The term *efficient cause* comes from Aristotle, who defines it as "the primary source of the change or rest". For Aristotle, this is the principle that causes something else to exist, like a sculptor who uses his talent to create a beautiful statue. See: Aristotle, *Physics*, 1991. Book II. p. 332.

<sup>115</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XII, Ch. 8. 1984. p. 480.

<sup>116</sup> St. Augustine understands the "first cause" to exist beyond the ordinary world of cause and effect. For Augustine, the first cause simply is the principle that causes the chain of causes and effects to exist, and that can exercise its causal power independently of any other being or condition. I am thankful to Professor Noah Lemos for providing this definition.

<sup>117</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XII, Ch. 8. 1984. p. 481.

<sup>118</sup> Isaac Dorner, 1994 and R.T. Mullins, 2013.

However, according to St. Augustine, the divine will has no efficient cause, which means that God's acts of willing are not subject to causality.<sup>119</sup> Since the divine will is thus free in this causally indeterministic sense, God does not act from necessity, for in this manner His decisions are not determined in virtue of prior causes and conditions.<sup>120</sup> Conversely, if the divine will had the power of change, it would cease to be immutable, and it would become susceptible to deficiency, like the created will is mutable, and susceptible to deficiency. St. Augustine remarks that the divine will differs from the created will specifically because it is immutably good, which means that it cannot choose to do evil, or to turn against its own nature that is immutably good:

“This I do know; that the nature of God cannot be deficient, at any time, anywhere, in any respect, while things which were made from nothing are capable of deficiency. And such things have efficient causes, the higher their degree of reality, the greater their activity in good, for it is then that they are really active; but in so far as they fail, and consequently act wrongly, their activity must be futile, and they have deficient causes.”<sup>121</sup>

This is to say that God's will cannot acquire a deficient nature, because it is uncreated, and immutably good. Conversely, the created will has the power to turn against its good nature, because it is only a mutable good, and although mutable things are created by God, they are not created from the immutable goodness of God. As St. Augustine says, God creates *ex nihilo* – from nothing.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, unlike the divine will, which is uncreated and immutably good, the created will is capable of mutability, because it admits of deficiency, and is capable of change.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> In Book XII in the *City of God*, St. Augustine offers a similar solution to problem of evil by arguing that it is a mistake to attribute an efficient cause to an evil will, because a will is not moved by something other than itself, for such a will would cease to be free, and freedom is essential to the nature of a will. In this chapter, I apply this Augustinian characterization of the will to the divine will. See: St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII, Ch. 8. 1984. pp. 480-481.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII, 8. 1984. p. 480.

<sup>122</sup> St. Augustine argues that the created will is capable of evil because it is created *ex nihilo* (“from nothing”). St. Augustine, *City of God*, 1984. Book XII, 1. p. 472.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

## 2. I. I. Divine Immutability and God as ‘Pure Act’

In order to explain the nature of action in God when God does not change, St. Aquinas elaborates on the distinction between potency, and act. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas maintains that God has no passive potentiality for change, because God is immutable, and perfect, as “potentiality is perfected by act”.<sup>124</sup> This is to say that God does not will something potentially before He wills it actually, since passing from potentiality to actuality implies mutability, and God is immutable. Consequently, there is no potentiality in the divine will, but only actuality.<sup>125</sup> Since God is therefore *actus purus* (pure act), Aquinas thinks that divine action proceeds from a single operation of the will that is “most perfectly united to its end.”<sup>126</sup> Hence, unlike creaturely will, God’s will does not proceed from potency to act.<sup>127</sup> Rather, according to Aquinas, God’s action emanates from an active power of the will that embraces the totality of being in its *pure actuality*:

“Every intellect that understands one thing after another is at one time understanding potentially, and at another time actually: for while it understands the first thing actually, it understands the second potentially. But the divine intellect is never in potentiality, but is always understanding actually. Therefore it understands things not successively, but altogether simultaneously.”<sup>128</sup>

It ought to be noted that the doctrine of *actus purus* comes from Aristotle.<sup>129</sup> According to Aristotle, the causative mind of God “exists without body and is impassive and unmixed with materiality, being in essence actuality.”<sup>130</sup> Aristotle thought that the causative mind does not

<sup>124</sup> St. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 1920. Q. 14. a. 2.

<sup>125</sup> St. Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei*. 1952. Q.3, art. 2. p. 89.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Q. 3, art. 1. p. 80.

<sup>128</sup> St. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*. 1924. p. 120.

<sup>129</sup> It ought to be noted that Aristotle’s conception of the ‘unmoved mover’ is not synonymous with the Hebrew-Christian God in Aquinas. It is, however, the origin of the doctrine of the ‘pure actuality’ of God that was adopted in scholastic thought, and therefore merits being mentioned here. See: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 1991.

