

# *The deadlock of absolute divine simplicity*

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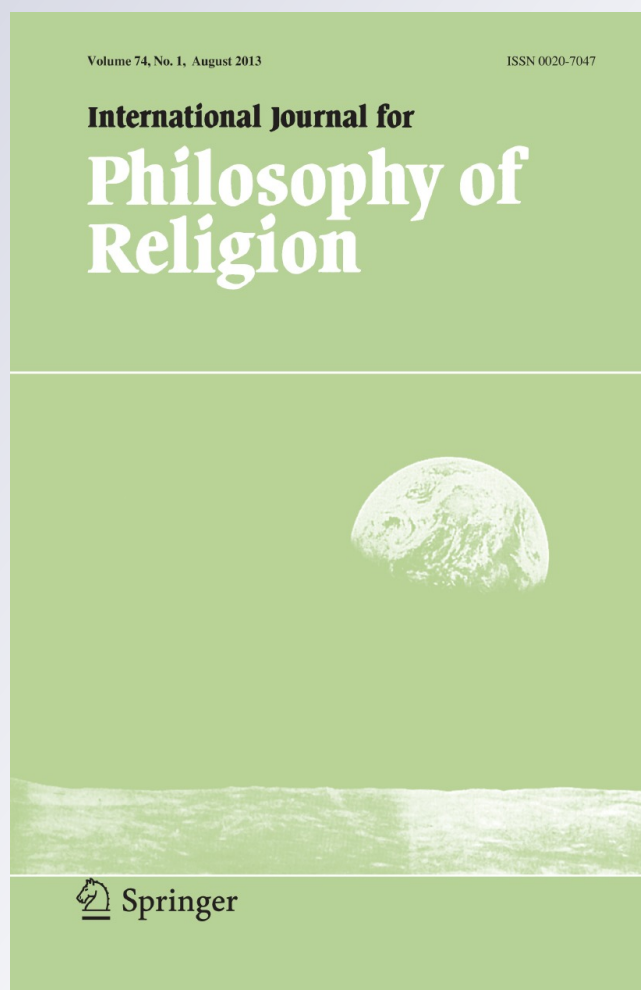
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## The deadlock of absolute divine simplicity

Yann Schmitt

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**Abstract** In this article, I explain how and why different attempts to defend absolute divine simplicity fail. A proponent of absolute divine simplicity has to explain why different attributions do not suppose a metaphysical complexity in God but just one superproperty, why there is no difference between God and His super-property and finally how a absolute simple entity can be the truthmaker of different intrinsic predications. It does not necessarily lead to a rejection of divine simplicity but it shows that we may consider another conception of divine simplicity compatible with some metaphysical complexity in God.

**Keywords** God · Simplicity · Truthmaker · Ontology

### Introduction

Divine simplicity is not an univocal notion, it can be absolute or moderate and, after all the rebuttals of absolute divine simplicity, my rebuttal and those of others,<sup>1</sup> this distinction is essential in order to preserve the possibility of a defense of divine simplicity in a moderate sense.

Divine simplicity is absolute means that God is completely devoid of any metaphysical complexity and Aquinas is a well-known proponent of this doctrine. As [Mertz \(2006, Chap. 3\)](#) notices, a simple entity can be simple because of the absence of proper parts but also because of the absolute indivisibility of its proper parts. If this is acceptable, then God could be simple and could have a metaphysical complexity, His parts which could be divine perfections, are only formally distinct. To define moderate

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<sup>1</sup> See [Plantinga \(1980\)](#) and [Wolterstorff \(1991\)](#).

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divine simplicity, I propose to use the notion of formal distinction developed by Duns Scotus and then to assume a classical opposition between Aquinas and Scotus.

(FD) X is formally distinct from Y if and only if 1) X and Y are inseparable even for an omnipotent being, 2) X and Y have not the same definition, 3) the distinction exists *de re* (it is independent of its conceptualization).

Scotus is a proponent of divine simplicity but he believes that divine attributes are formally distinct and then he refuses absolute divine simplicity. I do not intend to explore how God could be moderately simple. My main goal is to present the defaults of the doctrine of absolute divine simplicity and then the doctrine of moderate divine simplicity will appear to be a lively option worthy to be developed.

