An Argument from Divine Beauty Against Divine Simplicity

Matthew Baddorf

mattbaddorf@gmail.com

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Abstract: Some versions of the doctrine of divine simplicity imply that God lacks really differentiated parts. I present a new argument against these views based on divine beauty. The argument proceeds as follows: 1. God is beautiful. 2. If God is beautiful, then this beauty arises from some structure. 3. If God's beauty arises from a structure, then God possesses really differentiated parts. If these premises are true, then divine simplicity (so characterized) is false. I argue for each of the argument's premises and defend it against objections, including an objection based on analogical predication, and an objection that supposes that God is simple while appearing complex.

1. Introduction: Divine Simplicity and the Argument from Divine Beauty

In this paper, I present a new objection to a popular understanding of divine simplicity, an objection based on a classical conception of beauty. In this section, I offer some clarificatory notes and present the argument. Then I will defend the argument's premises and consider some objections.

The versions of the doctrine of divine simplicity to which I will object are those that imply the following:

(DS): God does not possess really differentiated parts.

A few notes are in order before we move on. First, in this paper, "parts" always means "proper parts." (A proper part is a part that is not identical to the whole it helps compose.) Parts are really differentiated just in case they exist apart from any mind's conceptualizations. (Note that my definition of real differentiation differs from some medieval definitions. On my view, parts do not have to be separable by anyone, even God, to be really differentiated.) For the remainder of this paper, I will drop the modifier "really differentiated" and just refer to "parts" for convenience.

Second, nearly all theists agree that God lacks a body, and so that God does not possess physical parts. (DS) goes further than this, in that it also denies that God possess any of what we can call "metaphysical parts."[1] For instance, one might think that (at least some) property instances which an object possesses are parts of that object—the rose partially made out of a certain color, the agent out of various capacities for thought and action.[2] (DS) denies that anything like this is the case for God.

Third, typically philosophers who defend divine simplicity are defending views that imply (DS). (This is certainly true now, and may also be true historically.)[3] It is worth noting, however, that within the Christian tradition at least, important figures have argued that God can be simple without (DS) being true.[4] For convenience, I am going to

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[1] Some philosophers may endorse (DS) because they believe that the only way in which something can have parts is by its having physical parts. I will not address this position; I take it that the interesting debates about divine simplicity occur between those who favor a "constituent ontology" and hence take it that at least some objects have metaphysical parts. See (Wolterstorff 1991) for a discussion of constituent vs. relational ontologies and their implications for the doctrine of divine simplicity.

[2] These examples are for illustration only, and I am not committed to their details—exactly what it takes for something to be a metaphysical part of something else, and what metaphysical parts exist, are difficult questions.

[3] Thomas Aquinas' view of simplicity, I think, implies (DS), and his view seems predominant in contemporary discussion. See (Aquinas 1947 I, 3) for Aquinas' view. (Stump and Kretzmann 1985) is an influential contemporary work in a similar vein.

[4] Duns Scotus' view is an example of a divine simplicity view that does not imply (DS); he uses his "formal distinction" to allow for distinctions between God's attributes while endorsing a sort of divine

set their views aside, and talk as though my argument is against divine simplicity *simpliciter*. I do not want to give the impression by doing so that I am making claims about whose views "really count" as versions of divine simplicity.

Finally, my argument depends crucially on claims about beauty. What is it for something to be beautiful? We can bypass some irrelevant debate on the subject by identifying beauty with *the most exalted kind of aesthetic state* (whatever exactly that is). To be beautiful is thus the best that an object can be, aesthetically speaking.[5] It could be compared with the status of knowledge, which is the most exalted epistemic state. I am not denying that beauty, unlike knowledge, admits of degrees. But all beautiful objects are aesthetically superior to all non-beautiful objects, and all beautiful objects have a high level of aesthetic value.[6]

With all that out of the way, we are ready to look at the argument. Here it is:

(1) God is beautiful.

(2) If God is beautiful, then God's beauty arises from some structure.

