

MODAL COLLAPSE AND MODAL FALLACIES: NO EASY DEFENSE OF SIMPLICITY

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ABSTRACT

I critically examine the claim that modal collapse arguments against the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity (*DDS*) are in general fallacious. In a recent paper, Christopher Tomaszewski alleges that modal collapse arguments against *DDS* are invalid, owing to illicit substitutions of nonrigid singular terms into intensional contexts. I show that this is not, in general, the case. I show, further, that where existing modal collapse arguments are vulnerable to this charge the arguments can be repaired without any apparent dialectical impropriety. I conclude that the genuine debate over modal collapse and divine simplicity and modal collapse is substantially a controversy over the metaphysics of divine action, and that this constitutes a fruitful direction in which to take future discussions of the subject.

I. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of divine simplicity (henceforth, *DDS*) is a central component of classical theism as articulated by Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and others. I should say, rather, that various versions of classical theism involve commitment, as a central component of the view, to some version of the doctrine of divine simplicity. Diverse doctrines, differing in their logical strength and ideological demandingness, are called doctrines of simplicity. In some way or other, simplicity doctrines maintain that God is utterly unified, not admitting of division into parts, partitions, or parties. Thus, according to Katherine Rogers:

. . . the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity, that advanced by Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, holds that God has a nature, and that, rather than transcending and creating all the

perfections by which we name Him, God just *is* these perfections. (1996, p. 170)

Nicholas Wolsterstorff characterizes Aquinas' endorsement of divine simplicity as follows:

The doctrine that God is simple was understood by the medievals as the denial of any form of composition in God. In his *Summa theologiae* Aquinas, before drawing the general conclusion that God is simple, dismisses various specific modes of composition. He argues, among other things, that

- (1) God is not distinct from God's essence;
that
- (2) God's existence is not distinct from God's essence;
and that
- (3) God has no property distinct from God's essence. (1991, p. 532)

Moreover, according to Rogers,

The traditional doctrine denies that God has any properties at all. God is an act . . . an eternal, immutable, absolutely simple act . . . God simply is an act, and all the words we use to describe God refer to this act. (p. 166)

Other characterizations of *DDS* involve the claim that God is one and the same as God's knowledge and power, the claim that God is pure act, and the claim that God has no nonessential intrinsic properties (e.g., Craig and Moreland 2003, Crisp 2003, Mann 1982, Mullins 2013, Stump 2005, Stump and Kretzmann 1985.) These and other distinctive claims about God derived from *DDS* have provoked suspicion as to the coherence of the doctrine.

One notable family of arguments against the coherence of *DDS* is the family of *modal collapse arguments*. An argument against *DDS* from modal collapse aims to conclude, from *DDS* and plausible or otherwise orthodox premises, that certain of the facts that seem for plausible or otherwise orthodox reasons to be contingent are in fact necessary. This conclusion, the claim that some very general class of putatively contingent facts are in fact necessary, is taken to be a severe issue for proponents of *DDS*.

Modal collapse arguments vary according to which among the corollaries or putative corollaries of *DDS* is taken to entail a modal collapse. For example, we ought to distinguish between modal collapse arguments that focus on the identification of God with God's perfections, and those that focus on the identification of God with the *actus purus* of Aquinas. Variation among modal collapse arguments owes also to variation in the type of modal collapse envisioned: some modal collapse arguments purport to threaten only the contingency of God's free choice to create a world, others purport to threaten contingency of anything at all.

Recently, it has been claimed that modal collapse arguments *in general* fail. That is, try as one might, no extant modal collapse argument can succeed without serious rehabilitation. In a recent article, Christopher Tomaszewski (2019) argues that modal collapse arguments depend upon modal inferences that are patently fallacious. In particular, Tomaszewski highlights what he takes to be a paradigm modal collapse argument and demonstrates in it a modal fallacy that he takes to be ubiquitous among modal collapse arguments. Thus, according to Tomaszewski, proponents of *DDS* need not respond to modal collapse arguments in the defensive mode: rather, the onus is on the detractors of *DDS* to proffer a modal collapse argument that is so much as valid.

After summarizing Tomaszewski's attack on modal collapse arguments, I will contest Tomaszewski's central claims. I argue that, Tomaszewski's more parochial claims notwithstanding, little of interest follows from the fallaciousness of the arguments he discusses. That is, contrary to what Tomaszewski maintains, there plainly are modal collapse arguments that are immune to Tomaszewski's critique. I will also argue that with respect to the specific modal collapse arguments discussed Tomaszewski is likewise mistaken: the arguments can be repaired so as to be no-longer fallacious, and this much can be accomplished without any apparent dialectical impropriety.

In all of this, I claim, what is at issue is *not* the logic of modal collapse arguments. If I am right, there are no interesting logical problems with modal collapse arguments just as such. Rather, what is at issue is a host of open questions concerning the metaphysics of divine action. And it is positive answers to *these* questions that should guide future discussions of divine simplicity and modal collapse.

I turn now to Tomaszewski's critique.

II. SUMMARY OF TOMASZEWSKI'S CRITIQUE

Consider that, according to some versions of the doctrine of divine simplicity, God is not to be distinguished from God's single and perfect act, which, given that God created the world, is a divine *creative* act. God is thus taken to be identical to God's act of creation. This is understood to be a close corollary of *DDS*.

Christopher Tomaszewski takes the following to be a paradigmatic modal collapse argument against *DDS* due to Ryan Mullins (2016):

On divine simplicity God's essence is identical to His existence. Also, God's one simple act is identical to His essence/existence. God's act of creation is identical to this one simple act, and so identical to God's essence/existence. God exists of absolute necessity. So His act of creation is of absolute necessity since it is identical to His essence/existence. (p. 138)

Again, we are here dealing with the puzzling claim that God is one and the same as God's act of creation. Given that there is such an act (i.e., given that God created the world and all of its denizens), *DDS* entails that God is identical to that very act. But then, as the argument purports to show, God's act of creation is necessary—being, as it is, identical with something that exists of necessity, namely, God.

Before dealing with Tomaszewski's reconstruction of Mullins' argument, two notes are in order.

First, where Tomaszewski opts to reconstruct Mullins' argument by employing the functional singular term "God's act of creation" to designate God's act of creation, we will proceed by designating God's act of creation with the definite description "the divine creative act." This alteration in nomenclature will ease the discussion considerably, and nothing of substance in what follows hangs on it. I'll on occasion write as though

Tomaszewski himself adopts this nomenclature, under the understanding that everything said about Tomaszewski's arguments under this guise applies *mutatis mutandis* to what Tomaszewski actually says.

Second, in order to bring out the fatalistic import of the sought-after conclusion, we stipulate that our terms designating God's act of creation will descriptively pick out God's act as effecting the creation of every individual that actually exists and of every state of affairs that actually obtains. Put another way, "the divine creative act" is stipulated to effect a specific and comprehensive state of affairs: it determines a unique possible world.¹ In this, we are following Tomaszewski's reconstruction of the argument.²

Given these considerations, we follow Tomaszewski in rendering Mullins' modal collapse argument against *DDS* as follows:

- (1) Necessarily, God exists.
- (2) God is identical to the divine creative act.
- (3) Necessarily, the divine creative act exists.

