

## DIVINE SIMPLICITY: THE ASPECTIVAL ACCOUNT

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**Abstract.** This article aims to provide a consistent explication of the doctrine of Divine Simplicity. To achieve this end, a re-construal of the doctrine is made within an “aspectival trope-theoretic” metaphysical framework, which will ultimately enable the doctrine to be elucidated in a consistent manner, and the Plantingian objections raised against it will be shown to be unproblematic.

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### *I.1 The Doctrine of Divine Simplicity*

The Doctrine of Divine Simplicity (hereafter, the DDS), in its most basic sense, claims that God is not composed of “parts”. In understanding this specific claim, we first need to make a distinction between two different types of parts: “proper” parts and “improper” parts. A part is a portion of any given entity. Hence, if a portion of a given entity is *less* than the whole entity itself, then it is a proper part, whereas if a portion of a given entity is *not* less than the whole itself, then it is an “improper part”. In contemporary mereology, as expressed by Aaron Cotnoir and Achille Varzi, the proper parthood relation  $P$  can be formally construed as such:

(1) (Proper Parthood):  $Pxy \wedge \neg x = y$ .<sup>1</sup>

According to this conception of proper parthood,  $x$  is a proper part of  $y$  iff  $x$  is distinct from  $y$ . That is, something is a proper part of an entity in the case in which it is *numerically distinct* from the entity itself—a finger is numerically distinct from a hand, and thus is a proper part of it. Conversely, something is an improper part of an entity in the case in which it is *numerically identical* to the

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1 Aaron Cotnoir and Achille Varzi, *Mereology* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2021), 23.

entity itself—a hand is numerically identical to a fist, and thus is an improper part of it.<sup>2</sup> Thus, this contemporary metaphysical conception of parts ties parthood to the relation of identity; conceiving of a part of an entity in the *proper* sense is conceiving a portion of that entity in a manner in which it is incompatible with that portion being the whole entity—the whole includes *something else* that is not included within that portion, which results in the latter being of a different mereological level than the former.<sup>3</sup> Whilst conceiving of a part in the *improper* sense is conceiving a portion of an entity in a manner in which it is compatible with that portion being the whole entity—nothing in the portion lies *outside* the whole, and nothing in the whole lies *outside* the portion, which results in the latter being of the same mereological level as the former. Taking this parthood distinction into account, we can plausibly construe the DDS as a doctrine that negates the compositional nature of God in a *proper* sense:

(2) (DDS): God is a simple entity through lacking proper parts.

Thus, according to the DDS, no portion of God is numerically distinct from him. God is a being who intrinsically within himself does not have any division or ontological composition. In short: there is nothing that is *in* God, that is *not* God.<sup>4</sup> The primary motivation for this lack of complexity in God is grounded upon the fact that any entity composed of proper parts would be dependent upon those parts for being what it is. However, God is traditionally understood to be an ontologically independent being that is the most fundamental entity in the hierarchical structure of reality and thus cannot be so dependent. Given this, God must be such that he does not have any sort of complexity involving composition. In further elucidating this fact, Thomas Morris has helpfully presented a threefold denial of the type of complexity that is posited by the DDS:

(3) (Spatial Simplicity): God has no proper spatial parts.

(4) (Temporal Simplicity): God has no proper temporal parts.

(5) (Property Simplicity): God has no proper metaphysical parts.<sup>5</sup>

2 Peter Simons, *Parts: A Study in Ontology* (Clarendon Press, 1987), 11.

3 Giorgio Lando, *Mereology: A Philosophical Introduction* (Bloomsbury, 2017), 142.

4 James Dolezal, *God Without Parts* (Pickwick Publications, 2011), xvi.

5 Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology* (InterVarsity Press, 1991), 114.

Focusing on Property Simplicity,<sup>6</sup> the denial made here by an adherent of the DDS is that of God not exemplifying any numerically distinct properties (i.e. proper metaphysical parts). Since if God were to exemplify these properties, he would be dependent upon them in order to be what he is. Yet, again, as God cannot be dependent in specific this way, he thus must not be the bearer of any properties. Rather, any intrinsic property attributable to God must be *numerically identical* to him. So, for example, if the intrinsic property of goodness is attributed to God, then one is not properly attributing to him an ontologically distinct property that he exemplifies. Rather, God is instead taken to be identical with his goodness (and all the other properties that are attributed to him as well). Moreover, given that God is identical to each of his properties, one must also infer that his properties are identical to each other due to the numerical identity relation having the following formal characteristics:

(6) (Reflexivity):  $\forall x R(x, x)$ .

(7) (Symmetry):  $\forall x \forall y (R(x, y) \rightarrow R(y, x))$ .

(8) (Transitivity):  $\forall x \forall y \forall z [(R(x, y) \wedge R(y, z)) \rightarrow R(x, z)]$ .

By the identity relation having the characteristics of (6)–(8),<sup>7</sup> God's identity with his goodness *and* his power entails the fact of his goodness being identical *to* his power (and, again, for all of the other properties that are attributed to him). Thus, according to the DDS, there is, firstly, no numerical distinction between God and his properties and, secondly, there is no numerical distinction between each of God's properties as well.

The Property Simplicity of God that is posited by the DDS is at the heart of the division between adherents of the doctrine, who we can term the "Classical Theists", and certain individuals who take issue with the doctrine, who

6 This article focuses on investigating and defending what Jeffrey Brower terms a "Property Account" of the DDS, which features in: Jeffrey Brower, "Making Sense of Divine Simplicity", *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008): 4. Thus, the following problems raised against it are not to be taken to be an issue against the alternative accounts of the DDS, such as Brower's "Truthmaker Account", which also features in: Brower, "Simplicity", 4. Nevertheless, for a helpful overview of the type of DDS accounts on offer, see Thomas Schärtl, "Divine Simplicity", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 2 (2018).

7 More specifically, it is that of (8): the Transitivity of Identity, which entails the following result.

we can term the “Neo-Classical Theists”.<sup>8</sup> That is, in the contemporary analytic theological literature, there are (at least) two ways for one to conceptualise God’s nature: one way, according to the Classical Theists, is to conceive of God as a simple entity who does *not* have his properties as proper parts of him. Instead, God is identical to each of his properties under this conception and thus would not depend upon any external entity for him existing as he does. However, according to the Neo-Classical Theists, another way to conceive of God is as a complex entity who has his properties as proper parts of him. Thus, under this conception, God is numerically distinct from his properties and, therefore, is dependent upon some external entities, namely his properties, in order for him to exist in the manner that he does. There is thus a radical distinction between these two conceptions of God’s nature, which can be illustrated as such (with the smaller ovals in the left image representing the parts of God, as posited by Neo-Classical Theism, and the double-headed arrows in the right image representing an identity relation, as posited by Classical Theism):

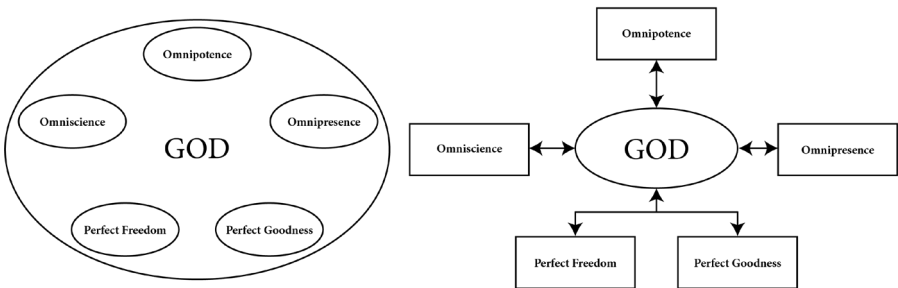


Figure 1.1 Complex and Simple Conceptions of God

Alvin Plantinga,<sup>9</sup> an adherent of Neo-Classical Theism, views the Classical Theist’s conception of the nature of God, and the DDS which it is built upon, as a “very hard saying”. One of the primary reasons why this is a “very hard saying” for Plantinga is that it seems to him that if God’s properties (such

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed explanation of these two theistic positions, see John Peckham, *The Doctrine of God: Introducing the Big Questions* (T&T Clark, 2019), 4–20.

