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DIVINE SIMPLICITY, CONTINGENT TRUTHS, AND EXTRINSIC MODELS OF DIVINE KNOWING

W. Matthews Grant

A well-known objection to divine simplicity holds that the doctrine is incompatible with God's contingent knowledge. I set out the objection and reject two problematic solutions. I then argue that the objection is best answered by adopting an "extrinsic model of divine knowing" according to which God's contingent knowledge, which varies across worlds, does not involve any intrinsic variation in God. Solutions along these lines have been suggested by others. This paper advances the discussion by developing and offering partial defenses of three such models.

1. *Divine Simplicity and the Problem of God's Contingent Knowledge*

God's contingent knowledge appears to pose a serious difficulty for the doctrine of divine simplicity.¹ To appreciate this difficulty, consider the central claim of the doctrine, the Simplicity Thesis:

ST: The divine substance is not composed in any way; nor are there entities intrinsic to God distinct from the divine substance.²

¹Difficulties of the sort I present here have been recognized by friend and foe of the doctrine. For the former, see Jeffrey E. Brower, "Simplicity and Aseity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. T. P. Flint and M. C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 117–123; and Alexander R. Pruss, "On Two Problems of Divine Simplicity," *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* 1 (2008), 157–166. For the latter, see Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 117–118; and Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 107–114. Brower and Pruss attempt to solve the problem by suggesting what I call "extrinsic models" of divine knowing, but the development and defense of their models is relatively brief (as might be expected given that their papers are not focused exclusively on this problem).

²I use "entity" as a generic term covering positive ontological items of any sort, including substance, subject, accident, attribute, feature, trope, property, matter, form, essence, act of existence, state, action, etc.; but not lacks or privations. The commonplace distinction between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" has proven difficult to analyze, but I will assume that even short of a satisfactory analysis we can grasp the meaning of the terms well enough to proceed. In his explication of divine simplicity, Brower relies on the intuitive distinction between "intrinsic predication," which characterizes things "in virtue of the way they themselves are" and "extrinsic predication," which characterizes things "in virtue of their relations or lack of relations to other things" ("Simplicity and Aseity," 124 n. 1). Given this distinction (which Brower draws from David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1986], 61–62), we can say that it is (or, at least, can be) solely in virtue of what is *intrinsic* with respect to some subject S—that is, solely in virtue of what S is or has in itself—that an intrinsic predication of the form "S is F" is true. By contrast, an extrinsic predication of the form "S is F" is true, not solely in virtue of what is intrinsic to S, but rather at least in



Now, assuming that God is omniscient and there are contingent truths, it follows that God has Contingent Knowledge:

CK: God knows some contingent truth.

But one might assume that God's knowing some truth, T, implies something intrinsic to God, such as God's belief that T, or perhaps just God's state or act of knowing T. What's more, one might suppose that such states would not exist were God not knowing T. Thus, we have the following thesis about God's knowledge (the Knowledge Thesis):

KT: Necessarily, God's knowing some truth T implies some entity intrinsic to God that would not exist were God not knowing T.³

Let us take the following as an example of a contingent truth God knows:

(1) Barack Obama is the 44th president of the United States.

Necessarily, God knows (1) only if (1) is true. Since (1) is a contingent truth, it follows that God's knowing (1) is contingent. But, by (KT), God's knowing (1) implies some entity intrinsic to God that would not exist were God not knowing (1). Since there are worlds in which God does not know (1), there are worlds in which this entity does not exist. So, God's knowing (1) implies some contingent entity intrinsic to God.

Our problem arises when we recall that God is a necessary being:

NB: The divine substance exists necessarily.⁴

As we have seen, the conjunction of (CK) and (KT) implies the existence of a contingent entity intrinsic to God. Since an entity that exists contingently cannot be identical to an entity that exists necessarily, it follows from the conjunction of (CK), (KT), and (NB), that there is distinction in God between the necessarily existing divine substance and the contingent entity or entities implied by God's contingent knowledge. Such distinction contradicts (ST). So, (CK), (KT), (NB), and (ST) are incompatible.

part in virtue of S's relations or lack of relations to other things. We can say, further, that an ideal inspector could determine what entities are intrinsic with respect to S by inspecting S alone, whereas knowing S's extrinsic properties (or what extrinsic predications are true of S) would require inspecting objects apart from S. Finally, we can say that if an entity that is intrinsic with respect to S ceases to exist, then either S itself ceases to exist (if the entity is S's essence or belongs to S essentially), or S undergoes a real, as opposed to merely Cambridge, change. For a discussion of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, see Brian Weatherson, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Properties," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/intrinsic-extrinsic/>.

³Although implication is typically thought of as a relation that holds between propositions, I here use "implies" in an extended sense to relate non-propositional objects. (KT) means that in any world in which God knows some truth T, there is some entity intrinsic to God that would not exist were God not knowing T.

⁴I intend (NB) and (CK) to be understood according to the standard, possible worlds interpretation of the modal concepts "necessary" and "contingent," and I intend "God" and "the divine substance" to serve as rigid designators. Thus, (NB) means that one and the same individual, the divine substance (or God), exists in all possible worlds.

In what follows, I consider how one wishing to retain (ST) might respond to the problem. Not surprisingly, the options are to reject at least one of (CK), (KT), or (NB). In the first section, I consider responses that reject (CK) and (NB), arguing that these responses are too costly, or that they leave significant problems unaddressed. In the third section, I argue that the problem is best solved by rejecting (KT). Rejecting (KT) means endorsing an extrinsic model of divine knowing. I present and offer partial defenses of three such models.

2. Problematic Solutions: Rejecting (CK) or (NB)

By rejecting (CK), we could retain (KT) and (NB) without compromising (ST); for (KT) without (CK) would not force us to admit a contingent entity in God distinct from the necessarily existing divine substance. On the other hand, if we reject (NB) and hold that God is, in the standard sense, a contingent being, then (ST) could be preserved alongside (KT) and (CK). For then the contingent entity in God required by the conjunction of (KT) and (CK) need not be distinct from the contingently existing divine substance. On either solution, God could be said to know whatever truths he knows (whether only necessary truths or also contingent) in virtue of a single entity that is identical with the divine substance itself.⁵ Unfortunately, neither solution is attractive.

To reject (CK) requires either denying that there are contingent truths, or admitting contingent truths, but denying that God knows any of them. The latter violates omniscience. The former means nothing could really be (or have been) otherwise, with the consequence that neither God nor any human being could really do (or have done) otherwise.