Suppose you want to defend the doctrine of absolute divine simplicity. You know that different intrinsic predications about an object seems to imply that this object has different properties and you really want and need to use different predications in your discourse about God. Therefore,

1. you have to explain why different attributions do not suppose a metaphysical complexity in God but just one super-property,
2. then you have to explain why there is no difference between God and His super-property
3. and finally you have to explain how an absolute simple entity can be the truthmaker of different intrinsic predications.

I will argue that each step is defective and this is an indirect argument for moderate divine simplicity but also for giving up any kind of divine simplicity. My background is realism that is the independence of the truthmakers in regard of the truthbearers and I accept the idea that being an antirealist could be a way out of the problems I am exposing; but this way out seems to me a fall in the Abyss.

### **Identity of all divine attributes**

#### A fregean theory of divine simplicity

In a fregean manner, one can say God is absolutely simple and differences between predicates do not imply any sort of composition or complexity in God. If someone attributes different predicates to God, it is not because God has different properties. All the predicates have only one reference and that claim is perfectly compatible with a real distinction between the meanings of the different predicates. Despite the fact ‘being perfectly good’ and ‘being omniscient’ have different meanings, they can refer to the same entity, that is God’s perfection or God Himself, instead of God’s different properties. The different meanings of different predicates express different concepts that we develop about God but their reference is an unique property, a super-property or God Himself.

Nevertheless, if it is easy to grasp how ‘the morning star’ and ‘the evening star’ have the same reference despite their different meanings, it is more difficult to grasp how being perfectly good and being omniscient are the very same property

or entity despite their different meanings. Facing this difficulty, it is important to differentiate between *being good* and *being perfectly good*, or between *having some knowledge* and *being omniscient*. Of course, *being good* and *having some knowledge* are different predicates and their references are different properties, but it does not imply that the maximals of those two properties are not identical. If something  $x$  is good then it is not necessary that  $x$  has also some knowledge of any sort: if existence is good, a stone which exists is a good thing in that respect but it does not have any knowledge. Nevertheless, ‘being perfectly good’ and ‘being omniscient’ are modifications of ‘being good’ and ‘having knowledge’. As maximal cases of the two scales of goodness and knowledge, they can refer to the same entity, the maximal perfection in itself, which is the limit at which every perfection which can have a maximal limit coincides with all others. I do not intent to prove this coincidence, I only want to expose a fregean strategy for the identity of all divine attributes.

However, another problem affects the fregean theory. ‘The morning star’ is an expression which contains a noun but ‘being omniscient’ has no noun inside. Saying that divine predicates refer to maximal perfection is ambiguous. Is perfection an entity that can be identified with God? Is it only a super-property whose identity with God is not stated? By itself, the fregean theory does not give any reason to identify the reference of divine predicates and God Himself because, it only analyses the meaning and the reference of expressions without noun. Nevertheless, it does not preclude some possible identification but, before developing this possibility, another explanation of the identity of divine attributes has to be examined.

#### A determinable/determinate theory of divine simplicity

The first account of the identification of all divine attributes begins with semantic issues. A more directly ontological account has to be tested because fregean theory assumes the possibility of an unique reference without any ontological explanation of the identity between maximal perfections. This second account has then to explain how all properties of God are identical and how different intrinsic predications can be grounded on an unique property.

To analyze the property scale whose maximal is the already mentioned super-property, using the distinction between determinable and determinate seems fruitful. If Socrates is wiser than Napoléon, the reason is that Socrates’ wisdom is greater than Napoléon’s. Funkhouser (2006) explains that an object which instantiates a determinate, also instantiates all determinables associated with this determinate. The degree  $d$  of a perfection  $P$  can be understood as a property  $p$  which is a determinate of the determinable  $P$ . The determination of a determinable supposes some criteria or variables that explain variations of the determinate in respect to the determinable.<sup>2</sup> More precisely, a determinate is a determination of a determinable in respect to several criteria or variables. These criteria or variables are not properties whose conjunction with the determinable would produce the determinate; only determinates and determinables

<sup>2</sup> Funkhouser calls these criteria “determination dimensions”.

are properties.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, one can conceive degrees of knowledge or wisdom as determinates of knowledge or wisdom in respect to their perfection degree.

