Still Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity

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In a 2014 paper in this journal, I put forward two objections to a version of divine simplicity I call 'Divine Truthmaker Simplicity'. James Beebe and Timothy Pawl have come to Divine Truthmaker Simplicity's defense. In this paper, I respond to Beebe and Pawl, consider an overlooked way of defending Divine Truthmaker Simplicity, and conclude by outlining an alternative account of God's simplicity.

According to divine simplicity, God is ontologically simple. He has neither proper parts nor intrinsic properties distinct from Him. God's justice is God's mercy is God.

Various formulation of divine simplicity have been given. The most recent and plausible of these is given by Brower.[1] According to him, divine simplicity can be expressed as follow:

> **Simplicity.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'God is F' is true, then God's F-ness exists and is identical with God.

Add to this the following truthmaker account of predication

> **Truthmaker.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'a is F' is true, then a's F-ness exists, where this entity is to be understood as the truthmaker for 'a is F'

and we get what I call 'Divine Truthmaker Simplicity'. From Simplicity and Truthmaker, it follows that if an intrinsic predication of the form 'God is F' is true, then God makes true 'God is F'. Restricting ourselves to intrinsic essential predications of God, that God makes true 'God is F' seems plausible only if the following is:

[1] Brower, "Making Sense of Divine Simplicity" and "Simplicity and Aseity". See also Bergmann and Brower, "A Theistic Argument against Platonism (and in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)" and Pruss, "On Two Problems of Divine Simplicity".

> **Essential.** For any concrete *x*, if 'p' is an intrinsic essential predication of *x*, then *x* makes 'p' true.

And Brower thinks it is plausible.[2] But then so is Divine Truthmaker Simplicity.

I disagree. As I have argued, Divine Truthmaker Simplicity rests on an implausible truthmaking principle (Essential) and has a hard time making sense of certain explanatory claims when it comes to God.[3] Pawl and Beebe think otherwise, claiming that my arguments fall short.[4] In this paper, I defend these arguments against Beebe's and Pawl's criticisms (§1 and §2). I then consider a new response to one of my arguments (§3) and conclude by outlining what seems to be a superior account of God's simplicity (§4).

1 The Truthmaker Argument

I have argued that, in relying on Essential, Divine Truthmaker Simplicity relies on a false truthmaking principle.[5] Truthmakers are explanatory in nature. If *x* makes 'p' true, then *x* (or *x*'s existence) explains that 'p' is true. But Plato does not explain that 'Plato is human' is true. And so Plato does not make 'Plato is human' true. To pump your intuitions, suppose that I ask you 'why is it true that Plato is human?' and you respond by saying 'because of Plato'. I respond in frustration: "You have not told me enough. I know that Plato *is*. But what makes or accounts for its being true that he is human?"

Pawl's Response

In defending Divine Truthmaker Simplicity, Pawl claims that I have failed to distinguish between *metaphysical* and *epistemic* explanations.[6] The former requires that the explanans fully account for the explanandum; that they make the explanandum exist, obtain, or happen. The latter requires that the explanans renders the explanandum intelligible; that they shed light on how or why the explanandum happened. Since it is only in cases involving epistemic explanation that Plato does

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[2] Brower, "Making Sense", 19 and "Simplicity and Aseity," 111.
[3] Saenz, "Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity". For another criticism of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity, see Da Vee, "Why Truthmaker Theory Cannot Save Divine Simplicity".
[4] Pawl, "In Defense of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity"; Beebe, "Brower and Saenz on Divine Truthmaker Simplicity".
[5] Saenz, "Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 463–468.
[6] Pawl, "In Defense of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 68–71.

not explain that 'Plato is human' is true, and since truthmaker explanations involve only metaphysical explanations, my objection misfires.

This defense of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity fails. First, it commits us to the following:

> If *x* makes true 'p', then even though *x* fully accounts for the truth of 'p', it need not render this truth intelligible.

This is a fantastic claim. If *x* fully accounts for the truth of 'p' and so makes it that 'p' is true, then *x* sheds light on this truth and so renders it intelligible (at least for those who both know what *x* is and understand 'p'). A view of truthmaking that permits truthmakers for 'p' to fail to render intelligible the truth of 'p' is an impoverished view of truthmaking.[7]

Second, Pawl has not addressed the crux of my worry: that according to Essential, the truthmaking relation is too coarse-grained.[8] This is a *metaphysical* worry. Let me demonstrate it. Consider the following claims:

1. Plato is material
2. Plato is rational

These say rather unrelated things about Plato. 1 says that materiality is true of Plato and 2 that rationality is. Because of this, it is plausible that whatever makes 1 true does not make 2 true. In particular, it is plausible that whatever makes 1 true has to do with materiality and not rationality and that whatever makes 2 true has to do with rationality and not materiality. Here then, we have a difference that requires a difference.