Rejecting (NB) would not work for someone who thinks God's perfection requires that he exist necessarily in the standard sense, or who posits God to account for beings that exist contingently in the standard sense. Still, even were one prepared to reject (NB),⁶ there remain significant problems in retaining (ST) alongside (CK) and (KT). To appreciate these, consider the actual world, *W*, in which God knows

- (1) Barack Obama is the 44th president of the United States.

Since (1) is a contingent truth, it might have been false. Indeed, there is a possible world, *W**, where instead of (1), it is true that

- (7) John McCain is the 44th president of the United States.

⁵I will assume, as is required by these solutions, that a subject can know multiple truths in virtue of being in a single state, and that there is, in principle, no upper limit to the number of truths the divine being could know in virtue of a single state.

⁶One who denied (NB) might still affirm the traditional claim "God is a necessary being" according to a different interpretation. For various interpretations, see Brian Leftow, "Necessary Being," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/K052>.

Now, it is natural to suppose that if (7) had been true, God would have known its truth. And by "God would have known its truth," we presumably mean that the very being who in the actual world created heaven and earth, and knows (1), would have known (7) were it true. Yet, by (ST) and (KT), the God who knows (1) in the actual world does not know (7) in W^* . To preserve (ST), one has to say that the entity intrinsic to God required by (KT) for God's knowledge of (1) is identical to the divine substance. This move makes the divine substance contingent (in the standard sense), but that by itself is not a problem so long as we are willing to give up (NB). But since, by (KT), this entity would not exist were God not knowing (1), a further implication of identifying this entity with the divine substance is that, were God not knowing (1), the divine substance wouldn't exist. Thus, the God who knows (1) in the actual world simply wouldn't be were (1) false. But, then, had (7) rather than (1) been true, the God who knows (1) in the actual world would not have known (7).

Just as retaining (ST), (KT), and (CK) precludes God's knowing otherwise, it also precludes God's doing otherwise. Consider God's creating our universe (call it alpha). To say God could have created a different universe, beta, is to say there is a possible world in which God creates, not alpha, but beta. It is also to say that

(8) God creates alpha.

is, in the standard sense, a contingent truth, since there will be at least one world, the world in which God creates beta, in which (8) is not true. Assuming God is omniscient, he knows the truth of (8). But, since (KT) requires an entity intrinsic to God that would not exist were God not knowing (8), and since (ST) requires us to identify this entity with the divine substance, it follows that the God who creates alpha in the actual world would not exist in any world in which (8) is false. But, then, there is no world in which the God who creates alpha does otherwise than create alpha.

3. *Rejecting (KT): Extrinsic Models of Divine Knowing*

The most promising way for a proponent of (ST) to respond to the problem of God's contingent knowledge is to reject (KT). To reject (KT), while retaining (ST), (CK), and (NB), requires endorsing an *extrinsic model of divine knowing*, a model on which God's contingent knowledge, which varies across worlds, does not involve any intrinsic variation in God. On an extrinsic model, whatever variations are required across worlds by God's varying contingent knowledge are outside of, or extrinsic to, God. In what follows, I sketch and offer partial defenses of three extrinsic models. My aim is not to persuade the reader that one of these models is true. More modestly, I will count it a success if I have shown that an extrinsic model is *prima facie* defensible, with the consequence that a proponent of (ST) has a plausible response to the problem of God's contingent knowledge.

Before introducing the first model, it is useful to consider why someone might embrace (KT). (KT) would appear to follow if we accept

- (a) God's knowledge is a species of belief.
- (b) Necessarily, God's beliefs are true, and meet whatever other conditions are required for beliefs to constitute knowledge.
- (c) God's beliefs are intrinsic states of God.

Given (a) and (b), God knows (1) if and only if he believes (1). Add (c) and it would seem to follow that God's knowing (1) implies some entity intrinsic to God, God's belief that (1), that would not exist were God not knowing (1). (KT) would also seem to follow if we simply hold

- (d) Knowing is an intrinsic act or state of God.

Given (d), there will be some entity intrinsic to God, God's act or state of knowing (1), that would not exist were God not knowing (1).

There is a strategy for blocking the apparent entailment from (a)–(c) or (d) to (KT). Suppose God's intrinsic beliefs (or acts or states of knowing) have their content, not in themselves, but in virtue of relations to things extrinsic to God. A divine belief, for example, is an intrinsic state, and in the actual world God has a belief whose content is that Obama is president. This content is given by the way things stand in the actual world. Were McCain president, God's *same* belief would have a different content, reflecting the different facts. Because the content of God's beliefs is given by the way things are, his beliefs are true in every world. But, since it is the same beliefs whose contents vary across worlds, the fact that God believes different truths in different worlds does not entail any variation in God's intrinsic states.⁷

Unfortunately, this strategy for accepting (a)–(c) or (d) while avoiding (KT) runs afoul of a proposition I find hard to give up, namely, Content Essentialism, the claim that beliefs, and states or acts of knowing, have their content essentially. Content Essentialism has no implications for how content is determined. What it does imply is that, for any beliefs (or knowings) *a* and *b*, if *a* and *b* have different content, they are not the same belief (or knowing), and if a belief (or knowing) has a content *p*, there is no world in which the same belief (or knowing) exists without that content. Agreeing to Content Essentialism means that God's belief or knowing (in an alternate world) that McCain is president could not be identical to his belief or knowing that Obama is president. Given (a)–(c) or (d) plus Content

⁷The example could just as easily be given in terms of acts or states of knowing, rather than beliefs. Something like, if not identical to, this approach can be found in E. M. Zemach and D. Widerker, "Facts, Freedom and Foreknowledge," *Religious Studies* 23 (1987), 25–26 (though Zemach and Widerker's discussion is not in connection with divine simplicity); and William E. Mann, "Simplicity and Immutability in God," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (1983), 273–274. Of course, to preserve (ST), a proponent of this strategy would need to hold that God has just one belief or knowledge state that is identical to the divine substance.

Essentialism, there is something intrinsic to God, God's belief or knowing that Obama is president, which would not exist were Obama not president. (a)–(c) or (d) plus Content Essentialism entails (KT).⁸

Those prepared to reject Content Essentialism can endorse an extrinsic model along the lines of the strategy described above, denying (KT) even while maintaining that a divine belief or act of knowing is intrinsic to God.⁹ The models I develop, by contrast, are all consistent with Content Essentialism. They avoid (KT) by denying the intrinsicness of God's contingent cognitional states.