<sup>130</sup> Aristotle cited in Victor Kal, 1988. p. 88.

proceed from potency to act, since “a mind which is in itself potential prior to cognition cannot at the same time be essentially actual cognition.”<sup>131</sup> Characterizing God as *pure act* means that the divine intellect is always actual, which is to say that it does not proceed from one state of cognition to another. Rather, it is a kind of perfection that adheres in God to an eminent degree.<sup>132</sup> According to Aristotle, in order for God to be fully actual, it must be the case that God’s intellect is always *in act*, for “only a mind which engages in an eternal act of thinking could be said to be in essence actuality.”<sup>133</sup>

For Aquinas, the primary motivation for the doctrine of God as ‘pure act’ is to affirm the existence of God as a necessary being, who could not have come into being *ex nihilo*, out of nothing.<sup>134</sup> Aquinas adopted this doctrine from Aristotle, who authored it in response to Parmenides: “nothing can come from nothing, for non-being does not exist; it is pure nothing, and nothing can come from nothing.”<sup>135</sup> Since potency characterizes only a potential for being, whereas God does not come into being from non-being, because nothing can come from non-being, Aquinas reasons that there can be no passive potency in God, since this would threaten God’s existence as self-sufficient ‘pure’ being. Since God is proclaimed to be *self-sufficient being*, and non-being cannot give rise to being, God must be fully in existence, and irreducible to unactualized potency in any form of its existence.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, the divine essence must be *pure actuality* in so far as it is actually in existence, which prevents God from falling into a state of non-existence in any form of its existence.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

<sup>132</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 44.

<sup>133</sup> Aristotle cited in Victor Kal, 1988. p. 88.

<sup>134</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 549.

<sup>135</sup> Aristotle cited in Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 549.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p. 551.

Aquinas' second motivation for the doctrine of God as 'pure act' is to establish the necessity of God as a creator.<sup>137</sup> To echo the words of Parmenides: "*Ex nihilo, nihilo fit*"; out of nothing, nothing comes.<sup>138</sup> Since God creates the world from no pre-existing matter, God must be fully self-subsisting, eternally existing being, for if this were not so, then God could not serve as the first cause of all other existing being. Furthermore, according to Aquinas, matter must be distinct from actual being, because if matter were made of actual being, then it would exist before becoming, whereas what is becoming does not yet exist.<sup>139</sup> Conversely, it is clear that anything that is made of matter is consistently passing in and out of being. It follows that matter, therefore, is neither self-subsisting nor eternal, which is to say that it needs a creator.

Given that material substance is therefore characterized by substantial change that in no way befits the creator, "the act of creation requires an infinitely active power, which can therefore be attributed only to God."<sup>140</sup> Since God is therefore fully *in act*, succession from potency to act does not appertain to it.<sup>141</sup> Consequently, when God wills something to exist, His action does not pass from potentiality to actuality; rather, the effect which is eternally in His will is made actual.<sup>142</sup> The implication of God's 'pure actuality' is that once God has willed a given effect, for instance, that He creates the dinosaurs at some time *T*, He has in virtue of His very act of willing caused the existence of the dinosaurs to begin at *T*. The dinosaurs, however, did not acquire this potency for existing from necessity, but from a free determination of the divine will, because God's creative

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Parmenides cited in Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 550.

<sup>139</sup> Aristotle cited in Garrigou-Lagrange, "Foundation for the Distinction between Potency and Act According to St. Thomas" in *God: His Existence and His Nature*, 1934. p. 549.

<sup>140</sup> According to Aristotle, as well as Aquinas, substantial change means the loss of a substance: it happens when the substance undergoing the change does not survive the change, as in the death of a lion, or the birth of another. Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 551.

<sup>141</sup> Aquinas, 1997. Q. 1, a. 5. p. 100.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

activities do not emanate from the nature of the divine will, but from a free act of willing.<sup>143</sup> Section I. II will address an objection to the doctrine of immutability from divine intentional behavior, and God's ability to effect temporal change in creation.