(3) If God's beauty arises from some structure, then God possesses parts.

(4) Therefore, God possesses parts.

Since the argument is valid, a critic of the argument must object to one or more premises. I now turn to a defense of these premises.

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simplicity. See (Cross 1999, p. 42-45). Gregory of Nyssa provides another example; see (RaddeGallwitz 2009, p. 212).

[5] In this respect, I follow Zangwill (2001) in describing beauty as the highest type of aesthetic state, to be contrasted with other aesthetic states such as daintiness.

[6] Perhaps some non-beautiful art objects are *artistically* superior to some beautiful objects, but this does not imply that those art objects are aesthetically superior to beautiful objects in the sense with which we are concerned.

2. Defense of the Premises

2.A. (1) God is beautiful

This premise is not likely to be especially controversial, but I should stress that the claim that God is beautiful should not be understood as equivalent to the claim that God is excellent, admirable, or worship-worthy. The argument makes a specific claim about a particular sort of excellence God has—aesthetic excellence. So it is not obvious from the fact that God is excellent overall that God is beautiful, since presumably there are excellent but non-beautiful things.

Still, it seems that a maximally excellent being must have all compossible maximal excellences, and that beauty is part of such a set of excellences.[7] That line of thought suggests the following argument:

(5) God is the greatest possible being.

(6) The greatest possible being has all compossible maximal excellences.

(7) Beauty is a member of the set of compossible maximal excellences.

(8) Therefore, God is beautiful.

I believe this argument is sound, and I suspect most theists will agree.

There is certainly a good deal of support for the idea that God is beautiful within the Western tradition. Augustine says: "I have learnt to love you late, Beauty at once so

[7] Or perhaps a maximally excellent being must possess all compossible maximal *universal* excellences, that is, things which are excellences for anything which possess them. This complication does not matter for our purposes. See (Martin Lembke 2012) for a defense of the notion of a universal excellence.

ancient and so new!" (Augustine 1961, p. 231-2.) And here's Anselm: "The Supreme Nature is… Supreme Beauty" (Anselm 2000a, p. 28). Similarly, in his Proslogion Anselm laments "[My soul] looks in all directions but does not see Your beauty… For in Your ineffable manner, O Lord God, You have these [features] within You" (Anselm 2000b, p. 104.)

I take it that these considerations give theists good reason to think that God is beautiful. In particular, they give us reason to believe that God is beautiful in the sense in which I mentioned earlier: that God is a being possessing the most exalted aesthetic state.

2.B. (2) If God is beautiful, then this beauty arises from some structure

This claim follows from a historically prominent general claim about beauty, a claim which I believe enjoys considerable support. We can call this view *Structuralism*, so long as we do not confuse it with other sorts of structuralism. (It has nothing to do, so far as I am aware, with the structuralist school of art, structuralism in philosophy of science, or French structuralism of the Lévi-Strauss sort.) Here is a formulation of the structuralist view:

> Structuralism: If an object is beautiful, it has a kind of unity, proportion, harmony, or some similar relation of various elements of a whole.

Structuralism is consistent with a number of different aesthetic theories; it claims only that beautiful objects necessarily exhibit a kind of unity, proportion, harmony, or

some similar relation. (These relation(s) need not be spatio-temporal.) Exactly which words correctly mark out these relation(s) is irrelevant for our purposes; for convenience, I will refer to "harmony relations." I'm claiming a necessary condition for beauty, not a sufficient one. There may be other necessary conditions; and in particular, it might be the case that beauty requires some kind of actual or ideal observer. Structuralism is thus, I think, neutral between standard debates about the extent to which beauty is observer-dependent. It merely claims that the beautiful objects themselves exhibit certain structural features. (Structuralism is, though, inconsistent with a kind of relativism that claims that all that is required for an object to be beautiful is that it cause pleasure when experienced.)[8]