The conclusion, given our maximal and maximally specific interpretation of "the divine creative act," is taken to entail the fatalistic conclusion: nothing in the creation could have been other than it actually is. The argument can be succinctly formalized:

- (1) $\Box \exists x (x = \text{God})$
- (2) $\text{God} = \iota x Cx$
- (3) $\Box \exists x (x = \iota y Cy)$

Where " $\iota x Cx$ " translates the definite description "the divine creative act." Call this argument "the basic argument."

(A brief word about the iota operator. The iota operator is a singular-term forming operator on open sentences or one-place predicates. Where F is a one place predicate, " $\iota x Fx$ " should be read as "the x such that x is F ." In the case of " $\iota x Cx$," we read it as "the x such that x is a divine creative act," or simply "the divine creative act." Singular terms formed by the iota operator are taken

to behave, in context, like Russellian definite descriptions.)

What, then, is the matter with this argument, so construed? Tomaszewski proposes to fault the above argument on sheer logical grounds, citing Quinean worries about the propriety of substituting co-referring terms into referentially opaque contexts. In particular, Tomaszewski draws a parallel between the above argument and the notoriously problematic argument due to Quine:

- (4) Necessarily, nine is greater than seven.
- (5) Nine is the number of the planets.
- (6) Necessarily, the number of the planets is greater than seven.

The argument's two premises are true, and the conclusion is false: the argument is invalid. But this fallacious Quinean argument is a mere line-for-line terminological variant of the basic argument. The standard collapse argument is surely likewise invalid. Invalidity is supposed to result, as for the Quinean argument, from the illicit substitution of a (perhaps) nonrigid singular term in (2) for a singular term occurring inside the scope of a modal operator in (1). Definite descriptions such as "the divine creative act" or "the number of the planets" are not in general guaranteed to have the same designatum, if they so much as designate anything at all, at all counterfactual circumstances. For that reason, it is in general inappropriate to substitute such descriptions for co-referring singular terms in modal contexts. So, then, the argument for modal collapse is taken to be invalid.

Tomaszewski suggests several means by which the opponent of *DDS* might repair the argument, *namely*, (i) switching out (2) for its necessitation, (ii) claiming rigidity for both singular terms flanking the identity sign in (2), and (iii) rendering the premises as claims *de re* about God and the divine creative act. Tomaszewski finds each of these strategies wanting and concludes that the modal collapse argument is invalid and unsalvageably so.

In what follows, we'll revisit Tomaszewski's negative appraisal of Mullins' argument, as well as Tomaszewski's responses to the suggested repairs thereof. For now, we'll say that the claim that Tomaszewski takes himself to have established is what we may call "FALLACY":

FALLACY: Mullins' modal collapse argument against *DDS* is invalid

And it is this claim that we'll spend the bulk of the paper addressing.

But FALLACY, all by itself, appears to be a somewhat parochial thesis. Not so, according to Tomaszewski. For Tomaszewski takes the import of FALLACY to be that of establishing that modal collapse arguments *in general* are invalid. Indeed, Mullins' modal collapse argument against *DDS* is here held up as a paradigm for the wider family of modal collapse arguments, so that its damnable fallaciousness is supposed to carry over to modal collapse arguments in general:

For the sake of concreteness and convenience, and because Mullins's is the simplest and most direct statement of the argument of which I am aware (indeed, so simple and direct that I won't bother to paraphrase or explicate it here), I will work with his version. But it should be clear that my criticism will apply equally to any reasonable formalization of the argument as it has been given elsewhere by other authors, including all those I mention. (p. 277)

This amounts to an endorsement of a further, stronger thesis, GENERALITY:

GENERALITY: Modal collapse arguments against *DDS* in general are invalid.

Because of the supposed robust similarities between Mullins' argument and modal collapse arguments more generally, GENERALITY is taken to enjoy some non-negligible measure of warrant in virtue of Tomaszewski's establishment of FALLACY. However, GENERALITY is the chief payload of Tomaszewski's paper. For in light of the

refutation of Mullins' modal collapse argument, Tomaszewski recommends a reevaluation of the dialectic between proponents and adversaries of *DDS*:

I [. . .] examine one very common form of this argument from modal collapse and show that it is invalid. So, the defenders of *DDS* have been too quick in conceding the force of the argument from modal collapse. Instead of there being a burden on the defenders of *DDS* to show that some premiss in the argument from modal collapse is false, there is a burden on those who pose such an argument to show that there is some version of it which is demonstrably valid. (p. 276)

Given the greater importance of *GENERALITY*, we'll first investigate it before turning to a sustained investigation of *FALLACY*.

III. AGAINST GENERALITY

GENERALITY, as we've construed it, is a claim to the effect that modal collapse arguments in general are fallacious—in the same way that Mullins' argument is purported to be fallacious. I am not here prepared to give an account of what constitutes a modal collapse argument just as such. Happily, Tomaszewski cites several examples to which we can appeal. We will thus only consider versions of the modal collapse argument that Tomaszewski puts forward as exemplary cases.

In order for Tomaszewski's maneuver to successfully go through, a number of conditions must be in place. *FALLACY*, a thesis about a certain putatively paradigmatic modal collapse argument, is supposed to lend support to *GENERALITY*, a thesis about modal collapse arguments in general. A necessary but by no means sufficient condition for the success of Tomaszewski's project is that all (or most) extant run-of-the-mill modal collapse arguments be structurally similar to what we've identified as the basic argument. Tomaszewski's rebuttal is meant to deflect collapse arguments of a certain logical

shape—those with nonrigid singular terms occurring inside the scope of this or that modal operator. So, it is critical that all modal collapse arguments that are taken to have a fighting chance against *DDS* be structurally similar to the basic argument in just the right ways.

But it appears that some modal collapse arguments do not fit into this argumentative procrustean bed. Take, for example, the argument due to Craig and Moreland:

If God is identical with his essence, then God cannot know or do anything different from what he knows and does. He can have no contingent knowledge or action, for everything about him is essential to him. But in that case all modal distinctions collapse, and everything becomes necessary. Since *God knows that p* is logically equivalent to *p is true*, the necessity of the former entails the necessity of the latter. Thus, divine simplicity leads to an extreme fatalism, according to which everything that happens does so, not with temporal necessity, but with logical necessity. (2003, p. 525)

According to Tomaszewski, this is a bona fide modal collapse argument. By *GENERALITY*, this argument is supposed to be vitiated by substitution fallacies in much the way that the basic argument was supposed to be so-vitiated. But it is utterly mysterious how Tomaszewski's rebuttal is meant to apply to this argument. We can render the argument as follows:

- (1) Necessarily, God exists
- (7) Necessarily, if God knows *p* then God essentially knows *p*
- (8) Necessarily, God knows *p* if and only if *p* is true
- (9) Therefore, necessarily, *p* is true if and only if *p* is necessarily true

