CHAPTER 10

The Separation of Ground and Mind

Presupposes: the structural dependence of content on contrast (Ch. 2); equality as the grounding terminus (Ch. 4); the zero-complexity constraint (Ch. 6); the exhibitive closure of the grid of diffs (Ch. 7, §4.1); the two infinities (Ch. 8).

Establishes: the separation of explanatory ground from intelligent agent; the ground/mind conflation in the prime mover tradition and its contemporary defences; the ecumenical result — a ground without mind. One formulation carries a grain condition, stated in note 1; grades are given there and in the Premise Register.

In brief. The chain of explanation may terminate. Why must it terminate in a mind? Demanding that the final cause of motion be coloured would be an obvious mistake — the terminus of a causal chain needs no chromatic properties. This chapter argues that demanding the terminus be *intelligent* has the same logical structure. The prime mover tradition, from Aristotle through Aquinas to Leibniz, fuses two separable demands: an explanatory ground (where grounding is structurally complete) and an intelligent agent (a being that knows, wills, intends). At the absolutely simple terminus the two cannot be satisfied together, and the tradition's subtlest instrument — the identity thesis, on which God's knowledge *is* God's power *is* God — collapses the wrong distinction: it merges the attributes with each other, but knowing P still differs from not knowing P, and that distinction no simplicity doctrine can afford.

---

1 Introduction

Creation is not the only route to God. Chapter 9 showed that creation ex nihilo is structurally incoherent, while the theological tradition has a second path; it is in many ways the more formidable one. The prime mover tradition, from Aristotle through Aquinas to Leibniz, holds that the chain of explanation terminates in a being that is both the explanatory ground of all else and a maximally intelligent agent. The doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) is the tradition's most sophisticated attempt to show that the conjunction is coherent: God is absolutely simple — identical with his nature, his attributes identical with one

another and with him — and yet maximally knowing, willing, and intentional.

This chapter argues that the tradition conflates two demands that are logically separable: the demand for an explanatory ground, a terminus at which the hierarchy of reasons is structurally complete, and the demand for an intelligent agent, a being possessed of knowledge, will, and intention. A structural analysis shows these demands are jointly unsatisfiable at the terminus.

The chapter presents the structural argument (§2), tests it against three historical case studies — Aristotle, Aquinas, and Leibniz, each of whom exhibits the conflation at a different structural point (§3) — and engages six contemporary defence strategies developed within the divine simplicity tradition (§4). The diagnostic question (§3) is whether the conjunction is coherent; the therapeutic question (§4) is whether the proposed solutions work.

The engagement is philosophical rather than purely exegetical, since the chapter reads each figure's strongest position as charitably as it can and shows where the conjunction encounters a tension. The question is not what each figure definitively meant but whether the conjunction each affirms, maximal simplicity with maximal intelligence, is structurally coherent.

By "cognitive predicates" the chapter means states involving determination, awareness, intentionality, or contentful self-relation, so the argument does not depend on discursive inference, linguistic thought, or temporal succession. A non-discursive, non-linguistic, atemporal cognition that nonetheless has determinate content — that is of something rather than of nothing, that is awareness of this rather than of that — is still a cognitive state requiring distinction. The constraint targets determination as such rather than any particular mode of cognition.

2 The Structural Argument

2.1 The terminus is zero complexity

Chapter 4 established that equality is the unique foreclosing terminus of grounding: a state of zero complexity at which the grounding relation reaches a unilateral boundary. A brute diverse terminus remains available, though it is not foreclosed and retains internal distinction. The present chapter takes the foreclosing terminus — the absolutely simple ground the prime mover tradition identifies with God — as its subject, and derives a local consequence: it has no internal distinction.

A clarification about scope. The target is the prime mover tradition's God: an absolutely simple ground, identified with the foreclosing terminus. A theist who has already given up simplicity — Plantinga (1980), Swinburne, the open theists — is not the target and loses no result here; she inherits the structured ground the chapter leaves standing (§6) and the cost Chapter 24 (§4.1) attaches to it. Against the tradition's own reading, on which actus purus is the maximum of determination, the argument uses Chapter 7's exhibitive closure, which a Thomist may refuse for intellect while granting it for sense, and is conditional on it to that extent. Against that target, if the grounding hierarchy terminates at the simple terminus, then it is zero complexity, and therefore it cannot bear cognitive predicates.

The argument does not require that the hierarchy terminates. If it does not, so that diversity is infinite, then the tradition's demand for a simple intelligent ground is not met for a different reason: there is no terminus at all. The simple intelligent ground the tradition requires is therefore unavailable on either branch — on the termination branch the simple terminus is unintelligent, and on the non-termination branch there is no terminus. This leaves untouched a theism whose ground is internally complex rather than simple, and so could bear cognition. Such a ground is not the simple God of this tradition, and whether it can be the necessary creator theism needs is taken up in Chapter 11.

2.2 Cognition requires determination

Chapter 6 (§2.2) established the zero-complexity constraint: no property whose obtaining constitutively requires at least one distinction can characterise a state with none. It was confirmed through the equalisation principle, on which the complete removal of distinctions within a modality produces not a minimal instance of its content but its structural boundary. Cognition — in the broadest sense encompassing knowledge, will, intention, awareness, and contentful self-relation — requires determination: being one way rather than another. This holds whether the cognition is discursive, non-discursive, temporal, atemporal, linguistic, or non-linguistic.

The bridge between the grounding terminus and the constraint is the structural dependence thesis (Chapter 2): any determinate content is a diff, individuated by contrast with at least one alternative, a result corroborated across inferentialist (Brandom, 1994), structuralist (Saussure, 1916/1959), and representationalist (Fodor, 1987) theories of content (Chapter 2, §2.2). Its application to cognition is direct: any cognitive state has content, any content requires contrast, a state without contrast has no content, and a state without content has no cognition.

2.3 The incompatibility

The conjunction yields the incompatibility; it can be stated in full. The demand for a ground is satisfied by a state at which further grounding is structurally foreclosed: a state whose character makes the question “what grounds this?” not merely unanswered but structurally ill-formed (Chapter 4, §5.2). This is the profile of zero complexity. The demand for intelligence is satisfied by a state with determinate cognitive content: a state that knows, wills, or intends something in particular. This is the profile of a state within diversity.

The two demands therefore pull in opposite directions, since grounding completeness requires the absence of distinctions while cognitive capacity requires their presence. The prime mover tradition’s central claim, that the ground of all things is a maximally intelligent being, is the claim that both demands are satisfied simultaneously. The

tradition assumes they are jointly satisfiable, and argues for the assumption through the bridge-arguments §3.2 meets. The argument gives strong reason to think they are not.

A finding that will recur throughout the chapter should be stated here. The distinction the constraint identifies is *intra-attribute*, not inter-attribute. The inter-attribute distinction is between one divine attribute and another (e.g., God's knowledge vs. God's power). The intra-attribute distinction is within any single attribute: knowing P requires the determination of knowing P rather than not knowing P. The identity thesis, which the divine simplicity tradition deploys to collapse inter-attribute distinctions, does not and cannot collapse intra-attribute distinctions. Collapsing the first does not eliminate the second. This finding is the recurring pattern that every reconciliation strategy encounters in different forms.

Relation to the modal collapse argument. The instrument's position in the contemporary debate should also be fixed here, because the argument that has dominated recent discussion of simplicity is a different one. The modal collapse argument (Mullins, 2013) charges that DDS, by identifying God with the one divine act, renders everything God does necessary and so collapses modality. Its standard formulation has been shown invalid without further premises (Tomaszewski, 2019), and the ensuing exchange concerns which auxiliary premises can be defended (Schmid, 2022).