I do not think that Structuralism is true by definition; that is, mere reflection on the meaning of the word "beauty" will not give us reason to believe that Structuralism is true. But as I mentioned, Structuralism, or something relevantly like it, has enjoyed some popularity historically.[9] More importantly, Structuralism is also plausible when we consider particular instances of beauty. The aesthetic excellence of a sunset consists in the variety and relative position of the hues of the sky. A symphony is beautiful because of the unity and variety of the sounds produced. And a painting or sculpture is beautiful

[8] What about the idea that what is important for an object's beauty is not the structure the object possesses in itself, but the apparent structure apprehended by observers? I am neutral about this issue for objects in general, and talk about features of beautiful objects rather than merely apparent, apprehended features for convenience. In section 3, however, I discuss how someone might try to use the idea that beauty is about appearance to object to my argument, and why I believe such an objection fails.

[9] I will not try to give a historical overview of the view, but perhaps it is worth noting some major supporters. Hutcheson's advocacy is probably the most well known, but he was far from its only champion. Sartwell (2014, p. 10-12; page numbers are to the PDF version) suggests that the view was common in the ancient period; Aristotle, for example, claims that "order [and] symmetry" are among "the chief forms of beauty" (quoted in (ibid p. 11)). The view was also found among the Stoics (Monroe 1966, p. 70), with Plato and Plotinus (see below) bucking the trend. David Hoekema has suggested to me in conversation that Kant endorsed Structuralism.

because of the spatial arrangement of its parts (be they patches of color or the shape of bits of marble).

Note that nothing that I have said implies that beauty requires (let alone consists in) some sort of precise, mathematical ratio between the elements of a whole of the sort that Edmund Burke railed against (see the discussion in (Sartwell 2014, p. 12-13)). What is required is not (necessarily) punctilious arrangement, but simply good arrangement.

So careful reflection on paradigmatically beautiful objects and the source of their beauty makes Structuralism plausible. But one might think that reflection on apparently simple objects can provide counterexamples to the view. This was the basis for an objection pressed by Structuralism's most notable ancient detractors: Plato and Plotinus. There are two sorts of relevant cases here: spatio-temporal ones, like color patches, and cases which are not (or not obviously) spatio-temporal, such as the beauty of thoughts. I'll discuss both of these in that order.[10]

Plotinus (echoing Plato in the *Philebus*) argued that a simple patch of color was beautiful despite its lack of the kinds of structure that other Greek philosophers held was essential to beauty.[11] This confuses beauty with mere pleasingness. A patch of a single hue of some color, I argue, cannot possess the kind of aesthetic excellence which is required for beauty.

Careful imagination shows this. To avoid the fallacy of composition, it is important to imagine that a single hue of color is *all* one can see. Imagining, for

[10] I am drawing on Plotinus' arguments in the 6th Tractate; these arguments are actually targeted not at Structuralism, but at a more specific claim that beauty requires symmetry and being "patterned" (Plotinus 2001, p. 35). So is not clear to me that Plotinus intended for all of his cases to be taken as counterexamples to Structuralism. But they are the sort of cases it is helpful to think through, in any event.
[11] (Plato 2001, p. 46 (51(d))); (Plotinus 2001, p. 35-36). See (Beardsley 1966, p. 43 and 80) for discussion of the claims of Plato and Plotinus, respectively. This argument was important for Plotinus, since he claimed that the (simple) One was beautiful.

instance, a patch of pink on a rose increases the possibility of assigning to the pinkness the beauty of the whole view. (Interestingly, Plotinus seems to have made this mistake; see (Plotinus 2001, p. 35-36.) At best, the rose's pinkness is beautiful by virtue of its place in the whole view; thus, if we want to test whether beauty is always dependent upon a structure, we must not imagine a color patch which is surrounded by other colors. Consider, then, a field of view which consisted entirely of a single patch of color. It hardly seems that this would be an instance of beauty. Even if a patch of color is pleasant to look at, it lacks the level of aesthetic value required to truly be beautiful. Similarly, a single tone is not in itself beautiful. (Again, it is important to imagine a single tone without any variation, which is *not* a part of some melody.) Even light (a frequent and appropriate metaphor for God) is only aesthetically excellent when there is a variety of the position and intensity of the luminescence. My claim is not that these things are not pleasing or attractive; only that they do not possess *beauty*—which was previously defined as the most exalted sort of aesthetic state. And although I cannot possibly consider all possible unstructured spatio-temporal objects here, I suspect that similar results will hold in those cases.[12]