<sup>9</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have A Nature?* (Marquette Univ. Press, 1980).

as his goodness and power) were all identical to him, then, firstly, he would only possess one property (i.e. either goodness *or* power), which seems to be evidently false since God possesses a multiplicity of qualitatively differing properties — God’s goodness is qualitatively different from his power. We can call this issue the *Many Properties Problem*. Secondly, and a more pertinent worry for Plantinga, is the fact that if God *were* identical to the properties that are attributable to him, then given Leibniz’s Law, which can formally be defined as such:

(9) (Leibniz’s Law):  $\forall x\forall y(x = y \rightarrow (\varphi(x) \leftrightarrow \varphi(y)))$

God must himself be a (self-exemplifying) property, which would bring forth a myriad of problems. As Plantinga notes,

no property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or, indeed, know anything at all. If God is a property, then he couldn’t be omniscient, or, indeed, know anything at all. If God is a property, then he isn’t a person but a mere abstract object; he has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life. So taken, the simplicity doctrine seems to be an utter mistake.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Plantinga thinks that *if* the DDS is true, then this would also entail that God is, in fact, a property. However, this is problematic as, in contemporary analytic thought, properties are regularly taken to be “abstract” entities that are causally inert. So, if God is a “property” or a collection of “properties”, he must also be an abstract entity and thus be causally inert. Yet, if that were indeed the case, then there will be a clear inconsistency with the mainline theistic position that construes God as the *personal ultimate causal agent* of all reality. Therefore, as Plantinga notes, an accurate conception of God requires us to affirm that he is a concrete entity, and thus we cannot consistently hold to the conception of him being a simple entity as well.<sup>11</sup> We can call this issue the *Property-Identity Problem*. On the basis of the *prima facie* success of the Many-Properties Problem and the Property-Identity Problem, Plantinga ultimately believes that DDS is unworthy of assent. A conceptualisation of God as a complex being is the only coherent way forward. Thus, the question becomes for the adherent of the DDS: how can one affirm this doctrine in light of these issues? One way to make this affirmation without having to face

<sup>10</sup> Plantinga, *Does God Have A Nature?*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Plantinga, *Does God Have A Nature?*, 36.

these issues is by one providing an alternative account of the DDS within a Neo-Classical Theistic framework. A particular individual who has sought to do just this is that of Richard Swinburne,<sup>12</sup> who shares the same sympathies as Plantinga concerning the DDS's coherence. As he writes,

how can God, who is a substance, an entity who possesses properties, be the same as those properties? And how can they be identical with each other? How can omnipotence be the same property as omniscience?<sup>13</sup>

Due to the difficulty in answering these questions, Swinburne ultimately rejects (what we can term) the *strong* DDS proposed by the Classical Theists. However, unlike Plantinga and certain other Neo-Classical Theists,<sup>14</sup> Swinburne sees some merit in affirming the DDS, yet he believes that one must indeed proceed to formulate this doctrine in a different manner. This alternative formulation, which we can term the *weak* DDS (or the “harmonisation account”),<sup>15</sup> firstly takes the divine nature to be reducible to one *essential* property, *omnipotence* (defined as the ability to perform any logically possible action). Secondly, this property is instantiated by, rather than identical to, God. Thirdly, the various other properties that are rightly predicated of God (such as omniscience, omnipresence, perfect freedom and perfect goodness etc.) are *entailed* by the possession of this one property—this property is such that it could not be had unless the other properties were had as well.<sup>16</sup> Positing an “entailment relation” here is the key move made by Swinburne for providing an alternative interpretation of the DDS—with the holding of this relation being grounded upon how these other properties are defined:<sup>17</sup>

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12 Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Clarendon Press, 1994), 160–68; Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), 258–59.

13 Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 162.

14 Other Neo-Classical Theists such as William Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 55–61.

15 For a further explanation of the harmonisation account and the positions of its other defenders, see Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 136–44.

16 For a detailed explanation of why there is this entailment from the property of omnipotence, see Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 174–75. Furthermore, this definition of omnipotence is a basic definition provided by Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 8, which is subject to certain counterexamples (such as the “McEar” objection). For these counterexamples and a more refined definition of omnipotence that does not face these counterexamples, see Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 150–74.

17 Again, these definitions are basic definitions provided by Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 6–13, which are also subject to certain counterexamples. For these counterexamples and some

Properties	Properties Definition
Omniscience	Knowing of all true propositions and believing no false proposition.
Omnipresence	Being cognizant of, and causally active at, every point of space.
Perfect Freedom	Having no non-rational causal influence determining one's choices.
Perfect Goodness	Performing the best action/kind of action, if there is one, many good actions and no bad actions.

Table 1.1 Property Definition

By the divine properties being defined in this specific way, a basis is provided for these properties being entailed by the property of omnipotence; that is, they are *derivable* from this property which can be illustrated as such (with the single-headed arrows representing an entailment relation):

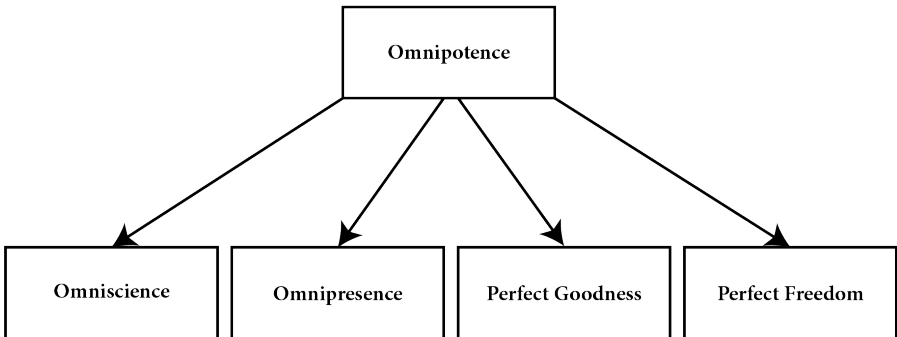


Figure 1.2 Property Entailment

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more refined definitions of these properties that do not face these counterexamples, see Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 126–227. Furthermore, the properties listed here are a limited set of properties, with Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 200–244, also taking the properties of eternity, being the creator of any universe that exists, being the source of moral obligation, ontological necessity, etc., to be entailed by the property of omnipotence. However, for space limitations, the four properties listed here will be the only divine properties that we focus on.

So, for example, focusing on the derivability of the property of omniscience from the property of omnipotence, for God to be omnipotent, that is him having the ability to perform any logically possible action, then he must, at the minimum, possess knowledge of what occurred in the past (and what is occurring now in the present) in order for him to know of (and believe no false propositions about) what actions are logically possible for him to perform at any given point in time. Thus, to *be* omnipotent, God must also be omniscient, with this requirement holding for all of the other divine properties above as well. Given this entailment, the divine properties fit together so as to form a *unified* nature. The unity or harmonisation of the divine properties, according to Swinburne,<sup>18</sup> is thus all that is required for a coherent construal of the DDS. However, even though the weak DDS is indeed a coherent construal of the doctrine, the main criticism against this type of approach is that of it failing to capture the primary motivation for one holding to DDS in the first place, which, as noted previously, is that of preserving *the ontological priority of God over all else*, or, what, Plantinga terms, the “sovereignty-aseity” intuition.<sup>19</sup> By the weak DDS, abandonment of an identity relation between God and his properties, it is God’s *properties* themselves, rather than God, which seem to have priority, since he is dependent upon them in order for him to exist *as* God. Furthermore, it also seems as if God is, in some manner, “constructed” out of these properties, which serve as his *proper parts*, due to each being a “portion” of him that is less than him. In affirming this coherent construal of the DDS, we end up positing a complex, rather than a simple, God and thus lose our primary motivation for holding to the doctrine in the first place. Therefore, the question now becomes for a (Classical or Neo-Classical) adherent of the DDS: is there another alternative means of construing the DDS without facing the issues that plague the strong and weak interpretations? I believe that there is, through one adopting a middle position between the strong and weak DDS accounts, which we can term the *moderate DDS* account, or, more specifically, the *Aspectival Account*.<sup>20</sup>

18 Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 162.

19 Plantinga, *Does God Have A Nature?*, 31.

20 Terming the moderate DDS account here the “Aspectival Account” does not negate the importance of the trope-theoretic framework in which the account is developed — it just rolls of the tongue a lot more than the “Aspectival Trope-Theoretic Account”. Furthermore, there are potentially a number of “moderate DDS accounts” that are very different from (and slightly



The Aspectival Account is one that affirms, in line with the strong DDS, an identity between God and his properties, and his properties with each other. This affirmation, as was previously shown by Plantinga, will result in God being a property and his properties being numerically identical to one another. Thus, the Aspectival Account “bites the bullet” and accepts these implications. However, by also assuming the “harmonisation move” of the weak DDS account, and re-situating it within a “trope-theoretic” and “aspectival” metaphysics, the Aspectival Account will be free from the absurdities that are derivable from the strong DDS. By utilising the Aspectival Account, one will thus be able to affirm, on the one hand, that God is a “property” *without* him losing his concreteness. And, on the other hand, one will also be able to affirm the identity of God’s “properties” with each other *without* each of these “properties” ceasing to be *qualitatively* different entities. The focus of the rest of this article will thus be on explicating and applying two particular theses from contemporary metaphysics within this specific theological context, which will ultimately provide a consistent formulation of the DDS without one having to face the issues raised by the Many Properties and Property-Identity problems (or the problem of transgressing the “sovereignty-aseity” intuition that plagued Swinburne’s weak DDS).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the plan is as follows: in section two (“Troping Simplicity”) I explicate the central elements of “Classical Trope Theory” and apply them to God, which will deal with the Property-Identity Problem. Then, in section three

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weaker than) the moderate DDS account proposed here, such as the “Parsimonious Account” proposed by Oliver Crisp, “A Parsimonious Model of Divine Simplicity”, *Modern Theology* 35, no. 3 (2019): 558–73, it will be helpful to distinguish the present account from the others by continuing to refer to it as the Aspectival Account, which is thus simply to be taken as one of the *possible* moderate DDS accounts on the market.