The intra-attribute argument runs on a different axis and inherits none of that exposure, since it concerns what any cognitive state must contain. It would hold in a world where the modal collapse argument failed entirely: a necessarily existing, freely creating simple God who knew all truths would still require the intra-attribute distinctions the constraint targets. Conversely, no repair that saves DDS from modal collapse — refining the divine act's modal status, separating God's essence from his contingent predications — touches the requirement that a knowing of P differ in the knower from a knowing of Q. The two arguments are independent, and the independence is an advantage: the recent literature's most contested ground can be conceded entirely without loss to the present critique.

The three case studies are not interchangeable. Aristotle identifies the terminus with self-contemplation: the conflation of actuality with cognition. Aquinas identifies it with a being whose intellect is identical with its essence: the conflation of simplicity with knowledge. Leibniz identifies it with a necessary being that is maximally perfect: the conflation of explanatory completeness with intelligence. Each reveals the conflation at a different structural point, and each requires a distinct response.

3 Three Case Studies

3.1 Aristotle: actuality and self-contemplation

Aristotle argues that an eternal, unchanging, immaterial substance is the final cause of all motion (*Physics* VIII; *Metaphysics* XII). This substance is pure actuality (energeia): no potentiality, no unactualised capacity, its activity self-contemplation — thought thinking itself (noesis noeseos). The engagement targets the conjunction: can a being be both purely actual and self-contemplating in full?

Three concepts distinguished. Three concepts must be distinguished that are often run together.

Pure actuality is the absence of unactualised potentials. A state of zero complexity satisfies this condition, since it has no potentials at all, actualised or otherwise, because potentials require distinguishable states and zero complexity has none. The satisfaction is not trivial; it is a real structural match between the Aristotelian concept and the characterisation of the terminus developed in Chapter 4.

Self-identity is the state's being identical with itself, trivially satisfied by any state, including zero complexity. A stone satisfies it. An empty room satisfies it. Self-contemplation is a cognitive activity: the state thinks itself, is aware of itself, knows itself. This requires determination, since the contemplation has content, the self, and content is a diff. Self-identity is therefore a formal property that everything has, while self-contemplation is a cognitive achievement requiring at least one distinction. That distinction may fall between the contemplation and

what is contemplated, or between the determinate character of the contemplation and any alternative character, or at minimum between a state that has the character of thought and a state that does not.

The unmoved mover faces a dilemma. If its activity is self-contemplation, a determinate cognitive state, then it has at least one internal distinction, so it is within diversity and cannot be the structurally simple terminus. If its activity is merely self-identity, the bare logical relation of a thing to itself, then it is zero complexity while not being engaged in thought, since a stone is self-identical and self-identity is not cognition.

The dilemma is sharp because the horns exhaust the options. Either the unmoved mover's activity adds something to bare self-identity — some character, some way it is rather than another — or it does not. If it adds something, it introduces a distinction. If it adds nothing, it is self-identity under another name.

An Aristotelian will respond that noesis noeseos is a unique form of activity that does not involve the subject-object distinction of ordinary thought. Broadie (1993) argues that the unmoved mover's thought is not about a separate object but is the very act of being fully actualised. Kosman (2000) presses this further, reading the self-thinking as a mode of being-at-work identical with its own object. Beere (2009) develops the concept with particular care, rejecting both "actuality" and "activity" as renderings of energeia in favour of an analogical conception on which the term picks out a single condition rather than two. This is the strongest version of the "unique activity" reply. Menn (n.d.) adds that the structure of *Metaphysics* XII is designed to show that the highest being must be a nous, because intellect is the only substance that can be both fully actual and eternal.

Grant Broadie, Kosman, and Beere everything: the mover's thinking is a single, complete being-at-work, identical with itself, and no relation between a subject and a separate object. The intra-attribute question survives the grant, because it never asked for two relata; it asks what the act is of. Either the thinking is of something determinate, in which case that determinate content is a distinction the act carries, as the

containment fork of §3.2 says of any content contained; or it is of no determinate content, in which case "thinking" names no thinking and the reading has surrendered the predicate it set out to keep. The identity of act and object removes the relation between two things; it does not remove the content, and content is the only distinction the argument needs.

The response engages the identification at its strongest. Even granting that intellect is the only substance that can be purely actual among substances that have internal structure, the question remains whether a state of zero complexity can be an intellect. The structural question is not whether divine thought resembles human thought but whether the activity has determinate character at all.

If noesis noeseos is determinate — if the activity has some character, however unlike human thought — then that character is a way of being rather than another, so at least one distinction is present. If it is not determinate, then calling it "thought" is misleading, since a state with no determinate character is not a mysterious or elevated form of cognition; it is indistinguishable from the absence of cognition. Self-identity plus determinacy is self-contemplation. Self-identity without determinacy is not a stone, since a stone is richly determinate, but the terminus under a flattering name. The Aristotelian who insists that the unmoved mover's activity is sui generis and beyond ordinary classification has conceded that it cannot be shown to be determinate, and a state that cannot be shown to be determinate cannot be shown to be cognitive.

The proposal: pure actuality and intelligence come apart at the terminus. Pure actuality is the absence of unactualised potentials, which zero complexity satisfies. Intelligence is the presence of determinate cognitive structure, which zero complexity excludes.

Aristotle assumed that the most actual being must also be the most intelligent, because he treated intellection as the highest form of actuality (*Metaphysics* XII.7, 1072b14–30). Within the domain of diversity, among beings that have internal structure, this may be correct. The error is the extrapolation: from "within diversity, the simplest

explanation is the most powerful" to "at the limit of simplicity, the most powerful intelligence resides". The extrapolation fails because the limit of simplicity is the boundary at which diversity's conditions, including the conditions for intelligence, are absent.

3.2 Aquinas: simplicity and the identity thesis

Aquinas argues that the chain of efficient causes terminates in a being that is pure act, with no potentiality and no composition of act and potency (Aquinas, 1947b, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 3). This being is absolutely simple and omniscient, since God's intellect is identical with his essence. Feser (2009, 2017) defends the Thomistic arguments as sound.

The argument does not dispute that the chain, if it terminates, has a terminus. It disputes the identification of that terminus with an intelligent being. Aquinas's Five Ways may establish that a terminus exists without establishing that it is intelligent, since the inference from "terminus exists" to "terminus is God" requires the additional premise that the terminus bears cognitive predicates, while the structural argument of §2 provides reasons to think this premise is false.

This identifies the step at which the ground/mind conflation enters the Thomistic system. Aquinas argues that the terminus must be pure act, then identifies pure act with God, then attributes to God the full panoply of cognitive and moral properties. The first step, terminus equals pure act, is compatible with the present analysis. The third step, God has cognitive properties, is compatible with a being within diversity. The problematic step is the second: the identification of pure act, a state the zero-complexity constraint characterises as without determination, with a cognitive agent.

The intra-attribute distinction. The identity thesis — God's intellect is identical with his essence — is the tradition's central strategy for reconciling simplicity with intelligence. Brower (2008) develops it as a property-identity account, on which God's attributes are not distinct properties inhering in a common subject but identical with one another and with God himself.