I am not claiming that for any two truths, such truths require different truthmakers. In certain cases, it may be that two truths are so related that positing one truthmaker for both is unproblematic. For example,

> The ball is red,
> The ball is colored,

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[7] See Beebe, "Brower and Saenz on Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 477 for a similar worry.
[8] Saenz, "Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 464 & 467.

may well have the same truthmaker (the ball's being red) on account of red being a determinate of color. But of course, we do not want to say that the ball is colored and

> The ball is extended

have the same truthmaker (and this in spite of the fact that both predications seem like essential predications of the ball). Color and extension are not related in such a way that what makes it that something is colored is true makes it that something is extended is true. The same goes for materiality and rationality.

And so that 1 ascribes materiality to Plato and 2 rationality is relevant with respect to what makes these claims true. But having it that Plato makes both true does away with this relevance. And so Plato does not make them true. Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity then, Essential is false.[9]

Beebe's Response

Again, suppose I ask 'what makes it that 'Plato is human' is true?' and you respond by uttering 'Plato'. This is a bad answer. But according to Beebe, what makes it bad is its being conversationally inappropriate. He says

> A response that consisted of a single-word answer like this would seem to be conversationally inappropriate and to fail to satisfy the explanatory demands of the situation . . . [that] such a single-word speech act of the sort envisioned would

[9] There are those who posit a coarse-grained truthmaking relation. See Armstrong, *Truth and Truthmakers*, 98. But this is neither here nor there. For the point is that this should not be done. I am not alone in saying this. Bennett, *Making Things Up*, 25–26 says, "it is at least somewhat odd to think that the same input, plugged into the same nondisjunctive [building] relation, can generate two very different outputs. Oughtn't there be something else that makes the difference?". Audi, "Why Truthmaking is not a Case of Grounding," §6 requires that truths and truthmakers match when he says says "Surely we should insist on some degree of match between a truthmaker and the truth it makes true. The match doesn't have to be perfect . . . but the limits are set by the semantic features of the relevant truths". And Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Truthmakers," 192 has it that "if essentially human Socrates himself necessitates the truth of the proposition that Socrates is human, it does not follow that Socrates himself is the truthmaker for the proposition that Socrates is human. Indeed what the proposition that Socrates is human seems to be true in virtue of is that Socrates is human, not just Socrates himself." For more who think along these lines, see Mulligan, Simons, & Smith, "Truth-Makers," 300.

> violate relevant conversational norms does not show that individual entities cannot serve as metaphysical grounds of truth.[10]

Suppose that Beebe is right. A single-word speech act of the sort envisioned violates relevant conversational norms. But how is this relevant? According to Essential, 'Plato is human' is true because of Plato. But for reasons given in section 1 — which constitute a brief extension and elucidation of my 2014 argument against Essential — this explanatory claim seems false. And it seems false whether or not 'Plato' is a conversationally appropriate answer to the above question. So, even if they were used by me to make this point, facts about speech-acts are ultimately beside the point.

Beebe goes on by saying that a conversationally appropriate answer to the above question would involve a "story about the ways in which truth-bearers are made true by things in reality, the kinds of things that can serve as truth-bearers and truthmakers, and whatever relations of necessitation obtain between the two".[11] In short, for Beebe, a conversationally appropriate answer involves giving a theory of truthmaking! But why think this? Suppose I ask you 'What makes it that 'Plato is wise' is true?' and you respond by saying 'that Plato is wise'. Here, no *theory of truthmaking* has been given and nothing conversationally inappropriate has occurred. Why then suggest that a theory of truthmaking be given in order to appropriately answer our initial question? What is it about this first question that requires it?