## 2. I. II. *Objection to Immutability: The Antinomy of God-World Relation*

In his work "*Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*", Isaac Dorner raises a worry that divine immutability is incompatible with God's agency to interact with the world of His creation without undergoing change in Himself.<sup>144</sup> According to Dorner, the fact that there is 'plurality, process, change, and contingency' in creation means that the exclusion of 'plurality, process, and changeableness' from the creator would preclude a living relation of God to the world.<sup>145</sup> If God has a living relation with humanity, Dorner argues, 'His being and will must undergo changes, for both are manifest in the world'.<sup>146</sup>

Dorner is certainly justified to observe that 'a living relation with creation' is necessary in order for God to be seen as "the vital absolute personality that stands in a living relation of mercy and love to the life of the world and its changing needs and conditions."<sup>147</sup> Dorner's account of divine action has a basis in historical Biblical exegesis, where soteriology, divine grace, and the incarnation exemplify the diversity of God's action in the world.<sup>148</sup> The interrelation between God and the world is evident in John 3:16 that says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one

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<sup>143</sup> I appreciate the assistance of Dr. John Cuddeback from Christendom College for explaining the nature of free action in Aquinas in a private conversation.

<sup>144</sup> Isaac Dorner, 1994. p. 95.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 110.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>149</sup> However, it is not evident that any of these Biblical belief systems forces us to forsake divine immutability.

According to St. Aquinas, changeability in an object willed by God does not entail changeability in God, since changeability in an object willed by God abides in the object, and not in God, who is the first cause of all changeable things.<sup>150</sup> In other words, Aquinas wants to say that change in an object being willed adheres to the object that acquires the change, whereas no change is to be predicated of an efficient cause in virtue of a change that occurs in the effect being willed.<sup>151</sup> In like manner as the making of a statue of Pericles does not presume any change in the sculptor that gives it form; similarly, effecting a formal cause to an object of creation does not presume any change in the giver of its form. It follows from this that God is able to effect changes in creation without undergoing a change in Himself, says Aquinas:

“Hence, the causality of the generator or of the alterer does not extend to everything which is found in the thing, but only to the form, which is brought from potency to actuality.”<sup>152</sup>

For Aquinas, furthermore, being and form are distinct, which is to say that being does not naturally subsist in the ‘quiddity’ of an object being willed.<sup>153</sup> This is to say that there is nothing in the inherent nature of an object that indicates that it ought to exist; rather, its existence is contingent on the divine will as the first efficient cause that wills it into existence through a single act of the will that is immutable, and eternal.<sup>154</sup> Consequently, God’s creative action is a virtue

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<sup>149</sup> John, 3:16.

<sup>150</sup> St. Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei*. Q. 3, art. 16. 1952. pp. 205-218.

<sup>151</sup> St. Aquinas. 1997. Q. 1, a. 5. p. 75.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Quiddity’ is here used as a synonym for the nature of a thing, which in this context refers to the formal cause of an object. See: note 8 in Aquinas, 1997. Q. 1, a. 5. p. 66.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

subsisting in God essentially, and only secondarily in creation. It follows from this that God possesses His creative agency even if it had never been manifested in creation.

Consider, for instance, God's response to prayer. Suppose that Mary prays to God for healing her mother, who is sick and suffering. Suppose that God responds to Mary's prayer by bestowing healing upon her mother. Since divine attributes adhere to the divine essence essentially, and all creative actions are formed in God's eternal wisdom, God did not undergo a change in Himself when he bestowed healing upon the mother, because this divine act is only an outward working of the divine will that proceeds from God essentially. Consequently, God does not undergo a change in effecting His will, for the outward workings of the divine will are already contained in the immediacy of His eternally enduring, and immutable essence.

Conversely, if God's creative action proceeds from His immutable essence eternally, and essentially, there arises a worry that this precludes God from effecting His will in the lives of creatures in a way that is meaningful, and intentional. After all, if there are no alternative courses of action for God, since all divine creative activities proceed from the divine will that is actual, and immutable, how can God meaningfully effect His will in creation? Aquinas responds that in God, power is the principle not of action, but of an effect: "Accordingly the notion of power is retained in God in so far as it is the principle of an effect."<sup>155</sup> Saying that God operates as the first efficient cause, since He has the 'power of effect' is to say that God acts with intention, for the fact that He does not act from necessity means that He must have some intention for acting.<sup>156</sup> This can be logically deduced, since an absence of intention for acting in an absence of necessity for acting would leave an explanatory gap in God's creative activity.

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<sup>155</sup> Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. Q. 25, a. 2. 1920. p. 347.

<sup>156</sup> Aquinas makes it explicit that God does not act from necessity in the *Summa Theologica*. Q. 25, a. 3. 1920. p. 349-353.

Furthermore, Aquinas says that “we attribute power to God by reason of that which is permanent and is the principle of power, and not by reason of that which is made complete by action.”<sup>157</sup> Hence, the intentionality of God’s action is safeguarded in the fact that all possible reasons God might have for acting are actual in His ever active cognition. Furthermore, since the divine mind is eternal, and therefore imperishable, His reasons for acting are always present in His ever-actual intellection. Therefore, God’s immutable intellection provides a foundation for divine intentional action, even if the divine intellect is immutable.