The zero-complexity constraint engages the thesis at a specific point, since it targets the distinctions required within intellection for intellection to obtain rather than the distinctions between intellection and other attributes. The identity thesis collapses the inter-attribute distinction: A = B = God's essence. The constraint does not target that distinction and is unaffected by its collapse.

The intra-attribute distinction the identity thesis does not collapse. That distinction falls within a single attribute, between the attribute's obtaining in one determinate way rather than another: knowing P rather than not knowing P. Even if knowledge and power are identical with the essence, the essence's being in a state of knowing P must still be distinguishable from its not being in that state, or else "God knows P" has no content.

The strongest Thomist response is that divine knowing is not composed, not sequential, and not representational in a creaturely way, and therefore does not require the distinctions the argument assumes. Feser (2017) presses this, holding that the objector imports creaturely models of cognition into the divine case.

The answer is that the argument is not about sequence, composition, or discursive inference. It is about the minimal structural conditions for a state to count as knowing anything at all. First, the state has determinate content: it is a knowing of P rather than a knowing of nothing. Second, the content is a determination: the state is one way rather than another. Third, a determination is a contrast: being this way rather than that way requires at least one distinction. These conditions presuppose only that knowing is a determinate state. A knowing that is no way at all is not a mysterious or elevated form of knowing; it is the absence of knowing.

Feser (2017) argues further that God's pure actuality is the fullest realisation of being: not a diminished state but the maximal one. Pure actuality is indeed maximal in one respect, while maximality in one respect does not entail maximality in all, since zero complexity is maximal in its simplicity and minimal in its cognitive capacity. The tradition assumes these converge, and the argument gives strong reason

to think they diverge — the same extrapolation error diagnosed for Aristotle (§3.1), with the same historical explanation: within diversity, simplicity and intelligence often do converge, so the error is extending the convergence to diversity's boundary.

The two bridge-arguments. A concession the chapter's vocabulary has so far withheld must be entered here, where Aquinas's own version of it lives: the tradition does not merely assume that the terminus is intelligent, since it argues it, and its two bridge-arguments must be met rather than diagnosed.

The first is the argument from immateriality (ST I, q. 14, a. 1). Knowers differ from non-knowers in that a knower can possess the form of another thing in addition to its own; what confines a thing to its own form is matter; therefore immateriality is the mark of cognition, and the wholly immaterial terminus is maximally cognitive. The second is the argument from the eminent containment of forms, carried into the contemporary literature by Feser's (2017) proofs. Nothing gives what it in no way has, so the cause of all things must in some way contain the forms of all its effects; and to contain the forms of other things immaterially is just what it is to be an intellect. Whatever their fate, these are arguments from the ground's nature to its intelligence, so the verdicts of conflation and non sequitur are earned only after they are down.

Both fall to the intra-attribute instrument, and the containment argument falls by a fork that yields a result Chapter 8 has been waiting for. Ask whether a contained form is a determinate content.

If it is — the form of horse rather than the form of oak — then each containment is a determination, containments of distinct forms are distinct determinations, and the container bears internal distinctions, so the constraint bites at the level of containment itself, before any question of knowledge arises.

If it is not — if the containments are one undifferentiated adequacy — then the container contains the form of horse in no way that differs from its containing the form of oak, so "contains the forms of all things"

says nothing form-specific, and the bridge to intellect, which is form-specific possession if it is anything, collapses.

The fork runs unchanged at the level of power: a power adequate to producing horses is a determination distinct from a power adequate to producing oaks, or it is a power adequate to nothing in particular. The general result may therefore be stated as a derived result — "theorem" only relative to the first horn's reading of containment, on which a power adequate to one specific kind of effect is a determination in the power's bearer; the Thomist doctrine of virtual containment refuses that reading, locating the difference in the effects alone; the fork stands at the cost of the refusal (Register, note w): grounding many perfections eminently requires either internal differentiation or the surrender of the eminence claim's determinate content. This discharges the premise Chapter 8 (§5) entered as a debt.

The virtual distinction, in full. The refusal deserves its strongest statement, since it is the one move on which the tradition's strong simplicity rests. The doctrine holds that the divine attributes, with the forms of creatures the divine essence contains, are distinct with a distinction of reason that has a foundation in the thing: one in God, many in our conceiving, the many concepts answering to one reality too eminent for any single creaturely concept to capture (Aquinas, 1947b, ST I, q. 13, a. 4; Aquinas, 1952, De potentia, q. 7, a. 6). Containment is virtual, in virtute: the essence contains the form of horse as a cause contains its effect, by a power adequate to producing it, with the difference between horse and oak lying in the effects and in their recipients and in no way in the power (Dolezal, 2011; Feser, 2017). The tradition's images are the sun, whose one light produces heat in one thing and colour in another (ST I, q. 4, a. 2), and the centre of a circle, whose one position grounds the equality of every radius. On this reading the fork's first horn is refused outright: a form may be contained without being a distinction in its container, so the many true predications have one foundation; the foundation carries no internal difference answering to their difference.

The images fail the doctrine before the argument reaches it, because each grounds many relations in a featured ground. The centre grounds

equal radii through its position, a determination relative to the circle; the light of the sun is structured through and through, its differing effects tracking differences the light already carries. Both are cases of one determination grounding many relations. The doctrine needs a case of none grounding many; the tradition supplies no such case, since every example it offers is drawn from within diversity.

The foundation in the thing is then the point at issue; the determination dilemma (Chapter 2, §2.4) reaches it. A foundation is a way the thing is. If the essence is such that "knows the horse" applies to it and such that "knows the oak" applies to it, with both applications holding in virtue of one feature, ask what distinguishes them. The tradition answers: the creatures. That answer is the second horn taken under a name. If the difference between the knowings lies wholly in the horse and the oak, then in God there is no knowing of the horse as distinct from a knowing of the oak; the content-level formulation of §4.2 says what follows: "knows P" and "knows Q" are distinct contents, so a knowing that carries no difference answering to theirs carries neither; "knows all things" has been emptied while the sentence is kept. Run at the level of power the result is the same (above): a power that yields horses here and oaks there, with the difference located in the recipients alone, contributes no form-specific content of its own, so the maxim that whatever is received is received after the manner of the receiver is doing the work the ground was supposed to do.

What the doctrine buys and what it costs can then be stated at their size. It buys the sentence: the attributes and the forms are predicated of one simple reality without contradiction, because the contradiction has been moved into the concepts, where distinctions of reason may multiply without limit. It costs the content: every predication whose difference from every other lies outside God has, in God, one and the same foundation, so the foundation grounds them all and none of them in particular. Held with its foundation in the thing, the distinction is a difference in the thing and the first horn has it — the maximal-determinacy reading met at §5.1, a structured reality, the sustainer of Chapter 24, with simplicity reduced to the absence of composition among determinations that are really there. Held without one, it is the

second horn; the eminence claim keeps its words. There is no third position for the virtual distinction to occupy, because the determination dilemma leaves a contrast or no contrast and the doctrine was built to be neither. A Thomist may still refuse the fork's first horn by name; what the refusal cannot claim is a ground both featureless and form-specific; the Register's note w records the refusal at that cost.

The immateriality argument then falls to one observation: immateriality removes matter, and the constraint was never about matter, since it targets determination as such (§1). An immaterial possession of the form of horse is still the possession of this form rather than that — a determination, and therefore a distinction. Removing matter removes one kind of composition without removing the contrast that makes the possessed form the form it is.

