

Divine Simplicity and Property Exemplification

by

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Classical Christian theists – Augustine of Hippo, Anselm of Canterbury, and Thomas Aquinas – depict God as essentially omniscient, omnipresent, perfect, necessarily existent and omnipotent. (This list is meant to be exhaustive but for our purpose here it need not be exhaustive.) By predicating the omniscience, omnipresence, perfection, necessary existence and omnipotence of God, classical theists grant that God exists, along with abstract entities (call them properties), and God exemplifies properties. Because God exemplifies properties, we rightly predicated properties of God and tag them God’s omniscience, God’s omnipresence, God’s omniscience, God’s omnipresence etc.

But what is the relationship between God and his properties? This question has befuddled philosophers and theologians for centuries and, apparently, even now there is no universally acceptable answer to it. In answering this question, theologians and philosophers conjecture many theories, but disputes still linger over the kind of relationship that holds between God and his properties and how best to characterize it without compromising God’s true identity.

Most theologians and philosophers who currently write on the doctrine of divine simplicity quibble over the concept of properties.¹ So, to adequately answer our question, we need to examine the concept of properties. I will examine some of the common definitions of properties on offer and say why they fail to apply to God. I will then turn to Augustine’s distinctive definition of divine properties as ideas in the mind of God and show that it allows us to state the relationship between God and his properties without compromising the personhood of God or nullifying the sovereignty and aseity² of God.

Properties

Essentially, properties are a kind of universals – which objects exemplify or instantiate and so come to be the way that they are. Properties imbue peculiar qualities to their exemplifiers. For instance, the property of red imbues red to any object that instantiates it. So, prima facie, properties are distinct from their exemplifiers. George Bealer quite incisively observes that because properties are a kind of universal, each of the standard views on the ontological status of universals is applicable to properties as well.³

The Platonic realism conceives of properties as a type of universals which particulars exemplify. Properties merely modify or characterize particulars antecedently so marked out.⁴ Aristotelian realists conceive of properties as a feature of the kinds to which particulars belong. It is because a particular belongs to the kind that it possesses those properties that it

does. Those properties make the unity of the particular without the possibility of reduction. Michael J. Loux explains, “The kind to which concrete particulars belong represent unified ways of being that cannot be reduced to anything more basic.”⁵ Tropes-theoretic nominalism conceive of properties as concrete entities that cannot be multiply exemplified by more than one particular at a time. Nominalists concede the relationship of similarity between properties that various concrete particulars instantiate. But they deny that one and the same property gets instantiated by more than one concrete particular at a time.⁶

If God exemplifies properties, on the platonic realism, God is distinct from his properties and his properties imbue certain qualities to God, which modify God (i.e., properties condition God). But if God’s properties modify God, then God depends on his properties to be who he is. If God depends on his properties to be who he is, God is not sovereign or *a se*. But Christian orthodoxy maintains that God is essentially sovereign and *a se*. Therefore, on Christian orthodoxy, God is not dependent on his properties. We call this Christian teaching about God, the “sovereignty-aseity intuition” (SAI).

SAI: (1). *God does not depend on anything distinct from himself for his existence;*

(2) *Everything distinct from God depends on God’s creative activity for its existence.*

Following SAI, we must say that God does not depend on anything, not even on his properties, to be God. So, the relationship that holds between God and his properties precludes dependency.

To state the relationship between God and his properties in a way that precludes dependency, classical theists say that God is a simple being who has no complexity whatsoever. God is not a complex being who is composed of properties or parts. God lacks the obvious forms of complexity associated with the possession of material or temporal parts and the most minimal form of complexity associated with the possession of distinct properties or attributes.⁷

But the denial of any ontological distinction between God and his properties strikes many contemporary theists as absurd because it entails the identicalness of God with his properties. It seems counterintuitive to grant that God has properties but to deny that God is distinct from his properties. It appears that the terms *God* and *properties* pick out one and the same thing.

But “God” is not a synonym of “properties” because properties, as we commonly conceive of them, are multiple exemplified universals. That is, properties are such that many subjects can exemplify them at the same time while God is a primary substance, a person, who cannot be exemplified. So, no property is God and God is not a property.