Some readers may find it intuitive that things like color patches can be beautiful, despite what I have said above. If you are still not convinced, consider the following adjustment to the argument. Single color patches, if they are beautiful at all, do not possess a high degree of beauty, and neither do single tones or undifferentiated patches

[12] Of course, a color patch is probably not completely unstructured (unless perhaps it is some sort of simple quale). They are experienced as simple, however, which may be what matters for aesthetic considerations. (See the final objection in section III for a consideration of whether the claim that the aesthetic qualities of things are dependent upon their appearance and not reality is of any help to the divine simplicity theorist.) And at any rate color patches (and similar examples I give) are probably closer to being unstructured and beautiful than anything else we can easily experience or imagine, so the evidence they can give regarding Structuralism is perhaps still part of the best evidence reflection on our experiences can get us.

of light. God, however, does possess a high degree of beauty. I think that my entire argument is still cogent if cast in terms of a high degree of beauty rather than mere beauty: possessing a high degree of beauty is still a divine perfection, and Structuralism could be modified to be a requirement for a high degree of beauty. The result would be that God has a high degree of beauty, and must therefore have some structure. Either way, the point is that there is a quite significant aesthetic difference between symphonies and notes, portraits and color patches, complex unities and mere simples; and that God's beauty is much more like the former set than the latter in its aesthetic excellence.

So much for the first sort of putative counterexample to Structuralism, the spatio-temporal sort. But Plotinus has another sort of case.[13] Here I think that Plotinus is wrong to assume that his putative counterexamples lack structure. Take thoughts.[14] Thoughts are typically beautiful (when they are) because they are appropriately related to their objects, and perhaps to the circumstances of the thinker. For example, think of a mathematician's thought that some theorem is true—her thought is beautiful because it is a true judgment, and perhaps also because it is about something important for her to get right. (Similarly, beautiful mathematical theorems seem to be beautiful by virtue of the structure of mathematical objects they express.)

Or consider the beauty of agents.[15] (This may be the most important for discussions of God's beauty, since it is plausible that God's beauty is of this sort.) Excellent agents have a kind of beauty of personality: they are beautiful in the way they

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[13] I'd like to thank David Hunt and an anonymous reviewer for helping me realize I should discuss cases like thoughts, mathematical theorems, and agents.

[14] Plotinus asks whether there can possibly be symmetry in "points of abstract thought" (2001, p. 36).

[15] Plotinus does not seem to consider the beauty of a good character in the 6th Tractate, although he does consider "noble conduct" (2001, p. 36). An agent's conduct, though, is usually spatio-temporal, and obviously structured. (In fact, it probably has a kind of structure similar to that attributed in the text to agents—as when the agent sees what ought to be done and does it.)

are disposed to reason and act. Some of this is moral beauty, the beauty of a morally admirable character. But the beauty of an excellent agent is not exclusively what we usually call moral—it also arises from the excellent way in which the agent is disposed to rationally connect means and ends, for example, as well as their well-ordered cognitive life. Each element of their character 'works well together' with each other element. So, for example, an excellent agent uses her excellent insight to see what should be done, and her excellent strength to accomplish it. The dispositions involved in such actions form an intricate, beautiful agential structure. But an object cannot 'work well *together*' with itself; agential excellence involves structure. Some sort of tight unity is to be expected between the elements of a maximally excellent agent's capacities, but this is consistent with the harmony of an intricate structure.