Due to this determinate/determinable account, the divine simplicity can then be exposed in a way that fits the general idea of the cosmos, if I may say so, of absolute divine simplicity.<sup>4</sup> All attributes of God are determinates, that is maximal degrees of determinables, and these determinables are also determinates of the fundamental determinable, *being perfect*, or *being real*. Perfection is determined by knowledge, wisdom, goodness and so on, and all maximal degrees of these properties are identical and constitute the absolutely simple perfection which is a determinate of the different determinables which are themselves determinates of being perfect. Nevertheless, two worries about this divine simplicity account undermines this account.

The first problem is that we should accept the principle (DD) whose consequences are questionable.

(DD) If a property is the determination of two determinables that are not in any relation of determination, then its nature depends on the two determinables.

(DD) is plausible because a determinate is the result of a determination of a determinable in regard to some criteria or variables and it seems that two determinations could have, contingently or necessarily, the same result. But is a single determination not sufficient to explain what is a determinable? Is the antecedent of (DD) plausible? If *being perfectly powerful* is the result of the maximal determination of *being powerful*, *being perfectly powerful* is sufficiently explained by this determination, and if *being perfectly wise* is the result of the maximal determination of *being wise*, *being perfectly wise* is sufficiently explained by this other determination. Now, identity between *being perfectly wise* and *being perfectly powerful* implies that *being perfectly wise* is also the result of a determination of *being powerful*. Determination is a relation which does not accept two unrelated determinables for an unique determinate because at least one of the determination dimensions of the first determinable is not a feature of the second determinable. Variations of degrees of *being good* are not variations of degrees of *having knowledge*. In the determinate/determinable account of divine properties, identity between maximal properties does not seem to make sense.

Here is my second concern. If something is red and if *being red* is a determinate of *being colored*, it seems that a red thing is red and colored, and then it has at least two properties and not only the property of *being red*. If God has the super-property of *being the maximal determinate of all the determinates of being perfect*, He also has these determinates and He is perfectly good. The obvious conclusion is that God is not absolutely simple.

The moral of the failure of determinate/determinable account is significant for all property account of divine simplicity. Trying to ground the plurality of intrinsic predications on a special property is impossible because *being perfectly F* implies *being F*. The only way out seems to add some analogy. If 'being good' and 'being

<sup>3</sup> See Prior (1949, pp. 5–6).

<sup>4</sup> This proposal can be seen as a new formulation of a neoplatonist cosmos.

perfectly good' are just analogical expressions and if the reference of 'being perfectly good' is identical with the reference of 'being omniscient' which bears itself an analogical relation to 'having knowledge', then God has a unique super-property without being good or having knowledge etc. However, this correction has worse consequences because it destroys the relation of determination. A property like *being good* is a determinate of another property and introducing an analogy between the two properties implies that the determinate is not only the result of the determination of the determinable. The analogy indicates a difference between the determinate and the determination of the determinable that contradicts the core idea of determination.

### The cospecificity problem

Even if those already exposed difficulties were solved, the two defenses of identity between all divine attributes would face the same problem: if God is maximally good and omniscient, He seems also to be good and having knowledge. But everybody acknowledges that it is possible to have knowledge without being good. Therefore, since the divine instance of goodness and the divine instance of power are a single instance, and since any divine instance of  $F$  is cospecific<sup>5</sup> with any instance of  $F$ , then any divine instance of goodness is cospecific with any created instance of any property instantiated by God. The divine goodness would become cospecific with Socrates' wisdom and Napoleon's power. By transitivity, Socrates' wisdom would be cospecific with Napoleon's power, something with which Socrates would surely disagree.

The problem is more pressing for a determinable/determinate theory than for the fregean theory. Suppose that  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  are determinates of  $A$ ,  $A$  being a determinable, that  $b_1$  and  $b_2$  are determinates of  $B$ , a different determinable, and that there is almost one  $a_i$  that is not a  $b_j$ . If there are a  $a_m$  and a  $b_n$  which are identical, it seems that  $A$  and  $B$  have something in common. But how can two different determinables share a determinate? What could be the reason for the identity of determinates if determinables that constitute their nature are different? I already have expressed my doubts on how to solve this problem.