Where (1) is as before, (7) is taken to be a deliverance of *DDS*, (8)-left-to-right just expresses the truism that knowledge entails truth, (8)-right-to-left is an expression of the doctrine of omniscience, and (9) is the conclusion of the argument. Letting "*K*" be an

operator for divine knowledge, so that “ Kp ” symbolizes the proposition that God knows that p , and if we allow for quantification into sentence position, the argument can be formalized:

- (1) $\Box \exists x (x = \text{God})$
- (7) $\forall p \Box (Kp \rightarrow \Box Kp)$ ³
- (8) $\forall p \Box (Kp \equiv p)$
- (9) $\forall p \Box (p \equiv \Box p)$

But where, in this argument, are the Quinean substitution improprieties? Where, for that matter, are any of the features of the standard collapse argument on which Tomaszewski’s rebuttal depends? They appear to be wholly absent. There aren’t any nonrigid singular terms in the argument whatever. *A fortiori* there aren’t any such terms on whose substitutability into modal contexts the argument depends. So even if we grant FALLACY, we do not apparently have any good reason to accept GENERALITY. There are plainly some bona fide modal collapse arguments to which this criticism does not apply.

In the case of Craig and Moreland’s argument against DDS, we rejected GENERALITY for mere structural reasons—there simply isn’t the right logical machinery in the argument for Tomaszewski’s charges to be applicable. But the case for GENERALITY looks no better if we review arguments that cannot be exonerated on structural grounds alone. Consider the argument due to Brian Leftow, quoted in full by Tomaszewski:

On DDS, nothing in God is really distinct from anything else in Him. If so, then everything wholly within God—everything intrinsic to God—is identical with everything else in God. Suppose, then, that God’s intentions are wholly within God. If they are, it follows that they are all identical: God has just one intention. Further, God’s intention = His essence. God has His essence necessarily. So, it seems to follow that He has His actual intention necessarily. But then it seems that He necessarily wills just what He does: that He could not have willed otherwise. (2015, p. 48)

This argument appears to be a suitable target for Tomaszewski’s rebuttal. We might regiment it thus:

- (10) The divine intention is identical to God’s essence
- (11) Necessarily, God has God’s essence
- (12) Necessarily, God has the divine intention

Which we can symbolize as follows:

- (10) $\lambda Ix = E$
- (11) $\Box \text{has}(\text{God}, E)$
- (12) $\Box \text{has}(\text{God}, \lambda Ix)$

Where we let “ λIx ” and “ E ” translate “the divine intention” and “God’s essence,” respectively. Put in this form, the argument appears to be vulnerable to Tomaszewski’s rebuttal just as Mullins’ argument is supposed to be. Indeed, put in this form, the argument does commit a fallacy of substitution: (10), as it is, does not make (12) an admissible substitution instance of (11). But it’s not clear that the above *is* a faithful rendering of the argument. The conclusion of Leftow’s argument is *not* the claim that God has God’s intention necessarily. Rather, the conclusion of the argument is that God has God’s *actual* intention necessarily.

We can thus revisit the question of regimentation in favor of the following:

- (10) The divine intention is identical to God’s essence
- (11) Necessarily, God has God’s essence
- (12*) Necessarily, God has the actual divine intention

In which (12*) replaces our original (12). And once we have enriched our modal language in the appropriate way so as to permit talk of actuality and its cognates, we can give the above argument a corresponding formalization as follows:

- (10) $\lambda Ix = E$
- (11) $\Box \text{has}(\text{God}, E)$
- (12*) $\Box \text{has}(\text{God}, \lambda x @ Ix)$

The only difference concerns (12*), in which the definite description “the divine intention”

has been replaced by the actualized-description “the actual divine intention,” which is translated as “ $\mathbf{1}x@Ix$.”

But *this* argument is not guilty of any improper substitutions of nonrigid singular terms into a modal context. The only nonrigid singular term in the argument is the definite description “the divine intention” occurring in (10). “God,” being a proper name, is rigid. Since God has His essence essentially, “God’s essence” is likewise rigid. As for the singular term substituted for “God’s essence” in (11), *viz.*, “the actual divine intention,” its rigidity follows from the fact that definite descriptions, when indexed to a designated world by an actuality operator, become rigid.⁴

Leftow’s argument is valid, as witnessed by the following stepwise inferences. Assuming that we’re discussing modal collapse arguments in the actual world (where else would we do it?), we get the following premise for free:

$$(13) \mathbf{1}xIx = \mathbf{1}x@Ix$$

That is, the divine intention is identical to the *actual* divine intention. Just as someone robbed the bank if and only if someone actually robbed the bank, so too the bank robber is identical to, is none other than, the actual bank robber. Given (13),

$$(14) \mathbf{1}x@Ix = E$$

is an admissible substitution instance of (10). But given that (14) contains no nonrigid singular terms whatever, we are permitted to infer (12*) as an admissible substitution instance of (11)—no Quinean quibbles stand in our way.

Given what we’ve said concerning Leftow’s argument, GENERALITY fails even for some modal collapse arguments that cannot be excluded on structural grounds alone. There plainly are some such arguments whose validity is not called in to question by concerns about substitution into modal contexts. We can now investigate Tomaszewski’s weaker

thesis, FALLACY, concerning the supposed invalidity of Mullins’ modal collapse argument.

IV. MULLINS’ ARGUMENT

Recall that the original argument due to Ryan Mullins was supposed to be vitiated by an improper substitution of co-referential singular terms into a modal context. This much is true if we construe Mullins’ argument along the lines of what we called the basic argument. In the previous section we saw that not all modal collapse arguments in the literature are vulnerable to these charges in the same way.

In observing Brian Leftow’s modal collapse argument against DDS, we found that a faithful reading of the argument yields a demonstratively valid modal collapse argument. A faithful reading of Leftow’s argument will dignify the distinction between ordinary definite descriptions like “the divine intention” and actually-rigidified descriptions like “the actual divine intention.” Once this distinction is marked, the argument’s conclusion can be seen to follow from the premises, unhindered by any concerns about substitutivity.

The obvious corresponding way to repair Mullins’ collapse argument is to make sure that all of the singular terms occurring in any of its premises are *rigid* (and, therefore, truth-preservingly substitutable in modal contexts). And this requires only slight modification. If we once again employ the language of actuality, an improved argument is the following:

- (1) Necessarily, God exists.
- (2*) God is identical to the actual divine creative act.
- (3*) Necessarily, the actual divine creative act exists.

Which can be formalized as follows:

- (1) $\Box \exists x (x = \text{God})$
- (2*) $\text{God} = \mathbf{1}x@Cx$
- (3*) $\Box \exists x (x = \mathbf{1}y@Cy)$

(1) is just as before. The argument has only been altered so as to ensure that all of the singular terms throughout are in fact rigid. (3*) is an admissible substitution instance of (1), and so the argument is valid. That (3*) is a valid substitution instance of (1) follows from (2*), in which both terms flanking the identity symbol are rigid. That the singular terms flanking the identity symbol in (2*) are both rigid can be easily shown. “God,” being a proper name, is rigid, and as we’ve already seen, actualized definite descriptions such as “the actual divine creative act” are likewise rigid.