## 2. II. *Divine Freedom and Immutability: A Neo-Thomist Reconciliation*

*“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever  
thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from  
everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”<sup>158</sup>*

It has been hitherto argued that God effects all changes in creation through one simple operation of the divine will that is eternal, and immutable. Yet if the divine essence is of such nature that has no potentiality for change, it remains to be shown whether God is determined to will His creative activities by necessity, or whether He has creative choice with respect to actions that are performed. The objective of this writing thereof is to introduce a Neo-Thomist theory of liberty made explicit by a famed 20<sup>th</sup> century Dominican friar and scholar of St. Aquinas, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange.

According to Garrigou-Lagrange, the antinomies that are thought to obtain in divine attributes arise from an effort to characterize the divine essence through concepts that are

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<sup>157</sup> Aquinas. *De Potentia Dei*. 1952. Q. 1, a. 1. p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Psalm 90:2

ultimately based in human understanding.<sup>159</sup> Since we acquire our concepts from the finite depths of our minds, it is natural, and perhaps even necessary for us to construe divine attributes in terms of human faculties that can be immediately apprehended by our intellect. Consequently, a divine free act is regarded as analogous to a human free act. This, says Garrigou-Lagrange, is most improper, because it fails to embrace the completeness of differences between a creature that depends for its existence on the first cause, and the supreme being that is uncreated, uncaused, eternal, absolutely perfect and therefore not wanting of any accidents that are extrinsic to its pure goodness.<sup>160</sup> Since a human free act proceeds from a power of the will that is only relative to what is good, it has a faculty of election by which we can choose to defect from the good, says Garrigou-Lagrange.<sup>161</sup> This means that free choice in us involves a potency that enables our will to undergo change.

“Our liberty is but the dominating indifference of a potency or faculty with regard to particular goods, and that because our will is not goodness itself but only a faculty which relates to goodness.”<sup>162</sup>

By contrast, “divine liberty”, says Garrigou-Lagrange, “is the dominating indifference not of a potency but of a pure act of subsistent love”.<sup>163</sup> This means that a divine free act consists in independence from extrinsic causes, and freedom from deficiency that arises from being susceptible to such causes in particular, since it is “without change of will that He wills and produces the change which is accomplished in things at the time fixed from all eternity”.<sup>164</sup> Since

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<sup>159</sup> Rev. Garrigou-Lagrange. 1934. p. 352.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 353.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

the divine will is thus completely free from external causes, it follows that God is not causally determined to will particular goods or creatures into existence.

Furthermore, since God is fully self-subsisting and perfect in His goodness, He does not will particular goods or creatures of intrinsic necessity, writes Garrigou-Lagrange, “since He already possesses, without them, the sovereign Good which is identical with His ever actual and eternally subsisting love.”<sup>165</sup> It follows that God is intrinsically free to will them or not to will them, and it is in this that God’s creative freedom consists. According to Garrigou-Lagrange, mutability is not a necessary condition for a will that acts freely; what is sufficient for freedom is *only* that an agent acts freely.

“Only liberty of exercise pertains to the essence of liberty. To be free with respect to an object, it is not necessary for us to be able to love or hate it, to prefer it to another, or another to it; it is sufficient if we are able to love or not to love it. To be master of our act, it is enough if we can act or not to act.”<sup>166</sup>

Consequently, if an incompatibilist believes that there cannot be human creative freedom in God, since God is ‘pure act’, she would be justified in her belief. Should she however think that it follows from this that there is no free act of creation in God, she would be mistaken, for God’s creative acts are neither extrinsically nor intrinsically determined in God, who is ‘pure act’ in His eternal wisdom and love. Section II. I. will elucidate the concept of freedom in God by the development of a *virtual distinction* as found in Aquinas’ theology proper.

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<sup>165</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 353.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p. 322.

## 2. II. I. *Divine Freedom and the Virtual Distinction*

Perhaps a plausible response to Lagrange, and other Neo-Thomists like him, is to object that if the divine will has no motion from potentiality to actuality, then God's creative causality is eternally determined to its effect.<sup>167</sup> Since God is *actus purus*, it seems that God cannot begin to create something new from mere potentiality, and conversely, if God can begin to create something new that was previously lacking actuality, then it seems that there has been a change in God's will. Since the divine will does not have the power of alteration, however, it seems that God cannot effect His will otherwise than He does.