3.3 Leibniz: explanatory completeness and intelligence

Leibniz (1714/1989a, 1714/1989b) argues that the chain of contingent facts requires a necessary being as its sufficient reason, and that this necessary being is maximally perfect: omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent. The inference from explanatory completeness to maximal perfection is the clearest instance of the ground/mind conflation in the Western tradition.

The PSR requires that every contingent fact have a sufficient reason: an explanatory ground. An explanatory ground need not be an intelligent agent, since it need only be a condition in virtue of which the fact obtains. Equality, as the structural boundary of the grounding hierarchy (Chapter 4, §5), is such a condition: the point at which further grounding is structurally impossible. That structural impossibility is itself a form of explanatory completeness. The PSR's demand is therefore met as far as any account can meet it, leaving the one structureless residue Chapter 5 (§2.5) owns, and what meets it is the limit in the structure of grounding, with no intelligent agent choosing that things be this way.

The separation of these two demands, for a ground and for a mind, is the chapter's most general contribution. It applies to any philosopher

who assumes that the terminus of explanation must be a cognitive agent. It can be made vivid by analogy: the demand that the final cause of motion be coloured would be obviously unwarranted, since the terminus of the causal chain need not have chromatic properties. The conjunction of "explanatory ground" with "intelligent agent" has the same logical structure.

Pruss (2006) argues that the necessary being must have libertarian free will, the capacity to choose among alternatives, because only a free agent can serve as the sufficient reason for a contingent world. The constraint provides a direct response. Libertarian free will requires multiple distinctions: between the alternatives, between the agent and its act, and between the state before the choice and the state after it, even if the "before" and "after" are understood atemporally. At zero complexity none obtains. Even an atemporal choice requires the distinction between the chosen and the unchosen.

Leibniz's system further requires that the necessary being select the best possible world. That selection presupposes a value-ranking of possible worlds, requiring distinctions between the world that is best, the worlds that are worse, and the evaluative standard. Maximal perfection therefore requires maximal determination, and zero complexity has none.

Two further placements complete the case. Oppy (2009) sorts cosmological arguments into categories and argues that each fails for reasons general to its type. The zero-complexity constraint identifies one such reason: the gap between establishing a necessary being and establishing a being with specific attributes. Leftow (2012) develops divine necessity from divine simplicity, inadvertently confirming the analysis, since if divine necessity is grounded in simplicity, and simplicity at the terminus is zero complexity, the constraint applies to the necessary being. The Leibniz case study therefore contributes a specific finding: the inference from "necessary being" to "intelligent being" is a non sequitur once the bridge-arguments are down (§3.2). Explanatory completeness is a structural property of the grounding hierarchy; intelligence is a cognitive property requiring determination; and the PSR can be satisfied without intelligence.

The divine simplicity tradition has developed sophisticated strategies for reconciling absolute simplicity with intelligence: Stump and Kretzmann's (1985) defence, which set the terms of the contemporary debate; Brower's (2008) property-identity account; Dolezal's (2011) supereminent simplicity; Bergmann and Brower's (2006) truthmaker simplicity, extended by Pawl (2019); Leftow's (2006) modal simplicity; Stump's (2010) second-person knowledge; and the Eastern Orthodox essence/energies distinction (Bradshaw, 2004). Feser (2014) situates the doctrine within Scholastic metaphysics.

Vallicella's (2019) survey sets out the doctrine's central motivation, simplicity as a response to the problem of unity: if God's attributes are distinct in reality, what unifies them? Simplicity answers that the attributes are identical with one another and with God. The argument acknowledges this motivation. The constraint does not deny that the unity problem is real; it identifies a structural cost the defence does not address. The solution achieves unity by eliminating all internal distinction, while the properties it unifies — knowledge, power, goodness — constitutively require internal distinction for their obtaining. The unity problem is solved at the cost of the properties the unity was supposed to preserve.

On the critical side, Hughes (1989) works through Aquinas's doctrine and finds the identities it requires unintelligible. Plantinga (1980) argues that DDS makes God a property. Wolterstorff (1991) argues that the theistic identity claims are intelligible only within a constituent ontology and baffling within the relation ontology contemporary philosophers work in. Mullins (2013, 2016, 2020) argues that simplicity is incompatible with the traditional attributes and develops the incompatibility in relation to the Trinity: the internal relations among the divine persons constitute real distinctions that DDS cannot accommodate. Those distinctions are structurally aligned with what the present analysis identifies as intra-attribute.

The contemporary literature, surveyed in Arcadi and Turner (2021), runs along a spectrum from strong simplicity, no internal distinction of any kind, to weak simplicity, no composition of matter and form but formal distinctions permitted. The present constraint applies with full

force to the strong end, with diminishing force toward the weak end. The chapter's contribution is distinct from these criticisms, since it applies an external structural constraint, derived from the nature of content, to the conjunction of simplicity with intelligence.

Where the argument stands: the two demands have been separated and shown jointly unsatisfiable at the terminus (§2); three historical case studies have located the conflation at three different points, with the tradition's two bridge-arguments met (§3). What follows tests six contemporary defences.

4 Contemporary Defences

Six strategies, one recurring obstacle. The table maps the terrain; the sections work through it.

Defence	**Principal proponents**	**Where the constraint bites**
Identity thesis	Brower; Dolezal	Collapses inter-attribute distinctions; intra-attribute distinctions survive (§4.1)
Truthmaker simplicity	Bergmann & Brower; Pawl; Grant	Truthmaking requires adequacy to each determinate truth (§4.2)
Essence/energies	Palamas; Bradshaw	Coherent — at the cost of an unintelligent essence (§4.3)
Modal simplicity	Leftow; Pruss	A modal distinction is still a distinction (§4.4)

Defence	Principal proponents	Where the constraint bites
Negative theology	(apophatic tradition)	Concedes the conclusion: no positive predicates, no attributed intelligence (§4.4)
Analogical predication	Aquinas; McInerny; Burrell	The analogy's surviving core is a determinate content — or nothing survives (§4.5)

4.1 The Neo-Thomist identity thesis

Brower (2008) and Dolezal (2011) argue that God's attributes are identical with one another and with God himself: God's knowledge and his power are the same simple being described under different concepts, so the distinctions among divine attributes are conceptual rather than metaphysical.

The zero-complexity constraint engages this defence at its deepest level. Grant that God's knowledge and God's power are metaphysically identical. The constraint does not depend on the distinctness of attributes from one another, since it depends on the distinctness required within any single attribute for that attribute to obtain. Knowledge, even if identical with power, still constitutively requires the distinction between knower and known. Power, even if identical with knowledge, still constitutively requires the distinction between agent and patient. The identity thesis therefore collapses the distinctions between attributes without eliminating the distinctions within each attribute that make it the attribute it is.

The point can be developed through a structural analysis. Suppose someone claims that the colour red and the sound middle-C are identical: the same underlying reality described under different sensory modalities. Grant this for the sake of argument. The claim does not eliminate the internal structure of redness — hue, saturation, brightness

— or of middle-C — frequency, amplitude, timbre. The identity operates at the level of what red is identical with rather than at the level of what it takes to be red.

Similarly, the identity thesis operates at the level of what God's knowledge is identical with, his power and his essence, rather than at the level of what it takes to be knowledge: determinate content, direction at an object, exclusion of alternatives. The constraint targets the second level, which the identity thesis leaves untouched.

Dolezal's (2011) supereminence claim attempts to go further: if divine simplicity is a positive mode of being beyond our conceptual distinctions, the categories employed here — distinction, determination, contrast — do not apply.