Moreover, assuming, once again, that (2) and the new (2*) are to be both evaluated at the actual world, (2*) is entailed by premise (2) of the standard collapse argument, since it is trivial that

$$(15) \quad \text{!}xCx = \text{!}x@Cx.$$

That is, the divine creative act is one and the same as the *actual* divine creative act. Neither (2) nor (15) has any singular terms inside the scope of any modal operators whatever, so no concerns about referential opacity prevent us from inferring (2*) as a substitution instance of (2). Given all of this, (2*) is equivalent to or weaker than (2), which Tomaszewski takes the proponent of *DDS* to be committed to. We thus take them also to be committed to (2*), which, in tandem with premise (1), entails (3*), the conclusion. Call this argument “the actuality argument.”

The defender of *DDS* cannot avoid the conclusion of the actuality argument by raising accusations of modal fallacy—the argument contains no modal fallacies whatever. What we have, as an answer to Tomaszewski’s challenge is a modal collapse argument that is demonstrably valid.

V. ACTION AND ACTUALITY

We have seen that there are modal collapse arguments that do not suffer from any debilitating substitution fallacies. Moreover,

I’ve provided an argument that, if it is not a straightforward reconstruction of Mullins’ argument, is nonetheless a valid modal collapse argument whose premises follow from those of Mullins’ argument. It is not apparently open to the defender of *DDS* to deny any of the premises—the first is a commitment of classical theism at least as basic as *DDS*, and the second follows from premises to which the defender of *DDS* is committed. The natural way, and, indeed, the only plausible way, for the defender of *DDS* to avoid modal collapse on the basis of the new and improved argument is to deny that the conclusion, the claim that the actual divine creative act necessarily exists, has any fatalistic import.

To this end, the sensitive defender of *DDS* will no doubt claim that there is something like an open metaphysical question concerning the metaphysics of divine action that is crucially relevant to these matters. We’ll frame this issue thusly: any important and relevant metaphysical connection between the conclusion of the actuality argument and fatalism depends on something like the following essentialist thesis concerning divine action:

- (E) Necessarily, something is a divine creative act only if it is essentially the unique divine creative act

This comes out in the distinction between (3), the conclusion of the basic argument, and (3*), the conclusion of the actuality argument. Given (E) and the necessary existence of the actual divine creative act, it follows that the creation and all of the seemingly contingent facts about the creation are necessary.

By my lights, (E) is pretty plausible. Suppose (E) is false. Then there could have been something that would have been a divine creative act but would only accidentally be such. This much is baffling to me. I am mystified at the suggestion that a divine creative act, an act that in fact makes the difference between a world in which God alone exists and a world

in which God coexists with Richard Nixon and the rest of creation, could be other than a divine creative act. But, for that matter, I am also baffled by the suggestion that God is identical to any act, as is entailed by *DDS*. The proponents of *DDS* are not beholden to my metaphysical intuitions, such as they are.

Indeed, so says the defender of *DDS*, (E) can be consistently denied. And, indeed, the defender of *DDS* will, no doubt, in the face of the actuality argument, appeal to accounts of the metaphysics of divine action according to which a divine creative act can be such without being essentially a divine creative act. But notice, then, that the disagreement over modal collapse turns out to be a disagreement over the status of (E); and in this case there's no work for allegations of modal fallacy to do anymore. The threat of modal collapse, considered as motivated by the actuality argument, stands or falls on the status of the essentialist thesis (E) concerning the metaphysics of divine action.

But the correspondence between modal collapse and the essentialist doctrine (E) is hardly limited to a consideration of the actuality argument. The same is true of the original, putatively fallacious, version of Mullins' modal collapse argument—the basic argument. We've said that the disagreement between the defender of *DDS* and the proponent of modal collapse, in the case of the actuality argument, comes down to the status of the essentialist doctrine (E): the proponent of the modal collapse argument presupposes it, the defender of *DDS*, on pain of modal collapse, is forced to deny it. Now, take seriously the suggestion that the opponent of *DDS* here presupposes something like (E) and suppose further that we incorporate this essentialist presupposition as a third premise in the original, putatively fallacious modal collapse argument. Read no longer as enthymematic, the argument looks like this:

- (1) Necessarily, God exists.
- (2) God is identical to the divine creative act.

(E) Necessarily, something is a divine creative act only if it is essentially a divine creative act

(3) Necessarily, the divine creative act exists.

And the argument, so construed, is *valid*. For (2) and (E) together entail that God is identical to something that is essentially a divine creative act. From this and (1) we get the conclusion, (3), and fatalism. Call this argument “the enthymeme argument.” Thus, the status of modal collapse, seen from this vantage, and by the lights of *both* the actuality argument and the enthymeme argument, stands or falls based on whether or not (E) is true.

To recap: the basic argument, for want of validity, prompted us to consider a repaired argument—the actuality argument. The actuality argument is neither invalid nor can its premises apparently be denied by the defender of *DDS*. In light of the actuality argument, the defender of *DDS* must make a distinction as regards the metaphysics of divine action—between (E) and its denial. But, once this distinction has been made, it is not clear how deep the original basic argument's invalidity goes. If we assume that opponents of *DDS* are tacitly assuming (E), then this immediately suggests a straightforward, valid reconstruction of Mullins' argument: the enthymeme argument. Thus, in the cases of *both* the actuality argument and the enthymeme argument, the disagreement between opponents and proponents of *DDS* is over the metaphysics of divine action.

VI. REPAIRS AND RESPONSES

We've discussed two ways of repairing Mullins' modal collapse argument. On the face of it, they are valid modal collapse arguments to which the defender of *DDS* is obliged to give response—against them, no Tomaszewskian charges of modal-logical fallacy will succeed. Perhaps Tomaszewski will wish to impugn such arguments all the same. For the remainder of this paper, I'll consider what Tomaszewski says about attempts to

repair Mullins' argument in the face of FAL-LACY.

Tomaszewski considers similar revisions of Mullins' argument and finds them all wanting. Recall that the basic argument, our initial reconstruction of Mullins' argument, comprises three numbered propositions:

- (1) Necessarily, God exists.
- (2) God is identical to the divine creative act.
- (3) Necessarily, the divine creative act exists.

Recall, further, that Tomaszewski's three suggested repairs of the basic argument involve (i) switching out (2) for its necessitation, (ii) claiming that the definite description occurring in (2) is rigid, and (iii) reconsidering (2) and (3) as claims *de re* about God and the divine creative act. The three suggested repairs involve three modifications of Mullins' modal collapse argument.

Since Tomaszewski's responses to these three arguments are relevant to the two arguments discussed earlier, the actuality argument and the enthymeme argument, we do well to consider them in turn. We will only focus on repairs (i) and (ii), both for the sake of space and since the issues raised for (iii) are essentially those we've already considered above for the actuality argument.