I want to stress that structuralism does not deny that unity or (relative) simplicity can play important roles in giving rise to an object's beauty. We do often appreciate an object's beauty more when we grasp the unity which underlies diverse phenomena. (Symphonies provide an example of this: the development section of a symphonic movement is better appreciated when one can discern the reappearance of the unifying theme.) But although greater appreciation for an object's beauty is often accompanied by greater awareness of its underlying unity, that fact does not suggest that the structure in which that unity finds expression is not necessary. It is just not the case that, say, a Bach fugue would be more beautiful if there were fewer differences or distinctions among its parts. The removal of distinctions would not bring the work closer to an ideal of beauty, but cause it to miss the golden mean. Nor would an agent be more beautiful if his activity and his insight were the same thing; there would then be no room for the

beautiful reason-giving relation between insight and activity, where activity is guided by insight.

One objection here would be to claim that the intuitions that I have tried to pump give us no reason to endorse Structuralism over this alternative:

> Structuralism*: *For any object with parts*, if that object is beautiful, it has a kind of unity, proportion, harmony, or some similar relation of various elements of a whole.

If the evidence considered above consisted merely of noting beautiful objects with parts and observing that they possessed harmony relations among their parts, then this objection would be correct. But our evidence consists of more than this, for two reasons.

First, consideration of objects which seem to approach complete simplicity (like color patches) suggests that they are not beautiful, as well as the fact that they do not apparently (at least, to the untrained eye) possess harmony relations among their parts. So our evidence consists not only of examples of beautiful objects with parts, but also non-beautiful objects without apparent parts, which gives us some evidence that objects without parts are not beautiful. This evidence is, of course, reflected in Structuralism but not in Structuralism*. Second, this objection ignores the role that the harmonious structure appears to play in beauty. It isn't just the case that the objects that are beautiful have harmony relations; they are beautiful because of those relations. Harmony relations (understood broadly) seem to play a role in explaining the beauty of beautiful objects. (Agents, for example, are beautiful partly by virtue of the way their diverse capacities

and dispositions are related; symphonies by virtue of the relation of different movements.) The fact that they play that role in observed cases gives us reason to think that they play that role in other cases of beauty as well, which gives us reason to think that harmony relations are found in all cases of beauty. Of course, other considerations might give us all things considered reason to prefer Structuralism* over Structuralism. But the evidence considered here supports Structuralism over Structuralism*.

I've presented some reasons to endorse structuralism. It is easy to see how the truth of structuralism would imply that a beautiful God must possess some structure. For proportion, harmony, unity, and similar candidate structuralist requirements for beauty involve relations among various elements of their objects, and the existence of relations implies the existence of some sort of structure. If this view of beauty is correct then to be able to truly say that God is beautiful requires that God possess (in some sense) the sort of unity, proportion, or harmony which gives rise to beauty.

2. C. (3) If God's beauty has a structure, then God possesses parts

It is hard to tell how a simple being could have structure. However, one might think that the structure which gives rise to God's beauty involves not only God, but things other than God as well. If this is true, then a defender of divine simplicity could argue that the structure underlying God's beauty is compatible with divine simplicity.

This idea could be filled out in several ways. For example, propositions about God might be held to provide the structure necessary. Perhaps propositions describing God's attributes could be the basis for God's beauty. Alternatively, the concrete world, by being created by God, might be thought to display God's nature in a way that provides the necessary structure. Or perhaps divine thoughts about the created world

might do so.[16] (One might also think that it is our thoughts about God that provide the necessary structure; this possibility will get further discussion in section 3.)