This move faces a sharp dilemma. Either supereminence is itself a determination, so God's mode of being is this way rather than that way, in which case the constraint applies to the characterisation itself. Or supereminence is not a determination, so it has no character, no way it is rather than another, in which case nothing meaningful can be said about it, including that God possesses knowledge, power, or goodness. The supereminence defence therefore preserves simplicity by placing God beyond description, which concedes that no distinction-requiring property can be attributed to him — which is just what the constraint asserts.

The distinction drawn in Chapter 4 (§2.2) sharpens the second horn and forecloses the natural retreat from it. The horn need not claim that nothing can be said of a characterless mode of being, since one thing can: that it obtains rather than not. That is obtaining-determination, the side-less determinateness a state has simply in being, as distinct from the property-determination that a partition within being supplies. A defender of supereminence may accordingly accept the second horn while denying that nothing follows, holding God's mode of being to be determinate in just this existential way.

But the retreat is self-defeating on its own terms. Obtaining-determination is what the zero-complexity terminus possesses; it is existential rather than cognitive, since knowledge and power require

property-determination — determinate content, direction at an object, the exclusion of alternatives — which obtaining-determination does not supply. To rest divine simplicity on a purely obtaining-determinate mode of being is therefore not to evade the constraint but to instantiate the very terminus the constraint concerns.

4.2 Truthmaker simplicity

Bergmann and Brower (2006) and Pawl (2019) argue that God is the truthmaker for all truths about himself without possessing distinct properties. On their view, God makes it true that he is wise and true that he is just, while wisdom and justice are not distinct properties inhering in God. The strategy is ingenious because it appears to avoid the constraint's target, since if God has no properties there are no intra-attribute distinctions for the constraint to identify.

Truthmaking is content-sensitive. The constraint targets the truthmaking relation itself rather than the ontological status of properties. The argument proceeds in three steps, and its first step must be taken at the level of content rather than of counterfactual contrast.

First, truthmaking is content-sensitive before it is modally sensitive. God is said to be the truthmaker of many distinct truths: "God knows P", "God knows Q", "God is just". For God to be the truthmaker of a determinate truth, what does the making must be adequate to the content made true, so the truth that God knows P is made true by God's knowing P rather than by God's knowing Q. A maker containing nothing that answers to the difference between the knowings would make all such truths true by the same undifferentiated fact. The making would then connect the maker to no determinate content in particular — correlation without adequacy, which is not truthmaking.

Second, the adequacy required is content-differentiation in the truthmaker: the respect in which God-as-ground-of-"God knows P" differs from God-as-ground-of-"God knows Q". It may be minimal, subtle, or unlike any creaturely distinction, while it must be some difference. Third, at zero complexity no such difference is available, since a wholly undifferentiated state has no respect in which it differs

depending on which truths it makes true. Truthmaker simplicity therefore avoids positing distinct properties in God without avoiding the minimal requirement that the truthmaker be adequate to each of the determinate truths it makes. That adequacy is a distinction, and zero complexity provides none.

The formulation matters, because the truthmaker theorist has a strong reply to the more familiar, counterfactual version of the first step: the version that asks how God's being would differ if "God does not know P" were true. For God's essential knowledge of necessary truths, she answers, that supposition holds at no world. The demand for a basis differentiating the truthmaker of P from the truthmaker of not-P therefore asks for a difference across an impossibility, and necessary truths are the class widely held to need no differential truthmakers, since God simpliciter necessitates them all. The reply succeeds against the counterfactual formulation, and the chapter grants it: the cross-world test is accordingly confined to God's free knowledge of contingent truths, where it is sound and where the extrinsic-model evasion below arises.

Against the content-level formulation the reply has no purchase. "God knows P" and "God knows Q" are distinct contents though both necessary, since the exclusion between them operates at the level of content-individuation rather than of possible worlds, in the sense Chapter 2 (§2.4) disambiguated. A truthmaker owes adequacy to each. The necessity of the truths changes what the differentiation is not owed against; it does not change that the truths differ.

One condition on this formulation belongs in its statement. That "God knows P" and "God knows Q" are two contents where both are necessary is what the fine-grained developments of Chapter 2 (§2.4) supply — individuation by constituent structure or by the impossibilities excluded — and what the coarse-grained semantics declines. On that semantics all necessary truths occupy a single node. A reader who holds the coarse grain therefore loses this formulation, and the loss is contained. The containment fork of §3.2 stands on either grain, because a knowing of every truth stands against a knowing of nothing whatever

the population of the space of contents, with the Register carrying the condition.

The extrinsic model. The most resourceful version of this strategy, arising on the contingent track, makes the differential basis explicitly extrinsic. On the extrinsic model of divine agency and knowing (Grant, 2019), God's knowing that P and his willing that the world exist consist in nothing intrinsic to God at all. They consist wholly in the obtaining of the effect and the causal relation God bears to it, so God's intrinsic being is the same whatever he knows or wills. This meets the cross-world formulation head-on, since it grants that there is no intrinsic differential basis in God and denies that one is needed, locating the whole difference between knowing-P and knowing-not-P outside God.

The reply is not that the model is incoherent but that it concedes the constraint's conclusion in the very act of evading it. If God's knowing and willing are constituted extrinsically, then God's intrinsic being — the simple terminus the grounding hierarchy identifies — has in itself no knowledge, no intention, and no agency. These are predicated of God only by extrinsic denomination, in virtue of relations to what is not God.

The constraint never claimed that the word "knows" cannot be applied to a simple God; it claimed that no determinate cognition can reside in an undifferentiated being. The extrinsic model agrees, and relocates the cognition outward, as the essence/energies distinction relocates it to the energies (§4.3) and negative theology relocates it into the via negativa (§4.4). What the model preserves is the predicate; what it surrenders is the claim that intelligence belongs to God's own being. That surrender is the structural finding, reached this time from the defender's own resources.

Stump's (2010) account of divine knowledge as second-person acquaintance rather than propositional knowledge faces a structurally parallel difficulty. Grant that God's knowledge of persons is not a collection of propositions about them but an intimate relational awareness. Even relational awareness is a determination, since it is awareness of this person rather than of no one; it has a character — intimate, loving, complete — that differs from the character of non-

awareness. An acquaintance that is no way rather than another is not an acquaintance but the absence of one. The relational form therefore changes the kind of knowledge attributed to God without eliminating the requirement that the knowledge involve at least one distinction.

4.3 The essence/energies distinction

The Eastern Orthodox tradition, following Gregory Palamas, distinguishes between God's essence, absolutely simple and unknowable, and God's energies, his real activities in the world: his knowledge, will, and creative power. Bradshaw (2004) provides the most philosophically rigorous treatment, tracing the distinction from Aristotle's energeia through the Cappadocian Fathers to Palamas. On this view God's essence is zero complexity while his energies are not, since the energies are distinct from one another and from the essence; they are what we encounter in revelation and experience.

The essence/energies distinction is the most accommodating of the strategies, and from the present standpoint the most coherent option available to the theist who wishes to preserve both simplicity and intelligence. The constraint is satisfied at the level of the essence, which, being wholly undifferentiated, has no cognitive properties, while the energies, being differentiated, are the locus of knowledge, will, and agency. The argument does not claim that this position is incoherent.