21 For this proposal to work, two specific assumptions will need to be made: first, that of God’s nature, following Swinburne, being reducible to one property with all of the other divine properties being related (in some sense) to this one property. This will serve as a basis for God’s properties to be identical to each other. Second, the conception of God within this account is identified as the God of Christianity (i.e. God is numerically identical to a person, the Father, who is a member of the Trinity), which will enable God to fulfil the requirements for being a “property” (without the problems raised by Plantinga being applicable to him). For an explanation of the historical basis for this second assumption, which has most recently been termed “Monarchical Trinitarianism”, see Beau Branson, “The Neglected Doctrine of the Monarchy of the Father and the Analytic Debate About the Trinity”, in *Analytic Theology and the Tri-Personal God*, ed. Olivier Riaudel and Alejandro Pérez (forthcoming), 1–24.

(“Aspecting Simplicity”) I explain the concept of an “aspect” and also apply it to God, which will deal with the Many-Properties Problem. Re-situating the DDS within these metaphysical frameworks will allow one to affirm the doctrine without having to face the problems raised by Plantinga. Finally, there will be a concluding section (“Conclusion”) which will summarise the above results and conclude the article.

## II. TROPING SIMPLICITY

### *II.1 The Nature of Tropes*

Classical Trope Theory is the specific theoretical framework proposed by Donald C. Williams, and further developed by “trope-theorists” such as Keith Campbell, Anna Sofia-Maurin, Douglas Ehring and A.R.J. Fisher, amongst others.<sup>22</sup> According to Williams and the trope-theorists, a trope is to be construed as such:

(10)(Trope): An entity is a trope if it is an abstract particular nature of a modifier or modular kind.

In breaking these concepts down, the first concept featured in (Trope): abstractness, is a word, as Fisher notes, that “is vague, imprecise, and ambiguous, like many other words in our philosophical theories and ordinary language”.<sup>23</sup> That is, there is not a single conception of the term “abstract”. However, trope-theorists, in disambiguating this term, focus on the original and broadest sense of the word, as Williams writes: “At its broadest the “true” meaning of “abstract” is *partial, incomplete, or fragmentary*, the trait of what is less than its including whole”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, a trope is abstract in the sense that it

22 Donald C. Williams, “On the Elements of Being”, *Review of Metaphysics* 7 (1953): 171–92; Donald C. Williams, “Universals and Existents”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 64 (1986): 1–14; Keith Campbell, *Abstract Particulars* (Blackwell, 1990); Anna-Sofia Maurin, *If Tropes* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002); Anna-Sofia Maurin, “Tropes”, in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Douglas Ehring, *Tropes: Properties, Objects and Mental Causation* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2011); A.R.J. Fisher, “Instantiation in Trope Theory”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2018): 153–64; A.R.J. Fisher, “Abstracta and Abstraction in Trope Theory”, *Philosophical Papers* 49, no. 1 (2020): 41–67.

23 Fisher, “Abstracta and Abstraction in Trope Theory”, 44.

24 Williams, “On the Elements of Being”, 186, emphasis in text.

*does not exhaust its content*, or is, in some sense, *less than its content*. This is in contrast, firstly, to the meaning of the word “concrete”, which, according to Williams, is “if not the main thing which this means is that, however discontinuous the placetime, or “plime”, which just contains such an object, the object exhausts or is the whole content of it”.<sup>25</sup> And thus, as Williams further adds, “abstract entities differ from concreta in that many of them can and do occupy the same plime”.<sup>26</sup> Thus, for example, a shape-trope that a table possesses is abstract because it does not exhaust its content, as other tropes, such as a colour-trope and a mass-trope, are also collocated with the shape-trope by occupying the same content. However, in contrast, the table would be concrete by itself *exhausting its content*, and thus not allowing another table (or object) to also occupy this content. The table would be a *concrete* entity, whilst the shape of the table would be an *abstract* entity. Thus, in further emphasising this distinction, Campbell helpfully writes:

Abstract here contrasts with concrete: a concrete entity is the totality of the being to be found where our colours, or temperatures or solidities are. The pea is concrete; it monopolises its location. All the qualities to be found where the pea is are qualities of that pea. But the pea’s quality instances are not themselves so exclusive. Each of them shares its place with many others.<sup>27</sup>

Following Fisher,<sup>28</sup> we can state the position expressed by Williams and Campbell more schematically by defining abstract entities as such:

(11) (Abstract): An entity is abstract iff this entity fails to exhaust the content of the region it occupies or is merely part of that region’s content.

This definition of “abstractness” shows that an entity is abstract, not because of its relation (or lack thereof) to spatiotemporal reality, as is often held in

25 Williams, “Universals and Existents”, 3.

26 Ibid., 3.

27 Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, 2–3. This use of the term “abstract” (and concrete) also contrasts with the prevalent understanding of the term, which sees an abstract entity as something that has, for concrete entities, or lacks, for abstract entities, spatiotemporal location or causal efficacy (Fisher, 2019). Thus, as Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, 3, further writes, focusing on abstract entities: Abstract does not imply indefinite, or purely theoretical. Most importantly, it does not imply that what is abstract is non-spatiotemporal. The solidity of this bell is a definite, experienceable and locatable reality. It is so definite, experienceable and locatable and that it can knock your head off, if you are not careful.

28 Fisher, “Abstracta and Abstraction in Trope Theory”, 44.

areas of contemporary metaphysics, but simply because it fails to exhaust the content of the region that is located (or is a part of the content of that region).

Turning our attention to the second concept featured in (Trope): particularity, in a similar vein to the abstractness of a trope, a trope's particularity is defined in a specific way within the Classical Trope Theory. In a general setting, universals are regularly taken to be entities that can be wholly present in different locations simultaneously.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, particulars are taken to not be able to be wholly present in different locations simultaneously. However, Williams and the trope-theorists have proposed an alternative means of distinguishing properties as universals, from properties as particulars, through *Leibniz's Law*. This specific account can be expressed succinctly as such:

(12) (Particular): An entity is particular if it is possible that there exists a duplicate (i.e. an exactly similar copy) of that entity.

In further elucidating this view, Williams writes that:

Entities determined and named in the first principle, by definition not subject to the identity of indiscernibles, are cases or particulars; entities determined in the second way, by definition subject to the identity of indiscernibles, are "general" entities, that is, kinds or universals.<sup>30</sup>

The central contention here is that of universals, but not particulars, conforming to Leibniz's Law.<sup>31</sup> By not conforming to Leibniz's Law, particulars are thus entities, as Williams further writes, which "may be exactly similar and yet not only distinct but discrete."<sup>32</sup> Thus, for example, according to this account, a shape-trope is particular because it is possible that there is a duplicate of this shape, that is, an entity that is exactly similar, but also distinct from this shape. If a property (or a given entity) obeys Leibniz's Law, then it is universal. If it does not obey this principle, then it is particular. Thus, for properties as universals, the principle holds, in that exactly similar entities (universals) are identical (i.e. if universal  $x$  and universal  $y$  are indiscernible, then  $x = y$ ). Whereas for particulars (e.g. tropes), the principle does not hold, as exactly similar entities can be distinct (i.e. if trope  $x$  and trope  $y$  are indis-

29 Fraser MacBride, "Whence the Particular-Universal Distinction?", *Grazer Philosophische studien* 67 (2004): 181–94.

30 Williams, "Universals and Existents", 8.

31 Ehring, *Tropes: Properties, Objects and Mental Causation*, 32–25.

32 Williams, "Universals and Existents", 3.

cernible, then  $x \neq y$ ). Given this conception of particularity, a trope is thus particular if it can have a duplicate.

Closely related to the concepts of abstractness and particularity is the third concept featured in (Trope): the primitive nature of a trope. That is, the concept of a nature, within this theoretical framework, is taken to be an unanalysable notion (i.e. a primitive) that directly applies to a given trope.<sup>33</sup> A trope is thus a (qualitative) nature, in that it does not have, or possess, a nature of its own; rather, the nature of a trope is *intrinsic* to it. A helpful way to construe intrinsicity, as noted by James Alvarado, is through Rae Langton and David Lewis' Independence Account of Intrinsicity.<sup>34</sup> Where a property P, according to Alvarado (following Lewis and Langton), "is combinatorially intrinsic if and only if the instantiation of P by an object x is indifferent to the fact that x is alone or accompanied in a possible world."<sup>35</sup> An object x is alone in a possible world w if and only if there is no other object besides x in w. An object that is not alone is accompanied. Thus, the nature of a trope is combinatorially intrinsic if and only if this nature of the trope is invariant under the scenarios in which the given trope is alone or accompanied.<sup>36</sup> However, the modal invariance of a trope, unlike other entities, is not grounded upon the possession of an intrinsic nature, but that of it *being* its intrinsic nature. There is nothing more to a trope than its nature and thus, as noted by Maurin, tropes, at a general level, "have no constituents, in the sense that they are not "made up" or "built" from entities belonging to some other category".<sup>37</sup> Tropes are thus primitively qualitative and irreducible entities. They are, in a sense, simple.

The final concept featured in (Trope) concerns the different *types* of tropes that exist: "tropes" and "trovers". Michael Loux introduces this distinction as such:

Whereas tropes are particular properties—things like this redness, this triangularity, this pallor, trovers are thin individuals—things like *this individual red thing, this individual triangular thing, and this individual pale thing*. The claim would be that familiar objects are bundles of compresent

33 Fisher, "Instantiation in Trope Theory", 154.

34 Rae Langton and David Lewis, "Defining Intrinsic", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998): 334–37. Given the complexity and space required to unpack Langton and Lewis' account, the brief explanation here will be based on Alvarado's interpretation of it.