However, a proponent of the fregean solution can deal with the cospecific problem if she is ready to introduce some analogy. If "God being perfectly wise" is an analogical expression with "Socrates being wise" and if "God being good" is analogical with "Socrates being good", the analogy might not be sufficiently strong for any cospecificity occurring. I have some doubt about the introduction of analogies at this fundamental level of the discourse about God but, even if someone is able to argue for identification of all God's properties with that delicate proceeding, she has to face the problem of the next step towards divine simplicity. It is insufficient to identify divine properties to each other, for the super-property has also to be identified with God Himself.

<sup>5</sup> By 'cospecific', I mean the fact of belonging to a common species.

### Attempted reductions of object/properties distinction

For the fregean and the determinable/determinate accounts, if God was different from His super-property, He would not be absolutely simple, because an ontological difference between God as an object and His super-property would remain. The next step of any defense of divine simplicity is to explain how it is possible to identify an object and its property, how the super-property could constitute the entire object called 'God'?

I will study three possible ways to explain identification between God and His super-property. It seems to me that none of them is able to avoid insuperable difficulties and that the last hope for a proponent of absolute divine simplicity is to find a different realist interpretation of predication from the one that associates predication with properties and objects.

#### A constituent ontology for absolute divine simplicity

The first solution begins by a criticism of the use of relational ontology for a reduction of the distinction between object and properties to explain absolute divine simplicity. Any relational ontology needs a strong stipulation on the nature of exemplification: every property can exemplify itself in a way that avoids the difference between object and property. If every property  $P$  can exemplify itself, it means that it is possible that it is true that  $P(P)$ . If it is a general statement on the nature of exemplification, it is very questionable for the property of *being gelatinous* is not itself gelatinous, but if the auto-exemplification claim is restricted to the divine super-property, it clearly seems ad hoc.

In regard to the fail of the auto-exemplification claim, a absolute divine simplicity proponent can believe that a constituent ontology is promising. The super-property could be the unique component of God. Bacon (1995, p. 20) examines the possibility of a divine trope but he rejects it immediately.

On my approach, it can even happen that one and the same bundle is both an individual and a property. An example might be {God's divinity} on the monotheistic conception. Such a singleton property-individual is unlikely, however, in view of the following two constraints on the metarelations  $H$  and  $I$ .

$H$  is the resemblance relation and  $I$  is the compresence relation. In the case of the unique divine trope, any compresence of tropes cannot occur, the individual being already constituted by its trope. Resemblance is also difficult to understand in that very case, because it is difficult to find something that can be resemblant with absolute divine simplicity which seems so transcendent to enter into any relation. No resemblance can supervene on the divine trope and any other trope and, then, no resemblance class can be created.

Nevertheless, if someone wants to defend absolute divine simplicity within a trope theory, she must admit that only a radical negative theology is available. A radical negative theology is not a mere *via negativa* but a theoretical theology which only allows an affirmative proposition of absolute divine simplicity and negations of all



other affirmative propositions. Maybe some affirmations can be tolerated for practical reasons, for example in prayers (“You who are perfectly good”) or in liturgy, but the context should forbid any theoretical analysis of this sentences.<sup>6</sup> Even if this divine simplicity theory is coherent which is far from certain, it does not give theists what they want. Theists who are inclined or forced to reflect on their beliefs and who are then proponents of divine simplicity seek to accommodate different positive claims about God and the transcendence of God. Exalting absolute simplicity without grounding the truth of different affirmative propositions is a fake solution, that is a dissolution of theoretical discourse in philosophical theology.

However, the relevance of negative theology associated with trope theory is also questionable from an ontological point of view. Usually, a trope is defined as an abstract and dependent entity, and obviously a dependent entity cannot constitute any independent object or any substance by itself. A lot of authors rightly consider that tropes are abstract particulars because tropes cannot sustain themselves and have to be connected with a bundle of tropes.<sup>7</sup> A proponent of the divine simplicity who wants to use a trope theory seems to contradict a fundamental claim of this theory, but Campbell (1981, pp. 127–128) tried to justify the possibility for a single trope to exist by itself. His argument begins with a restatement of the basicness of tropes. In a trope theory, no trope depends on an entity belonging to a more fundamental ontological category. Therefore, it seems legitimate to believe that a trope can exist by itself even if it is not a substance.