What it identifies is a cost, and the cost is substantial. God's innermost being — his essence, his most fundamental nature — is unknowable and unintelligent, so the cognitive properties the tradition values most, omniscience, wisdom, and providential care, belong not to what God is but to what God does. For most Western theists, committed to the identity thesis that God is his nature, this is a significant concession. If God's essence is unintelligent, then the most fundamental level of divine reality is not a mind; it is the structural boundary of mindedness. The Palamite distinction therefore relocates intelligence from God's being to God's activity, which is, from the present standpoint, an implicit concession that being and intelligence come apart at the deepest level.

Bradshaw argues that the Western identification of God with his essence is a specifically Latin development departing from the Greek patristic understanding, in which God's activities are as divine as his essence without being identical with it. On his reconstruction, the Greek tradition never faced the Western problem of reconciling absolute simplicity with cognitive activity, because it never identified God's being exhaustively with his essence. The reconstruction is historically persuasive and philosophically illuminating, and it confirms that the tension identified here is a feature of the Western DDS tradition specifically, and that the Eastern tradition has resources for a more structurally coherent theology, at the cost of abandoning the identity of God with his nature.

A separate line of criticism converges on the tension from the side of the divine emotional life. Mullins (2020) argues that the love, empathy, and compassion the tradition ascribes to God are responsive, relational states, directed at a real other and answering to how things stand with that other, which a wholly simple and impassible God cannot possess in their full sense. That criticism reaches through the analysis of emotion what the structural dependence thesis reaches through the conditions on any determinate state, so the convergence strengthens both.

4.4 Two further strategies

Two further strategies can be addressed more concisely because the structural pattern is the same. The modal strategy (Leftow, 2006; Pruss, 2008) permits God to be simple in actuality while possessing modal distinctions, so God's actual willing involves no internal distinction while God could have willed differently.

But a modal distinction is still a distinction: between the actual and the possible. If God could have willed otherwise, there is a difference between the actual world and a possible one; if there is no such difference, divine freedom is eliminated. The modal strategy therefore faces a dilemma: either modal distinctions are real distinctions, in which case zero complexity is violated, or they are not, in which case divine

freedom is lost. This converges with Mullins's (2016) independent argument that simplicity and libertarian freedom are incompatible.

Negative theology holds that no positive attribute can be predicated of God, so divine intelligence cannot be attributed. The negative theologian who denies all positive predicates has therefore conceded the constraint's conclusion: God has no determinate cognitive properties. The defence preserves simplicity by abandoning intelligence, which is the structural finding the constraint identifies. Chapter 12 develops this result at length.

4.5 Analogical predication

One strategy remains; it is the tradition's most flexible: the doctrine that cognitive predicates apply to God neither univocally, in the same sense as to creatures, nor equivocally, in an unrelated sense, but analogically (Aquinas, ST I, q. 13; McInerny, 1996; Burrell, 1973). Alston (1989) defends literal divine predication against its stronger forms. If "knows" is said of God only by analogy, the constitutive requirements of creaturely knowing, determination included, need not transfer, and the zero-complexity constraint, the analogist argues, has been aimed at a univocal target the tradition never presented.

The content-preservation dilemma. The reply is a dilemma about content-preservation, generated by the framework's own account of meaning (Chapter 7). For a predication to be analogical rather than merely equivocal, something must be preserved across the analogy: some core of the creaturely concept must survive into the divine application. Otherwise "God knows" stands to human knowing as the bank of a river stands to the bank on the corner, related by sound alone.

Ask, then, what is preserved. Whatever core makes the divine predicate a knowing-analogue rather than a power-analogue or a stone-analogue is a determinate content. It says something specific of God, excludes alternatives — a God who knows-analogically is thereby not ignorant-analogically — and contrasts with the tradition's other analogical predicates. A determinate content is a diff, and its obtaining in God is the obtaining of a determination, God's being one way rather

than another, which is what the constraint targets and what the intra-attribute analysis (§4.1) showed the identity thesis cannot collapse.

The first horn therefore preserves the constraint along with the content. The second horn preserves nothing, since an analogy with no surviving core is an equivocation. "God knows" then becomes a label attached to no diff: the empty overshoot of language that Chapter 7 (§3.3) taxonomises. On that horn the analogist has not defended divine cognition; he has renamed its abandonment.

Res and modus significandi. A sharper form of the defence presses the analogy further. It concedes that "knows" applies to God only analogically, and locates the knower/known distinction not in God but in our mode of signifying. The perfection signified, the res significata, is in God; the structure through which we signify it, the modus significandi drawn from creaturely knowing, is ours rather than his (ST I, q. 13, a. 3).

The reply does not depend on rejecting analogy, since it turns on which side of the res/modus line the relevant distinction falls. The constraint can grant that God does not know in the discursive, successive, subject-confronting-object manner of creatures, and that manner may indeed belong only to the mode of signifying. What it denies is that the minimal determinacy of knowing belongs there too.

To be a knowing at all, a state must be a knowing of something rather than nothing: directed rather than null, this content rather than no content (§4.1). And this is not a creaturely manner imposed by our concepts but what any res counting as knowledge must possess, in God no less than in us, on pain of the name signifying nothing. Assigning that determinacy to the modus significandi therefore does not predicate knowledge of God in a higher mode; it empties the res significata of content, which is to withhold divine knowledge rather than to affirm it analogically. The mode-of-signifying distinction can relocate the manner of knowing; it cannot relocate the determinacy that makes knowledge the perfection it is, and the constraint bears on that determinacy alone.

Nor is the middle position — proportionality without specifiable content — stable, and the tradition's own internal critic sharpened the point long before the present framework did. Scotus argued against the Thomists that some univocal core is required for theological reasoning to be valid at all (Duns Scotus, 1987, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3), since an argument from creatures to God whose middle terms shift sense mid-inference proves nothing. The point survives in Alston's defence of partial univocity. The framework agrees and adds the structural reason: inference operates on contents, contents are diffs, and a predicate that contributes no diff contributes no premise.

The analogist may still speak analogically, since stretched vocabulary is permissible wherever its sense is fixed, while the sense, once fixed, either includes determination or includes nothing. And the permission transfers asymmetrically: the limit sense is available for "ground" because the argument asks the terminus to do nothing, and unavailable for "knows" because the theist asks it to do everything. The dilemma is the supereminence dilemma of §4.1 met again at the level of language, and it closes the same way: what can be said of a state without distinction is that it obtains. Every richer predication either imports the distinctions the doctrine denies or dissolves into the silence Chapter 12 examines.

Two terms of art. Two scholastic terms of art should be filed by name, because Thomist and Scotist readers will look for them and conclude, wrongly, that the chapter does not know them.

The Thomist's virtual distinction holds that the attributes are distinct only in our concepts while pre-contained "virtually", by power and eminence, in the simple essence. This is the supereminence strategy under its technical name; it is met where that strategy is met. Either the virtual containment grounds real differences in what is contained, which is internal structure; or it does not, and the attributes' distinctness is our artefact, with the cognitive content of the divine reality evacuated accordingly.

The Scotist's formal distinction concedes non-identity a parte rei — formalities really distinct in the thing prior to any mind's work — which

is internal structure by open avowal. The chapter's argument reaches it without modification: a God with really distinct formalities is on the diversity side of the partition, whatever the formalities' further metaphysics. Neither term of art names an escape; each names a horn.