Finally, that 'Plato' is a conversationally inappropriate answer to 'what makes it that 'Plato is human' is true?' is not obvious given that Plato in fact makes 'Plato is human' true. Suppose I ask 'what makes it that 'Plato exists' is true?' and you respond by uttering 'Plato'. This answer is not conversationally inappropriate. In giving it, the person who asked the question would not respond in frustration. Here, the one-word answer 'Plato' is both conversationally appropriate and seems to satisfy the explanatory demands of the situation. Why then does Beebe claim otherwise when it comes to the original question? For him, Plato is a suitable truthmaker for 'Plato is human'. Why then is 'Plato' a conversationally inappropriate answer to our initial

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[10] Beebe, "Brower and Saenz on Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 478.
[11] Ibid., 478.

question? What is it about 'Plato is human', as opposed to 'Plato exists', that makes this conversational difference?[12]

2 The Divine Predications Argument

My second argument has it that Divine Truthmaker Simplicity cannot make sense of explanatory claims like the following

3. God is wise, at least in part, because God is divine.[13]

In order to see why, consider a different dependence claim. Suppose that

4. Plato is human, at least in part, because Plato is rational.

But from 4 and that Plato's humanity and rationality exist, we should infer

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[12] In the course of his criticism, Beebe "Brower and Saenz," makes a number of non-obvious claims concerning truthmaker theory. For example, on page 475 he says

> it is generally accepted among truthmaker theorists that concrete individuals alone can serve as truthmakers for intrinsic essential predications.

But this is not obvious. Now he supports his claim by citing Bigelow, *The Reality of Numbers*, 128; Lewis, "Armstrong on Combinatorial Possibility," 216; Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Truthmakers," 192. But citing these authors helps little. For one, Beebe gets Rodriguez-Pereyra wrong. As made clear in note 9, Rodriguez-Pereyra rejects that concrete individuals are truthmakers for intrinsic essential predications. For two, given the supervenience or entailment accounts of truthmaking that both Bigelow, *The Reality of Numbers*, 133 and Lewis, "Armstrong on Combinatorial Possibility," 217–219 accept, it is no surprise that both think that concrete individuals alone can serve as truthmakers for intrinsic essential predications. But it is now universally accepted that these accounts are bad accounts, being too coarse-grained (among other things, they fail to capture the idea that truth depends on the world but not vice-versa). Given this, that Bigelow and Lewis have it that individuals can make true intrinsic essential predications hardly counts in favor of thinking that most truthmaker theorists do. At present, truthmaker theorists want an *in virtue of* or *grounding* account of truthmaking and not a modal account. But once we go in for such fine-grained accounts of truthmaking, that individuals can make true intrinsic essential predications is no longer so clear (and, as I have been arguing, is false).

[13] Saenz, "Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 468–473. One can flip this and instead accept that God is divine, at least in part, because he is wise, or that God is omniscient, at least in part, because he knows, or that God loves, at least in part, because he desires, and so on. Nothing hangs on the particular example being used. So long as what goes in the blank are intrinsic essential predicates of God, feel free to use any instance of God is _____, at least in part, because God is _____.

5. Plato's humanity depends on his rationality.[14]

Now since this kind of inference is plausible, and since divine simplicity theorists accept that God's wisdom and divinity exist, then from 3 we should infer

6. God's wisdom depends on God's divinity.

This, coupled with divine simplicity, yields

7. God depends on God.

But this is false, flouting the irreflexivity of dependence. And so divine simplicity cannot make sense of explanatory claims like 3. This is bad.

The Response

Beebe suggests that when it comes to divine simplicity, there can be no true dependence claims involving God's intrinsic essential predications. The divine simplicity theorist is thus free to reject 3.[15] Now perhaps Beebe is right. But if he is, this speaks against divine simplicity and not in favor of it. As Brower himself states

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[14] A referee asks "where does 'depends on' come from in 5? How do we get it from 4 and the two additional assumptions that Plato's humanity and rationality exist?". The answer is that if follows from the fact that 4 is an explanatory claim. Consider: the window broke because Jill threw the ball. So the window's breaking depends on Jill's throwing the ball; the chair is F-shaped because its parts are F-shaped. So the chair's being F-shaped depends on its parts being F-shaped; p or q is true because p is true. So p or q's being true depends on p's being true. These are all plausible claims. And they are plausible because explanation is often times undergirded by some dependency or other. But if you are still skeptical, feel free to substitute 'depends on' for 'is explanatorily prior to'. 5 now becomes 'Plato's humanity is explanatorily prior to his rationality', which follows from 4 (assuming that Plato's humanity and rationality exist).