3.1 The Belief Model

Our first model, the Belief Model, accepts (a) and (b), but rejects (c), denying that God's beliefs are intrinsic.

Let us assume that the objects of belief are propositions and that propositions are abstract entities of a platonic sort, entities that exist independently of the subjects who believe them. To believe is to take a proposition to be true. A familiar distinction contrasts "occurrent" with "dispositional" beliefs. An occurrent belief is a conscious act of taking a proposition to be true. A dispositional belief is a state that disposes one occurrently to believe a proposition is true when one actually considers the proposition.

⁸As is probably clear from the context of our discussion, I mean Content Essentialism to range over individual beliefs as well as belief types. Thus, according to Content Essentialism, individual beliefs *a* and *b* could not be the same individual belief if they have different contents. (Put differently, according to Content Essentialism, necessarily if an individual belief *a* is a token of the belief type "that Obama is president" and individual belief *b* is a token of the belief type "that McCain is president," then *a* and *b* are not the same individual belief.) Could there be a belief that has no content? If so, I do not intend Content Essentialism to apply to such beliefs. I assume, however, that no belief without content (if there are such beliefs) could be true or false. Thus, the suggestion that there might be beliefs without content is of no use to one wishing to affirm (a)–(c), while avoiding (KT). To be clear, I am not claiming that, given Content Essentialism, no entity intrinsic to a subject could be a common *component* of beliefs or knowings with different contents; only that, if some entity were a belief or knowing *simpliciter*, that entity could not exist with a different content, with the consequence that no intrinsic belief or knowing could exist with a different content. Nor am I claiming that externalism about content runs afoul of Content Essentialism. "Externalism" is commonly presented as the view that mental content can vary without any intrinsic variation in the mental subject. (See, for instance, Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 49–54.) One can affirm both Content Essentialism and Externalism provided one denies that a belief or knowing whose content is externally determined is intrinsic to its subject. This, I suggest, is what externalists should say, and what many do say. Allowing that a mental state might be extrinsic to its subject suggests the possibility that the state is at least partially constituted (and, given Content Essentialism, essentially constituted) by the extrinsic items that determine its content. If so, "content externalism," as it is sometimes called, would seem a bit of a misnomer, since what determines content would not be extrinsic to the mental state at all, but only to the subject to whom the state belongs. In the extrinsic models I propose, the content of God's contingent cognitions is essentially determined by constituents of those cognitions.

⁹For some who have rejected Content Essentialism apart from theological concerns, see John Gibbons, "Identity Without Supervenience," *Philosophical Studies* 70 (1993), 59–79; and Bryan Frances, "Externalism, Physicalism, Statues, and Hunks," *Philosophical Studies* 133 (2007), 199–232.

Since dispositional states are generally thought to be intrinsic to their subjects,¹⁰ it may be thought that, if God has dispositional beliefs, these would have to be intrinsic to God.¹¹ But I assume as a consequence of the divine cognitive perfection that whatever God believes he is actively believing—that if God has beliefs, they are all occurrent beliefs.¹² And it is not clear that acts of believing need be thought of as intrinsic to God. On the contrary, it would seem open to a proponent of (ST) to view divine acts of believing as relations to the propositions believed, relations that do not require any intrinsic features of God that would be otherwise were the relations not holding, were God not so believing. God's believing that (1), for example, would consist in nothing but God's relation—the relation of believing—to proposition (1). It follows that, were God not believing (1), God would be intrinsically no different.¹³

The central claims of the Belief Model are as follows:

- (a) God's knowledge is a species of belief.
- (b) Necessarily, God's beliefs are true, and meet whatever other conditions are required for beliefs to constitute knowledge.
- (e) It belongs to God's essence to believe whatever propositions are true.
- (f) All God's beliefs are occurrent acts of believing.
- (g) All God's acts of believing contingent propositions consist in relations to propositions that exist outside of God.
- (h) These relations do not involve any intrinsic states of God that would be otherwise were the relations not holding, were God not so believing.

¹⁰See Sungho Choi and Michael Fara, "Dispositions," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, forthcoming, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/dispositions/>.

¹¹There would not seem to be any conflict, as such, in a dispositional belief's both being intrinsic with respect to the believer and having as its object (what the belief is about or that) an independently existing proposition. For instance, even given Content Essentialism, the belief could be intrinsic provided that what proposition is believed (and thus the content of the belief) is determined or necessitated by whatever item(s) intrinsic to the believer constitute the belief, such that an ideal inspector could know what proposition is believed solely by inspecting the believer.

¹²See also Tully Borland, "Omniscience and Divine Foreknowledge," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006), ed. J. Fieser and B. Dowden, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/omnisci/>.

¹³Because occurrent believing and knowing seem to be operations of a subject, I speak of God's occurrent *acts* of believing and knowing. If one thinks occurrent believing and knowing ought to be classified as "states" rather than "acts," one can substitute "state" for "act" without affecting the substance of the arguments that follow. Note also that, although all three models understand God's contingent cognitions to involve relations to objects outside God, they remain neutral on what exactly relations are (universals, tropes, or something else).

What objections can be raised against this account?¹⁴

The most likely objections will target (g) and (h).¹⁵ With respect to (g), some may be puzzled at the thought that believing could be a mere relation to a proposition. Yet, philosophers have sometimes identified mental acts or states with relations to various objects. Prominent accounts of perception, for example, view perceiving as a relation.¹⁶ And, indeed, some have argued that believing is a relation. Michael Thau, for instance, observes that “the philosophical conception of belief according to which beliefs . . . are internal states of subjects is usually assumed to be an utter triviality with nary a thought that it might be a substantive claim for which argument is needed.”¹⁷ But, says Thau, “Once you see that beliefs are propositions and believing is nothing more than a relation to a proposition, there’s no reason to think that the absence of internal belief states would make the existence of beliefs in any way less robust.”¹⁸

Of course, the fact that some philosopher has identified believing with a relation does not make it true. But a proponent of the Belief Model can take some comfort in the fact that the move is not unprecedented, even apart from concerns about divine simplicity. Furthermore, if believing is taking a proposition to be true, it seems that, minimally, believing will *involve* a relation of the believer to a proposition. Considerations of parsimony