Attempts of this sort are prey to two problems. The first is that they run afoul of a plausible principle:

Intrinsicness: For any beautiful object *O*, the structure *S* which provides the basis for the beauty of *O* is intrinsic to *O*.[17]

This principle accounts for the fact that beautiful objects seem to be beautiful because of facts about *themselves* (perhaps when joined with facts about actual or ideal perceivers), not because of other objects. But perhaps this principle should be rejected; in any case, the second problem is worse. The inclusion of anything which is not divine into the structure which gives rise to God's beauty violates a core commitment of theists who endorse divine simplicity: the doctrine of divine aseity.[18]

The reason for this is that divine aseity requires that God not be dependent on anything non-divine for either God's existence or God's perfections. (Divine aseity may require more than this, but it certainly requires at least this.) What does it mean in this context for something to be non-divine? I suggest that something is non-divine just in case it is neither identical to God nor an intrinsic property of God. Relations between God and the world (such as God's thoughts about the world) are not divine in this

[16] I include divine thoughts here because I believe divine simplicity theorists ought to say that God's thoughts about the created world are extrinsic to God. On this, see more below; and for a good recent defense of views on which God's knowledge of contingent matters is extrinsic to God, see (Grant 2012).
[17] Intrinsicness is designed to be compatible with response-dependent theories of beauty, since it does not specify that *all* necessary conditions for beauty are intrinsic to the beautiful object.
[18] Divine aseity is in fact a main motivation for divine simplicity; see (Vallicella 2010). Sometimes divine aseity plays a role in arguments for divine simplicity. I believe that divine aseity does not require divine simplicity; for some reasons to think this is so, see (Fowler 2015), and my (forthcoming).

context, which is the right result since presumably these relations are dependent on the world. If God had not created, then there would be no world for God to relate to; yet (according to standard theism) God would still retain the divine perfections.

Beauty is a divine perfection. (This is a consequence of the Anselmian argument sketched in 2.A above. And even if this argument is not sound, it is surely plausible that beauty is a divine perfection.) So inclusion of propositions, created substances, thoughts about the created world, or anything else that is not divine in the structure responsible for divine beauty would make God's beauty dependent on something outside God. Thus, it violates divine aseity. (And, of course, if propositions or other structure-providing features are divine, perhaps by being divine thoughts, then divine simplicity is false anyway.)[19]

This is a cost that I doubt divine simplicity advocates are willing to pay. Nor should they be willing to do so: it is intuitive that God is not dependent on anything "outside" God for the divine perfections.

These sorts of considerations can be expressed in the form of a dilemma for any attempt to acknowledge that God's beauty arises from some kind of structure while denying that God has parts. Either the structure required for beauty involves non-divine things or it does not. If it does, then the position runs afoul of divine aseity. If it does not, then the position appears to be incoherent; how could a perfectly simple thing have the sort of structure claimed?

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[19] I'm assuming that divine thoughts would be (non-identical) metaphysical parts of God. I believe some divine simplicity theorists hold that divine thoughts are not metaphysical parts of God, and hence are consistent with divine simplicity. They might claim that God is structured by virtue of divine thoughts about God (e.g. God's self-understanding as falling under various concepts). But according to the structuralist view defended in the previous section, it must be the beautiful thing *itself* that possesses structure; structure cannot be imposed on the object by someone's thoughts about the thing. This seems inconsistent with the idea that God is beautiful because of God's thoughts about God.

One interesting potential objection to this premise appeals to the Christian idea that God is triune. Might a Trinitarian God possess the sort of structure that can undergird beauty in a way consistent with (DS)? Aquinas' attempt to give a rigorous theory of the Trinity which is consistent with (DS) is paradigmatic for western Trinitarianism, so let's consider his view. Aquinas held that each Person of the Trinity was identical to a relation, relations which take the divine essence as both relata (Aquinas *ST*, I.28). He also believed that each Person, although distinct from the other Persons, was "not other than" the metaphysically simple divine essence, and accordingly held that each Person is metaphysically simple as well (see (Aquinas *ST*, I.40.2), especially the first objection and reply). This provides a kind of structure to divinity—albeit not a structure with proper parts, thus allowing Aquinas to deny premise (3).