35 José T. Alvarado, "Are Tropes Simple?", *Teorema* 38 (2019): 53–54.

36 Alvarado, "Are Tropes Simple?", 54.

37 Maurin, *If Tropes*, 2.2.

tropers. So the view would again dispense with properties and insist that the ultimate constituents of familiar particulars are intrinsically characterised or natured, but would construe those constituents as particulars rather than universals. Such intrinsically characterised particulars would be the ultimate or underived sources of character: a familiar particular would be, say, pale because it has a pale troper as a constituent.<sup>38</sup>

The central difference between a trope and a troper, according to Loux, is that of the former being a singly (or minimally) *characterising property*, whilst the latter is a singly (or minimally) *charactered property* in a “stretched” (or analogical) sense — it is a “propertied thing or object” (hereafter, property\*).<sup>39</sup> Thus, within this construal of Classical Trope Theory, there is an ontological difference between entities that are properties and entities that are properties\*.

However, off of this distinction, Robert K. Garcia notes that Loux’s division between a trope and a troper is not a *novel* suggestion, but is, in fact, *the* prevalent view of tropes found within the literature.<sup>40</sup> According to Garcia, Loux’s distinction between a “trope” and a “troper” is thus best described as a distinction between two different *concepts* of a trope. Hence, Garcia sees that the two terms “trope” and “troper” are potentially misleading, and thus he introduces the more helpful terms of a “modifier trope” (for Loux’s “trope”) and a “module trope” (for Loux’s “troper”). Given this conceptual distinction and re-labelling, the difference between these two trope concepts can now be expressed succinctly as such:

- (13)(Modifier): An entity is a modifier trope if it is a singly, maximally-thin property that does not have the character that it grounds.

38 Michael Loux, “An Exercise in Constituent Ontology”, in *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Gabrielle Galluzzo and Michael Loux (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 31.

39 I leave the account of analogy here undefined.

40 For a more detailed comparison than what can be presently provided here of the different conceptions of a trope, see Robert K. Garcia, “Two Ways to Particularize a Property”, *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1 (2015): 635–52; Robert K. Garcia, “Is Trope Theory a Divided House?”, in *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, eds. Gabrielle Galluzzo and Michael Loux (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 133–155; Robert K. Garcia, “Tropes as Character-Grounders”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 94 (2016): 499–515. And for an alternative application of Garcia’s position within a theological context, see Robert K. Garcia, “Tropes as Divine Acts: The Nature of Creaturely Properties in a World Sustained by God”, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7, no. 3 (2015): 105–30.

(14) (Module): An entity is a module trope if it is a singly, maximally-thin property\* that possesses the character that it grounds.

At a general level, modifier tropes and module tropes are both taken to be non-shareable, maximally-thin (i.e. singly characterized), character-grounders.<sup>41</sup> The central difference between these two types of tropes is that of a modifier trope being a *property* that does not *exemplify* this character, but simply bestows it upon (i.e. “makes”) something else to be characterized in that specific way. Thus, for example, a particular object is spherical in virtue of its modifier trope, which “spherises” that object by simply making *it* spherical without it sharing in that character as well. The character grounding provided by a modifier trope is thus *de novo* (or *sui generis*).<sup>42</sup>

Whilst, a module trope is a property\* that *exemplifies* the character that it grounds (i.e. is self-exemplifying). Thus, for example, a particular (thickly-charactered) object is spherical and red in virtue of its module tropes, which are themselves spherical and red (i.e. exemplify sphericity and redness), and together (compresently) are *parts* (or constituents) of that object. A module tropes’ character grounding, rather than being *de novo*, can thus be taken to be some type of parthood (or constitution) relation.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, an additional distinction between modifier and module tropes is the role played by these types of tropes in causation. As Maurin writes,

According to a majority of the trope theorists, tropes have an important role to play in causation. It is, after all, not the *whole* stove that burns you, it is its *temperature* that does the damage. And it is not any temperature, nor temperature in general, which leaves a red mark. That mark is left by *the particular temperature had by this particular stove now* or, in other words, it is left by the stove’s temperature-trope.<sup>44</sup>

At a more specific level, it is solely module tropes, rather than modifier tropes, that can play any direct role in causation. As in Maurin’s example, a modifier hotness trope cannot fulfil the role of being the direct cause of the burn mark, as it is not itself hot — something else must thus be the direct cause of the burn mark. Yet, this is not a unique problem for the modifier view, as Gar-

41 Garcia, “Is Trope Theory a Divided House?”, 142.

42 Garcia, “Tropes as Character-Grounders”, 503.

43 Ibid., 503.

44 Maurin, *If Tropes*, §4.1.

cia notes, “mass tropes are not massive, charge tropes are not charged, and so on. Thus, unlike module tropes, modifier tropes seem ineligible to play a direct role in causation”.<sup>45</sup> Modifier tropes, in a similar manner to universals, are thus causally inert. However, the modular view does not have this issue, given that module tropes are self-exemplifying entities, resulting, in our example above, in a modular hotness trope being the direct cause of the burn mark. Thus, again, at a more specific level, it is module tropes, and not modifier tropes, that are uniquely suited to be the basic terms of causation.<sup>46</sup> Given these differences, the conceptual distinction between these two types of tropes can be illustrated as such:

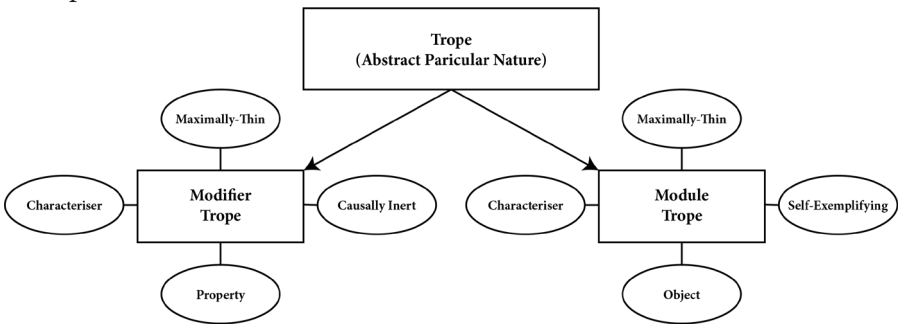


Figure 1.3 Trope Conceptual Distinction

Thus, in sum, a trope, within Classical Trope Theory, is an abstract particular nature. As an abstract particular nature, a trope can either be a modifier, and thus be a maximally-thinly characterized property that is not self-exemplifying (i.e. does not exemplify the character that it bestows). Or, it can be modular, and thus be a maximally-thinly characterized property\* that is self-exemplifying (i.e. exemplifies the character that it bestows). We thus have a detailed explication here of the nature of a trope, and off of this basis, we can now turn our attention to re-construing the nature of God as a trope in the modular sense of the word.

<sup>45</sup> Garcia, “Two Ways to Particularize a Property”, 643.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 642.



## II.2 God as a Module Trope

God is a module trope — an abstract particular nature of a modular kind, and in understanding this claim, we can now unpack each of the concepts featured in (Trope) within this specific theistic context. The first concept featured in (Trope): abstractness, is concerned with an entity being “partial, incomplete, or fragmentary”, and with the trait of it being “less than the including whole”. Thus, we can take God to be abstract in this *sense*, rather than the “spatiotemporal” sense assumed (and rejected) by Plantinga. That is, God is less than his including whole, which, assuming Christian Trinitarianism, is *the Trinity itself*. Thus, God does not, in accord with (Abstract), exhaust his “content” or “plime” (or is less than his “content” or “plime” ), where his content is taken to the Trinity as a whole, and the plime to be the location in which the Trinity is located at. For God, who we can identify as the Father, there are two other Trinitarian persons: the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are exactly located where the Father is. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each collocated with each other by occupying the same content and plime — that of the Trinity. God is an abstract entity without this negating him being *concrete* in the Plantingian (spatiotemporal sense).

Concerning the notion of particularity, which is the second concept featured in (Trope), a given entity is particular, in accord with (Particular), by it failing to abide by Leibniz’s Law, and thus permitting the possibility of the existence of an entity (i.e. a duplicate) that is exactly similar in its intrinsic properties (i.e. its nature) to the first entity, yet is not identical to it. Whereas a universal, however, is taken to be the denial of this (i.e. an entity abiding by Leibniz’s Law and thus not permitting a duplicate of the given entity). Given this understanding of these terms, God is not a universal in that, assuming Trinitarianism again, Leibniz’s Law does not hold. As for God (who is identified as the Father), there exist duplicate entities of him: the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is, the Trinitarian persons are exactly similar to each other (i.e. each of the persons are divine, *in the exact same way*), but they are still distinct entities — the Father  $\neq$  the Son, the Son  $\neq$  Spirit and the Father  $\neq$  the Spirit. Thus, according to this construal of particularity, God is a particular entity. God is abstract *and* particular,

Yet, in line with the third concept featured in (Trope): the primitive relation between a trope and its nature, God is also one that possesses a (qualitative) nature. However, this is not to be construed in the sense that he in-

stantiates a nature distinct from himself, but that he simply *is* that nature. God's nature is intrinsic to him. That is, it is combinatorially intrinsic, in that his nature is invariant under the scenarios in which he is alone (assuming *per impossible* the other Trinitarian persons did not exist) or accompanied (assuming the existence of the other Trinitarian persons and wider reality). God's nature is modally invariant in both scenarios. Furthermore, God's qualitative nature is *primitive*, in that it is not reducible to anything outside of himself. No nature is distinct from him. God is primitively qualitative — he is characterised as divine by his *identity* with this nature, which is not constituted, made up, or built up by anything from a different category. God, as an abstract particular nature, is a primitively characterised and irreducible entity — God is, in a sense, simple.