If we grant that God is distinct from his properties then how does God come to exemplify his properties? There are two possible answers to this question:

3). God brought his properties about so they depend on God for their existence and characteristics. God who endows his properties with innate powers to function as they do. Had God not brought it about that, say, the property of omnipotence exists and that omnipotence can make its exemplifier maximally powerful, there would not be omnipotence and it would not be the case that whoever exemplifies omnipotence is maximally powerful.

(4). Properties are independent of God. Properties are universals; hence they cannot fail to exist. Universals always are and they always will be. No one causes universals to exist. Therefore, God comes to exemplify his properties by taking them upon himself.

If we token (3), we denote that God existed prior to his properties. But it is hard to see how even God can exist before the very properties that define his nature. Since everything exists with its nature, it is absurd to say that God has properties but there was a time when God lacked them because God had not brought them about. To avoid this absurdity, Christian orthodoxy teaches that God essentially exemplifies all his properties in eternity.

Supposing at (t-1) God exists but is not omnipotent, then at (t-2), a timeframe after (t-1), God is omnipotent. God's being omnipotent at (t-2) must be due to something (or someone) making God omnipotent. Because a non-omnipotent entity necessarily lacks the power to bring it about that the property of omnipotence exists and that God exemplifies it, if God is not essentially omnipotent (that is, if God is contingently omnipotent) then something or someone must have made God omnipotent. But what can make God omnipotent? Absolutely nothing, nobody! Therefore, God is essentially omnipotent. This conclusion defeats (3).

If we token (4), we denote that God's properties do not depend on God for their existence or characteristics. God and his properties are two distinct entities that always exist and will always exist. God exemplifies his properties by participating in them. But if God exemplifies his properties subsequent to his creating them then a temporal gap exists between God's existence and God's exemplification of his properties. But there is no temporal gap between God and his properties because God exemplifies his properties in eternity. It is impossible for God to exist without his nature. Therefore, God always has his properties. This conclusion defeats (4).

To give a non-reductive analysis of God's relatedness to his properties, classical theists employed the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) to assert:

5). DDS: *God is identical with his properties.*

Classical theists were aware of the negative connotation that is implicit in the DDS, especially on Platonic realism. So, classical theists employed their theological insight regarding the sovereignty and *aseity* of God to state and explain the DDS.

Aquinas attests: "Because it seems contrary to the faith to hold, as the Platonists did, that the Forms of things exist in themselves ... Augustine substituted concepts of all creatures existing in the divine mind with the Ideas of things defended by Plato."⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff acknowledges that there are differences between the theoretical framework on which contemporary philosophers understand the DDS and the theoretical framework on which classical theists developed the DDS:

It has become habitual for us twentieth-century philosophers, when thinking of essences, to think of things having essences, and to think of these essences as certain properties or sets of properties. An essence is thus for us an abstract entity. For a medieval, I suggest, an essence or nature was just as concrete as that of which it is the nature. Naturally, the medievals will speak of something

as having a certain nature. But the having here is to be understood as having as one of its constituents.⁹

I agree with Wolterstorff that classical theists used a different theoretical framework from the one that contemporary theists use to analyze the DDS. I go on to identify the theoretical framework that classical theists used in developing the DDS as theological rather than philosophical.

Many contemporary theists fail to see that classical theists used a theological framework to develop the DDS so they have used philosophical frameworks to analyze the DDS. But it is impossible to make sense of the DDS using any of the philosophical conceptions of properties stated above. So, we must conclude that classical theists used a theological framework in maintaining ontological similarity between God and his properties.

Interpreting the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity

The doctrine of divine simplicity is rooted in antiquity. We can, perhaps, trace its roots back to Parmenides' discussion of substance.¹⁰ In any case, the doctrine was elaborately developed and carefully defended by medieval theologians in explaining the relationship between God and his properties. Since these medieval theologians were also distinguished philosophers, many people simply assume that their DDS answer the philosophical question of the relationship between substance and properties. But the medieval theologians did not develop the DDS to explain the relationship between properties and substances. Rather they developed the DDS to answer the theological question of how an independent, sovereign and *aseitas* God relates to his properties.