¹⁴One question (objection?), which I here take up only briefly, is whether, if we countenance the Belief Model, we shouldn’t make a similar move regarding *any* predication of *any* property to *any* substance. Any true predication of the form “S is P” would be made true by S’s standing in an exemplification relation to the abstract property P, and S would not differ intrinsically were “S is P” false, that is, were S not standing in the exemplification relation to P. Readers will differ in their estimates of the plausibility of the suggested move, but it should be clear that a defender of the Belief Model is not, as such, committed to its plausibility. A defender of the Belief Model might well think that it makes no sense to speak of a subject of which absolutely nothing is true independently of its relations to other entities. Certainly, as I have presented the Belief Model, it would be possible for a proponent to say that the truth-maker for “God is good” or “God believes whatever propositions are true” is simply God. Likewise, it would be possible for him to say that the truth-maker for “Obama is human” is simply Obama. The foregoing examples are of essential predications, but a defender of the Belief Model need not find the suggested move plausible even if we restrict it to all contingent predications. For example, he might think it implausible, when it ceases to be true that “Cecilia is 35 inches tall” and is now true that “Cecilia is 36 inches tall,” to say that Cecilia has undergone a merely Cambridge change. My thanks to Tom Flint for raising the question.

¹⁵Section 3.2 considers an extrinsic model that rejects (a).

¹⁶Sense-datum theories of perception, for instance, view perceiving as a relation to a sense-datum, while disjunctive theories of perception view perceiving as a relation to an ordinary physical object. See Tim Crane, “The Problem of Perception,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/perception-problem/>. See also Joseph Campbell, *Reference and Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 114–120; and Tom Stoneham, “A Neglected Account of Perception,” *Dialectica* 62 (2008), 307–322. Stoneham (313) even suggests that perceptions are relations to objects which might come and go without any intrinsic change in the perceiving subject.

¹⁷Michael Thau, *Consciousness and Cognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 62.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 66. Thau defends the view again in “Precis,” *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2007), 565–570. See also Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 21, where he takes both “believing” and “knowing” to be relations of subjects to propositions.

might then be thought to place the burden on those who would argue, against (g), that believing is something else than (in addition to) this relation, or against (h), that even if believing *is* this relation, it is a relation that involves an intrinsic state of the believer that would be otherwise were he not so believing. Perhaps, the best way to test whether something more than a believing relation is needed is to consider whether the objections that have been raised against Thau's proposal pose a problem for the Belief Model. I will consider what I take to be the two main objections.

The first objection is relevant to claim (h) of the Belief Model, since it allows that believing might be a relation to a proposition, but maintains that we need some ground of this relation in the believer. Thus, Joseph Levine remarks, "If for *S* to believe *P* is for *S* to stand in a relation to the proposition that *P*, it's a fair question to ask what it is about *S* in virtue of which he/she stands in that relation. . . . There has to be an answer to the 'by virtue of what' question."¹⁹ Similarly, Frank Jackson argues, "When we think of belief as a relation to a proposition, we need to think of it as an internal relation in the traditional jargon. . . . When Fred stands in the belief relation to proposition *P*, there is something about Fred that makes it the case that he stands in that relation to *P* rather than *Q*, something that, as we might put it, points him towards *P* rather than towards *Q*. Belief is an internal or grounded relation."²⁰

This *grounding objection* has significantly more force against the claim that *human* beliefs are without counterfactually varying grounds in their subjects than it does against claim (h) of the Belief Model. To see why, consider the propositions:

P: Muggsy Bogues is the shortest player in NBA history.

Q: Spud Webb is the shortest player in NBA history.

Why do we need a ground in Fred for Fred's standing in the believing relation to *P* rather than *Q*? Presumably, because we need something that accounts for Fred's standing in this relation when it is consistent with being Fred that he stand in the relation to *Q* instead. We can't account for Fred's standing in the relation by pointing out that *P* is true; for it is consistent with being Fred that he believe *Q* despite the fact that *P* is true. Nothing about what Fred is essentially explains why he stands in the believing relation to the true proposition *P*. So, granting that something must account for his standing in the relation, it looks as if the ground will have to be some intrinsic, accidental property of Fred that he lacks in worlds in which he does not stand in the believing relation to *P*.

¹⁹Joseph Levine, review of *Consciousness and Cognition*, by Michael Thau, *Mind* 113 (2004), 597–598.

²⁰Frank Jackson, "Is Belief an Internal State?," *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2007), 575–576. The passage is from Jackson's contribution to a *Philosophical Studies* symposium on Thau's *Consciousness and Cognition*.

Now, it should be clear that the foregoing line of reasoning has no force against the Belief Model. Unlike Fred, God's very essence—as claim (e) tells us—is such that he believes whatever propositions are true in any given world. What accounts for God's standing in the believing relation to *P* is simply God's essence coupled with the fact that *P* is true. There is no need to posit some intrinsic, accidental property in God as a further ground for God's standing in the relation. So, unlike in Fred's case, there is no reason to think that the grounding for God's relation requires some intrinsic state of God that would be otherwise were God not standing in that relation. The grounding objection to Thau's proposal, whatever problems it poses for Thau's account of human belief, gives us no reason to reject claim (h) of the Belief Model.²¹

A second objection argues that beliefs should be identified with internal states, rather than relations, and thus it is relevant to claim (g) of the Belief Model. According to Jackson,

The functional commonplaces for belief are, as a matter of fact, satisfied by states of the brain and these states are internal. When I look around me, I acquire beliefs about my surroundings that enable me to navigate them successfully. When cognitive scientists search for what I acquire when I look around me that enables me to navigate my surroundings successfully, they find that it is some state of the brain. The details are still very murky of course, but it is agreed that the key part of the action is in the brain. As many have said, 'belief' is a name for what it is that does what belief does, and that makes it a name for certain internal states of the brain.²²

That beliefs are internal states is here presented as an empirical discovery. "Belief" refers to whatever it is that does what beliefs do, and scientists have discovered that these are brain states. But, surely, scientists haven't made a comparable discovery regarding God's beliefs. So, as stated, this *function objection* to Thau has no force against claim (g) of the Belief Model.