In order to respond to this objection, it is necessary to understand the concept of *actus purus*. God is not, says Aquinas, made of passive potency by which He could undergo alteration or change.<sup>168</sup> God is, however, capable of active potency, which refers to God's power to act as an efficient cause.<sup>169</sup> This means that God can bring about any effect that does not entail a contradiction in itself, and that does not contradict His immutably good nature.<sup>170</sup> If, however, God wills everything by a 'single operation of the will' that is eternal, and fully actual, how can a neo-Thomist account for indeterminacy in God's creative activities without endorsing a change in the divine will? A contemporary neo-Thomist, Steven J. Duby, responds:

“God's being is already fully realized without any reference to us, so that He was entirely free to create the world, and in deciding to create it, did so not by any shift from potency to act that would bear on the magnitude of his actuality but rather by an application or directing of his already complete actuality toward the world”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Aquinas addresses this objection in *the Summa Theologica*, Q. 19, a. 3. 1920. p. 263-266.

<sup>168</sup> According to Aquinas, matter is the fundamental principle of differentiation that produces changes in things. Since God does not have matter, it follows for Aquinas that God lacks passive potency. Aquinas, 1997. p. 77.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>170</sup> Steven J. Duby, 2017. pp. 144-162.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

Duby maintains that even though the present order of creation could have been different (in the way in which our intellect discerns such differences), nevertheless, the capacity to generate such differences does not predicate mutability of God. This follows because there is a *virtual distinction* in the operations and effects of the divine will that is discerned through the use of created intellect.<sup>172</sup> Duby explains that the virtual distinction is a close relative of a purely rational distinction (*ratio ratiocinans*), which is a distinction that is coming from an intellect that is actively discerning the distinction that is perceived.<sup>173</sup> As such, the rational distinction adheres only in the mind of a subject performing the discernment, and has no fundamental basis in reality.

In contrast to the rational distinction, however, the *virtual distinction* is not solely based in the mind, for it proceeds from an extra-mental reality in so far as the *virtus* or ‘excellence’ that is discerned is found in the reality from which the subject is obtaining the discernment.<sup>174</sup> That this excellence is aptly discerned by the subject in the confines of their immediate reality, however, does not mean that there is a foundation for such a discernment to be predicated of fundamental reality, that is the divine actuality of God. For while God is fully actual, and “ponders all things as if they were enacted in the present”<sup>175</sup>, as Boethius says, the way in which our intellect interacts with our immediate reality has superimposed to it a necessity for temporal as well as formal discernment that helps us to make sense of the temporo-spatial structure of our reality.

It follows from this, says Duby, that the formal as well as temporal diversity of divine operations is not a product of the mind only, since this excellence is truly manifest in the created order from a creaturely perspective.<sup>176</sup> It is true of our reality to say, for instance, that there is a

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Steven J. Duby, 2017. p. 149.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 150.

<sup>175</sup> Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, 1999. Ch. 6: 15-16. p. 112.

<sup>176</sup> Steven J. Duby, 2017. p. 150.

distinction between the existence of the universe in actuality, and the non-existence of the universe in potentiality. Since this kind of discernment is not found in divine actuality, which is pure actuality, it therefore follows that the discerned mutability of divine operations in creaturely actuality does not necessitate mutability in the fundamental actuality of God.<sup>177</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange makes a further distinction between what he calls an *intrinsically virtual distinction*, and an *extrinsically virtual distinction*.<sup>178</sup> According to Lagrange, an *extrinsically virtual distinction* originates in the created reality that is external to God, whereas an *intrinsically virtual distinction* originates in the divine essence.<sup>179</sup> According to Garrigou-Lagrange, there is no intrinsically virtual distinction in the divine essence, because God is altogether simple.<sup>180</sup> However, the *extrinsically virtual distinction* denotes a distinction that the created intellect is able to discern between potency and act in creation, because of the way in which the created reality is structured. According to Garrigou-Lagrange, this happens because the world of creation is constantly passing from potency to act. In the pure actuality of God, however, where potency is altogether inseparable from act, there is no foundation for such a discernment.<sup>181</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange elucidates the difference between the pure actuality of God and the immediate reality of creatures through an analogy to an infinite series.<sup>182</sup> Suppose that we have a set of numbers, which constitutes an infinite series. Let Fibonacci numbers provide such a series. Take the following set of numbers in an infinite series,  $F = \{1, 1, 2, 3, 5, n, \dots\}$ . Even though the sum of  $3 + 5$  can be added to increase the series successively - a process that can be continued *to*

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>178</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 63.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 63.

<sup>182</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange demonstrates the distinction through an analogy of days that extend infinitely into the past. Here, I have chosen numbers since numbers amount to an infinite series, whereas days have a finite characteristic.