Essentially, the DDS underscores the fact that God is completely devoid of any metaphysical complexity. Jeffrey Brower explains: "God lacks even the most minimal form of complexity associated with the exemplification of properties."¹¹ Although God exemplifies properties, God is not dependent on his properties. God is not a bundle of coarse-grained entities or a mereological sum of his properties. Hence, we can neither set God to one side and his properties to another side nor can we conceive of God as existing apart from his properties. To conceive of God is to conceive of God's properties and to conceive of God's properties is to conceive of God.

A major fact about the DDS that I want to accentuate here is its negativity. The DDS does not make positive assertions about God; rather it simply denies any distinction in God. So, Augustine says:

We speak of God in many ways – as great, good, wise, blessed, true, and whatever else does not seem unworthily said of him. Nonetheless, God is identical with his greatness, which is his wisdom (since he is not great by virtue of quantity, but by virtue of power); and he is identical with his goodness, which is his wisdom and his greatness; and he is identical with his truth, which is all of these things. For in him it is not one thing to be blessed and another to be great, or wise, or true, or to be good, or to be altogether himself.¹²

The Augustinian statement can be schematized thus:

- a) God has a set of essential divine properties.
- b) The set of essential divine properties is identical with God.
- c) (from a & b) If an intrinsic predication of the form “*God is P*” is true, then *God’s P-ness* exists and is identical with God.¹³
- d) Therefore, God is altogether simple.

But why suppose that God is identical with his properties? Augustine says that the identicalness of God with his properties blocks off spurious and unwarranted distinctions between God and his properties. Such unwarranted distinctions render God dependent on his properties for his existence or nature, which is an anathema since God is not dependent on anything outside himself. Therefore, the DDS maintains that God is identical with his properties.

Given the enormity of Augustine’s influence on medieval philosophy and Christian theology, it is quite understandable that most Christian theologians since the medieval period have embraced the DDS and promulgate it as the correct explanation of the relationship that holds between God and his properties. For instance, Anselm regards the DDS as a given and he says that only those who either unknowingly fail to distinguish or wilfully confound the difference between the way that creatures exemplify properties and the way that God exemplify properties find the doctrine of divine simplicity absurd. Anselm:

A human being cannot be his justice, though he can have his justice. For the same reason a just human being is not understood as being his justice (*existens iustitia*), but as having his justice. By contrast, it is not properly said that the supreme nature has its justice, but is its justice. Hence when the supreme nature is called just, it is properly understood as being its justice, rather than as having its justice.¹⁴

For example, if Socrates is truly just, then Socrates participates in the property of justice. But even though Socrates participates in the property of justice he does not exhaust justice. Others also participate in justice and so are called just. However, when God is just, that is because there is a property called *God’s justice* and God exhausts it. No one else has *God’s justice*. So, the mode of predicating justice of Socrates differs from the mode of predicating justice of God. The difference in modal predication is captured quite pithily by the doctrine of divine simplicity.

Aquinas attests:

In every simple thing, its being and that which it is are the same. For, if the one were not the other, simplicity would be removed. As we have shown, however, God is absolutely simple. Hence, in God, being good is not anything distinct from him; he is his goodness.¹⁵

Aquinas concurs with Augustine that God is absolutely simple and Aquinas adds that God exemplifies his properties essentially and eternally. It is impossible for God, who is a necessary being, to exist without essentially exemplifying his set of properties. For Aquinas,

the accurate explanation of the relationship between God and his properties is that God is identical with his properties.