To refute claim (g), one would need to show as a conceptual matter that only intrinsic belief states, and not believing relations, can play the functional roles that God's beliefs need to play. Most obviously, God's beliefs

²¹Note that God's believing relations on the extrinsic model are, on Jackson's use of the term, "internal" or internally grounded. Jackson says "being rounder" is an internal relation because "when *A* is rounder than *B*, necessarily there is some shape that *A* is, some shape that *B* is, and *A*'s being rounder than *B* supervenes on their having those shapes. Instances of being rounder are *grounded* in the nature of the relata" (Jackson, "Is Belief an Internal State?" 575). Since we can assume that Jackson hasn't overlooked the fact that *A* might cease being rounder than *B* simply in virtue of a change in *B*'s shape, without *A*'s undergoing any intrinsic change, it appears that Jackson thinks a subject *S*'s relation *R* could be internal even without *S*'s differing intrinsically were *S* not bearing *R*. Just as *A*'s being rounder than *B* is internally grounded in *A*'s shape together with *B*'s shape, without the implication that *A*'s not being rounder would entail a change in *A*'s shape; so God's standing in the believing relation to a true proposition *P* is internally grounded in God's essence together with the truth of *P*, without the implication that God's not standing in that relation would entail some intrinsic change in God. God's believing relations also count as "internal" on Lewis's use of the term. See Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 62.

²²Jackson, "Is Belief an Internal State?" 576.

play a role in God's knowing and acting. With respect to knowing, if one thinks that God's knowledge about the world is a result of his being acted upon by it, and that being acted upon means being affected intrinsically, then one might suppose that God's beliefs are intrinsic states God has as a result of being acted upon. But, of course, this argument depends on a controversial position regarding how God comes to know. A proponent of the Belief Model can reasonably adopt a position on which God believes and knows all true propositions without being acted upon by the world; in which case this particular argument for thinking that God's beliefs must be intrinsic states vanishes.²³

Most want to say that when God acts he acts on the basis of reasons, reasons which, though often hidden from us, can at least in principle play a role in explaining God's actions. On one influential account, for an agent's action to be motivated and explained by a reason requires that the action be caused by the reason, where the reason consists in a pairing of belief and desire.²⁴ One who accepts such a "causal theory" of reasons might think that God's beliefs can play their causal role only if they are internal states. Thau argues vigorously that even if beliefs are relations they can still cause actions.²⁵ We need not consider Thau's case here, however. It is enough to note that, as with the previous argument, this argument that God's beliefs must be internal states depends on a controversial position that a proponent of the Belief Model need not accept. "Non-causalist" theories are available on which an agent's belief can figure in the reason that motivates and explains his action without the belief's causing the action.²⁶ If for God to act for a reason is for him to act for a goal towards which he believes the act in question will contribute, the belief figures into God's reason and helps answer (at least non-contrastively) why God performed the act in question; but I see no grounds for thinking a belief can't play this role if it is a relation to a proposition and not an internal state.

Perhaps, there are other arguments, not considered here, for thinking that only internal states can play the functional roles God's beliefs need to play, but I think the foregoing is enough to show that the Belief Model is at least *prima facie* defensible. Let us turn, then, to consider a second extrinsic model.

²³If, with claim (e), God essentially believes all true propositions, and with claim (b), God's beliefs necessarily satisfy all requirements for knowledge, then it is not obvious that God's being acted upon by the world is necessary to account for his belief and knowledge about it. For a discussion of how God might know without being acted upon, see Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 159–187. One advantage of the third extrinsic model, presented below, is that it provides a ready answer to how God is in cognitive contact with the world.

²⁴See Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1963).

²⁵See Thau, *Consciousness and Cognition*, 62–64, and Michael Thau, "Response to Jackson," *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2007), 616–622.

²⁶See, for instance, Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 85–91.

3.2 *The Immediate Cognition Model*

Although contemporary analytic philosophers typically think of God's knowledge as a species of belief, God's knowledge has not always been thought of this way. Beliefs take propositions as their objects, and defenders of divine simplicity have sometimes denied that God's knowledge is propositional on the grounds that propositional knowledge conflicts with simplicity. Aquinas, for instance, thought of propositions as entities existing in the mind which constructs them by composing and dividing, that is, by linking and separating subjects and predicates. Since propositions are themselves composite, and since propositional knowers know diverse things by diverse propositions, Aquinas reasons that the divine intellect would be composite were God's knowledge propositional.²⁷

Of course, the Belief Model depends on an account of propositions quite different from Aquinas's. On the Belief Model, propositions are abstract entities of a platonic sort, entities with an existence extrinsic to the subjects (including God) who believe them. Couple this conception of propositions with the claim that God's acts of believing are extrinsic to him, and no intrinsic diversity or composition is introduced into God himself.

Even apart from concerns about simplicity, however, some have questioned whether God's knowledge is best understood as a species of belief. William Alston argues that the highest type of knowledge, the one we should attribute to God, is a type on which the knower is in direct, unmediated contact with the object known:

Immediate awareness of facts is the highest form of knowledge just because it is a direct and foolproof way of mirroring the reality to be known. There is no potentially distorting medium in the way, no possibly unreliable witnesses, no fallible signs or indications. The fact known is "bodily" present in the knowledge. The state of knowledge is constituted by the presence of the fact known. . . . Since God is absolutely perfect, cognitively as well as otherwise, His knowledge will be of this most perfect form.²⁸

If one grants this ideal, an obvious problem arises for understanding God's knowledge as a species of belief. On the view currently standard, beliefs take propositions as their objects, but the concrete universe is not made up of propositions. Propositions may represent or correspond to the concrete universe, but they are not the thing itself. In order to secure the highest form of knowledge for God, then, we need an account on which God's knowing is not a species of believing and on which his knowledge of concrete reality is direct, not mediated by propositions or anything else.

²⁷See *Summa contra gentiles*, Bk. I, ch. 58.

²⁸William P. Alston, "Does God Have Beliefs?" *Religious Studies* 22 (1986), 297–298. See also Morris, *Our Idea*, 84; and Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 77.

The Immediate Cognition Model is an attempt to supply such an account, and one that enables a proponent of (ST) to reject (KT), and thus to respond to the problem of God's contingent knowledge. In its basic structure, the Immediate Cognition Model is very much like the Belief Model. The difference is that instead of having acts of believing consisting in relations to contingent propositions, God has acts of knowing consisting in relations to the contingent realities known. The chief claims of the Immediate Cognition Model are as follows:

- (i) All God's knowledge consists in occurrent acts of knowing.
- (j) All God's acts of knowing regarding contingent realities consist in relations to contingent realities existing outside of God.
- (k) These relations do not involve any intrinsic states of God that would be otherwise were the relations not holding, were God not so knowing.