[15] Beebe, "Brower and Saenz," 481. He further notes that "the dilemma that Saenz is concerned with in his second objection takes aim at the doctrine of divine simplicity only when it is combined with an additional doctrine." And this doctrine (if it should be called that) is that there exists a kind of priority ordering between God's intrinsic essential predications. He then claims that because of this, "the present objection is not a fully direct attack on [Divine Truthmaker Simplicity] itself."

Now I am not sure what would count as a fully direct attack in Beebe's sense. Even if I had attempted to show that divine simplicity is internally incoherent (and so gives what has the best chance of being a fully direct attack), one could respond by saying that this is not a fully direct attack. After all, such an attack would only work when it is combined with the claim that there cannot be true contradictions. And nothing bars one from coupling divine simplicity with a logic (dialetheism) that permits true contradictions.

> the God of traditional theism possesses intellectual states like knowledge (*in virtue of which* he is omniscient), and appetitive states like desires or volitions (*in virtue of which* he is perfectly good or loving). (italics mine)[16]

This is spot on. God is not a "flat" being. Not all of his intrinsic essential predications are fundamental. They are not all explanatorily on par. God is omniscient, or good, or loving in part because He knows, or desires, or volits. So there are true in-virtue-of claims involving God's intrinsic essential predications.[17] But then an account of God that denies such claims is an impoverished account. To put things differently, if divine simplicity is committed to claiming that there are no true dependence claims involving God's intrinsic essential predications, then we have uncovered a surprising and substantive commitment of such a view.

Assuming then that 3 is true, both Beebe and Pawl claim that its being true is a conceptual matter. Beebe says

> Yet if the distinctions between these divine attributes are merely conceptual and not based in reality, it is clear that whatever priority or dependence there is between predications regarding these attributes is also purely conceptual rather than real.[18]

And Pawl says

To use a more familiar example, Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, criticizes divine simplicity on the grounds that it identifies God with a property. But his argument assumes that God's omniscience, power, and goodness must be properties. And of course, divine simplicity need not say that they are. Because of this, I suppose Beebe would say that Plantinga's attack is not a fully direct attack. But it also looks like, given this standard, just about any attack on divine simplicity would not count as a fully direct attack.

[16] Brower, "Simplicity and Aseity," 106. Consider also Leftow, "God and the Problem of Universals,", 353 who says that "God is powerful because He has deity". Or Augustine, *De Trinitate* 6.7.8, who says "Nevertheless, God is identical with his greatness, which is his wisdom (since he is not great by virtue of quantity, but by virtue of power)".

[17] A referee says that many who work on divine simplicity would deny that some essential predications are true in virtue of others. Perhaps. But some do not, as we have seen in the main text and in the previous note. What is more, such a view seems implausible. The examples already given seem to establish this (surely, that God is omniscient, good, and loving are essential predications of God). Here is another: it seems to be that God is good & wise in virtue of God's being good and God's being wise. Here then, we have an essential conjunctive predication being true in virtue of two essential predications.

[18] Beebe, "Brower and Saenz on Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 483.

> If there must be an explanatory relation between the predications, then I think the proponent of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity should affirm that [3] is true due to the concepts involved.[19]

Suppose then that 3 involves nothing more than a conceptual distinction. If so, then we cannot move from it to 6, which involves worldly, and not conceptual, matters. And this generalizes. Where the predications involved are intrinsic essential predications, the move from 'God is F because God is G' to 'God's F-ness depends on God's G-ness' will always be illegitimate.

But that 3 amounts to nothing more than a conceptual claim is implausible. In responding to my argument, Beebe and Pawl note that philosophers disagree on conceptual matters all the time. Pawl says

> Such conceptual disagreement is rife in philosophy. Think of analyses of concepts that turn the standard view on its head. For instance, is an action good because God approves of it, or does God approve of it because it is good? Or is a proposition necessarily true because it is true in all worlds, or is it true in all worlds because it is necessarily true?[20]

But it is mistaken to suggest that when philosophers attempt to analyze wisdom, goodness, necessity, freedom, and so on, they are, in general at least, attempting to analyze our *concepts* of wisdom, goodness, necessity, freedom, and so on.[21] Rosen makes clear why, saying "The old Socratic questions — What is Justice? What is courage? — call for definitions, not of words or

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[19] Pawl, "In Defense of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 73.

[20] Pawl, "In Defense of Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 73. Beebe, "Brower and Saenz on Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 482 makes a similar claim when he says "one epistemologist can think JUSTIFIED BELIEF is conceptually prior to KNOWLEDGE while another can think that the reverse is true without either one of them being guilty of elementary confusions about the concepts involved."