*infinity* numerically, nothing may be added to an infinite series that would produce a real numerical change in the series. This follows because in *infinite actuality*, F has the capacity for neither increase nor decrease. Consequently, when F is considered from the perspective of its *pure actuality*, it remains immutably the same: “in as much as the series is infinite, it admits of no increase”, says Garrigou-Lagrange.<sup>183</sup>

Indeed, Garrigou-Lagrange says that it is only from a creaturely perspective that the series admits of any increase or change: “It is only from the finite point of view (*in ratione finiti*) that the series admits of increase, inasmuch as it is finite in one direction.”<sup>184</sup> Essentially, however, F amounts to no change, because no matter how many numbers we ‘add’ to it, essentially the series admits of no increase. This follows because all possible members are already contained in the complete actuality of the infinite series. Yet even though F is altogether complete and unchanging in itself, it may nevertheless admit of a *virtual* increase that is superimposed to it from the immediate reality of creatures. This increase is only *virtual* in so far as it originates in the created intellect: 2+3 is less than 3+5, and so on.

Similarly, the diverse operations of the divine will amount to no change in God, who is altogether unchanging in the completeness of *pure actuality*.<sup>185</sup> Recognizing therefore that we may discern a *virtual distinction* between potency and act in our immediate reality, whereas no such discernment can be applied to the infinite essence of God, the neo-Thomist can resolve the antinomy of divine immutability, and God’s capacity to will opposite effects in creation.

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<sup>183</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 48.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>185</sup> Steven J. Duby, 2017. p. 150.

## 2. II. I. I. *Virtual Distinction and The Modal Collapse Argument*

Perhaps the most prominent argument against divine immutability in contemporary literature is articulated by R.T. Mullins. This is the ‘modal collapse argument’, which is essentially the claim that an immutable God could not have created any world other than the present one, since this would imply mutability in God’s cognitive state. Conversely, if God had the potential to create a different world, or to abstain from creating altogether, then there would be unactualized potential in God, and God would cease to be ‘pure act’.<sup>186</sup> According to Mullins, saying that ‘God is pure act’ results in a modal collapse, because it says that there is only one possible act of creation and that is the actual one. This would mean that God must necessarily create the actual world, and everything in it must unfold exactly as it does.<sup>187</sup> This chapter will respond to this argument by showing that the doctrine of *pure act* can yet be understood in such a way as not to result in a modal collapse, which no proponent of simplicity, immutability, or the doctrine of pure act surely desires.

It ought to be noted that virtually every classical and medieval thinker, including St. Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas, all believed in some form of divine simplicity, and all were unanimous that God is immutable. Their reasons for believing this cannot be explained by Biblical dogma, since there is no verse in the Bible that declares that ‘God is pure act’.<sup>188</sup> Additionally, these thinkers vehemently defended the idea that God acts freely, and that the present order of creation is not the only one that could possibly exist. For millennia, these thinkers were acutely aware of the objections raised against their doctrine, including the argument from divine

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<sup>186</sup> R.T. Mullins, 2013. pp. 181-203.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p. 196.

<sup>188</sup> R.T. Mullins points out that divine simplicity, which is intimately connected with the doctrine of God as ‘pure act’ has its origins in Greek philosophy. Indeed, the idea of divine immutability gains its fullest expression in the Neoplatonic thought of Plotinus. See: Mullins, 2013. p. 190.

determinism. Yet none of them considered such arguments so persuasive as to deny the concept of simplicity. Aquinas raises this concern in the *Summa*, where he surmises as follows:

“Some laid it down in such way that as from the action of nature nothing else can happen beyond what actually takes place – as, for instance, from the seed of man, a man must come, and from that of an olive, an olive; so from the divine operation there could not result other things, nor another order of things, than that which now is.”<sup>189</sup>

According to Aquinas, the doctrine of God as ‘pure act’ means that God has no unactualized potency in His essence.<sup>190</sup> It does not mean, however, that God has no potency whatsoever. After all, God created the material universe, and his act of creation alone suffices to show that there is active potency in God. What Aquinas is talking about when he refers to God as ‘pure act’, therefore, is that there is no passive potency in God, by which God could undergo alteration or change. Perhaps Mullins really means passive potency, when he makes the following claim: “If it is possible for God to do something that God does not do, God has a potency to do it”.<sup>191</sup>

Conversely, Mullins reasons the following: “If it is possible that God does anything other than what He in fact does do, He has potential that is unactualized.”<sup>192</sup> How might the *virtual distinction*, as presented above, respond to Mullins’ concern? Strictly speaking, the virtual distinction states that “the pure actuality of God is equivalent, in an eminent way, to potency and act, which are distinct in created things”.<sup>193</sup> Consequently, while it is true that the created intellect may distinguish unactualized potency in created actuality, this does not translate to unactualized potency in the divine actuality of God, as can be shown.