The moral of this encounter will be just as it was in previous sections: the real dispute is about the metaphysics of divine action. In response to these arguments, the defenders of *DDS* ought simply to do more constructive metaphysics, contrary to Tomaszewski's claims to have emancipated them from this responsibility. For the actuality argument and enthymeme argument, this is manifest in the question of whether or not a certain essentialist thesis (E) comes out true. If (E) is granted, modal collapse follows straightforwardly from *DDS*; without denying (E), the conclusion is unavoidable. In what follows, I will show that this is substantially true for each of Tomaszewski's repair-arguments as well: in each case, the vital question about

the acceptability of these arguments is that of whether or not (E) is true.

VII. NECESSITATION

The first of Tomaszewski's suggested repairs of Mullins' modal collapse argument, to which we now turn, involves replacing (2) in the original argument with its necessitation, so that the modified argument can be formalized as

- (1) $\Box\exists x (x = \text{God})$
- (2**) $\Box(\text{God} = \lambda x Cx)$
- (3) $\Box\exists x (x = \lambda x Cx)$

We will call this argument "the necessity argument." According to Tomaszewski, the necessity argument merely corrects the invalidity of Mullins' argument at the cost of replacing the original premise (2) with an affrontingly strong premise:

While this argument is valid, it is entirely open to the proponent of *DDS* simply to reject [(2**)] without any injury to *DDS*. *DDS* is directly committed only to (2), that is, to the identity of God and His act of creation. It is not directly committed to [(2**)]. So simply substituting [(2**)] for (2) is not itself sufficient to make the argument from modal collapse both valid and dialectically well situated. (p. 279)

What's the problem here? The problem, Tomaszewski alleges, is that this attempted repair cannot at once make the argument "both valid and dialectically well situated." Given that, according to Tomaszewski, the necessity argument is valid, we ought to think that the problem with modal collapse arguments so-repaired is that they are *not dialectically well situated*.

I'm quite sure I don't know what "dialectically well situated" is supposed to mean to in this context. Tomaszewski's specific application of this language does not offer much direction. I very much doubt whether dialectical well-situatedness, whatever it is, is something that can be attributed to an argument so unqualifiedly, in the way that one

may so-attribute validity or soundness. So far as I can tell, whether or not an argument is dialectically well-situated depends in part on the character of a particular dialectical situation—hence, “well-situated.”

Along these lines, I also suspect that something like a type-token confusion is involved in Tomaszewski’s suggestion that the necessity argument is either invalid or dialectically not-well-situated. Arguments are generally appraised for validity as a matter of their type; I assume arguments are judged for well-situatedness on a token-by-token basis. To suggest that a certain argument is either invalid or dialectically not-well-situated is a bit like saying that a certain entrée has either been in the oven for too long or has been a staple at Moravian birthdays for centuries: it’s a pun. I submit that the language of well-situatedness is unilluminating for our purposes.

We’ll stipulate that the notion of dialectical well situatedness is here doing duty for some well-behaved, normatively significant property of arguments that doesn’t admit of this type-token confusion. (To keep things neat, we’ll continue to use “dialectical well-situatedness” to invoke this property. Its complement is what we will call “dialectical ill-situatedness.”) What is this property? The only thing Tomaszewski tells us is that the necessity argument lacks dialectical well-situatedness because (2**) is open to being rejected by the proponent of *DDS*. What are we to make of this?

We might understand this as an invocation of what I’ll call “the compulsive standard of dialectical well-situatedness,” according to which an argument is dialectically ill-situated if it is eminently possible for one’s (imagined or ideal) dialectical partner to reject one of the premises or presuppositions of the argument without threat of contradiction, obvious irrationality, etc. This standard is, obviously, very strong. The necessity argument is surely not dialectically well-situated by the lights of

the compulsive standard. But what follows from this?

First, I am hard-pressed to think of any interesting arguments in contemporary philosophy that are not dialectically ill-situated in *this* sense. Are we to conclude that most arguments in contemporary philosophy are dialectically inert, accordingly? Perhaps. But it seems more plausible to conclude that this standard of dialectical well-situatedness is simply inappropriate to the philosophical enterprise—certainly for the discussion of modal collapse arguments: I very much doubt that modal collapse arguments, even before Tomaszewski’s supposed exorcism of them, were ever taken to have *this* sort of dialectical force.

This suggests a second, more local issue with Tomaszewski’s dismissal of (2**). For among the things to which the defender of *DDS* is *not* committed—in the sense of being free to deny—is the denial of fatalism itself. That there are any contingent truths is neither a corollary nor a rationally required concomitant of *DDS*. Are we supposed to think that, in principle, no modal collapse arguments, even *if* valid, would have any force against *DDS*? Not only is this facially implausible, but it is also in tension with a starting presupposition of Tomaszewski’s paper—*namely*, that modal collapse arguments are worth discussing in the first place. (This is a very general problem for this sort of response to modal collapse arguments: rejecting some premise in a given modal collapse argument simply because that premise doesn’t *follow from* the doctrine of divine simplicity runs the considerable risk of answering one objection by trivializing every such objection.)

Finally, Tomaszewski’s criticism of (2**), if it presupposes the compulsive standard of dialectical well-situatedness, smacks of self-defeat. After all, it is entirely coherent (and, I think, advisable) for critics of *DDS* to simply deny this restrictive standard of dialectical well-situatedness. Understood this way, the

suggestion that the necessity argument is not dialectically well-situated is by its own lights not dialectically well-situated. Investigating whether or not it is open to the defender of *DDS* to dismiss (2**) has not, I think, illuminated any genuine dialectical inadequacies of the necessity argument.

Neither the metaphor of well-situatedness nor meditation on premise (2**)’s resistibility yields a principled objection to the necessity argument. As a last hermeneutical maneuver, we might interrogate what Tomaszewski has to say about whether or not the defender of *DDS* is committed to (2**) alongside commitment to (2). The notion of commitment at play is not self-disclosing. What does Tomaszewski have in mind in his application of it? What is it in virtue of which the defender of *DDS* is taken to be committed to (2) but not to (2**)? Tomaszewski tells us: the defender of *DDS* is not committed to (2**) on the basis of (2) because *it is contingent whether or not God’s act is an act of creation*.⁵

This is a substantive claim. Have we any reason to accept it? Neither the defender nor the opponent of *DDS* has any requirement *per se* to accept this claim. In fact, this claim is nothing short of a flat denial of what we have above called (E), the crucial premise in the enthymeme argument. While this is not in itself illicit, it should be clear that at this point Tomaszewski has tried to evade the modal collapse argument by invoking auxiliary metaphysical theses no less contentious than those required to make modal collapse arguments successful in the first place.

Recall that (E) entails that anything that could have been a divine creative act is essentially and uniquely a divine creative act. This thesis is sufficient to turn Mullins’ putatively fallacious argument against *DDS* into a valid argument; it is also sufficient to bolster the conclusion of the actuality argument, so that its conclusion entails fatalism. What I said in the preceding section was that both modal

collapse arguments stand or fall on the status of (E), and in surveying Tomaszewski’s response to the necessity argument, we see that the same is true here.