Still, the question that is now presented to us is: what *type* of trope is God? That is, taking into account the conceptual distinction featured in (Trope), between a modifier and module trope, the more specific question now to be answered is: is God a modifier trope or a module trope? Well, it is quite clear that God is not a modifier trope, simply for the reason that God *is* the specific character that he bestows, which, in line with our second general assumption noted above, is that of him *being omnipotent*. That is, God is a singly, maximally-thinly characterised property\*, due to the fact that God possesses, or more specifically, is numerically identical to omnipotence. God is thus an *omnipotence-trope*, which we can illustrate as such (with the double-headed arrows representing an identity relation):

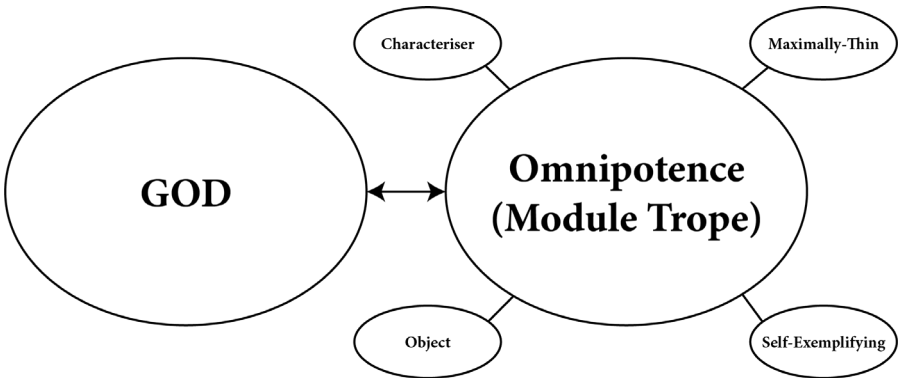


Figure 1.4 Theistic Trope Relationship

By God being a module trope that is identical to omnipotence, this also enables the Trinity, which he constitutes with the Son and the Holy Spirit, to have the character of omnipotence as well. However, the character that the Trinity has is a *reproduction* of the character that God himself has. Thus, taking this all into account, as God is the character that he bestows, he cannot be a modifier trope. Instead, God should be taken to be a module trope in the sense of him being a maximally-thinly characterized property\* — an omnipotence trope — that is self-exemplifying and serves the role of bestowing this characteristic upon the Trinity which he constitutes. Furthermore, since God is an omnipotence-trope of a modular kind, he plays a direct role in causation and is thus a basic term of a causal relation.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in sum: as an omnipotence-trope, God is a *modular abstract particular nature* that has the ability to perform any logically possible action.

Off of this position, we now have a means available to deal with Plantinga's Property-Identity problem. According to the re-construal of DDS through this proposal, God is identical with omnipotence, and thus he *is* a property. However, the type of property that he is, is that of a *trope* — God is abstract (i.e. he does not exhaust the content that he is a part of), is particular (i.e. he can have duplicates) and is a qualitative nature (i.e. his nature is combinatorially intrinsic and identical to him). However, this does not imply that God exists as a causally inert entity, as he would be if he were a normal "property".<sup>48</sup> Instead, due to him being a property\* — a module trope — God is a singly, maximally-thin *object* that is the character (i.e. omnipotence) that he grounds the Trinity with.<sup>49</sup> And as a trope of this specific kind, he can fulfil the role of being the direct causal grounds of everything else. Therefore, God is a modular omnipotence-trope, and this omnipotence, instead of being a part or constituent of him, is identical to him. Thus, God is nothing more than his omnipotence. He has no constituents causing him to be "made up" or "built" from entities belonging to some other category which, in line with

47 We can also say that God is in some sense a personal agent, as to exercise his omnipotence, he must be an entity that has a rich form of consciousness that enables him to perform a range of actions that are solely limited by logic. Yet, positing God as a trope does not rob him of this personhood, given that he is a trope of a *modular* nature.

48 The mistaken assumption here could be that Plantinga operates within a Platonic substance/attribute framework where universals are indeed transcendent/non-spatiotemporal.

49 This grounding would also include the Son and the Holy Spirit as well.

the DDS, implies that he lacks parts (in the propertied sense) and is, therefore, a simple entity. Plantinga's Property-Identity problem is thus unproblematic once the DDS is re-situated within a trope-theoretic framework. We will now turn our attention to the Many-Properties problem to see if we can reach a similar result as well.

### III. ASPECTING SIMPLICITY

#### *III.1 The Nature of Aspects*

Donald C. Baxter introduced the concept of an "aspect" into the contemporary metaphysical literature in order to provide a coherent conceptual foundation for the notion of *qualitative self-differing* (hereafter, self-differing).<sup>50</sup> Self-differing is the qualitative differing of some entity in one way (or respect) from *itself* in another. To help motivate the existence of aspects within this context, we can consider a case in which an individual is torn about what to do (or how to feel) in a certain situation:

David is an ardent philosophy professor and is also a loving and faithful father of two children, Jacob and Melissa. Now suppose that, firstly, David has an upcoming philosophy conference in which he is the keynote speaker and, due to other work commitments, has not prepared his speech yet. Secondly, suppose that David had previously promised that he would reward his children with a camping trip this upcoming weekend if they achieved A\* grades in their A-Level results. And, thirdly, suppose that Jacob and Melissa have both, in fact, recently achieved A\* grades in their A-Level results.<sup>51</sup>

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50 Baxter first introduced the concept of an aspect to provide clarity to the composition as identity debate in: Donald Baxter, "Identity in the Loose and Popular Sense", *Mind* XCVII (1988): 575–82 and Donald Baxter, "Many-One Identity", *Philosophical Papers* 17 (1988): 193–216. There was then a detachment of the concept from this debate, and a further conceptual development of it in: Donald Baxter, "The Discernibility of Identicals", *Journal of Philosophical Research* 24 (1999): 37–55. Most recently, Baxter has developed the concept of aspect into a fully working, multi-functional theory in: Donald Baxter, "Instantiation as Partial Identity", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 79 (2001): 449–64; Donald Baxter, "Aspects and the Alteration of Temporal Simples", *Manuscripto* 39 (2016): 169–81. Donald Baxter, "Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law", *Noûs* 52 (2018): 900–920 and Donald Baxter, "Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians", in *The Oneness Hypothesis: Beyond the Boundary of Self*, ed. Phillip J. Ivanhoe et al. (Columbia Univ. Press, 2018), 90–105.

51 This example is based on a similar example provided by Baxter, "Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law", 901–2. In motivating aspects, Baxter believes that the clearest cases, as

In this specific scenario, David is in a situation of self-differing as he knows that he has an important keynote speech that he needs to prepare. David being an ardent philosophy professor results in him wanting to fulfil this commitment and thus complete his speech. So, the following proposition would be true: David “*does not want to take his children on a camping trip this upcoming weekend*”. However, having promised his children that he would reward them for their academic achievement, and being a loving and faithful father, he wants to fulfil his promise to them. So, the following conflicting proposition would also be true: David “*wants to take his children on a camping trip this weekend*”. David is torn. He is in conflict with himself. He thus *differs from himself*. David’s struggle is between two *aspects* of him: David insofar as he is a philosopher *versus* David insofar as he is a father. This, and other cases of internal conflict, are cases of self-differing, where the subjects of what differs are the *aspects* of the individual that self-differs. Thus, for the case to be one of *differing*, one aspect must possess a quality that another aspect lacks. And for it to be a case of *self-differing*, then the aspects must be numerically identical with the individual that bares them.<sup>52</sup>

At a semantic level, the aspects in these cases of self-differing, as seen above, are expressed through “nominal qualifiers” such as “insofar as” (or “in some respect” and to a lesser extent “as” and “qua”). Nominal qualifiers serve a special role of referring to aspects — they are specifically present within self-differing cases, where the same entity can be discernible from itself. Furthermore, following Jason Turner,<sup>53</sup> the use of a nominal qualifier in these cases (and other cases like them) can be further precisified *via* formalisation — where one takes “ $\alpha$ ” as a regular term and “ $\varphi(y)$ ” as any formula open in  $y$ , and thus we can introduce a term to refer to aspects, namely an *aspect term*, written as such: “ $\alpha^y[\varphi(y)]$ ”. From this semantic basis, we can now pro-

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in the example in the main text, are those of the internal psychological conflict of a person. However, self-differing, according to Baxter, is not only confined to these psychological conflicts but, as Baxter writes, cases “of being torn give us the experiences by which we know that there are numerically identical, qualitatively differing aspects. We feel them”, Baxter, “Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians”, 104. Thus, at a general level, as we will see, self-differing is present in any case where an entity has a property and lacks it at the same time, in the virtue of playing different roles.