Let's grant, *arguendo*, that this approach to Trinitarian doctrine is consistent with (DS).[20] This approach would succeed in explaining the beauty of the Trinity as a whole without compromising (DS). However, like the previous proposal, it suffers from theological defects that its likely proponents should find unacceptable. For, on this view, parallel arguments can be made to the effect that individual Persons of the Trinity are not beautiful. Each Person is metaphysically simple, and none of the Persons themselves have a Trinitarian structure. But orthodox Trinitarianism holds that each Person (being God) possesses all the divine perfections, including beauty (Baber section 2.c.). So Aquinas' account of the Trinity might help secure the beauty of the Trinity as a whole, but fails to help secure the beauty of the individual members of the Trinity. Insofar as other Trinitarian advocates of (DS) also hold that the individual members of the Trinity

[20] For discussion of medieval attempts to show that (DS) is consistent with broadly similar approaches to understanding the Trinity, see (Friedman 2010) and (Thom 2012).

are metaphysically simple, they must also deal with parallel problems regarding the individual Persons.[21]

This leaves us where we began: there doesn't seem to be any contender for the beauty-undergirding divine structure that is compatible with divine simplicity and the theological commitments of divine simplicity theorists.

3. Further Objections

In this section I consider three further strategies that might be used to resist my argument. The first consists of an appeal to the analogical character of positive talk about God. Such an appeal would say more or less something like this: it may well be that created things must have structure to be beautiful, but (although we may truly call God 'beautiful') God's beauty is different. It is only like our beauty by analogy, so we cannot reason from the character of creaturely beauty to divine beauty.

What should we think about this line of thought? To some extent, that depends on exactly what sort of doctrine of analogy is being appealed to.[22] I won't try to canvass all versions of the doctrine; instead, I will briefly argue that the version which seems most promising as a response to my argument is actually irrelevant.

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[21] At this point, someone might want to claim that the individual Persons are beautiful because of their relations with each other. I think this kind of move suffers from two problems. First, it is inconsistent with Instrinsicness, which I think we have some reason to accept. (Recall that Intrinsicness accounts for the idea that an object is beautiful because of the way it is, rather than because of the way other things are.) Second, at least the 1st Person of the Trinity (and perhaps all of them) is typically supposed to have all divine perfections without relying on the other Persons for them. The only thing the Father is typically supposed to "get" from the Son is his Fatherhood. The Father has, in Himself, the whole divine nature, including all the divine perfections (or else he couldn't beget them in the Son). And beauty is a divine perfection, so I don't think that it is promising to suppose that the Father is beautiful because of his begetting relationship with the Son.

[22] There are significant differences, between, e.g. the view Davies (2012, p. 394-7) attributes to Aquinas and the view Wippel (2000, p. 549) does.

The version of the doctrine of analogy which seems most promising is one which claims that divine perfections are limit cases of creaturely perfections. It is promising because it suggests how God's beauty is unlike other beauty: while other beauty requires a unity formed out of diversity, God's beauty is pure unity without diversity.[23] (We could imagine a line, with maximal unity represented by one endpoint, and less and less diversity as one approaches the endpoint.) The problem with this way of responding is that, if my earlier argument is right, beauty requires more than mere unity (whether found in diversity or not); it also requires diversity.[24] Beauty involves a harmonious combination of elements, and the limiting case of unity is a mere sameness. When it comes to beauty, the limit case of unity is not 'what everything is striving after,' but rather a way of missing the golden mean.

So, as I said, *if* my earlier arguments in part 2 were correct, then this appeal to analogy will not help. The argument thus turns on specific, normative claims about beauty, and thus cannot be undercut merely by general accounts of analogical predication such as the limit case theory mentioned above. In other words, the problem is specific to beauty, and not dependent on any general skepticism about analogical predication about God. Thus, general theories of predication about God will not help unless they specifically engage with the aesthetic argument.

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[23] Thanks to Matt Frise for suggesting this particular application of the view that divine attributes are limit cases of creaturely perfections. For discussions of analogical predication that take this sort of line, see (Wippel 2000, p. 549) and (Miller 1996, p. 150). A reviewer has suggested that this version may not be so promising after all, on the grounds that a mere limiting case cannot capture the qualitative difference that, according to the doctrine of analogy, holds the between the creaturely and divine perfections. I am not sure that this is correct. Even if it is, this problem has not kept a limit case understanding of analogy from being popular; and in any case, of all the versions of the doctrine I am familiar with, it is the only one which suggests how God's beauty might not involve structure.