[21] A referee asks "What else is one to give an analysis [of wisdom, goodness, necessity, freedom, and so on] in terms of if not concepts?". Of course, in any analysis, concepts must be *used*. This is true whether we are talking about worldly or non-worldly (conceptual, linguistic, and representational) things. Communication requires making use of concepts. But it does not follow from this that when we give an analysis, what we are analyzing are concepts. Concepts need not be *mentioned*. To use a tired example, since water is one thing and out concept of water another, it is one thing to ask for a definition of the former (a real definition), which should not mention concepts, and another to ask for a definition of the latter (a nominal definition), which should. See the main text for more.

concepts, but of [non-conceptual] things" (brackets mine).[22] And so when we ask what it is for something to be F, we are best understood as seeking definitions of the

> properties, kinds, and relations that figure in our questions, rather than semantic or conceptual equivalents, [. . .]. The main argument for this view is that when we try to answer these questions, we are happy to entertain analyses cast in terms that fully competent masters of the analysandum need not grasp. We have no conception of semantic or conceptual analysis on which this makes sense; and yet our analytical questions do make sense. And this suggests our questions are not semantic or conceptual questions after all, but rather metaphysical questions that call for definitions of properties and other aspects of mind-independent reality.[23]

We can put what he says in terms of explanation. In asking 'in virtue of what is it that God is wise, good, necessary, or free?', we are happy to entertain explanations cast in terms that fully competent masters of the concepts involved in the explanandum need not grasp. This tells us that the explanations we are looking for are not conceptual in nature but metaphysical.[24] For example, it may be that God is free, in part, because his causing his actions is wholly reducible to mental states. Or it may be that God is free, in part, because his actions are the result of a mechanism that is appropriately responsive to reasons. But a competent master of the concept of freedom need not grasp any of this.[25] So it is a mistake to cast such disputes as conceptual disputes. And since 3 is an answer to the kinds of questions we are considering — it is an instance of an answer to an instance of the question 'in virtue of what is it that *x* is F?' — it is a mistake to think that it is

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[22] Rosen, "Real Definition," 189.

[23] In saying that we are seeking definition of the *properties*, *kinds*, and *relations* that figure in our questions, Rosen is not being fair to the nominalist. For we can state the argument Rosen gives in terms that a nominalist can accept. Instead of asking 'What is Justice?' we can ask 'What is it for *x* to be just?' And here, what Rosen says about the former question applies just as easily to the latter.

[24] That this is so is clear in both of Pawl's examples. A fully competent master of the concept of good need not grasp God or God's approving of such an action. And a fully competent master of the concept of necessity need not grasp possible worlds or truth in all worlds.

[25] Going back to what was said in note 21, don't confuse the concept of freedom with freedom. We can be competent masters of the former without being certain about what the latter is. Indeed, this is precisely the point! We can disagree about what freedom is all while largely employing the same concept of freedom. If this were not so, then our disagreements would be apparent; they would be cases of talking past one another. But they are not.

settled on conceptual grounds or is a conceptual claim. It is not. It is settled on metaphysical grounds and is a metaphysical claim; it is about God's wisdom and not about our concept of God's wisdom. But then the move from 3 to 6 cannot be blocked by saying that 3 amounts to nothing more than a conceptual claim.

3 An Overlooked Response

Above, both 3 (God is wise, at least in part, because God is divine) and the inference from it to 6 (God's wisdom depends on God's divinity) were questioned. But the inference from 6 to 7 (God depends on God) also deserves our attention.

Following Jenkins, suppose that we treat the semantics of 'depends on' as hyperintensional.[26] So 'depends on' creates contexts into which one cannot always substitute necessarily co-extensive terms *salva veritate*. To use her example, it might be that the following triad is true:

a. S's pain depends on S's brain state B.
b. S's pain does not depend on S's pain.
c. S's brain state B is identical to S's pain.

But any two of these claims seem to entail that the third is false. How then can they be true? By construing the dependence relation as more than two-place. Jenkins says

> we could think of the dependence relation as holding between a state of affairs, a (possibly identical) state of affairs, a feature or aspect of the first state of affairs and a feature or aspect of the second state of affairs. We could then say that in order to get a true sentence of the form '*x* grounds *y*', one must present the referents of '*x*' and '*y*' in such a way that the relevant aspects of them, i.e. the things which stand in the relation's third and fourth places, are sufficiently evident (in context).[27]

[26] Jenkins, "Is Metaphysical Dependence Irreflexive?".
[27] Ibid., 271–272.