52 Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz’s Law”, 907.

53 Jason Turner, “Donald Baxter’s Composition as Identity”, in *Composition as Identity*, ed. Donald Baxter and Aaron Cotnoir (Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 227.

gress onto the ontological level, which will allow us to further elucidate the nature of an aspect.

At the ontological level, according to Baxter, aspects are difficult to distinguish from other entities.<sup>54</sup> However, we can begin to acquire an understanding of their nature by describing their functional role and the relationship to the individuals that bear them. Primarily, the aspects of an individual function as the particular *ways of being* of that individual. A way of being is a conceptually primitive notion that can be glossed in part by taking it to be the way or manner in which an entity exists. That is, as Jerrod Levinson notes, “an object’s ways of being are the varied fashion in which it goes the complicate business of existing”.<sup>55</sup> Thus, aspects function as the *particular ways in which individuals are*. However, as ways of being of an individual, aspects are *not* qualities (or properties) as they, themselves, possess qualities (or properties) due to their numerical identity to the individuals that bear them.<sup>56</sup> Aspects, however, do not possess all of the qualities that the particular individuals that they are aspects have. Moreover, in a similar manner to their bearers, they are particular entities — rather than universals — through Leibniz’s Law failing to hold for them.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, despite the numerical identity between individuals and their aspects, aspects are *not* “complete individuals”, due to the fact that complete individuals are entities that can exist independently. Instead, according to Baxter, aspects are “incomplete entities” due to them “having fewer properties than it takes to exist on one’s own”.<sup>58</sup> Aspects are thus incomplete in the sense of them being dependent upon the complete individuals

54 As Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz’s Law”, 13, writes, “aspects should not be confused with Casteneda’s guises, or Fine’s qua-objects, or other such attenuated entities”.

55 Jerrod Levinson, “Properties and Related Entities”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 39 (1978): 2. This functional role fulfilled by an aspect is similar to that of “mode”, which has recently been re-introduced into the literature by Jonathan E. Lowe, *The Four-Category Ontology: A Metaphysical Foundation For Natural Science* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 23–24, and John Heil, *The Universe As We Find It* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 3–4. However, the central difference between an aspect and a mode is that the former, and not the latter, is numerically identical with the individual that bears it.

56 In reference to aspects, there will be an interchanging of the term “qualities” with the term “properties”. However, the former term is preferable over the latter term, as it helps us to ward off mistaking the entities that are born by aspects to be further entities that are ontologically different from them.

57 More on this below.

58 Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz’s Law”, 916.

that they are numerically identical to. The nature of a complete individual determines the aspects that they have, in that they depend entirely upon how that individual entity is — once we have the individual, we also have its ways of being.<sup>59</sup> Thirdly, aspects are *not* mereological parts of the individuals that they are aspects of, as, again, they are numerically identical to, rather than a “part” of, these individuals.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, aspects are *not* mental abstractions. That is, even though a complete individual’s aspects are abstract entities (through them failing to exhaust the content or plume that they are aspects of),<sup>61</sup> that can be considered by means of abstraction — where one abstracts a *way* that an individual is — it is important to note, as Baxter writes, that the difference between a complete individual and their aspects is “a less-than-numerical distinction but more than a mere distinction of reason.”<sup>62</sup> Baxter terms this distinction an *aspectival distinction*, which results in the aspects of an individual only ever being two (or more) in a “loose” sense when they are counted based on qualitative distinction. However, in a “strict” sense, when the aspects are counted based on a numerical distinction, they are only ever one. Thus, aspects, as Baxter notes, provide a “complexity to the simple, i.e., a qualitative complexity to the quantitatively simple.”<sup>63</sup>

Taking this explanation of the semantic and ontological features of aspects into account, for further clarity, we can construe the concept of an aspect as such:

(15)(Aspect):

- (a) An aspect is a qualitatively differing, incomplete abstract particular entity that is numerically identical to the complete individual that bears it (and any other aspect possessed by that individual).
- (b) It functions as a particular way that a complete individual is and is determined by that individual’s nature.

59 Joaquim Giannotti, *The Identity Theory of Powers Revised* (2019), 2.

60 Baxter, “The Discernibility of Identicals”, 39.

61 Thus, the abstractness and particularity of an aspect fit neatly with that of a trope’s abstractness and particularity that was noted above.

62 Baxter, “Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians”, 99.

63 Baxter, “Aspects and the Alteration of Temporal Simples”, 178.

- (c) It is expressed through a Nominal Qualifier such as “insofar as”, which, at a precise level, can be captured through the use of an aspect term (such as  $\alpha[\varphi(y)]$ ).
- (d) It is distinguishable through an aspectual distinction, rather than a numerical or conceptual distinction.

From this basic construal of an aspect, we can now return to our example of self-differing and re-construe the notion of self-differing to be that of the qualitative differing of numerically identical *aspects* possessed by an individual.<sup>64</sup> So, for example, “David *insofar as* he is a philosopher” refers to one, numerically identical aspect of David and “David *insofar as* he is a father” refers to another, numerically identical aspect of him. Aspects can thus differ in their properties *without* the resultant differences indicating numerically distinct individuals.<sup>65</sup> More fully, we can apply some aspect terms to our self-differing example, where one aspect term of David would be: David<sup>y</sup>[y is a father], which is a name for “David *insofar as* he is a father”. And another aspect term of David would be David<sup>y</sup>[y is a philosopher] which is a name for “David *insofar as* he is a philosopher”. Thus, re-construing the above situation as such:

(16) David<sup>y</sup>[y is a philosopher] *does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend.*

and

(17)  $\sim$ David<sup>y</sup>[y is a father] *does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend*

It would seem as if one is affirming a contradiction. However, through the use of nominal qualifiers such as “insofar as” (i.e. formally  $\alpha[\varphi(y)]$ ), it removes any explicit contradiction, as the above case does not say that it is David, *unqualified*, that does and does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend. Nor does it say that David, in one respect, does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend. Either of those, as Baxter notes, would indeed be contradictory.<sup>66</sup> Rather it is simply David<sup>y</sup>[y is a father] (i.e. David *insofar as* he is a father) who wants to take his children on a camping trip

64 Baxter, “Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians”, 92.

65 Baxter, “Aspects and the Alteration of Temporal Simples”, 175.

66 Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz’s Law”, 908.



this weekend, and David<sup>y</sup>[y is a philosopher] (i.e. David insofar he is a philosopher) who does not want to take his children on a camping trip this weekend. The negation, as Baxter writes, “is internal, that is, has short-scope relative to the nominal qualifier and so there is no contradiction”.<sup>67</sup> Aspects of David have these qualities, but not David (unqualified). Furthermore, according to Baxter, David<sup>y</sup>[y is a philosopher] and David<sup>y</sup>[y is a father], as aspects of David, are *identical* to him. Thus, as Turner notes, Baxter endorses the following principle:

$$(18) \text{ (Aspect Identity): } \forall x(\exists z(z = xy[\varphi(y)]) \rightarrow x = xy[\varphi(y)]).^{68}$$

In reality, David *is* David<sup>y</sup>[y is a philosopher], and David *is* David<sup>y</sup>[y is a father] — David *insofar* as he is a *particular way* (i.e. as philosopher or father) is still David. Moreover, taking into account the characteristics of the numerical identity relation (i.e. (6)–(8)), noted previously, this will result in:

$$(19) \text{ David}^y[\text{y is a philosopher}] = \text{David}^y[\text{y is a father}]$$

which is that of David’s aspects each being numerically identical to one another. Thus, in this context, the same thing can be abstractedly considered in two ways, and in this discernment, it can differ from itself whilst still being that *same thing*. David is numerically identical to the two above aspects (and a near-infinite amount other aspects), and these aspects are all numerically identical to each other. The same individual can possess *qualitatively differing* aspects that are nevertheless *numerically identical* to the individual that bears them and also with each other.

