

Christian Apologetics Journal, Volume 3, No. 2, Fall 2004

© by Southern Evangelical Seminary 2004

DOES GOD HAVE A NATURE: PROBLEMS IN PLANTINGA

by Max Herrera

INTRODUCTION

The great orthodox creeds and confessions of the church affirm that God has a “nature,” which denotes what God is.¹ For example, in A.D. 270, Gregory Thaumaturgus put forth the Ante-Nicene Creed, which states “There is one God, the Father of the living Word, who is *substantive* wisdom and eternal power and image of God . . . a perfect Trinity not divided.”² In A.D. 373, the church put forth the Athanasian Creed, which states, “We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the *substance [essence]*. . . the Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.”³ In A.D. 1647, the church put forth the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which states “There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise. . .”⁴ From the aforementioned creeds, one observes that many things are attributed to God—wisdom, eternality, etc. All of these attributes are said

about God’s nature. In other words, these attributes tell us what God is.

Although many things are attributed to God (e.g., Goodness, Wisdom, etc.), it is worth noting that the Westminster Confession understood the unity of God to mean that God has no parts. Why would one assert that God has no parts? Doesn’t God have many attributes? Are not these attributes parts that make up God? Though it is true that God has many attributes, the confessions deny that God has parts, for a thing that has parts is composed of its parts. In addition, every composed thing requires a composer. Because God is the First Cause, He cannot have a composer; hence, God cannot be composed of parts.

The notion that God is not composed of parts entails that God is indivisible and that God is one. Consider the following: That which has no parts cannot be decomposed or divided because when a thing is divided or decomposed, it is divided or decomposed into its parts. However, God has no parts, so God is indivisible. Yet, to affirm that a thing is indivisible is to assert that a thing is one. Thus, by asserting that God has no parts, one affirms that God is indivisible, uncomposed, and that God is one. In theological terms, one affirms that God is simple.

Given the aforementioned, one sees that historically the church has affirmed the simplicity of God. In other words, the church has affirmed that God’s nature is simple. By affirming that God’s nature is simple, it follows that all attributes ascribed to God denote God’s simple nature. Consequently, there is no distinction between God’s nature and the attributes that are ascribed to Him. For example, when one says “God is beautiful,” God’s nature is not one thing and beauty another thing, which is related to His nature. Instead, one is saying that the nature of God is beauty itself. When one says, “God exists,” God’s nature is not one thing and existence another thing, which is related to His nature. Instead, one is saying that the nature (i.e., essence) of God is existence itself. That is to say, there can be no distinction between *that God is* and *what God is*. It is of the nature of God to exist.

Underlying the notion of nature (i.e., essence or substance) is the idea that a nature (i.e., essence) accounts for *what* a thing is. For example, if while on earth one were to point to the apostle Paul and ask, “What is he?” one would respond, “He is human.” Similarly, if while on earth one were to point to the apostle Peter and ask, “What is he?” one would respond, “He is human.” Though Paul and Peter may differ

in height, weight, and other *accidental features* that *they have*, nevertheless, they do not differ in *what they are* because both Peter and Paul have a human nature which accounts for their humanity. In other words, natures account for what is *common* between individuals, and account for *what* things are.

In contradistinction to the traditional notion of nature (i.e., essence), many analytical philosophers have a new conception of essence.⁵ The new conception of essence *does not* account for *what* a thing is, but it accounts for the individual. For example, in the aforementioned example, Paul and Peter are human by virtue of having a human essence. Under the new conception of essence, Paul is *essentially different* than Peter because the essence of a thing is that which *distinguishes* one thing from all other things. That is to say, essences account for individuation.⁶ If Paul and Peter had the same essence, they would be one and the same individual. An analogy may help. Imagine that each thing has its own unique identifier (e.g., a universal social security number), and no two things can have the same unique identifier. Thus, Paul would have his own unique identifier as would Peter. Each unique identifier is an essence. In other words, whereas the traditional notion of *essences* account for *what is common* among individuals, the new conception of essence accounts for what is *different* among individuals. So how does one account for what is common between multiple individuals under the contemporary model of essence or nature?

In order to account for what is common between individuals, many analytical philosophers resort to properties. Things are common because they have the same properties. For example, Peter and Paul are both human because each has the property called "humanity." They both have the ability to laugh because they both have the property called "risibility." However, not only do properties account for what is common among individuals but properties also account for the difference among individuals. Peter has the property of "being the apostle to the Jews," whereas Paul has the property of "being the apostle to the Gentiles." Consequently, the *amalgamation of properties* accounts for *what a thing is*. In other words, the essence or nature, which is also a property, distinguishes one amalgamation of properties from another amalgamation of properties, and the amalgamation of properties account for what a thing is.