Applying this to the above case, the dependence relation can be seen as holding between

S's pain (which is identical to brain state B)
Brain state B
The pain-y aspect of the state in question
The brain-y aspect of the state in question.

Calling S's pain 'P', the thought is that P, with respect to its pain-y aspect, depends on P, with respect to its brain-y aspect. And one way of capturing these 'with-respect-to's is by referring to the first occurrence of P with the name 'S's pain' and the second occurrence of P with the name 'S's brain state B'. This is why we can truly say that S's pain depends on S's brain state B. It is also why that S's pain depends on S's pain is false: P, with respect to its pain-y aspect, does not depend on P, with respect to its pain-y aspect.

A similar move can be made with 6. In having it that God's wisdom, at least in part, depends on God's divinity, the dependence relation can be seen as holding between

God's wisdom (which is identical to God's divinity)
God's divinity
The wisdom-y aspect of the thing in question
The divine-y aspect of the thing in question.

So God, with respect to his wisdom-y aspect, depends on God, with respect to his divine-y aspect. And since we can capture these 'with-respect-to's by referring to the first occurrence of God with the name 'God's wisdom' and the second occurrence of God with the name 'God's divinity', we can say that 6 is true. Moreover, since 'God depends on God' does not supply us with the wisdom-y and the divine-y aspects of God, which it must if dependence has aspects among its relata, then that God depends on God is false. In all this then we have found a way to say that 6, but not 7, is true.

Alas, there is a problem. Notice that the wisdom-y and divine-y aspects of God cannot be intrinsic properties of God given divine simplicity. Perhaps then they are concepts (WISDOM, DIVINITY) that God is in the extension of, or predicates ('is wise', 'is divine') that God satisfies, or sets (the set of wise things, the set of divine things) that God is a member of, or actions (acting

wisely, acting divinely) that God does, or propositions ('God is wise', 'God is divine') that God makes true, or manifestations (appearing wise, appearing divine) of God. Focusing on concepts, the dependence relation can be seen as holding between God's wisdom, God's divinity, WISDOM, and DIVINITY and would be expressed as follows:

> God, with respect to being in the extension of WISDOM, depends on God, with respect to being in the extension of DIVINITY.[28]

But this suffer from the defect of turning what is supposed to be a claim involving matters *intrinsic* to God — God's wisdom and God's divinity — into one involving matters *extrinsic* to God — being in the extension of a concept. (This holds true for satisfying a predicate, being a member of a set, doing a certain action, making true a proposition, and appearing some way.) We can call the problem that dependence claims like 6 pose for divine simplicity 'the problem of dependent intrinsics' (a problem because they seem to entail that God depends on God).[29] And we can say that the present solution to the problem of dependent intrinsics is that there are none. But this is absurd. If we know anything, we know that God's wisdom and God's divinity are intrinsic to God. But then that God's wisdom depends on God's divinity has to do with how God is and not with how things "outside" God are.

4 Divine Nominal Simplicity

Divine Truthmaker Simplicity is the conjunction of

> **Truthmaker.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'a is F' is true, then a's F-ness exists, where this entity is to be understood as the truthmaker for 'a is F'

and

[28] It is not hard to see how the other options would look: God, with respect to satisfying 'is wise', depends on God, with respect to satisfying 'is divine'; God, with respect to being a member of the set of wise things, depends on God, with respect to being a member of the set of divine things; God, with respect to acting wise, depends on God, with respect to acting divine; God, with respect to making true 'God is wise', depends on God, with respect to making true 'God is divine'; God, with respect to appearing wise, depends on God, with respect to appearing divine.

[29] This problem and its name are inspired by Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 203–205.

> **Simplicity.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'God is F' is true, then God's F-ness exists and is identical with God.

I have contrasted this conjunction with Divine Truthmaker Complexity, which is the conjunction of Truthmaker and

> **Complexity.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'God is F' is true, then God's F-ness exists and is not identical with God.[30]

Divine Truthmaker Complexity is immune to the Truthmaker and Divine Predications Argument. In having it that God's F-ness exists but is not identical to God, it not only blocks the move from 6 to 7 (there is no problem of dependent intrinsics here), it also furnishes us with truthmakers for intrinsic essential predications of God all while denying that God makes such predications true (and so is not committed to Essential).