This all seems to be conceptually coherent; however, a pertinent issue appears to be in sight. That is, Leibniz’s Law seems to be transgressed within an aspectival framework, as the existence of aspects allows for there to be numerically identical entities that do *not* share the same qualities. Any violation of Leibniz’s Law will certainly be problematic for most individuals. However, once this issue is further investigated, we can, in fact, see that there is no violation of Leibniz’s Law within an aspectival framework as, according to Baxter, aspects allow “contradictories to be predicated of the same thing in a way that Leibniz’s Law is *silent* about”.<sup>69</sup> We can begin to notice this “silence” by asking the question of *why* Leibniz’s Law should be taken to apply to *all entities*, with-

67 Baxter, “Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians”, 104.

68 Turner, “Donald Baxter’s Composition as Identity”, 239.

69 Baxter, “Aspects and the Alteration of Temporal Simples”, 172.

out restriction? Baxter sees that the issue might revolve around the frequently raised worry,<sup>70</sup> that a relation that is not characterised by Leibniz's Law is *not* identity. However, Baxter sees that the only reason for this attitude is that the principle seems to express the truth that no entity both possesses and lacks a property — that contradictions cannot exist in reality.<sup>71</sup> Thus, as Baxter writes, “It may seem that the original Indiscernibility of Identicals [Leibniz's Law] is just another way of saying that nothing both has and lacks a property, which is just another way of saying that no contradictions are true”.<sup>72</sup> It thus seems that individuals regularly accord Leibniz's Law (the Indiscernibility of Identicals) the same unassailable status that is regularly given to the Principle of Non-Contradiction.<sup>73</sup> However, following Aristotle, Baxter sees that what is central to the latter principle is solely that of nothing both possessing and lacking a property in the same respect at the same time. Thus, this formulation leaves room to manoeuvre as it opens up the possibility that, as Baxter writes, “something in one respect has a property that it in another respect lacks”.<sup>74</sup> However, that claim is not contradictory, as a contradictory claim here would be for one to say that some individual in one respect possesses a property that in no respect it possesses.<sup>75</sup> Baxter's non-contradictory claim is thus simply that something *in one respect* is numerically identical with itself *in another respect*.<sup>76</sup> Thus,

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70 As noted by Ted Sider, “Parthood”, *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007): 51–91, “Defenders of strong composition as identity must accept this version of Leibniz's Law; to deny it would arouse suspicion that their use of “is identical to” does not really express identity”. Likewise, as noted by Einar Bohn, “Composition as Identity: Pushing Forward”, *Synthese* (2019): 2, square parenthesis added, “[Leibniz's Law] is simply conceptually rock bottom of what I mean by identity. So, violating it amounts to, at best, changing the subject”.

71 Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law”, 908.

72 *Ibid.*, 907.

73 *Ibid.*, 908.

74 Baxter, 105. Baxter does not see any other reason in support of the absolute allegiance to the principle, rejecting Leibniz's reason tied to his view of substance.

75 One might still comment that it is inconceivable to *define* numerical identity without utilising Leibniz's Law, and thus Baxter's approach should be rejected. However, Baxter notes that he is *not* defining identity; but instead is taking it as primitive. That is, for Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law”, 908, for one to be numerically identical is to be one single individual and to be numerically distinct is simply to be two single individuals, and thus it is the connection with cardinality, rather than qualitative sameness, which is essential to numerical identity, not some connection with qualitative sameness.

76 A single individual differs from itself by having two or more aspects. An important question that can be raised here is if the two-ness of the aspect entails a numerical distinctness between

based on this claim, some numerically identical things can qualitatively differ without an entailment of a contradiction. Baxter thus believes that we lack any substantial reason to believe that Leibniz's Law applies to every entity without question, and states that "Leibniz's Law should not be thought of as applying absolutely generally to anything that can be talked about; the argument that it must apply so generally, fails".<sup>77</sup> Rather it is important to consider the *domain of quantification* for Leibniz's Law. That is, according to Baxter, Leibniz's Law solely applies to individuals (i.e. complete/independent entities) and thus does not generalise over to aspects (i.e. incomplete/dependent entities). The non-contradictory internal negation in specific self-differing claims, such as David's above, seems to suggest that Leibniz's Law does not apply to aspects. Thus, there are certain cases in which identicals *are discernible*, yet do not falsify the principle, namely, when an individual possesses aspects that are numerically identical to it (and each other). The same thing cannot be true and false of the same individual, in the same respect, without entailing a contradiction.<sup>78</sup> Yet, phrases such as "David *insofar* as he is a father" refer to aspects, which are incomplete entities, and not the complete individual that the aspect is numerically identical with. Thus, as Baxter notes, it is vital that one is sensitive to "aspectival reference", which refers to aspects and is distinguishable from singular reference, which refers to complete entities.<sup>79</sup> Singular reference, according to Baxter, is not sensitive to the aspectival distinction, whilst the former is. And once we are sensitive to this distinction, we can realise that the domain of quantification for Leibniz's Law, in its original sense, as Baxter writes, "includes all the complete entities, but does not include the incomplete entities numerically identical to some of them".<sup>80</sup> Thus, it follows that Leibniz's Law does not preclude the numerically identical aspects of an individual from being qualitatively different from each other

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the aspects? Baxter, "Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law", 908, believes not, as counting aspects is only a *loose way* of counting individuals — aspects possessed by a single individual are counted as more than one in virtue of their qualitative difference; however, this does not entail a numerical difference that would result in the individual being more than one individual.

77 Baxter, "Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law", 907.

78 Ibid., 908.

79 Ibid., 907.

80 Baxter, 104.

and the individual themselves.<sup>81</sup> Assuming the reality of aspects thus does not lead to a complete denial of Leibniz's Law. Instead, there is only a denial of an *unrestricted* understanding of Leibniz's Law that includes all complete and incomplete entities within its domain. More can indeed be said here. However, for the task at hand, we can conclude that Leibniz's Law does not apply to aspects, and thus it is coherent to posit the existence of qualitatively differing, yet numerically identical aspects, which will help us with our task of dealing with Plantinga's Many-Properties problem. To this task, we now turn.

### III.2 God's Properties as Aspects

As God is numerically identical to an omnipotence-trope, he is a module trope that has the ability to perform any logically possible action. However, instead of this omnipotence-trope *entailing* the further *properties* of omniscience, omnipresence, perfect freedom and perfect goodness (as the weak DDS account posits), we can now "convert" these properties into *aspects*, which will also result in the entailment relation being converted into a relation of numerical identity. So, in mapping out this conversion process, we can illustrate this as such:

*Properties*  $\xrightarrow{\text{Aspects conversion}}$  *Aspects*    *Entailment*  $\xrightarrow{\text{Relation conversion}}$  *Identity*

Figure 1.5 Aspectival and Relation Conversions

Given these conversions, the additional properties that were previously taken to be entailed by the property of omnipotence are now to be construed in an *aspectival* manner. We can begin to unpack this by focusing on the functional role of the "aspects of omnipotence" and the relationship that they have to the omnipotence-trope, which allows us to say that they are *not* properties, complete entities, or mereological parts. Rather, they are incomplete abstract particular entities that are numerically identical to a specific complete individual and function as its ways of being. More fully, each of the aspects of omnipotence is *numerically identical* to the omnipotence-trope, yet they do not

81 Baxter, "Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz's Law", 909, sees Leibniz's Law as being closely related to the further principle that co-referential terms are substitutable *salva veritate*. However, he notes that this specific principle concerns only singular reference, and thus the substitution of expressions only refers to single individuals. One would thus need to provide an argument for why it should be generalised to aspects.

possess the same characteristics as it — they are *not* the ability to perform any logically possible action. Lacking this characteristic, the aspects of omnipotence are thus *incomplete entities*, in that they are dependent on the omnipotence-trope, which exists as a *complete entity* (i.e. an independently existing entity). These aspects of omnipotence do not exhaust the content or plime that they are aspects of (i.e. they each do not exhaust the omnipotence-trope), and they each function as *ways* that the omnipotence trope exists, which we can consider through a process of abstraction. This aspectival construal of the divine properties, thus allows us to re-define each of the properties as such:

Properties	Properties Definition	Aspects	Aspects Definition
Omniscience	Knowing of all true propositions and believing no false proposition	<u>Aspect of Omnipotence:</u> Omniscience-Aspect <u>Aspect Term:</u> Omnipotence <sup>y</sup> [y is knowledge]	Omnipotence <i>insofar as</i> it is the ability to know of all true propositions and believing no false proposition (i.e. be omniscient).
Omnipresence	Being cognizant of, and causally active at, every point of space.	<u>Aspect of Omnipotence:</u> Omnipresence-Aspect <u>Aspect Term:</u> Omnipotence <sup>y</sup> [y is presence]	Omnipotence <i>insofar as</i> it is the ability to be cognizant of, and causally active at, every point of space (i.e. be omnipresent).
Perfect Freedom	Having no non-rational causal influence determining one's choices	<u>Aspect of Omnipotence:</u> Freedom-Aspect <u>Aspect Term:</u> Omnipotence <sup>y</sup> [y is freedom]	Omnipotence <i>insofar as</i> it is the ability to have no non-rational causal influence determining one's choices (i.e. be perfectly free).

Properties	Properties Definition	Aspects	Aspects Definition
Perfect Goodness	Performing the best action/kind of action, if there is one, many good actions and no bad actions	<u>Aspect of Omnipotence:</u> Goodness-Aspect <u>Aspect Term:</u> Omnipotence <sup>y</sup> [y is goodness]	Omnipotence <i>in-sofar as</i> it is the ability to perform the best action/ kind of action (if there is one), many good actions and no bad actions (i.e. be perfectly good).