On the one hand, granting (E) plainly secures (2**) on the basis of (2). On the other hand, Tomaszewski’s riposte to this repair is just the reverse—denying (E) in order to block the inference from (2) to (2**). Tomaszewski has not given us any principled reason to deny this inference—the defender of *DDS* is not in a better position to deny (E) than is the opponent of *DDS* to endorse it. If Tomaszewski is entitled to deny (E) in order to avoid (2**), the opponent of *DDS* is likewise entitled to affirm (E) in order to motivate (2**). Shy of further meta-dialectical thrusts and parries, we find that the interesting discussion to be had is over the metaphysics of divine action—which is just what I have been suggesting all along.

It is also important to note that Tomaszewski, in light of his own arguments, is here back to arguing against modal collapse in a palpably pre-Tomaszewskian mode. Recall that Tomaszewski takes the import of his discussion to be that of freeing the defenders of *DDS* from the positive burden of having to undermine modal collapse arguments by disputing their premises. But Tomaszewski’s response to the necessity argument, ignoring some non-starters about dialectical well-situatedness, *just is* such an attempt at so-undermining the argument.

To summarize, Tomaszewski has not given us any reason to regard the necessity argument as unavailable to the opponent of *DDS*. On the one hand, Tomaszewski wishes to impugn premise (2**) for being dialectically ill-situated, but Tomaszewski’s discussion has not suggested any non-problematic standard of dialectical well-situatedness that vindicates this judgment. On the other hand, Tomaszewski seeks to deny the defender of *DDS*’s commitment to (2**) by denying (E), that is, by suggesting that divine creative acts

are such only contingently. This suggestion, however, is not a reason to doubt the dialectical merits of (2**), for the objection is by all appearances on a *dialectical par* with (2**): Tomaszewski has no response to the necessity argument that does not depend on premises at least as immodest as those which he seeks to deny his opponents. We have not yet seen a principled objection to the necessity argument.

VIII. RIGID DESIGNATION

Tomaszewski’s next proposal, the final one we’ll consider, is a continuation of the strategy pursued in the necessity argument. The suggestion is that we might try and establish (2**) above by claiming that the singular term “the divine creative act” in the original

(2) God is identical to the divine creative act.

occurs as a rigid designator. Call this metalinguistic claim “the rigidity thesis.” If the rigidity thesis is true, then “the divine creative act,” translated as “ ιxCx ,” is rigid and so (2) expresses an identity of individuals, where the individuals in question are designated rigidly. But, then, as we know from arguments due to Kripke (1972), such identities are necessarily true if they are true at all. So, the suggestion is that this rigidified reading of (2) would justify (2**) so that something like the necessity argument would go through.

Before moving to Tomaszewski’s response, we do well to formulate the argument explicitly. Where we opted to construe the necessity argument as

- (1) $\Box \exists x (x = \text{God})$
- (2**) $\Box (\text{God} = \iota xCx)$
- (3) $\Box \exists x (x = \iota xCx)$

this will not do for Tomaszewski’s proposed repair-by-rigidity. For one, we need something corresponding to the rigidity thesis itself. I will employ the following as a characterization of the rigidity thesis:

((R)) $\ulcorner \iota xCx \urcorner$ is rigid

(Since the rigidity thesis is a metalinguistic claim about a certain singular term in our modal language, I’ve numbered it with double brackets. In this way, we’re understanding ((R)) as giving metalinguistic directions as to the proper interpretation of some of our ground-level quantified modal discourse.) Thus, what we will call “the rigidity argument” is the following:

- (1) $\Box \exists x (x = \text{God})$
- (2) $\text{God} = \iota xCx$
- ((R)) $\ulcorner \iota xCx \urcorner$ is rigid
- (2**) $\Box (\text{God} = \iota xCx)$
- (3) $\Box \exists x (x = \iota yCy)$

Where (2**) is meant to follow from (2) and ((R)), and (3) is a consequence of (2**) and (1). Now that we have something like a characterization of the argument, let’s investigate what charges Tomaszewski brings against it.

Tomaszewski alleges that this argument begs the question:

this approach rather overtly begs the question. If ‘God’s act of creation’ designates God in every possible world, this is just to say that God creates in every possible world . . . which is precisely the conclusion that the argument from modal collapse is intended to prove. The claim that ‘God’s act of creation’ is a rigid designator is equivalent to the conclusion of the argument from modal collapse (namely that God creates in every possible world), and so reliance upon such a claim in the argument is question-begging. (p. 280)

How are we to understand this complaint? We can understand Tomaszewski’s objection as involving three components: (i) the argument so-repaired becomes valid, but (ii) the rigidity thesis and the conclusion of the argument are equivalent, and so (iii) the argument so-repaired becomes question-begging.

I’ll not question (i) since the rigidity argument is taken to be a version of the necessity argument, which we’ve thus far understood to be valid. I’ll also leave aside the inference from (ii) to (iii), even though it is, I think,

dubious: It is exceedingly difficult to come up with a general, nonpragmatic notion of equivalence that suffices for an argument's being question-begging (Sinnott Armstrong 1999; Sorensen 1991; Walton 1994.) The dubiousness of this inference, though, matters very little, since the crucial inference is supposed to move from (ii) to (iii), and (ii) is simply false. The rigidity thesis is *not* equivalent to the conclusion of the argument above. In suggesting that the rigidity thesis is equivalent to the conclusion of the argument, Tomaszewski is mistaken. It is to this point that I now turn.

To begin with, we need to get clear on what the rigidity thesis amounts to, in order to avoid certain confusions. The rigidity thesis is the claim that a certain singular term in our modal language is rigid—that is, its designatum, what it designates, is constant relative to all possible circumstances. (This latter is understood in terms of invariance of reference across all *worlds of evaluation*, which must be distinguished from related notions, such as invariance of meaning across all *contexts of utterance*.) The singular term in question is the definite description “ λxCx ,” our translation of “the divine creative act.” This definite description gets a Russellian semantical treatment. Given this, from ((R)), we get the following:

(D) “ λxCx ” is a rigid definite description

which, first of all, we must be wary not to confuse with

(D*) “ λxCx ” is a rigidified definite description

We thus need to distinguish between rigid definite descriptions on the one hand and rigidified definite descriptions on the other. A rigid definite description is a definite description that, *given its ordinary interpretation*, is rigid. We'll clarify what this means in what follows. A rigidified definite description is a definite description that has, so to speak,

undergone an extraordinary semantical treatment so as to *make it rigid*.

We've already encountered one example of this, in the case of actually-rigidified descriptions like “the *actual* divine creative act.” In this case, an ordinary definite description is turned into a rigid singular term by a modal operator (Soames 1998). Another example that has seen some non-negligible application in the philosophy of language is the case of definite descriptions turned into demonstratives by a demonstrative-forming operator (Kaplan 1989; Soames 1998). If the pragmatic parameters are well-understood, something like Donnellan's (1966) referential use of definite descriptions may well qualify as a way of forming rigid singular terms from ordinary definite descriptions. A rigidified definite description is plainly a different creature from a rigid definite description. The point of rigidifying a definite description is precisely that of forming a singular term that *does not* behave like an ordinary definite description. Thus, we must not associate (D*) with ((R)): (D*) rests on a tempting but ultimately confused misreading of ((R)) and is patently unworkable for our purposes.