Simplicity and Complexity accept that if 'God is F' is true, then God's F-ness exists. But this inference is not forced on one who is keen to preserve God's simplicity *on account of aseity considerations* (as divine simplicity theorists typically are). According to divine simplicity, if God is *a se*, then if God's wisdom exists, God is God's wisdom. But there are two ways to accept the embedded conditional. We can affirm the consequent (as Simplicity does) or deny the antecedent (God is wise but God's wisdom does not exist). And so there is nothing about God's being *a se* that favors Simplicity over

> **Nominal Simplicity.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'God is F' is true, then God, but not God's F-ness, exists.

Given Nominal Simplicity and that 'God is F' is true, Truthmaker is false. For if 'God is F' is true, then given Truthmaker, God's F-ness exists. But Nominal Simplicity says otherwise. So instead of Truthmaker, anyone who accepts Nominal Simplicity should accept

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[30] Saenz, "Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," 472–473.

> **Truthmaking.** If an intrinsic predication of the form 'a is F' is true, then 'a is F' is true because a is F.

Truthmaking is plausible. Everyone should accept that if 'a is F' is true, then 'a is F' is true because a is F.[31] It is also ontologically neutral. There is no quantifying over truthmakers here. That 'a is F' is true because a is F is committed only to a and to 'a is F' (and, if you're a fan of second-order quantification, to F-ness). Here then, we have truthmaking *sans* truthmakers.[32]

We now have a new account. Call the conjunction of Truthmaking and Nominal Simplicity 'Divine Nominal Simplicity'. This is an attractive version of the simplicity of God since, unlike Divine Truthmaker Simplicity, it allows us to make distinctions *in* God and not just in the concepts we apply to God. For example, it allows us to distinguish God's being just from God's being merciful. Of course, this distinction is not ontological. But it is a distinction having to do with God. It has nothing to do with *us*: how we think about or represent God. It is a distinction in nature, out there in the world, that is best expressed in terms of the ideology of the theory and not its ontology.[33]

In spite of having it that God is simple, Divine Nominal Simplicity is not a version of divine simplicity as Brower understands it. All such versions accept Simplicity and so accept that

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[31] Here is Merricks, *Truth and Ontology*, xiii,

> *That Fido is Brown* is true because Fido is brown. *That the Trojans were conquered* is true because the Trojans were conquered. *That hobbits do not exist* is true because hobbits do not exist. And so on. And so we might say that truth 'depends on the world'. But such 'dependence' is trivial. No one would deny it.

[32] For more on this view of truthmaking, see Hornsby, "Truth without Truthmaking Entities"; Melia, "Truthmaking without Truthmakers"; Schnieder, "Truth-MakingWithout Truth-Makers".

[33] A referee asked me to elaborate more on how there can be a distinction in something, and so out there in the world, without its being an ontological distinction. The latter requires making a difference over what *exists*. For example, if the difference between *x*'s being just and *x*'s being merciful were ontological, then *x*'s being just would involve or entail commitment to *something* (the property of being just) that *x*'s being merciful would not and vice-versa: *x*'s being merciful would involve or entail commitment to *something* (the property of being merciful) that *x*'s being just would not. By definition, if a distinction is an ontological distinction, then it requires quantifying over distinct things and so requires a distinction over what exists. But one might not think that all distinctions require making a difference over what exists. Suppose I repudiate properties. That alone does not bar me from thinking that there is a difference between *x*'s being just and *x*'s being merciful. And so for me, not all distinctions are accompanied by a difference over what exists. This, however, does not commit me to thinking that these distinctions have to do with *us* (Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*, 12–13). Whether we exist or not, the difference between *x*'s being just and *x*'s being merciful remains and is a distinction that concerns, and only concerns, *x* (and so not us).

God's F-ness exists when the intrinsic predication 'God is F' is true. Divine Nominal Simplicity denies this. What these two views on God do have in common is not the acceptance of this thing, God's F-ness, that is identical to God but the denial of there being a thing, God's F-ness, that is distinct from God. Divine Truthmaker Simplicity denies this because it denies that God's F-ness is distinct from God. And Divine Nominal Simplicity denies this because it denies the existence of God's F-ness altogether.