It is easy to see why the Immediate Cognition Model would be attractive to someone who endorses the sort of cognitive ideal introduced above. Just as on the Belief Model a divine act of believing has the proposition believed as an essential constituent (along with the believing relation to it), so on the Immediate Cognition Model God's act of knowing has the contingent reality known as an essential constituent. God's knowledge of contingent reality is unmediated in the strongest sense possible. Rover—all four paws and sixty-three pounds—directly constitutes (with the knowing relation) God's state and act of knowing him. God's cognitive state, his act of knowing, extends out beyond God to embrace the contingent things in themselves, and those contingent realities, in turn, directly inform God's acts of knowing.²⁹

Some of the objections to the Immediate Cognition Model will be very similar to the *grounding* and *function objections* raised against the Belief Model. Answers can be discerned from the responses in the previous section. Here I will consider two new objections.

The first new objection concerns worries about divine aseity, worries that may arise also for the Belief Model. On both models, God depends for his contingent knowledge on something apart from God, either the propositions or the concrete realities that are constituents of God's contingent acts of believing and knowing on the respective models. That God's contingent knowledge depends on the contingent realities known will likely seem unproblematic to many readers. Concerns about aseity are appropriate within the context of a defense of simplicity, however, since the two doctrines are so closely associated. Jeffery Brower has even suggested

²⁹Stoneham ("A Neglected Account," 318–320) similarly recommends his "Purely Relational" account of perception for offering a genuinely "direct" account of perception in contrast to standard views on which perceiving takes place by means of an inner representation or experience.

that aseity “provides divine simplicity’s chief motivation historically.”³⁰ If Brower is correct, then any defense of simplicity that compromises aseity will likely prove self-defeating or at least unsatisfactory to proponents of simplicity.

Brower suggests that aseity can be saved if we add that God is the cause of the contingent objects on which his contingent knowledge depends. The problem, says Brower, is that among the contingent objects God knows are the free choices of creatures, and those choices can’t be free in the libertarian sense if God causes them. Thus, we are left in a dilemma: we can affirm simplicity and aseity, or we can affirm libertarian freedom, but not both.³¹

Brower’s proposal for answering the *aseity objection* is, perhaps, more promising than he realizes; for, while God’s causing the contingent objects known should be enough to secure aseity, it is arguably premature to conclude that God’s causing free choices rules out libertarian freedom.³² Even so, there is a plausible understanding of aseity on which the Belief and Immediate Cognition models pose no problem, whether or not God causes the contingent objects known. For God to be *a se* is literally for him to *exist from himself*. But a thing’s existence pertains to what it is intrinsically, not to how it may be related to other things. Thus, it is sufficient for aseity that God not depend on anything else for what he is intrinsically.³³

The foregoing conception of aseity seems operative in at least one classical proponent of simplicity. When Aquinas asks whether God is related to creatures, he answers in the affirmative, including as examples God’s moving them and knowing them. He is not worried that God’s being related to creatures will make God dependent on something apart from himself provided that these are not real relations, that is, provided these relations have no foundation in God, and thus make no difference to what God is intrinsically.³⁴ There are, then, two viable strategies by which proponents of the Belief or Immediate Cognition models can respond to the aseity objection: (1) Make God the cause of the contingent objects known; (2) Point out that it suffices for aseity that on neither model does God’s contingent knowledge make God dependent on anything apart from himself for what he is intrinsically.

³⁰Brower, “Simplicity and Aseity,” 107. See also William F. Vallicella, “Divine Simplicity,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/divine-simplicity/>.

³¹Brower, “Simplicity and Aseity,” 121–123.

³²See my “Can a Libertarian Hold that our Free Acts are Caused by God?” *Faith and Philosophy* 27 (2010), 22–44. See also Robert Koons, “Dual Agency: A Thomistic Account of Providence and Human Freedom,” *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2002), 397–410; and Hugh J. McCann, “Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995), 582–598.

³³For a similar point regarding aseity, see Pruss, “Two Problems,” 164–165.

³⁴See *Summa contra gentiles*, Bk. II, chs. 11–14. For an explication of the teaching that God is not really related to creatures, see Mark G. Henniger, S.J., *Relations: Medieval Theories 1250–1325* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 7.

The second new objection is one William Hasker raised against Alston's proposal that God's knowledge is "constituted by the presence of the fact known." Hasker agrees that "immediate, intuitive knowledge, in some form very similar to that portrayed by Alston, does indeed represent a cognitive ideal."³⁵ The problem, says Hasker, is that

Temporal entities may . . . be immediately, 'bodily' present in God's awareness. But they can only be so present *at the times when they exist to be present!* But of course, God's knowledge of such realities cannot be so limited. It follows, then, that there *is* a requirement for an inner mental representation on God's part, to enable him to know what has passed away or (perhaps) what is yet to come.³⁶

Hasker's critique of Alston clearly applies to the Immediate Cognition Model. On this model, God's contingent acts of knowing consist in relations to the contingent objects known, and these objects directly inform and partially constitute God's acts of knowing them. But, if only the present exists, then only the present is there for God to be related to, and some sort of representation will be needed to accommodate God's knowledge of the past and future.³⁷

A first response to this *presentist objection* agrees that only the present exists, but wonders whether it follows that God can't stand in the knowing relation to past and future events. Does the proponent of this objection wish to endorse a proposition such as the following?

NR: Nothing can be related to a past or future object or event.

This proposition would likely cause problems for the presentist, too. One might suppose, for example, that the "inner mental representation" Hasker thinks necessary for God to know the past or future must stand in a matching or, at least, a representing relation to the past or future event it represents. Similarly, the proposition "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" is presumably true because of a correspondence, made-true-by, or supervenes-on relation to the past event which it is about. In short, even if only the present exists, it is not obvious that an account of knowledge of—or of true propositions about—the past and future can do without some sort of relations to past and future events. Taking such concerns seriously, a presentist might be tempted to reject (NR). To do so, however, is to remove the barrier to a presentist's accepting the Immediate Cognition Model. At the very least, once relations to the past and future are admitted, an argument is required why God can't stand in the knowing relation to past and future events.³⁸

³⁵William Hasker, "Yes, God Has Beliefs!," *Religious Studies* 24 (1988), 389.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 391.