[24] Actually, I suspect that it is impossible for their to be a limit case of *unity* without diversity; a complete lack of diversity is merely identity, which does not seem to be a kind of unity at all. (It involves no *union*, since union always involves diversity of some kind.) But I will grant my objector the use of the term "unity" to describe a simple being for the sake of argument.

The second objection I will consider can be traced back to the Pseudo-Dionysius (Spicher section 3.b). On one reading of his view, God is beautiful by virtue of the fact that God is the source of beauty. There are two different ways in which this claim could be understood. It could be that the claim is that God is beautiful by virtue of beautiful created things; then, however, it contradicts the doctrine of divine aseity (as I argued in 2.C.). Or one might think that God is beautiful by virtue of his power to produce beautiful things. But it is hard to see why this would suffice to make God beautiful. After all, a beautiful vase could be produced by a plain potter. (Or, more likely today, a plain machine.) So it doesn't seem generally true that the ability to make beautiful things is sufficient for being beautiful, which suggests that this objection is unacceptably *ad hoc*. We should therefore conclude that this second objection is not promising either.

The final objection holds more promise, but is, I think, not compelling.[25] It might be said that I have neglected the possibility that the beauty of an object is not determined by the way the object is, but by the way it appears. And appearance can differ from reality; so perhaps God is simple in a way that implies (DS), but does not appear to be simple. This would allow God to possess the sort of structure required by Structuralism in appearance, and so to be beautiful, without rendering (DS) false. I have two responses to make to this line of reasoning. The first starts from the fact that divine beauty is typically taken to be a divine perfection, and the fact that God is typically considered to possess aseity. If these views are correct, then it seems that God's beauty must depend on the way that God is, not on the way that God appears. After all, the way that God appears to creatures is dependent upon the nature of the creatures, and for a divine perfection to be dependent upon creatures would violate aseity. The objector might here

[25] I would like to thank John Bennett for impressing upon me the need to think about this objection.

say that divine beauty could be based on God's appearance not to creatures, but to God. But it is surely that case that God "sees" himself the way that God actually is; so a simple God must appear simple to himself—in which case the appeal to the difference between appearance and reality cannot help the objector.

At this point, perhaps the objector may want to insist that it is God's self-perception that matters for divine beauty, and claim that Structuralism is just false for divine perception. After all, all the examples I gave to motivate Structuralism were drawn from the experiences of creatures; perhaps God does not share our preference for structure. It is hard to tell just what God's aesthetic responses are like, and so hard to tell how to assess this reply. Suppose for the sake of argument that it is correct; my second response to the objection avoids this problem.

My second response starts from the idea that it isn't just God who is supposed to be able to see God as God is. It is a typical religious hope that we may someday see God "face to face," apprehending the divine nature.[26] Seeing God "face to face"—especially seeing God in a blessed future state—presumably must involve seeing God as God is. For an utterly simple God to appear structured would not be to see God as God is; and it would be a disappointing eschaton that featured such a permanent veil. So for those who think this sort of religious hope is on the right track—which I think includes most of those who are tempted to endorse (DS)—this last objection should not be convincing.

4. Conclusion

I have presented an argument against divine simplicity and defended its premises. I do not regard it as a knock-out punch against divine simplicity: disputes in

[26] For a philosophical discussion of the idea of seeing God, with commentary on the reports of people who have had religious experiences, see (Alston 1991).

philosophy of religion are typically won on points, not through a single devastating argument.[27] But since this argument is valid, I believe my defense of its premises gives us some reason to believe that its conclusion is true. Assessments of the doctrine of divine simplicity should no longer ignore the evidence aesthetics gives us against it.

[27] I owe this metaphor to Tom Flint, in his (2011, p. 46). Flint uses it in the context of disputes over Molinism.

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