Divine Nominal Simplicity is untouched by my arguments against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity. (This should come as no surprise. Still, I will elaborate on it in order to emphasize the attractiveness of Divine Nominal Simplicity over Divine Truthmaker Simplicity.) According to it, 'God is F' is true not because of God, but because God is F. Since there is no commitment to Essential here, there is nothing like the Truthmaker Argument against it. Turning to the Divine Predications Argument, since Divine Nominal Simplicity denies that God's wisdom and divinity exist, it rejects the inference from 3 (God is wise, at least in part, because God is divine) to 6 (God's wisdom depends on God's divinity).[34] More generally, since it denies that God's F-ness and G-ness exist, it rejects the move from 'God is F because God is G' to 'God's F-ness depends on God's G-ness'. And because it denies this inference *in this way*, it is able to say that God is F because God is G is a worldly, and so non-conceptual, matter. As the discussion in section 2 makes clear, this is good.

It is worth emphasizing this virtue of Divine Nominal Simplicity. When it comes to God, both Divine Truthmaker Simplicity and Divine Nominal Simplicity agree on the ontology: God exists and has no intrinsic properties.[35] However, what the former does is identify God with God's F-ness. But not only does committing to God's F-ness make denying the inference from 3 to 6 difficult for those who think that God is simple (an inference which results in the problem of dependent intrinsics for divine simplicity), identifying God with God's F-ness does not allow one

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[34] Of course, Divine Truthmaker Simplicity will also reject this inference (see section 2 where I discuss such a rejection). But as I have been at pains to show, it cannot do this in a plausible manner once God's wisdom and divinity are granted. As I claim in the main text, this is not so for Divine Nominal Simplicity.

[35] How can they agree on the ontology? Does not Divine Nominal Simplicity, but not Divine Truthmaker Simplicity, deny that God's F-ness exists? And is this not an ontological difference? No, it is not. When Divine Truthmaker Simplicity affirms that God's F-ness exists, it is not affirming the existence of something distinct from God. What it is doing is affirming something about the nature of God: that God is God's F-ness. The difference between these views is not over *whether* something is but *how* it is. It is a disagreement over *essence* and not *being*.

to make distinctions *in* God. Since Divine Nominal Simplicity denies that God's F-ness exists and so denies that God is God's F-ness, it avoids both of these problems.[36]

It is helpful to compare and contrast the views of God discussed in this paper. Where the kinds of properties we have in mind are intrinsic, we have:

	Does God have properties?	Does God's F-ness exist?	Is God's F-ness God?
Divine Truthmaker Simplicity	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Divine Nominal Simplicity	*No*	*No*	*No*
Divine Truthmaker Complexity	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*

This table omits all of the incoherent views. A view which answers 'yes' to all three questions identifies God with a property since if God's F-ness exists, then it is both a property God instantiates (since God has properties) and God.[37] A view which answers 'yes' to the first question but 'no' to the second is incoherent since if God instantiates F, God's F-ness exists. A view which answers 'no' to the first, 'yes' to the second, and 'no' to the third is left without a thing to identify God's F-ness with. And a view which answers 'no' to the second and 'yes' to the third entails that God's F-ness both does and does not exist.

Given the above advantages of Divine Nominal Simplicity over Divine Truthmaker Simplicity, the following conditional becomes attractive: if God lacks intrinsic properties, then

[36] A referee says that it's not lost on anyone that giving up truthmakers and properties [as Divine Nominal Simplicity does] solves the problem. The referee also says that it solves the problem in the way that giving up the existence of God solves the problem of evil. But this is to misstate and misunderstand things. I am not presenting Divine Nominal Simplicity as a solution to a problem. I am instead providing it as an alternative way of understanding God's nature, when understanding God's nature is motivated by aseity concerns (as divine simplicity often is), that is not subject to the worries raised with Divine Truthmaker Simplicity or divine simplicity in general. And that we can avoid these worries all while preserving one of the chief motivations for accepting divine simplicity (aseity motivations) is more than worth pointing out and elaborating on (this is unlike claiming that atheists can "solve" the problem the evil, which is neither worth pointing out nor elaborating on).

[37] This is Plantinga's, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 47 classic objection to divine simplicity.

Divine Nominal Simplicity is true. Since I accept this conditional but deny its consequent (I am not a nominalist about God because I am not a nominalist at all), I favor Divine Truthmaker Complexity. But whether you tollens or ponens, Divine Truthmaker Simplicity must go.[38]

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