³⁷I assume that, if God can stand in the knowing relation to past and future objects and events, then these objects and events can also partially constitute and inform God's acts of knowing them, where these acts are understood as relations to these objects and events.

³⁸The concerns discussed here have much in common with standard objections to presentism. For a presentist who rejects (NR), see Mark Hinchliff, *A Defense of Presentism*

A second response concedes that if only the present exists, then the Immediate Cognition Model won't work for God's knowledge of the past and future. It denies, however, that only the present exists—at least for God. In one form the second response rejects presentism in favor of an eternalist account of time on which all moments of time exist, absolutely speaking. In another form it maintains that the question "Which times exist?" does not admit of an absolute answer; rather, the answer is relative to a reference-frame or perspective. Relative to our temporally bound reference frame, only the present exists. Relative to God's eternal reference frame, all moments of time exist.³⁹ Both forms of the response, then, reject the premise that the past and future do not exist for God to be related to.

Hasker considers the claim that all moments of time are present to God but finds it fatally problematic.⁴⁰ Rather than taking up the debate over God and time, I will close this section with some general remarks about the force of the presentist objection. First, the "classical theists" who embrace divine simplicity, whether contemporary or historical, have as a matter of fact almost always held that, in one way or another, the whole of time is present to God. Whichever side is correct about God and time, the presentist objection will not be found compelling by proponents of simplicity. It is based on a premise they (at least most of them) take to be false.

Second, and of equal importance, even if one does find the presentist objection compelling, this does not give one reason to reject simplicity. The presentist objection, if sound, topples the Immediate Cognition Model, but it has no such consequence for the Belief Model. A proponent of the objection will agree that propositions such as "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" are true even though the events these propositions are about no longer exist. Since, on the Belief Model, God knows propositions about the past, and whatever true propositions there may be about the future, God can have knowledge of the past and future whether or not the past and future exist for him to be related to. So, whatever the force of the presentist objection, there is a plausible, extrinsic model of divine knowing that would enable a proponent of simplicity to reject (KT) and thus to respond to the problem of God's contingent knowledge.

(doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 1988), chaps. 2–3. More commonly, presentists have affirmed (NR), arguing that propositions about the past and future can be true even without relations to past and future events, either because such propositions don't need truth-makers, or because they have truth-makers that exist in the present. For examples of these more common strategies, see Trenton Merricks, *Truth and Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 119–145; Thomas M. Crisp, "Presentism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, ed. M. J. Loux and D. W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 236–242; and Simon Keller, "Truth and Truthmaking," *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 1 (2004), 83–104. To the extent that one finds these more common strategies plausible, the first response to the presentist objection loses power.

³⁹For approaches of this second sort, see Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), 429–458; Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 230–235; and Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas*, 131–158.

⁴⁰Hasker, "Yes, God Has Beliefs!" 389.

3.3 The Agency Model

Proponents of simplicity have often linked God's knowledge of contingent objects to his causality.⁴¹ The precise nature of this link has varied and is sometimes difficult to discern. Consider this passage from Barry Miller:

Primarily he [God] knows himself, and precisely in knowing himself, he knows everything he himself *does*. He therefore knows himself as creating Socrates, as bringing about the exemplification of *F*, and so on. . . . He knows Socrates in the very act of creating him, by his practical knowledge. The same can be said of his knowledge of all other individuals who have existed or will exist, as well as of everything that happens in the Universe. . . . Each of these creatures and the properties they exemplify are known by God in precisely the one act of knowing himself qua creating.⁴²

Here I think we find two distinguishable lines of thought, one promising and one not so promising. If the claim is that God knows what he creates by knowing what he is intrinsically, then problems arise of the sort discussed in section 2. If he knows what he creates by knowing some intrinsic property distinct from his essence, then he is not simple. If he knows what he creates by knowing his essence, then there is no world in which the God who created the actual universe does otherwise.

A more promising line is suggested by the thought that God "knows Socrates in the very act of creating him." Defenders of simplicity, including Miller,⁴³ have realized that God's creative, causal agency cannot consist in or involve some intrinsic state of God that would be otherwise were God bringing about different effects. Such an intrinsic state would, again, either have to be distinct from God's essence or belong to God's essence, with the familiar result that either God would not be simple, or there would be no world in which God creates differently. Defenders of simplicity have therefore needed to embrace an "extrinsic model of divine causal agency" just as I have been suggesting they embrace an extrinsic model of divine knowing. On the extrinsic model of divine agency, God's act of causing or bringing about some effect *E* consists in a causal relation to *E*, and God would be no different intrinsically were he not standing in that relation, were he not causing *E*. God brings about *E* for a reason, and thus his activity is intentional and purposeful; yet, God's reason leaves him free to refrain from causing *E*, and refraining is consistent with all that God is intrinsically, including his wisdom and goodness.⁴⁴

⁴¹For examples, see Barry Miller, *A Most Unlikely God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 97 and 139–142; David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 86–108; and Rogers, *Perfect Being*, 71–91. Rogers especially stresses the traditional idea that God's knowledge is the cause of the things he knows. How that might be so, though worth exploring, will not be taken up here.

⁴²Miller, *A Most Unlikely God*, 97.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 106–112.

⁴⁴For defenders of simplicity who advocate this model of divine agency, in addition to Miller, see Brower, "Simplicity and Aseity," 118–120; Pruss, "Two Problems," 160–163; and Timothy O'Connor, "Simplicity and Creation," *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999), 405–412. The

Combining the extrinsic account of divine agency with the thought that God knows his effects “in the very act of creating them” suggests a third extrinsic model of divine knowing, the Agency Model. The chief claims of this model are as follows:

- (l) A divine causal act consists in a causal or bringing about relation to an effect.
- (m) This relation does not involve any intrinsic state of God that would be otherwise were the relation not holding, were God not so causing.
- (n) God’s activity is inherently cognitional: he knows what he is doing in the doing of it, what he is bringing about in the act of bringing it about.
- (o) God is the cause of all contingent entities.
- (p) So, in knowing what he is doing, God knows all contingent entities.

A key assumption of the Agency Model, reflected in claim (n), is that intentional activity is inherently cognitional. When I act intentionally, I know what I am doing in the very doing of it. I don’t need a separate act of knowing to know what I am doing.⁴⁵ Though not self-evident, this assumption seems plausible enough. In what follows I consider five objections to the Agency Model and briefly suggest directions for responding to them. I conclude by considering whether the Agency Model confers any advantage over the Belief and Immediate Cognition models.