Aquinas explains the identicalness of God with his properties as the denial of composition or complexity in God. God is spirit as such God is a non-composite, simple being. Aquinas denies,

- i. Any composition of extended parts in God. The part-whole relationship that permeates material entities is absent in God. God does not receive or participate in matter; rather God is pure self-subsistent form. God is devoid of any kind of matter whatsoever.¹⁶
- ii. Any composition of substantial form in God. God is not dependent on anything for his existence. There is no distinction in God between elements by which God is in potentiality and elements by which God is in actuality. Consequently, God is absolutely immutable.
- iii. Any composition of subject and accidents in God. God's essence is "individuated of itself, and not by virtue of a composition with really distinct singularizing elements." So, God is not dependent on his properties for his character.¹⁷
- iv. Any composition of essence and existence in God. What God *is* is the same thing as who God is. There are no properties outside of divine essence entering into composition with the divine essence. Rather, each of God's properties (his goodness, his power, his wisdom and the like) are all the same as the divine essence, which is to say, the same as God; hence all the same as one another.¹⁸

Aquinas presents (i-iv) as additional justification for the DDS which is based on the fact that God is sovereign and *a se*. God causes all things to exist; hence God cannot depend on anything for his existence or nature. Our predication of properties unto God does not thereby connote that God is composed of properties. God is pure self-subsistent. So, God is not inherent in anything and nothing distinct from God inheres in God.¹⁹

Furthermore, Aquinas argues that if God were distinct from his properties God would participate in distinct entities, which would make God a contingent being. A contingent being exists because something else makes it exist and gives it a nature. So, if God were a contingent being, something would have made God to exist and given God a nature. Both scenarios contravene God's sovereignty and aseity. Besides, it is hard to see what could have caused God to exist or given God a nature. So, in keeping with Christian orthodoxy on the sovereignty and aseity of God, Aquinas maintained that God is absolutely simple.

Contemporary Objections to the DDS

Many contemporary Christian theists reject the doctrine of divine simplicity because it commits a category mistake of rendering God, who is a person, a mere property. Alvin Plantinga, who is probably the most prominent modern critic of the DDS, argues that if God is identical with each of his properties then each of his properties is identical with him. If each of God's properties is identical with God, God is nothing but a property. Now, Plantinga regards this conclusion as a laughable piece of bravado. He says:

In the first place, if God is identical with each of his properties, then each of his properties is identical with each of his properties, so that he has but one property ... In the second place, if God is identical with each of his properties, then since each of his properties is a property, he is a property – a self-exemplifying property.²⁰

Plantinga judges this conclusion as flatly contradictory of the obvious fact that God has many properties.

Furthermore, Plantinga argues:

No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or indeed, know anything at all. If God is a property, then he isn't a person but a mere abstract object; he has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life. So taken, the simplicity doctrine seems to be an utter mistake.²¹

Thus, Plantinga rejects the DDS for confounding the true identity of God as a person, not a property.

But isn't Plantinga's conclusion hasty? Is there no way to explain the doctrine of divine simplicity to avoid the category mistake? There is. And Augustine promulgates it. Augustine takes God's properties to be ideas in the mind of God and so his ontology of properties differs from Plato's. Giving up the common supposition that classical theists were Platonists, so they used Platonic ontology of properties to develop and defend the DDS, allows us to see that classical theists employed Augustine's concept of properties in explicating the DDS.

As noted, the Platonic ontology of properties or realism takes properties to be distinct entities, "things," or "abstracta" from pure substances that exemplify them. Therefore, on Platonic realism, God is distinct from his properties and it is hard to see how God could be identical with his properties. Since Plantinga subscribes to Platonic realism he fails to see how God can be identical with his properties.

But, the Augustinian ontology of properties makes God's properties mere ideas in the mind of God. God's properties are ideations of God. If God had not ideated them, they would not have existed or exemplified. Hence, on the Augustinian ontology of properties, the DDS commits no category mistake in maintaining that God's properties are identical with God. It is actually impossible to ontologically distinguish between God and his ideas.

Even if, with creatures, properties are distinct entities from substances that exemplify them, with God, there is no such distinction. Augustine differentiates God's properties from other properties that creatures exemplify by saying that while God is identical with his properties, creatures are not identical with their properties. Let me reiterate that it is this Augustinian ontology of properties rather than Plato's ontology of properties that classical theists used in developing the DDS.