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<sup>189</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 25, a. 5, 1920. p. 356.

<sup>190</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Q. 14, a. 2. 1920.

<sup>191</sup> R.T. Mullins. 2013. pp. 181-203.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934. p. 63.

Consider the following. Let S1 refer to the actual world, and S2 refer to some other world. Suppose that God is not subject to time and space, but that He is eternal, immutable, and therefore, pure actuality. Suppose that such a God has created the actual world (S1). Even though, in such a case, S2 would represent unactualized potency when contrasted with S1, it does not represent unactualized potency in the pure actuality of God, because not both S1 and S2 emanate from the pure actuality of God. Since God is pure actuality, any potency that proceeds from the divine will must in itself be fully actual.<sup>194</sup> Consequently, if God had intrinsically willed S2 rather than S1, S1 would not be the actual world, and S1 would not emanate from the divine will as unactualized potential, since it would not be an instance of active potency actually emanating from the pure actuality of God.<sup>195</sup> For, as Aquinas says, “active power exists in God according to the measure in which He is actual.”<sup>196</sup>

Conversely, in order for there to be some kind of change in God, there would have to be a change in at least some aspect of the divine actuality, at least in potentiality. However, since God is pure actuality, there is only one intrinsic operation of the divine will, and that is the actual one. Consequently, God does not change in virtue of actualizing S1 rather than S2, since only one is ever actual in the pure actuality of God. Rather, it is only by reason of created intellect that we can say that God’s will would have undergone a change had he actualized a different ‘possible’ world, because we perceive a *virtual distinction* between a potential world, and the actual one.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> St. Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. 1920. Q. 25, a. 1. pp. 345-347.

<sup>195</sup> Some philosophers may object that for God to effect His will differently across possible worlds contradicts the transitivity of identity principle, if it is granted that God’s will is one with His essence. Even though this topic merits to be discussed at greater length than can be afforded in this paper, it may be briefly stated here that there is no possible world in God that is not actual. Consequently, there would, at best, be only a *virtual distinction* in the operations and effects produced, since God is eternal, and perfectly united to His one pure act of subsistent love.

<sup>196</sup> St. Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. 1920. p. 348.

<sup>197</sup> For a thorough elaboration of the virtual distinction as found in Aquinas’ theology proper, see Garrigou-Lagrange, 1934, pp. 59-94, and Steven J. Duby, 2017. pp. 148-162.

Intrinsically, however, there is no such distinction to be found in God, because God operates through one simple act of the will that is immutable, and eternal.

## 2. II. I. II. *Modal Collapse and the Euthyphro Dilemma.*

Perhaps Mullins might respond to the above by stating that the *virtual distinction* proves nothing other than that God necessarily willed the actual world. After all, if God only admits of active potency, why should we presume that God's creative act – the only one that there now is – would have been different even in the divine actuality of God? Perhaps the difficulty with the alleged incompatibility of free action, and God's pure actuality can be demonstrated more clearly via an analogy to the *Euthyphro dilemma*.<sup>198</sup> Suppose, with Mullins, that “there is only one possible world – this world.”<sup>199</sup> Let us call such a world W.

With regard to W, one may be right to inquire as to whether (a) God executes the actual world, W, *in virtue of* the fact that W belongs to God's pure actuality, or whether it is rather the case that (b) God executes W, and W obtains in God's pure actuality *in virtue of* the fact that God executes it. The order of reference should hardly be considered inconsequential here, since it shows that if (a) is true, then God's action is necessary, since it follows with necessity from (a) that God executes actual world, and “everything must follow exactly as it does”.<sup>200</sup> If, however, the divine actuality admits of W *in virtue of* the fact that God executed it (b), one may consistently hold that God may have executed some other actuality instead, since it states that W obtains in God's pure actuality in virtue of God's active power.

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<sup>198</sup> This refers to Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*, where Socrates enquires whether something is pious because it is loved by the gods, or whether something is loved by the gods because it is pious (Plato, 1992. p. 10). I give credit to my advisor in religious studies and professor in medieval and renaissance studies, Professor Alexander Angelov, for bringing it to my attention.

<sup>199</sup> R.T. Mullins. 2013. pp. 181-203.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

Yet perhaps this addresses nothing more than the root of the disagreement between the opponent and proponent of the thesis, since the opponent would have to invariably say that (a) is more consistent with the divine essence, particularly if God's intrinsic actuality is such that it admits of no other effect intrinsically. The opponent, however, has provided no reasons to suppose that God's active potency cannot will any other effect intrinsically, particularly if she admits with Aquinas that God is omnipotent, and can will any effect that does not constitute a contradiction in His essence, and that does not constitute a contradiction in itself.<sup>201</sup> Consequently, even though God did will the present order of creation, the opponent cannot demonstrate that God did so from intrinsic necessity. It ought to be added that willing an 'alternate' actuality would not constitute a change in God, who is eternally pure actuality, as has been shown.