Objection 1. We think God knows (or knows about) Napoleon and his activities, but we wouldn’t normally say God is causing them. If something doesn’t exist, then God isn’t causing it. But if God isn’t causing Napoleon and his activities, and so also for other past and future substances and events, then the Agency Model won’t work as an account of God’s knowledge of the past and future. The response will have to be similar, I think, to the second response given to the presentist objection in the previous section. In order for the Agency Model to work, an eternalist account of time will have to be assumed, or short of that, it will have to be assumed that from God’s eternal reference frame he is causing Napoleon and his activities, or is present to his causing them.

Objection 2. Against claims (l) and (m), it may be argued that causes must differ intrinsically across worlds in which their effects differ. If God is intrinsically no different in the actual world in which he creates alpha than in another world in which he creates beta, then God cannot

name “extrinsic model of divine causal agency” is taken from my “Can a Libertarian Hold that our Free Acts are Caused by God?” where I discuss the model (26–30), though not in the context of a defense of divine simplicity.

⁴⁵For a classic statement of this view, see G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957). One might argue that I know only what I am intending to do. Even so, it may be responded that in God there is no disparity between what he is intending to do and what he is actually doing.

be said causally to account for alpha. In response it can be pointed out that anyone who accepts indeterministic causal relations, whether event or agent-causal, must deny that a cause has to vary intrinsically across worlds where its effects differ. If event E1 indeterministically causes event E2, then there is a possible world in which under the same conditions E1 does not cause E2. Similarly, when a libertarian agent-cause brings about an intention, it is consistent with his intrinsic state prior to bringing about the intention that he not bring it about.

Objection 3. It may be agreed that intentional action is inherently cognitive, but denied that this phenomenon makes sense without some intrinsic state of the agent that serves as the means by which the agent knows what he is doing. On the standard agent-causal account, there is a plausible candidate for this intrinsic state in the intention, the bringing about of which is the agent's basic action.⁴⁶ Since on the Agency Model God lacks such a state, it is not possible for him to know what he is doing simply in the doing of it. In response, it can be pointed out that this objection really just begs the question by assuming that cognitive states must be internal states of cognizers, or that cognizers cognize by means of internal states. This assumption is precisely the proposition the extrinsic models deny. The objection offers no argument for the proposition, but merely assumes what is at issue.

Objection 4. Against claim (o), it may be objected that among contingent entities are human choices and that God's causing such choices precludes free will. In response, a proponent of the Agency Model will have to argue that free will is not ruled out by God's causing our choices.⁴⁷

Objection 5. Even if a free choice can be caused by God, some of our choices are evil, and there are contingent natural evils, as well. We want to say that God permits rather than causes evil, but on the Agency Model, God's knowledge of contingent evils requires that he cause them. To respond to this objection, a proponent of the Agency Model will likely need to embrace a privation account of evil, according to which evil, whether natural or moral, is not an entity caused by God, but rather a lack of perfection due to a thing. An account will then be needed of how God knows privations, given that he does not cause them. One answer could be that God knows privations indirectly by knowing (a) necessary truths about what perfections are due to a given type of thing in specified circumstances, and (b) what perfections a thing actually has, which perfections God knows in the act of bringing them about.⁴⁸

⁴⁶See O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*, 71–72.

⁴⁷One could embrace compatibilism or agree with the authors cited in note 32 that God's causing our choices does not rule out libertarian freedom.

⁴⁸For an account along these lines, see Brian Shanley O.P., "Aquinas On God's Causal Knowledge: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998), 449. In speaking of the perfections "due to" a thing of a particular type, a proponent of this account *does not* mean to imply that God is *bound* in justice to bring about these perfections; for that would imply that God is failing to do something he ought. If Brower is

One thing clear from the brief responses to these objections is that defending the Agency Model requires adopting what are, from the perspective of contemporary philosophy, a number of highly controversial metaphysical and theological positions—(i) that all time is present to God, (ii) that free creaturely choices are caused by God, and (iii) that all evil is privation. Indeed, with each successive model it looks as if the number of controversial claims needed to defend it increases. Thus, defending the Belief Model requires none of (i)–(iii); defending the Immediate Cognition Model probably requires (i) and possibly (if Brower is right about aseity) (ii) and (iii); and defending the Agency Model requires all of (i)–(iii).

On the other hand, each successive model brings certain advantages over its predecessor. The Immediate Cognition Model has the advantage over the Belief Model that God's knowledge of contingent objects is direct and unmediated. The Agency Model shares this advantage, which can be seen from the fact that on this model God knows contingent objects in the very act of bringing them about, and these acts, since they are relations to the objects known, have the objects known as constituents. What further advantage does the Agency Model bring?

While the Belief and Immediate Cognition models tell us what God's contingent acts of knowing consist in, they do not explain *how* God is in cognitive contact with the contingent objects he knows. Presumably, he is not in cognitive contact by being acted upon by contingent objects; for being acted upon likely involves being affected intrinsically, and being affected intrinsically would introduce contingent intrinsic states in God, contrary to simplicity. Perhaps, on the first two models, God's knowing contingent objects is a brute fact, with no further explanation as to how he is in contact with them. On the Agency Model, by contrast, we have a clear answer to the question of cognitive contact. God is in cognitive contact with the contingent objects he knows because he purposefully and intentionally brings them about.⁴⁹

That we have no answer to the question about cognitive contact is, perhaps, not too damaging to the first two models. Philosophers have puzzled over cognitive contact when it comes to human knowing. Why should it be any easier with God? On the other hand, for many proponents of simplicity, the advantage of the Agency Model may not be too costly in terms of the controversial commitments one needs to defend the model. The great medieval proponents of simplicity, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, seem to have accepted (i)–(iii),⁵⁰ and so do many who work

correct that answering the aseity objection requires God's causing the contingent objects he knows, then a defender of the Immediate Cognition Model will also need to embrace a privation account of evil and hold that God knows evil indirectly by knowing the difference between the perfections things have and the perfections they should have.

⁴⁹And God knows privations because he knows the difference between what he brings about and what perfections things ought to have given their natures.

⁵⁰Or so it seems to me. There is, not surprisingly, controversy concerning the correct interpretation of these figures on some of the matters in question.

in the theological traditions they inspire. In the end, a choice between the models will come down to judgments individual proponents of simplicity make regarding the balance of costs and benefits.⁵¹

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