Finding an example of a single independent trope is a real challenge as we have seen with Bacon’s account of divine simplicity. Campbell offers three unconvincing cases. (1) The sky’s color would be a color trope without any material substratum Campbell says, but the sky’s color, like all colors, cannot exist without a surface, and then this trope is dependent on a surface trope. (2) The rainbow would only be *composed of independent tropes* Campbell continues, but even if we assume that a color trope does not need any surface trope, a rainbow is a particular object constituted by several color tropes which are dependent on each other. (3) Campbell’s last example is founded in microphysics which would contain examples of independent tropes like fundamental particles. Nevertheless, it is more plausible to conceive microparticles as bundles of tropes for they have different properties. None of Campbell’s examples are sufficient and the more reasonable way to accommodate trope theory with the possibility of a single independent trope is to consider that this trope is a limit case of trope theory.<sup>8</sup> This case which seems to have no example except God and which renders impossible any of the basic relations of trope theory appears to be, if not incoherent, entirely ad hoc. God is said to be a trope in any clear and robust sense of the word ‘trope’ but whatever, should we say! Then, for religious and ontological reasons, trope theory for absolute divine simplicity is not a promising analysis.

<sup>6</sup> For some examples of this kind of approach, but without precise insights on divine simplicity, see Marion (1991, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> See Simons (1994).

<sup>8</sup> Maybe the other ‘limit’ case is an infinite bundle of tropes, an interesting case for theists who want to develop a constituent ontology and have to assume that God is composed of an actual infinite number of perfections.

## A lewisian and quinian theory of absolute divine simplicity

Maybe a functional theory of properties is more promising than a constituent ontology. Hughes (1989, pp. 63–67) has proposed a nice defense of identity of all divine attributes with each other and with God. He uses parts of Lewis's theory of properties and several Quine's remarks on sets. The smartness of this failed attempt clearly shows the insuperable difficulties to develop a functional account of divine properties.

First, let us assume that properties are functions from possible worlds to individuals. Sometimes, some properties has a singleton as extension like being an even prime number whose extension is  $\{2\}$ . It is also assumed that being omniscient, being omnipotent and all other divines attributes have God for their extension because of the identity of all divine attributes. Even if the sequel of the argument is acceptable, it is highly questionable to claim that, for example, the extension of being omniscient is necessarily a singleton. Maybe, the extension of being omnipotent is a singleton because two omnipotent entities would limit themselves and then they would not be omnipotent, but why do we have to believe that the extension of *being omniscient* cannot be more than one?<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, even if it was possible to manage a solution to this problem, the next step, the quinian step, leads to an insurmountable difficulty.

Following Quine, Hughes adds that, in some interpretations of set theory, a singleton can be identify with the individual in it. This assumption implies that an abstract entity can be an concrete entity, something that seems to be a category mistake. Maybe this possible category mistake can be ignored for it is a well-known metaphysical problem: God is abstract if 'abstract' means out of space and time and God is concrete if 'concrete' means causally efficient. Therefore, if a property corresponds only to a singleton and if this singleton is identical with the individual in it, then the property is identical with the individual, that is, *being omniscient* and God are the same entity. Granting that the category mistake is not devastating, this seems to be a coherent theory of the double identification. Nevertheless, the problem of the cospecificity presented in "The cospecificity problem" section remains. The identity between *being perfectly good* and *being omniscient* implies that all instances of goodness are cospecific with all instances of *having knowledge*. I shall conclude the lewisian and quinian theory of absolute divine simplicity faces too many problems to be a promising theory of divine attributes.

## From aseity to absolute simplicity

Another solution is to impose a well grounded constraint on the relation between God and all other entities and to deduce, from this claim, the identity between God and His attributes. Leftow (1990, pp. 582–586), had tried to impose an identity requirement for divine attributes based on God's aseity. He has abandoned this solution but it is a nice try to justify the two identifications with a single principle and it is worth readable.

God's aseity associated with God's creative nature leads to this principle:

<sup>9</sup> Most Christians certainly believe the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are, in some sense, omniscient.

(1) Necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  is God,  $x$  creates and maintains in existence whatever is not identical with  $x$ .