So, what are rigid definite descriptions, as, according to (D), we take “ λxCx ” to be? Properly understood, ordinary definite descriptions come out as rigid or flaccid (that is, nonrigid) depending on metaphysical issues that are independent of the stipulative powers of language users. An ordinary definite description refers to whatever uniquely instantiates the (perhaps relational) properties designated by the nominal expression appended to the definite article. An ordinary definite description has the same designatum at all worlds just in case (a) no two things could have instantiated those properties, (b) nothing that could have uniquely instantiated those properties could have existed without so-instantiating them, and (c) nothing that could have failed to instantiate those

properties could have existed without failing to so-instantiate them. Seen this way, the rigidity of ordinary definite descriptions is a matter of the modal profile of certain properties.

Consider three cases of rigid definite descriptions, one uncontroversial, another more readily controvertible, and a third theory-generated.

First, consider the definite description “the square root of 9.” The rigidity of this definite description is taken to follow from the necessity of mathematical truths, so that nothing other than 3 could have been the square root of 9. The modal robustness of any number’s arithmetical properties ensures that a mathematical definite description, if it possibly designates anything at all, necessarily designates one and the same thing.

Second, consider Kripke’s (1972) thesis of *the essentiality of origin*. According to this doctrine, certain of a thing’s *origination properties* are essential to them. For example, no person could have had biological parents other than the biological parents that they actually have. No statue formed from a block of marble could have been formed from a block of cheese. These properties of *being parented by so-and-so* and *being formed from so-and-so* are essential properties of the individuals that instantiate them. But, if any of these origination properties are required to be only *uniquely* instantiated if at all, then these origination properties can provoke the rigidity of certain definite descriptions. To borrow an example from Scott Soames (2011), let $sperm_{(a)}$ and $egg_{(b)}$ be names designating the sperm and egg, respectively, whose communion eventually led to the development of Saul Kripke. Then, if Kripke exists, the definite description “the individual that developed from the communion of $sperm_{(a)}$ and $egg_{(b)}$ ” designates Kripke. Moreover, because the property of *having developed from $sperm_{(a)}$ and $egg_{(b)}$* is

an origination property, Kripke has this property essentially. Thus, the definite description “the individual that developed from the communion of $sperm_{(a)}$ and $egg_{(b)}$ ” is a rigid definite description, assuming Kripke is right about the essentiality of origin. In this case, the rigidity of the definite description owes to the modal profile of certain properties, in this case, origination properties uniquely had by Kripke.

Finally, in Alvin Plantinga’s (1979) modal metaphysics, we can generate rigid definite descriptions arbitrarily in the following way. In Plantinga’s modal metaphysics, individuals are related one-to-one with what are called *individual essences*. A central component of Plantinganian actualism is the thesis that individuals, though they needn’t exist, instantiate individual essences that exist necessarily. In this way, Plantinganian actualism recruits necessarily existing surrogates for contingently existing individuals. For now, the important point is this: individual essences are properties such that, necessarily, they are instantiated only if they are uniquely instantiated essential properties of whatever instantiates them. So, if σ is an arbitrary Plantinganian individual essence, and “ $\Sigma(x)$ ” is a one-place predicate expressing σ , then the definite description “ $\lambda x\Sigma(x)$ ” is a rigid definite description. Once again, the rigidity in question is not chiefly grounded in semantic matters—the rigidity of a definite description whose nominal connotation is a Plantinganian essence is a consequence of the modal profile of Plantinganian essences.

In each of these cases, the proper judgments about rigidity are motivated by substantive metaphysical commitments, and not the other way around. Similarly, if one wants to contest these claims about rigidity, the way to do it is to contest the underlying metaphysics. No data from linguistics, no stipulations concerning one’s referential intentions and, I should add, no charges of question-begging should

influence our judgments about the rigidity or flaccidity of ordinary definite descriptions: whether or not these singular terms are rigid is a sheer matter of the metaphysics of properties.

We are now in a position to appreciate the import of the rigidity thesis. We've seen that the rigidity thesis entails that the definite description involved in the rigidity argument is a rigid definite description, rather than a rigidified definite description. We have also seen that the proper evaluation of such an ordinary definite description as either rigid or flaccid is a substantive matter—a matter of the modal profile of the properties connoted by the description in question.

So, the rigidity thesis should be understood, on pain of being grossly misunderstood, as a claim about the definite description " λxCx ," to the effect that the property (or properties) connoted by the predicative expression " Cx ," the property *being a divine creative act*, is a property that nothing could have had nonessentially, and that necessarily no distinct individuals could have had.⁶

We are now in a position to see that Tomaszewski's claim that the rigidity thesis is equivalent to the conclusion of the rigidity argument is mistaken. The conclusion of the rigidity argument is the proposition that necessarily something is the divine creative act. That is clearly not equivalent to the proposition that nothing could have been the divine creative act without being essentially uniquely the divine creative act. Consider: the rigidity thesis is compatible with there being no divine creative act, not so for the conclusion of the rigidity argument.

As far as I can tell, the reason Tomaszewski makes this mistake is not a subtle confusion of modal semantics *vis-à-vis* metaphysics, though these issues surely welcome such confusions. Tomaszewski's mistake is more basic. Recall how Tomaszewski describes the matter of question-begging: "If 'God's act of creation' designates God in every

possible world, this is just to say that God creates in every possible world." But here Tomaszewski misunderstands the claim that the singular term "the divine creative act" rigidly designates whatever it designates (the rigidity thesis) as the thesis that the definite description "the divine creative act" rigidly designates what Tomaszewski *takes it* to designate (i.e. God). The latter claim is *not* the rigidity thesis.

Far from it. Contra Tomaszewski, the rigidity thesis doesn't even *entail* the conclusion of the rigidity argument. This much is important. By my reckoning, one ought *only* take the rigidity thesis to entail that "the divine creative act" rigidly designates God if one has antecedently accepted that God is one and the same as the divine creative act—that is, if one has assumed *DDS*. But this much is clearly *not* to be taken for granted: it's what we're arguing about in the first place. Those that do not endorse *DDS* do not apparently have any reason to believe that the rigidity thesis so much as entails that "the divine creative act" rigidly designates God.

We've seen that Tomaszewski's objection to the rigidity argument is very seriously flawed. Let me finally take note of something further. The rigidity thesis, as we've seen, should be understood as chiefly implicating the modal profile of certain properties expressed by the description "the divine creative act." As it happens, we can do little better than to conscript our old friend (E) as an object-language construal of the rigidity thesis. That is, the definite description "the divine creative act" comes out rigid only if, necessarily, anything that could have been a divine creative act is uniquely and essentially the divine creative act; and anything that could have been a divine creative act is uniquely and essentially so only if "the divine creative act" is rigid. That is, the rigidity thesis is true if and only if (E) is. So, we see once again that our discussion of the rigidity argument can be fruitfully thought of as revolving around (E)—a

nontrivial thesis concerning the metaphysics of divine action.