A third term of art belongs beside them, since it is the one built to evade the content-preservation dilemma. Analogy of proper proportionality (Cajetan, 1953; Klubertanz, 1960) holds that what is preserved across the analogy is neither a common content nor a mere name but a proportion: as knowing stands to the creature, so some unnamed perfection stands to God, with no core of the creaturely concept carried over. The dilemma reaches it without modification. A preserved proportion is a preserved contrast — this-as-to-that — and a contrast is a diff; so the proportion's divine term either has enough determination for the proportion to hold of it, in which case the constraint applies to that determination, or is left wholly unspecified, in which case the proportion relates a creaturely term to a blank and the second horn has it: a proportion with an empty relatum preserves the form of an analogy and none of its content.

5 Objections and Replies

5.1 The equivocation objection

Objection. The tradition uses "simple" to mean something different from "zero complexity." Aristotle's pure actuality and Aquinas's actus purus are not states of complete undifferentiation; they are states of maximal actualisation.

Reply. If the tradition's "simplicity" means the total absence of internal distinction, as the strongest versions of DDS assert (Dolezal, 2011; Brower, 2008), then the constraint applies directly. If "simplicity" means something weaker, the absence of material composition while permitting formal distinctions, then God is not zero complexity and the constraint does not apply — while God has internal distinctions, is within the domain of diversity, and is not at the structural boundary the grounding hierarchy identifies. The theist who weakens simplicity

therefore escapes the constraint and concedes that God is not the grounding terminus.

A third reading must be named, because it is the tradition's own and neither horn catches it. On this reading actus purus is not the absence of determination but its maximum (Aquinas, 1952, De potentia, q. 7, a. 1): a reality wholly determinate and yet without composition. That is why ST I, q. 7, a. 1 can deny God the formless infinite while affirming the formal one (Chapter 8, §5). The reading is met at §3.2 rather than here, and met as a theorem: eminent possession of many perfections either grounds real differences in what is possessed, in which case the reality is structured and the terminus has been vacated, or it does not, and "possesses all perfections" has lost its form-specific content. Maximal determinacy without composition is not a third structural condition; it is the demand that one state occupy both.

The tradition's own name for what would let one state occupy both is the distinction of reason, the "virtual" distinction. God's knowing of one creature and of another differ, it is said, in our conceiving and in the creatures, while in God they are one act (ST I, q. 14, aa. 5–6). Run the determination dilemma of Chapter 2 (§2.4) on it.

Either God's knowing of this creature differs, in God, from God's knowing of that one. Then a contrast falls within the divine being, the distinction is real under its modest name, so the being is structured — the sustainer of Chapter 24 (§4.1), with the word "simple" kept and its content given up. Or it does not differ in God, and the one act is undifferentiated on God's side. Then it registers no creature as distinct from any other, and an act that registers no distinction is not the knowing of anything in particular, by the intra-attribute instrument of §4. The Thomist locates the difference in the creatures, as the tradition does; the reply is that a knowing of two things as different is a difference in the knower or no knowing of a difference, since registration is differential response (Chapter 13, §2.1). A mirror that shows two things bears two images, and a register that does not vary with what it registers registers no distinction at all.

A virtual distinction is therefore either a contrast or nothing, so the dilemma leaves no third thing for it to be. The second horn uses Chapter 7's exhibitive closure — an act that carries no distinction carries no distinct contents — which a Thomist may refuse for intellect while granting it for sense. The result against the maximal-determinacy reading is conditional on that closure, which the Grades note records.

5.2 The non-discursive cognition objection

Objection. Divine cognition is sui generis — non-discursive, non-temporal, non-representational. By importing creaturely cognitive models, the chapter fails to engage divine cognition on its own terms.

Reply. This is the strongest resistance the chapter faces, and §§3.1–3.2 addressed it at length. The argument targets the minimal structural condition for any state to count as knowing: that the state have determinate content, that it be a knowing of something rather than a knowing of nothing. This does not presuppose a subject-object split or temporal succession. It presupposes only that "knowing" is a determination, a state that is one way rather than no way. A divine knowing that is wholly non-determinate, a knowing of nothing in particular, is indistinguishable from the absence of knowing.

5.3 The structured terminus objection

Objection. A priority monist (Schaffer, 2010) could accept that the grounding hierarchy terminates in an internally structured cosmos, not in zero complexity.

Reply. The priority monist's terminus is within diversity: a bilateral boundary at which explanation is declined rather than foreclosed. The chapter's argument targets the conjunction of zero complexity with intelligence rather than the conjunction of fundamentality with intelligence. A philosopher who holds that the fundamental entity is internally structured and intelligent has a coherent position, while it is not the prime mover tradition's; it does not achieve the structural foreclosure identified above.

5.4 The convergence objection

Objection. The chapter applies the same argument to all strategies — the pattern is suspiciously uniform.

Reply. The uniformity reflects a deeper finding. All strategies attempt to reconcile the same two properties, zero complexity and intelligence, where the constraint identifies a structural tension between them that no reconciliation can eliminate.

The specific mechanism of failure differs in each case. The identity thesis fails because intra-attribute distinctions survive. Truthmaker simplicity fails because truthmaking requires adequacy to determinate content — a differential basis in the contingent case, content-differentiation in the necessary case. The essence/energies distinction splits simplicity from intelligence across ontological levels. The modal strategy, analogical predication, and negative theology each encounter the constraint at their own characteristic point. The pattern is uniform because the tension is uniform.

The distinction Chapter 3 (§5) drew against the same charge applies here unchanged. A test is rigged when counterexamples exist and the procedure misclassifies them; it is empty when the specification of a counterexample is unfulfillable. This test is empty, and the emptiness was derived, since a reconciliation would have to locate a cognitive state in a bearer with no determination, and the intra-attribute analysis (§4.1) shows the location has no site. The derivation had joints that could have broken: the truthmaker theorist's counterfactual reply succeeds and is granted (§4.2), the essence/energies distinction is conceded as coherent (§4.3), and the extrinsic model is met on its own construction rather than dismissed. A chapter that concedes three times is not running a procedure that cannot lose.

6 Conclusion

The chapter yields three results.

The separation of ground and mind. The demand for an explanatory ground and the demand for an intelligent agent are logically

separable, and the structural conditions for satisfying each are incompatible at the terminus, since zero complexity satisfies the demand for a ground and not the demand for intelligence.

The result reaches both readings of simplicity. Read as the absence of internal distinction, the simple being cannot know. Read as maximal determinacy without composition, its virtual distinctions are contrasts or nothing, so the being is structured and is the sustainer of Chapter 24 rather than the terminus — the second reading conditional on Chapter 7's exhibitive closure (§5.1).

The historical and contemporary cases. Three foundational figures in the prime mover tradition each exhibit the ground/mind conflation at a structurally distinct point. Aristotle's unmoved mover faces a dilemma between self-contemplation and zero complexity. Aquinas's identity thesis collapses inter-attribute distinctions but not the intra-attribute distinctions that make knowing a knowing. Leibniz's inference from necessary being to intelligent being is a non sequitur once the bridge-arguments are down (§3.2). Among contemporary defences, the Neo-Thomist identity thesis, truthmaker simplicity, and four further strategies each encounter the same structural obstacle. The most coherent option is the Palamite essence/energies distinction — which implicitly concedes that being and intelligence come apart at the deepest level.

Ground without mind. The argument is ecumenical: compatible with the PSR's demand for an explanatory ground and with the Five Ways' arguments for a terminus, it denies only that the ground must be intelligent. This separation is the chapter's most general contribution. One retreat remains: if God cannot be positively described, perhaps God transcends description altogether. But the tradition has one more route to God before that retreat is reached — the kalām cosmological argument, which reaches God not through the grounding hierarchy but through temporal origination. Chapter 11 offers a novel response.