Alternative Interpretations of Properties

Before we settle on this Augustinian interpretation of properties it is good we examine some alternative interpretations of properties. Clearly, some classical theists were

Aristotelian realists, others were *nominalists*. There are other suggestions to understanding the ontology of properties that informed classical theists to develop the DDS.²² So, it would seem quite possible that some classical theists used non-Platonic ontology of properties to develop and defend the DDS. But that is not the argument I am making here, because all the major philosophical conceptions of properties have problems. What I am arguing, instead, is that classical theists used theological framework in characterizing properties.

Although it might be thought that one can use Aristotle's concept of properties to explain the doctrine of divine simplicity, no one has actually done it. It is easy to see why not. On the Aristotelian concept of properties, properties are concrete universals. So, if God exemplifies properties, understood as concrete universals, and we grant that God is identical with his properties, then God would be a concrete universal. But, by their very nature, properties are exemplified many times. That is, properties are such that they can be exemplified by more than one thing at the same time. Hence, interpreting properties as concrete universals would make God susceptible to being exemplified by other concrete particulars. But God is pure substance and no substance can be exemplified by other concrete particulars. Hence, Jeffrey Brower rightly says that although God relates to other concrete particulars, it does not follow that God can be exemplified by other concrete particulars. Nor is it plausible to make God a constituent of anything else. So, the Aristotelian concept of properties fails.²³

Could the nominalistic or trope-theoretic interpretation of properties do this job? It would seem that the nominalistic or tropes-theoretic interpretation of properties would do the job. Nominalists take properties to be tropes. If tropes are used to explain the relationship between God and his properties, we could say that God is identical with his tropes. This may be parsed, tautologically, as that God is identical with God. According to tropes theorists, only particulars exist. So, to say that God is identical with his goodness is to acknowledge the existence of a trope called *God's goodness*, and to add that God's goodness is a trope with which God is identical. Since tropes are particulars, nothing else can have the trope called God's goodness, except God. Similarly, if Socrates is good then there exists a trope called Socrates' goodness and Socrates alone has it. It is worth noting that although God and Socrates exemplify goodness, these are two different tropes of goodness. They have nothing in common except their semblance.

But the nominalistic or trope-theoretic interpretation of properties also does not adequately explain the relationship that holds between God and his properties. Even tropes, as they are usually conceived, are dependent on the concrete particular that instantiates them. So, if God is identical with his tropes, God is not absolutely independent of his tropes for his nature and existence, which contravenes the sovereignty-aseity of God.

The State-of-Affairs Interpretation -- some contemporary Christian theists interpret properties as states of affairs. So, Plantinga:

Suppose we consider Socrates and wisdom: we can distinguish Socrates from wisdom and each of them from the state of affairs of Socrates' being wise – a state of affairs that obtains or is actual if and only if Socrates displays wisdom. Perhaps we could refer to Socrates' being wise by the locutions Socrates' wisdom or 'the wisdom of Socrates' or even 'Socrates' wisdom.' And when Aquinas speaks of God's life or God's wisdom, perhaps we may take him as

speaking of the state of affairs consisting in God's being wise and having life.²⁴

Plantinga thinks that the state-of-affairs interpretation is superior to the property interpretation because it allows God's goodness, power, and wisdom to be an identical state of affairs. He explains, "While it is obviously absurd to claim that wisdom and power are the very same property, it is not obviously absurd to hold that God's being wise is the same state of affairs as God's being powerful" (Plantinga 1980, 49). But, there still stands the difficult question of how God relates to these states of affairs. Just as God cannot be identical with properties, God cannot be identical with states of affairs. So, Plantinga rejects the state of affairs interpretation for not offering us a good way out.

Essentially, states of affairs are abstract objects. But no abstract object can create the universe or has knowledge, awareness, power, love, or life. Only persons can perform these acts. So, if God performed these acts, as Christianity teaches, we must conclude that God is a person, not a state of affairs. States of affairs are contingents – they may obtain or fail to obtain – but God is a necessary being; hence God must be. The state of affairs interpretation of the doctrine of divine simplicity is, thus, unable to evade the category mistake.

Truth-Maker Interpretation – Jeffrey Brower thinks that the best strategy for evading the category mistake induced by the DDS is to interpret God's properties as "truth-makers."²⁵ A truth-maker is a quite common concept in contemporary discussions of the furniture of the universe. Contrary to what the name suggests, a truth-maker is not understood in terms of (efficient) causality, but in terms of broadly logical necessitation.