This principle seems independent from divine simplicity and it grasps the fundamental theist belief that God is *a se* and the creator and sustainer of everything. From (1), it is also possible to infer that any divine property is identical with God. Suppose that a divine attribute  $A$  exists and is non-identical with God. From (1), we should say God had created  $A$ , an attribute that constitutes His nature. For being what He is, God would have to exemplify  $A$ . Nevertheless, because of His aseity, God's nature cannot depend on anything and even less on a property that He has created. Divine attributes cannot be different from God and then, they should be identical with God. However, (1) contains an implicit alternative: for all  $x$ , either  $x$  is created or  $x$  is identical with God. The second disjunct supposes that God is absolutely simple, it begs the question. There is a third way between being identical and being created.

(1') Necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  is God,  $x$  creates and maintains in existence whatever is not identical with  $x$  or a part of  $x$ .

Of course, (1') does not necessarily implies that God is simple, but unlike (1), it is not assumed a priori that God cannot have any complexity and then (1') avoids any circular reasoning. If we compare (1) and (1'), it appears that (1) does not only encapsulate the divine creative power but implicitly characterizes it as the power of an absolutely simple agent which is begging the question.

The failure of these attempts proves that we need a different approach of divine simplicity. Several times in the previous sections, I used expressions like “even if we can do this or that, there is the problem . . .”. My point is that too many problems arise in the double identification between divine attributes and between God and His attributes. The only way out of this messy difficulties seems to explain the divine simplicity without a two steps approach. Brower (2008, 2009)<sup>10</sup> proposes to restate the problem of divine simplicity without analyzing theological propositions as attributing properties. This avoids the two steps approach of divine simplicity and seems helpful.

## Divine simplicity and truthmakers

### A absolute simple God as a truthmaker

Brower reverses the classical strategy used by proponents of absolute divine simplicity. Divine simplicity is not a goal but a starting point. To this starting point, Brower adds truthmaker theory in order to present a coherent account of predication in the case of an absolutely simple God. This proceeding seeks to explain how an absolute divine God can be the unique truthmaker of different intrinsic predications. Therefore, the plurality of predications does not lead to a plurality of properties but is justified in the light of divine absolute simplicity and of the use of truthmaker theory. My main objection is that Brower's use of truthmaker theory does not fit with the nature of truthmaking

<sup>10</sup> See also Bergmann and Brower (2006).

relation. To be useful, an explanation of a propositional truth by a truthmaker must specify which is the minimal entity which makes true that proposition. Brower rightly argues that an object or a person can be a truthmaker for existential propositions but also for intrinsic predications. Socrates can be the truthmaker for <Socrates exists> and for <Socrates is human>. But is Socrates a minimal truthmaker for <Socrates is human>? A minimal truthmaker for a proposition is a truthmaker without any proper part that could be a truthmaker for that proposition. Seeking a minimal truthmaker of a proposition is seeking a ultimate and fine-grained ontological ground of the truth of that proposition. Without minimal truthmakers, truthmaking relation does not provide precise explanation of the truth of propositions. Socrates is a genuine truthmaker for <Socrates is human> but the minimal truthmaker has to be the nature of Socrates whatever it is, *Socrates' humanity* conceived as an instance of an universal or a trope, as the state of affairs *Socrates being human* or as an ontological constituent like Socrates's individual essence or form.

(TA) states Brower's account of intrinsic predication in truthmaker theory:

(TA) 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". (Brower 2009, p. 109)

The point Brower does not sufficiently examine is the problem of a minimal a's Fness. In a note, Brower (2009, p. 125, n.23) just adds that God is the minimal truthmaker for intrinsic predications for God is absolutely simple, without any kind of parts. I disagree with this claim not because Brower postulates divine absolute simplicity but because what is missed here is an account of the truthmaking relation between a minimal truthmaker and different intrinsic predications about it.

Brower simplifies Socrates's case when he says:

Socrates himself, just in virtue of being the concrete individual he is, can be regarded as the truthmaker for "Socrates is human", "Socrates is an animal", "Socrates is a material object", "Socrates exists", "Socrates is identical with himself", and so on. (Brower 2009, p. 111)

The expression "Socrates himself, just in virtue of being the concrete individual he is" can refer to two different truthmakers: Socrates himself and Socrates's essence or nature. The first is not necessarily a minimal truthmaker. Apparently, Socrates is not identical with Socrates's nature, nor with Socrates's humanity or Socrates being human. Even if Socrates is a truthmaker of these propositions, someone who uses truthmaker theory, has to carefully precise which is the minimal truthmaker of each proposition to actually explain each truth.