Grades and Dependencies

1. **The grain condition.** All three results are graded *established*. One formulation carries a condition: the content-level truthmaker argument (§4.2) individuates "knows P" and "knows Q" as distinct necessary contents on the fine-grained developments Chapter 2 (§2.4) licenses — a plurality the coarse-grained semantics declines, since on that semantics all necessary truths occupy a single node. A reader holding the coarse grain loses that formulation only; the containment fork (§3.2) holds on either grain, and Chapter 17 (§5.2) inherits the same condition. The Premise Register carries the condition and the full chain. The extension of the ground/mind result to simplicity read as maximal determinacy (§5.1) is conditional on the exhibitive closure of Chapter 7 (§4.1), and the Register carries that dependency on the conflation row.

2. **Debts discharged and independence secured.** This chapter settles accounts opened earlier. The *richness premise* Chapter 8 (§5) borrowed is here derived (§3.2), at the cost the containment fork states for the virtual-containment doctrine (Register, note w): grounding many perfections eminently requires either internal differentiation or the surrender of the eminence claim's determinate content — which converts Chapter 8's Aquinas tension into contradiction on the tradition's own terms. Chapter 9's second horn (agency at the undifferentiated limit) is closed in full: the capacities acting requires — determinate content, direction at an object, exclusion of alternatives — cannot characterise the undifferentiated (§§2.2, 4.1). The chapter's instrument is also independent of the modal collapse debate (§2.3): conceding that entire literature to the Thomist costs the intra-attribute argument nothing. What this chapter in turn leaves open — whether an internally *complex* ground can be the necessary creator theism needs — is Chapter 11's question.

References

Alston, W. P. (1989). *Divine nature and human language: Essays in philosophical theology*. Cornell University Press.

Aquinas, T. (1947b). *Summa theologiae* (Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Trans.). Benziger Brothers.

Aquinas, T. (1952). *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei* (English Dominican Fathers, Trans.). Newman Press.

Arcadi, J. M., & Turner, J. T. (Eds.). (2021). *T&T Clark handbook of analytic theology*. T&T Clark.

Aristotle. (1984a). Metaphysics. In J. Barnes (Ed.), *The complete works of Aristotle* (Vol. 2). Princeton University Press.

Aristotle. (1984c). Physics. In J. Barnes (Ed.), *The complete works of Aristotle* (Vol. 1). Princeton University Press.

Beere, J. (2009). *Doing and being: An interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta*. Oxford University Press.

Bergmann, M., & Brower, J. E. (2006). A theistic argument against Platonism (and in support of truthmakers and divine simplicity). In D. W. Zimmerman (Ed.), *Oxford studies in metaphysics* (Vol. 2, pp. 357–386). Oxford University Press.

Bradshaw, D. (2004). *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the division of Christendom*. Cambridge University Press.

Brandom, R. (1994). *Making it explicit: Reasoning, representing, and discursive commitment*. Harvard University Press.

Broadie, S. (1993). Que fait le premier moteur d'Aristote? (Sur la théologie du livre Lambda de la Métaphysique) *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 183(2), 375–411.

Brower, J. E. (2008). Making sense of divine simplicity. *Faith and Philosophy*, 25(1), 3–30.

Burrell, D. B. (1973). *Analogy and philosophical language*. Yale University Press.

Cajetan (Thomas de Vio). (1953). *The analogy of names* (E. A. Bushinski & H. J. Koren, Trans.). Duquesne University Press.

Dolezal, J. E. (2011). *God without parts: Divine simplicity and the metaphysics of God's absoluteness*. Pickwick.

Duns Scotus, J. (1987). *Philosophical writings: A selection* (A. B. Wolter, Trans.). Hackett.

Feser, E. (2009). *Aquinas: A beginner's guide*. Oneworld.

Feser, E. (2014). *Scholastic metaphysics: A contemporary introduction*. Editiones Scholasticae.

Feser, E. (2017). *Five proofs of the existence of God*. Ignatius Press.

Fodor, J. A. (1987). *Psychosemantics: The problem of meaning in the philosophy of mind*. MIT Press.

Grant, W. M. (2019). *Free will and God's universal causality: The dual sources account*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Hughes, C. (1989). *On a complex theory of a simple God: An investigation in Aquinas' philosophical theology*. Cornell University Press.

Klubertanz, G. P. (1960). *St. Thomas Aquinas on analogy: A textual analysis and systematic synthesis*. Loyola University Press.

Kosman, L. A. (2000). Metaphysics Λ 9: Divine thought. In M. Frede & D. Charles (Eds.), *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda: Symposium Aristotelicum* (pp. 307–326). Clarendon Press.

Leftow, B. (2006). Divine simplicity. *Faith and Philosophy*, 23(4), 365–380.

Leftow, B. (2012). *God and necessity*. Oxford University Press.

Leibniz, G. W. (1714/1989a). Principles of nature and grace, based on reason. In R. Ariew & D. Garber (Eds. & Trans.), *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical essays* (pp. 206–213). Hackett.

Leibniz, G. W. (1714/1989b). Monadology. In R. Ariew & D. Garber (Eds. & Trans.), *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical essays* (pp. 213–225). Hackett.

McInerny, R. (1996). *Aquinas and analogy*. Catholic University of America Press.

Menn, S. (n.d.). *The aim and the argument of Aristotle's Metaphysics* [Unpublished manuscript]. McGill University. Available at https://www.philosophie.hu-berlin.de/de/arbeitsbereiche/antike/mitarbeiter/menn/contents

Mullins, R. T. (2013). Simply impossible: A case against divine simplicity. *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 7(2), 181–203.

Mullins, R. T. (2016). *The end of the timeless God*. Oxford University Press.

Mullins, R. T. (2020). *God and emotion*. Cambridge University Press.

Oppy, G. (2009). Cosmological arguments. *Noûs*, 43(1), 31–48.

Pawl, T. (2019). In defense of divine truthmaker simplicity. *Res Philosophica*, 96(1), 63–75.

Plantinga, A. (1980). *Does God have a nature?* Marquette University Press.

Pruss, A. R. (2006). *The principle of sufficient reason: A reassessment*. Cambridge University Press.

Pruss, A. R. (2008). On two problems of divine simplicity. In J. L. Kvanvig (Ed.), *Oxford studies in philosophy of religion* (Vol. 1, pp. 150–167). Oxford University Press.

Saussure, F. de. (1916/1959). *Course in general linguistics* (W. Baskin, Trans.). Philosophical Library.

Schaffer, J. (2010). Monism: The priority of the whole. *Philosophical Review*, 119(1), 31–76.

Schmid, J. C. (2022). The fruitful death of modal collapse arguments. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 91(1), 3–22.

Stump, E. (2010). *Wandering in darkness: Narrative and the problem of suffering*. Oxford University Press.

Stump, E., & Kretzmann, N. (1985). Absolute simplicity. *Faith and Philosophy*, 2(4), 353–382.

Tomaszewski, C. (2019). Collapsing the modal collapse argument: On an invalid argument against divine simplicity. *Analysis*, 79(2), 275–284.

Vallicella, W. F. (2019). Divine simplicity. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Spring 2019 ed.). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/divine-simplicity/

Wolterstorff, N. (1991). Divine simplicity. In J. E. Tomberlin (Ed.), *Philosophical perspectives 5: Philosophy of religion* (pp. 531–552). Ridgeview Publishing Company.