A truth-maker is that which entails the truth of certain statements or propositions. Propositions predicate something of a subject. A truth-maker reveals the logical necessity in the predication of something of a subject. There are different ways of characterizing truth-makers. Some philosophers regard truth-makers as primitive or properly basic. Other philosophers regard truth-makers as propositional stands that we take regarding the furniture of the universe. If we take the latter view of truth-makers, and apply it to our discussion of the DDS, then we will say that God makes true all true predications about God. That is, God is identical with that which makes true each true (intrinsic) predication about God. So, Brower says that if God is divine, God is identical with that which makes it true that God is divine. If God is good, God is identical with that which makes it true that God is good; and so on in every other such case.

Notice, however, that the truth-maker interpretation of predications about God leads to mere tautology. It neither clarifies the concept of properties nor answers the question of how God relates to distinct truth-makers. Indeed, it is true that God necessitates many true propositions. But that is not what we want to know. What we want to know is the relation that holds between God and his properties in such assertions as "God is wise," "God is omnipotent," and "God is omniscient." Although the truth-maker theory hopes to evade the category mistake by saying that God is identical with God, it fails to adequately explain the relationship that holds between God and his properties or abstract entities – understood as truth-makers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me return to St. Augustine's argument and answer some objections to it. If we return to St. Augustine's interpretation of properties as *ideas* or *mental events* in the mind of God, we can say that necessarily God has ideas in his mind. So, the DDS's claim that God is identical with his properties should be read as God is identical with his ideas. Having the idea of good, justice, or love necessitates bringing it about that goodness, justice, and love exists.

It is hard to imagine that God could exist without having love, knowledge, goodness, and the like. If God has love, knowledge, and goodness, then God must have the idea of good, knowledge, and love from eternity. Having ideas in the mind, God then went ahead and brought about that love and goodness, etc., exist. In the case of God, therefore, the property of goodness traces back to the very idea of goodness that God has in his mind. So, while properties are distinct entities alongside other creatures, in the case of God Augustine invites us to conceive of properties as the very ideas that God has of them in his mind from eternity. Hence there is no distinction between God and his properties.

But does the Augustinian interpretation of God's properties as ideas in the mind of God meet Plantinga's demand that the doctrine of divine simplicity should affirm the personhood of God? Yes. Persons have ideas in the mind and they own them totally. Because a person totally owns his or her ideas, we rightly call them "intellectual" properties of the person and prohibit others from usurping them. Since God is a person who has ideas, God's ideas are totally God's. No one else has them except God. So they are God's properties which he eternally actualizes as love, wisdom, omnipotence, and omniscience. We now predicate these properties of God by saying that God is love, God is wise, God is omnipotent, and God is omniscient.

The Augustinian understanding of divine properties renders properties totally dependent on God, while the Platonic understanding of properties takes properties as abstract entities with independent existence. Augustinians may note that in the case of the property of being beautiful we often refer to the mental idea of beauty when we say, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." This saying indicates that the property of beauty is not merely what an object exemplifies outside the mind, but the real essence of the property of beauty resides in the mind of the beholder. So ideas in the mind can sometimes rightly be tagged properties.

How does the Augustinian conception of properties account for the question of dependency? If a thing's nature is that which grounds its kind and defines it, then to say of x that x exemplifies a particular set of properties is to fix x's nature. But to say that x has a nature is not to say that x depends on his nature. So, it is wrong to read the claim that God has a nature, consisting of certain properties, as meaning that God depends on his properties for his existence.

By conceiving of properties as ideas in the mind of God, St Augustine removes the supposition that God's properties are independent objects having existence all by themselves. God's properties are intrinsic in God and they depend on God for their existence. Since there is no ontological distinction between God and his properties, God's properties must exist in God as thoughts of a thinker exist in the mind of the thinker. Without the thinker there is no thought. Similarly, had God not existed, God's properties would not have existed. God's properties exist because God exist. So, it is God's properties that depend on God (as do many other entities) for their existence and characteristics, not God who depends on his properties for his nature and character.