Table 1.2 Aspects Conversion

At a specific level, these aspects of omnipotence are focused on the different *particular ways* in which the omnipotence-trope is. That is, by this module trope having (or, more specifically, being) the singular-character of omnipotence, it would exist in a particular manner and have certain limitless abilities that enable it to fulfil different roles. This functional role fulfilled by the omnipotence-trope allows one to establish an aspectival distinction that takes these ways to be aspects of this specific trope. Therefore, as was seen with our previous example, we have a case of self-differing here. The subjects of this differing would be the *aspects* of the omnipotence-trope, with each aspect possessing a quality that each of the other aspects lacks.<sup>82</sup> For instance, focusing on the omniscient-aspect and the freedom-aspect, we have the following examples:

<sup>82</sup> An issue could be raised here concerning the possession of qualities by the aspects of omnipotence robbing the omnipotence-trope of its property-simplicity. More precisely, one could say that, for example, by the omniscience-aspect having a certain quality, it would result in the omnipotence also having that quality and thus not being simple. However, against this, following Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz’s Law”, 910, we can hold to the *secundum quid ad simpliciter* inference being blocked within an aspectival context, as it doesn’t follow from the fact that an aspect of an individual has a certain quality that the individual also has that quality. As Baxter, “Self-Differing, Aspects, and Leibniz’s Law”, 910, writes “‘Socrates insofar as he is wise is admirable’ does not entail ‘Socrates is wise’ He may be wise only to a very limited extent and mostly foolish, so that ‘Socrates is not wise’ is what is true”. Similarly, in our theistic context, “Omnipotence (unqualified)” does not have the quality and/or ability to know of all true propositions and believe no false proposition (and the other qualities that are entailed by this such as that of knowing what happened in New York on January 1st 2 A.D.), as it solely has the singular character of *being the ability to perform any logically possible action*.

(20) Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is knowledge] *enables its bearer to know whether it snowed in New York on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2 A.D.*

(21) ~Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is freedom] *enables its bearer to know whether it snowed in New York on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2 A.D.*

And, for the omnipresent-aspect and the goodness-aspect, we also have the following examples:

(22) Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is presence] *enables its bearer to be cognizant of, and causally active at, the Galactic Center.*

(23) ~Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is goodness] *enables its bearer to be cognizant of, and causally active at, the Galactic Center.*

In these examples, we do not have a case of internal conflict, as in the example of David above; however, it is a case of *differing*, by there being a qualitative difference between the aspects of the omnipotence-trope. And, importantly, it is a case of *self-differing*, as the aspects are numerically identical to the omnipotence-trope itself. This is certainly the case, as from the position that was reached in the previous section of God being numerically identical to the omnipotence-trope:

(24) God = Omnipotence.

we can now, within this aspectival framework, proceed to posit a numerical identity between the omnipotence-trope and the various aspects of omnipotence:

(25) Omnipotence = Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is knowledge]; Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is presence]; Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is freedom]; Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is goodness].

Omnipotence *insofar* as it is a certain way (e.g. an omniscient way, an omnipresent way etc.) is *still* Omnipotence, which is still, at the bottom level, God.

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So, the statement “Omnipotence (unqualified) *is not the ability to know of all true propositions and believing no false proposition*” is what is true, and thus, instead, it is “Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is knowledge] that has this quality and/or ability”, which shows that aspects of an individual can have qualities which the (unqualified) individual itself does not have. The omnipotence-trope can thus still be property-simple as its aspects are the bearers of the various qualities normally attributed to it and not itself.

Yet, due to the formal characteristics of the numerical identity relation (i.e. (6)–(8)), each of the aspects of omnipotence is also *numerically identical* to each of the other aspects:

(26) Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is knowledge] = Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is presence],

(27) Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is presence] = Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is freedom],

(28) Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is freedom] = Omnipotence<sup>y</sup>[y is goodness].

Notably, however, there is no Leibniz’s Law failure here as this law solely applies to complete individuals and thus does not generalise over to these aspects of omnipotence, which exist as incomplete/dependent entities. Thus, within an aspectual context, the same thing: the omnipotence-trope, which is numerically identical to God, is discerned in multiple ways without absurdity. And in this discernment, it differs from itself, whilst still being that *same thing*. More specifically, within this aspectual framework, there is one *property\**, the omnipotence-trope, that is *identical* to multiple aspects, which are, in turn, identical to one another. In short: God *is* the omnipotence-trope, the omnipotence-trope *is* the qualitatively differing omnipotence-aspects, and the qualitatively differing omnipotence-aspects *are* one another. The possession of “many properties” by God is thus, in fact, the possession of many qualitatively differing, yet numerically identical aspects. The aspects of omnipotence provide a certain “complexity to the simple” — a qualitative complexity to the quantitatively simple omnipotence-trope which God *is*. Thus, by utilising an aspectual distinction here, in a “loose” sense, focused on qualitative distinctiveness, we can indeed count a multiplicity of aspects within God. Yet, in a strict sense, focused on numerical distinctiveness, there is solely one self-same *property\**, the omnipotence-trope, which is *differently considered*. We can now illustrate the position reached here as such (with the double-headed arrows representing an identity relation):



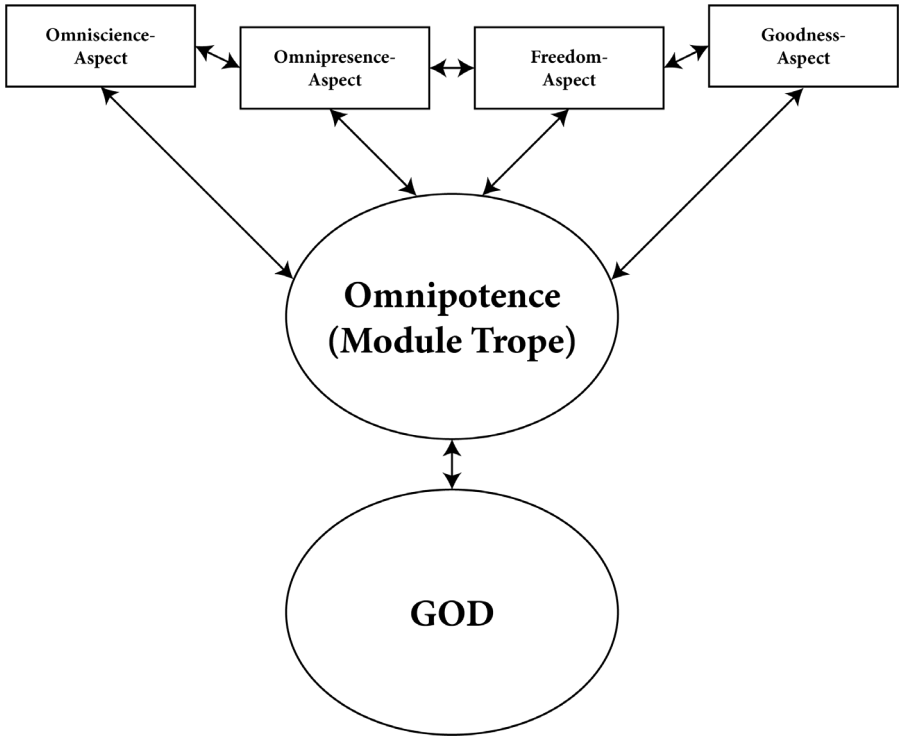


Figure 1.6 Aspectival Simplicity

Assuming the contemporary metaphysical conception of parthood introduced above, if we conceive of God’s attributes as aspects, rather than as properties, we thus have the case of each of the divine qualities *not* being a proper part of God, as they are each not portions *distinct* from God. Rather each of these qualities is numerically identical to God himself—the aspects of omnipotence are at the “same mereological level” as God. Given this, the aspects of omnipotence are each *improper* parts of God (where “g” stands for God):

$$(29) (\text{Divine Simplicity Parthood}): Pxg \wedge x = g.$$

The aspectival analysis provided by the Aspectival Account thus allows the doctrine to fit with the Neo-Classical Theistic position, which conceives of God’s nature as being composed of parts, as we can take each of the aspects of om-

nipotence to be literal parts of God. However, in line with the Classical Theistic conception of God (and unlike Swinburne’s “harmonisation account”), it can secure the sovereignty-aseity intuition, as God is not composed of proper parts which he is dependent upon. Instead, the parts posited here are improper parts, which are simply just *God himself*. God, within this account, thus remains simple, through lacking proper parts, but has a form of “qualitative complexity”, through possessing qualitatively differing improper parts.

From the position explicated in detail above, we can now respond to Plantinga’s Many Properties problem as such: omnipotence is *one property\**; however, God’s omniscience, omnipresence, perfect freedom and perfect goodness are not additional properties of God; rather, they are *aspects* of this one property\*. However, there is no entailment relation between the property\* of omnipotence and the aspects of omnipotence, as there is no numerical distinction between omnipotence and its aspects. Instead, there is a strict identity, with a sole *qualitative* distinction between them. Yet, this lack of a numerical distinction between omnipotence and its aspects does not result in a negation of God’s multiple “character”, as the omnipotence-trope has a *multiplicity* of qualitatively differing aspects that ground this multiform character. Plantinga’s Many Properties problem is thus unproblematic once we take each of the divine properties to be aspects of omnipotence — one can still attribute multiple qualities to God even though there is, in a strict sense, solely one property\* within the divine life.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the DDS has been consistently explicated through proposing a moderate formulation of the doctrine, which utilises the metaphysical concept of a “trope” and an “aspect”. The utilisation of these metaphysical concepts allowed us to re-construe the nature of God *as* a module trope with qualitatively differing, yet numerically identical, aspects. This proposal thus takes God to be identical to the one omnipotence-trope — which is a property\* (i.e. a module trope). And as the omnipotence-trope has aspects, it is identical to these aspects, which solely qualitatively differ. Thus, God *is* a property\* and the qualities of God, construed as aspects, are indeed identical as well. However, *contra* Plantinga, by God and his qualities being identical in the manner detailed above, this does not lead to the Property-Identity and Many Properties problems. God, construed in this aspectival way, is unproblematically simple.

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