The comparison between theist propositions and propositions about Socrates is then misleading. If Socrates's humanity is an abstract entity exemplified by Socrates, identifying Socrates with it leads to a category mistake for Socrates is a concrete entity. If Socrates's humanity is not abstract, it could be a form which does not exist without a matter but is, in itself, absolutely simple. Nevertheless, being a form of a matter implies that Socrates has two ontological constituents and cannot be himself simple. Socrates is not the minimal truthmaker of intrinsic predications about himself but his form could be. Now, it is widely accepted that God does not have matter, then, if a

form can be subsistent by itself, it can be a truthmaker of intrinsic predications about God. Is it the minimal truthmaker? Here Brower could claim that God is identical with His form and that, in general, a form is without any kind of constituents, that is a form is not a complex entity or a collection of essential properties. He could also introduce divine simplicity—God is simple and has no proper parts—which is simpler and easier because he only defends the coherence of the doctrine of divine simplicity, God's absolute simplicity is just postulated and does not have to be proved. Therefore, he could conclude that God can be the minimal truthmaker for all intrinsic predications of the form  $\langle \text{God is } F \rangle$  but it should be noticed that Socrates example is not completely relevant here.

Nevertheless, that a simple entity can be the minimal truthmaker of different intrinsic predications seems to me to be in complete opposition to the nature of truthmaking, if we understand that truthmaking relation cannot be used only to mean that a minimal truthmaker is something in virtue of which a proposition is true. Brower argues that truthmaking relation is a way to explain why a proposition is true and he prefers to treat truthmaking relation as basic. However, it is possible to give a better explanation of the nature of truthmaking relation and this explanation, albeit incomplete, leads to a critic of what [Rodríguez-Pereyra \(2002, Sect. 3.1\)](#), calls a “truthmaker ostrich nominalism”. A truthmaker ostrich nominalism reduces truthmaking relation to an implication. Brower denies that he is doing this and argues that truthmaking is a kind of necessitation. The problem is that we do not understand how a simple God without any ontological complexity could necessitate, in any precise meaning of ‘necessitate’ related to the minimal truthmaker requirement, the truth of different intrinsic predications.

As Brower acknowledges, necessitation without further specifications is not sufficient for a complete understanding of the truthmaking relation, because if  $7$  is a necessary entity, then  $\langle \text{the apple is red} \rangle$  is true in virtue of the existence of  $7$ .  $7$  necessitates, in a broad sense, the truth of  $\langle \text{the apple is red} \rangle$ , because  $\langle \text{the apple is red} \rangle$  is true only if  $7$  exists but it is clearly irrelevant for explaining in virtue of what the proposition is true. Existential dependence is not sufficient for analyzing propositional truth in terms of truthmakers and truthmaking relations. [Lowe \(2006, Sect. 12.6\)](#), prefers essential dependence of propositions on their truthmakers.

(TM) A proposition is true if and only if a truthmaker  $x$  exists and  $x$  is such that it is part of the essence of that proposition that it is true if  $x$  exists.<sup>11</sup>

We must accept the idea that the nature of propositions imposes some restrictions on the nature of truthmakers and especially on the nature of minimal truthmakers otherwise “truthmaking relation” would remain a vague expression. It is *prima facie* a part of the essence of an intrinsic predication that something is intrinsic. In the existential proposition case, if existence is not a property, the entity is sufficient for being the minimal truthmaker, because it is easy to understand that the truth of an existential proposition depends essentially on the entity, and nothing more fundamental

<sup>11</sup> For those who do not want to assume that essences of proposition exist, (TM) can be restated: a proposition is true if and only if a truthmaker  $x$  exists and  $x$  is such that because the proposition is what it is, it is true if  $x$  exists.

is needed. For different intrinsic predications, the nature of these propositions seems to imply different minimal truthmakers. Following (TA) and a minimal truthmaker requirement, the minimal truthmaker of  $\langle a \text{ is } F \rangle$ , that is  $a$ 's  $F$ ness, is *prima facie* different from the minimal truthmaker of  $\langle a \text{ is } G \rangle$  and both seem different from  $a$ . Here is the danger of truthmaker ostrich nominalism: being indifferent to the essential dependence of propositions on their minimal truthmakers or to the nature of truthmaking relation.