IX. MODAL COLLAPSE AND DIVINE SIMPLICITY

After examining Christopher Tomaszewski's recent diagnosis of modal collapse arguments against *DDS*, I have argued at length that Tomaszewski's conclusions are eminently dubitable. Even if we grant Tomaszewski's claim that Mullins' modal collapse argument is fallacious for the reasons Tomaszewski cites, there apparently are modal collapse arguments to which Tomaszewski's criticisms do not—indeed, *cannot*—apply. Further, in response to Tomaszewski's suggestion that Mullins' argument cannot be repaired, I've offered two new arguments—the actuality argument and the enthymeme argument—as well as defended two of the three arguments that Tomaszewski considers—the necessity argument and the rigidity argument.

Each of these arguments, in order to have force against the doctrine of divine simplicity, requires something like an endorsement of (E), a nontrivial thesis about the individuation of divine actions. I've also argued, in examining Tomaszewski's objections to the necessity argument and the rigidity argument, that the only principled objections available to the defender of *DDS* similarly depend on a straightforward *rejection* of (E). Thus, what we have are four valid modal collapse arguments against *DDS*, the success of which depends on (E), and to which the only available response, shy of denying *DDS* itself, is to reject (E).

If (E) is true, then the conclusion of the actuality argument, the premises of which

are all corollaries or concomitants of *DDS*, entails fatalism. Moreover, if (E) is true, then we have a bridge premise connecting the two premises of Mullins' original argument to its conclusion, so that the enthymeme argument goes through. By the same token, (E) serves as a bridge connecting the second premise of Mullins' original argument (to which the defender of *DDS* is committed) to the stronger second premise of the necessity argument. Finally, if (E) is true, the rigidity thesis at issue in the rigidity argument comes out true: if (E) is true, then "the divine creative act" is a rigid definite description. In sum, if we grant (E), we have a quartet of strong modal collapse arguments against *DDS*.

The defenders of *DDS*, on pain of accepting fatalism, ought to deny (E). Contrary to Tomaszewski's pronouncements about the debate over divine simplicity and modal collapse, defenders of *DDS* simply cannot respond to modal collapse arguments without doing constructive metaphysics and philosophical theology. In closing, I want to offer a different, positive diagnosis.

What is at issue in this narrow discussion of modal collapse and divine simplicity is the metaphysics of divine action. Is (E) true? This is a question for metaphysicians and philosophical theologians. If the subterranean argument of my paper holds water, this question is also *an interesting question*: it effectively decides the question of whether or not some sort of modal collapse follows from the doctrine of divine simplicity.⁷

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NOTES

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1. Though Tomaszewski himself leaves out the details, there are a few suggestions as to how this might go. For example, we'll say that where w is a possible world, the world-proposition p_w is the proposition such that, necessarily, it is true if and only if w is actual. If there are such world propositions, then we can also countenance the following Cambridge property: the property *being such that* p_w , where w is an arbitrary possible world. Thus, if necessarily something is such that p_w , then necessarily w is actual. Alternatively, if we cannot avail ourselves of world propositions, we can avail ourselves of infinitary conjunctions of propositions characteristic of unique possible worlds.

2. He writes: “. . . since we can construe God's act of creation as specifically as we might like, allowing ‘act of creation’ to denote the act which creates our world down to every last apparently contingent detail, the argument seems to establish not only the necessity of creation, but of this creation, such that every fact about our world is necessitated.” (p. 277)

3. As usual, symbolizing claims of the form ‘God is essentially F ’ as ‘ $\Box(\text{God is } F)$ ’ can be tolerated just as long as we can assume, for the sake of argument, that God exists necessarily. Given that premise (1) secures just this assumption, we can assume that there is no important difference between properties that God has essentially and those that, necessarily, God has.

4. In order to see how descriptions can be rigidified by an actuality operator, consider a simple framework for the intensions of singular terms, sentences, and n -place predicates. We write $\llbracket S \rrbracket^w$, $\llbracket t \rrbracket^w$ or $\llbracket F(x_1, \dots, x_n) \rrbracket^w$ for the interpretation of a sentence S or singular term t or n -ary predicate $F(x_1, \dots, x_n)$, respectively, with respect to a world of evaluation w . Call a singular term t *rigid* iff for all worlds w and w' , $\llbracket t \rrbracket^w = \llbracket t \rrbracket^{w'}$. That is, a term t is rigid iff its referent is invariant across worlds of evaluation. The iota operator ιx takes a unary (perhaps complex) predicate $F(x)$ to form a singular term $\iota x Fx$ interpreted so as to refer, for a world w , to the unique individual o such that $o \in \llbracket F(x) \rrbracket^w$. We also have the truth-conditions for the modal operator $@$, letting α be the designated world (the actual world), according to which, for any sentence S and world w , $\llbracket @S \rrbracket^w = \llbracket S \rrbracket^\alpha$ (Kaplan 1979). Putting all of this together, we get that for any world w ,

$$\begin{aligned} \llbracket \iota x @Fx \rrbracket^w &= \text{the unique } o \text{ such that } o \in \llbracket \langle \lambda x. @Fx \rangle \rrbracket^w \\ &= \text{the unique } o \text{ such that } o \in \llbracket F(x) \rrbracket^\alpha \\ &= \llbracket \iota x Fx \rrbracket^\alpha \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, $\iota x @Fx$ is rigid: for all worlds w and w' , $\llbracket \iota x @Fx \rrbracket^w = \llbracket \iota x @Fx \rrbracket^{w'} = \llbracket \iota x Fx \rrbracket^\alpha$. Definite descriptions, if they designate at all, when prefixed by an actuality operator, become rigid.

5. But it might be objected: aren't proponents of DDS committed to (2*) in virtue of being committed to the necessity of DDS itself? If God is not only simple, but necessarily simple, doesn't it follow that He is necessarily identical to His act of creation? It does not. What follows from DDS is the necessary identity of God with God's act. But that God's act is an act of creation is a contingent fact not entailed by DDS. (pp. 279)

6. This discourse about properties is, of course, a metaphysical gloss on some truisms about the truth-conditions of sentences involving rigid definite descriptions in an interpreted quantified modal logic. Defenders of *DDS* will, no doubt, object to this way of speaking, since, on some views, *DDS* involves commitment to the view that God has *no properties whatsoever*. Nothing I say employing property-talk, cannot be in essentials translated into talk of true-predications and the modal statuses thereof. This much avoids concerns about the legitimacy of property-talk, since all parties to the debate agree that there are *true predications* of God (lest we fall into self-contradiction).

7. See Nemes (2019) for a somewhat similar diagnosis, and for a response in favor of *DDS* along the lines I have been recommending.

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