But how about Plantinga's argument that if God is identical with his properties, then since each of his properties is a property, God is a property – a self-exemplifying property?²⁶ Does Augustine's conception of properties as ideas in the mind of God make God a mere idea in God's mind? No. Actually, even the structure of this question lacks sense. God is a person and the interpretation of properties as ideas in the mind of God does not nullify the personhood of God. Only if properties are taken as independent entities with distinct existence would the doctrine of divine simplicity lead to contradiction by affirming that God is identical with distinct entities called properties. But, if we take properties as ideas in God's mind, then the claim that God is identical with his properties raises no difficulties for the personhood of God. So then classical theists had no difficulty whatsoever in affirming both that God is simple and that God is a person.

In holding both positions, classical theists did not draw from philosophical conceptions of properties to explain the relationship between God and his properties. Rather they quite intuitively and innovatively drew on theological considerations about the sovereignty and aseity of God to interpret God's properties as ideas in God's mind. In this way, classical theists avoided the category mistake of rendering God a mere property. Instead, classical theists rightly conclude that God is a person with ideas and those ideas exist in the person.

¹ William E. Mann suggests we speak of property instances rather than properties, which he reserves for universals. By property instance, Mann means what philosophers now call trope ("Divine Simplicity," *Religious Studies* (1982)18:451-471). Thomas V. Morris, "On God and Mann: A View of Divine Simplicity," *Religious Studies* (1985) 21: 299-318. James Ross, "Comments on 'Absolute Simplicity,'" *Faith and Philosophy* (1985) 2:383-391. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, "Absolute Simplicity," *Faith and Philosophy* (1985) 2:353-382.

² Aseity is derived from the Latin word *a se* which means the pure essence of a thing. When applied to God, the word denotes the purity of God's existence in and of himself without any foreign intrusion into the God's being.

³ George Bealer, "Property" in *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Robert Audi, Editor (1997): 457.

⁴ Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1998), p. 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁷ Jeffrey Brower, "Making Sense of Divine Simplicity" in *Faith and Philosophy*.

⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a, q.84, 5.

⁹ Wolterstorff, "Divine Simplicity," *Philosophical Perspectives*, 5, *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. James E. Tomberlin (1991), 541-542.

¹⁰ Cf. Christopher Janaway, “The Pre-Socratics and Plato,” in *Philosophy 1*, ed. A. C. Grayling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.349; Panayot Butchvarov, *Being Qua Being: A Theory of Identity, Existence, and Predication* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p.2.

¹¹ Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey E. Brower, “A Theistic Argument against Platonism (and in Support of Truth-makers and Divine Simplicity”), p .2.

¹² Augustine, *De Trinitate* 6: 7.8.

¹³ The P in “if God is P” represent any one of the properties in the set of divine properties that we commonly and rightly predicate of God.

¹⁴ Anselm, *Monologion*, 16.

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I: 38.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a. 3. 7.

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1. 19. 3.

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a. 14. 4-5.

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a. 14. 4-5; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1. 45. 3 & 7.

²⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), p. 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Jeffrey Brower suggests we interpret properties as truth-maker. Alvin Plantinga suggests we interpret properties as states of affairs. Nicholas Wolterstoff suggests we interpret properties in their proper historic perspective of “having” properties of which classical theist were aware and employed in developing the doctrine of divine simplicity. William Mann suggests we interpret properties as concrete individuals. A. J. Ayer suggests we take properties as “junior substances.” Kathrin Rogers suggests we take properties as qualities or traits. Brian Leftow argues that the doctrine of divine simplicity actually shows the falsity of the traditional conception of properties and substances. William Vallicella suggests we construe properties as entities that can be exemplified only by themselves.

²³ Jeffrey Brower, “Making Sense of Divine Simplicity,” *Faith and Philosophy*, pp. 9-10.

²⁴ Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* p. 48.

²⁵ Cf. Jeffrey E. Brower, “Making Sense of Divine Simplicity”; “A Theistic Argument against Platonism” (and in Support of Truth-makers and Divine Simplicity).Unpublished.

²⁶ Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* p. 47.