Should the reader find this approach unconvincing, however, section II. II. will consider one last approach to preserve divine freedom given the doctrine of God's 'pure actuality'.

## 2. II. II. *God's 'Pure Actuality' and The Fallacy of the Consequent*

In his article concerning God's knowledge in the *Summa Theologica*, St. Aquinas presents a compelling case against the objection that divine omniscience is incompatible with free action in God and creatures by pointing out that the argument commits a modal fallacy.<sup>202</sup> I purport to show here that the argument given for the incompatibility of free action in God given God's pure actuality fails for the same reason.<sup>203</sup> Suppose that the following premises for the incompatibility of God's pure actuality and freedom are true.

- (1) Active power, P, exists in God according to the measure in which He is

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<sup>201</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Q. 25, a. 3. 1920. p. 351.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. Q. 14, a. 13. 1920. p. 207.

<sup>203</sup> This argument is parallel in form to one that is given in favor of human freedom in Alvin Plantinga, 1986. p. 238.

actual.<sup>204</sup>

- (2) Necessarily, for any action A that is executed by P, if A is actual, then A is the only possible action that is executed by P.<sup>205</sup>
- (3) Necessarily, no state of affairs that is inconsistent with A can be executed by P.
- (4) God is not free with respect to P.

What the argument wants to say is that any action A that is executed by an active power, P, is absolutely necessary, because it is actual. According to St. Aquinas, however, in order for a conditional proposition to be true by absolute necessity, or with *necessity of the consequent*, it must have a consequent that is absolutely necessary.<sup>206</sup> With this in mind, consider two distinctive ways of reading premise (2). Evidently, (b) is implicit in the argument.

- (a) Necessarily, for any action A that is executed by P, if A is actual, then A is the only possible action that is executed by P.
- (b) If A is executed by P, and A is actual, then it is necessary that A is the only possible action that is executed by P.

Now, consider the conditional proposition,

- (c) If A is executed by P, and A is actual, then A is the only possible action that is executed by P.

According to Aquinas, (a) is a true proposition expressing a necessity of the consequence.<sup>207</sup> Reasonably, it says that the consequent of (c) necessarily follows from its

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<sup>204</sup> St. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Q. 25, a. 3. 1920. p. 348.

<sup>205</sup> According to Aquinas, whereas the will commands an action, the divine power executes the action. Consequently, an analogy from the divine power is more pertinent here. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Q. 25, a. 3. 1920. p. 357.

<sup>206</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Q. 14, a. 13. o. 2., 1920. p. 209.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

antecedent. However, what is being expressed in (a) is a conditional truth, which imposes no necessity upon the consequent of (c). On the other hand, (b) expresses a *fallacy of the consequent*. It says that the necessity of the consequent follows from the necessity of the antecedent, which is a modal fallacy.<sup>208</sup> Conversely, what the argument needs to show in order to be true by absolute necessity, or with *necessity of the consequent*, is that the consequent of (c) is absolutely necessary (b). Only if (b) could be demonstrated true by absolute necessity, could one be justified in saying that no other actuality could have ever flown from the divine will, in any other actual world, beyond the one that is now emanating from the divine power, and constitutes this actual world.

However, the truth of (b) is not supported by the argument, and thereafter the determinist is in luck, since this would commit her to a modal fallacy. Consequently, the argument imposes no intrinsic necessity upon the present order of actuality. Hence, even though it is now necessary that God executed the actual world, the argument cannot establish that the divine actuality must have been intrinsically such that no other actuality could have been actual to the divine power beyond the one that is now actual. It follows from this that God's pure actuality could have been intrinsically different, in so far as God's act of willing it does not constitute a contradiction in itself, and does not violate God's intrinsically good nature.

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

*Conclusion.*

Chapter II has argued that God is able to freely effect changes in creation even though God is immutable, and therefore, pure actuality. It was argued that mutability in God's nature would not only make it impossible for God to act as the first efficient cause of all causality; it would also subject Him to passive potency, whereas God is understood to be unlimited by any potency to act. The *virtual distinction* as derived from Aquinas' theology proper has elucidated the capacity for a free action in God without predicating any change of the pure actuality of God. Given that God is not driven by any internal or external necessity to act, freedom in God consists in the free determination of active potency in God that is intrinsically determined only by God's pure act of subsistent love.

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