I just see one escape to this problem: identifying all divine attributes and identifying God with all divine attributes, that is showing that, despite the fact that two intrinsic predications about God seems to express different truths, these truths are one and then grounded or ontologically explained by an unique minimal truthmaker. In the first section of his article, Brower (2009) briefly defends these identifications but I have already expressed my doubts on them. If someone does not want to prove these identities and if, as Brower does in the second section, she only wants to defend the coherence of divine simplicity, after postulating that God is absolutely simple, she owes us an explanation of truthmaking relation which does not suppose different minimal truthmakers for different intrinsic predications. Suppose  $p$  and  $q$  are two intrinsic predications about God. There is a dilemma without any good solution. Either it has been proved that  $p$  and  $q$  are equivalent and then the minimal truthmaker of  $p$  is the minimal truthmaker of  $q$ , or God is said to be absolutely simple and it should have been explained how He can be in each case the same minimal truthmaker of intrinsic predications that remain different. Socrates example being unconvincing, we need an explanation of truthmaking relation that associates a simple entity with different intrinsic predications.

### Divine indivisibility

But can a theist accept simultaneously truthmaker theory, the minimal truthmaker requirement and divine simplicity? Maybe the choice to abandon divine simplicity and to keep truthmaker theory is easier than the strange ambition to reconcile, at the same time, truthmaker theory with its minimal truthmaker requirement and divine simplicity. The only solution for this reconciliation is clearly to reformulate divine simplicity and this shows that the use of truthmaker theory is not suitable for a defense of absolute divine simplicity.

Brower refuses any metaphysical complexity in God when he explains what it means for God to be absolutely simple. His reasoning is as follows. If God has metaphysical complexity, that is, a plurality of constituents, He would be either dependent on the constituents or, to be what He is, dependent on a cause that constitutes God from these constituents or prevents God from decomposition. All these assumptions are incompatible with the aseity of God and then objectionable for any theist,<sup>12</sup> but metaphysical complexity is not equivalent to metaphysical composition.

<sup>12</sup> These are classical claims which can be found in Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, Pars I, q. 3, a.7, and Brower (2009, p. 107) mentions them.

As I already said, for a better understanding of the compatibility between divine simplicity and the distinction of attributes in God, I propose to use the notion of formal distinction developed by Duns Scotus.

FD X is formally distinct from Y if and only if (1) X and Y are inseparable even for an omnipotent being, (2) X and Y have not the same definition, (3) the distinction exists *de re*.

I think we can accept some metaphysical complexity in God because simplicity is a scale notion. The highest simplicity is the absolute simplicity without any complexity or any internal differentiation. The lowest simplicity is the absence of material or physical composition. Between these two extremes, there is a place for a moderate simplicity, that is absolute indivisibility.

The minimal truthmaker requirement can then be assumed without any contradiction with divine simplicity. <God is good> is true in virtue of a perfection of God, that is God's goodness. <God is omniscient> is true in virtue of another perfection of God, God's omniscience. We do not have to say that God is identical with His goodness or His omniscience. We do not have to say that God's goodness is identical with His omniscience. The problems arising from these identities are dissolved. Of course, this theory supposes that we accept a moderate conception of simplicity as absolute indivisibility instead of absolute lack of complexity. It seems to me that the advantage of this solution, a God that is moderately simple, is greater than the weak advantage of the conception of God as absolutely simple and greater than to refuse any kind of divine simplicity. The most important advantage for philosophy of religion and philosophical theology is to be found in the realist foundation of the truth of intrinsic predications, something Brower among others also sought.

More details have to be provided for a complete account of this moderately simple God, details about divine perfections, their relations and their nature. I do not want to enter into these problems now for my main point in this article was only to discuss different defenses of absolute divine simplicity. I hope, as a *pars destruens*, it has prepared further developments for a *pars construens*.

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