If one compares the traditional notion of essence or nature with the

contemporary notion of essence or nature, one finds the following distinctions: First, the traditional notion of nature accounts for what a thing is, whereas the contemporary notion of nature does not account for what a thing is. Second, the traditional notion of nature does not *necessarily* individuate a thing, whereas the contemporary notion of nature *necessarily* individuates a thing. Third, the traditional notion of nature accounts for what is *common* among individuals, whereas the contemporary notion accounts for what *differentiates* one individual from another. Fourth, the traditional notion of "*what a thing is*" does not rely on amalgamation of properties, whereas the contemporary notion of "*what a thing is*" *does rely on an amalgamation of properties*. As a result of the new conception of essence or nature, if multiple things can be ascribed to a thing, necessarily, the thing must be complex (i.e., the thing cannot be simple.) Because multiple attributes can be ascribed to God, under the new conception of nature, it follows that God is not simple. Instead, God is complex, composed of parts.

One of the foremost evangelical thinkers, Alvin Plantinga, demurs the traditional notion of nature or essence. Instead, Plantinga opts for the new conception of nature or essence. As a result, Plantinga denies the traditional notion that God is simple. In addition, Alvin Plantinga has constructed a very complex ontological system, a system concerning the nature of reality. However, I maintain that ultimately his ontological system is internally inconsistent because his denial of divine simplicity⁷ is inconsistent with his notion of necessary existence. Why is this the case? In order to affirm divine simplicity, one must affirm the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. However, as we will see, Plantinga explicitly rejects the doctrine of analogy, and yet implicitly he relies on the doctrine of analogy to keep his ontological system afloat.

In this article, to show why Plantinga's ontology is internally inconsistent, I will do the following: (1) sketch out the ontological building blocks in Plantinga's system; (2) examine Plantinga's notion of proposition; (3) examine the relationship between terms (i.e., the signifier) and what the terms denote (i.e., the signified); (4) examine the relationships between the term "God" as a signifier and God as signified; (5) examine the implications of univocal God-talk; (6) examine the property of existence and its dependence on the property of necessary existence; (7) demonstrate that Plantinga's ontology (viz., the property of necessary existence) depends on the Thomistic doctrine of analogy, which

Plantinga rejects; (8) examine possible objections to this paper; and (9) give a summary and conclusion.

PLANTINGA'S ONTOLOGICAL BUILDING BLOCKS

In order to understand Plantinga's system, it is necessary to discuss the following: concrete objects, abstract objects, properties, states of affairs, possible worlds, existence, and actuality.

For Plantinga, the term "object" denotes any existing thing. For example, trees, dogs, cats, rocks, angels, propositions, and God are all things that exist; hence, they are all objects. In addition, objects can be either concrete or abstract. A concrete object is a physical object; thus, dogs, cats, and trees are concrete or physical objects.⁸ On the other hand, abstract objects are objects that are neither temporal nor spatial: God and propositions. Regardless of the type of object, abstract or concrete, all objects have properties.

Properties serve two main purposes in Plantinga's system: they individuate or they specify an object. To say that a property individuates an object means that the property accounts for the identity of that object.⁹ For example, Uncle Bubba is distinct from all other objects because he has the property of "Uncle Bubbaity." It is impossible for any other object to have the property of "Uncle Bubbaity."¹⁰ Consequently, because the property of "Uncle Bubbaity" belongs only to the object called "Uncle Bubba," it is possible to distinguish Uncle Bubba from any other object. In other words, the property of "Uncle Bubbaity" is the ontological basis by which Uncle Bubba can be epistemologically recognized as distinct from any other object.¹¹

However, let us not forget that properties also specify objects. This means that properties provide or account for the qualities, quantities, and characteristics that belong to an object. For example, Uncle Bubba has the property of "being over 50 years of age." He also has the property of "living in Florida." He also has the property of "being Uncle Jed's proofreader." In addition, he has the property of "being a grandfather." He might even have the property of "having gray hair." There are many more properties that Uncle Bubba has, and the sum of all the properties account for *what* Uncle Bubba is. Thus, by specifying Uncle Bubba, properties account for *what* Uncle Bubba is. Yet it is possible for properties to exist even if a concrete object like Uncle Bubba does

not exist? Yes!

Properties may be abstract or they may be concrete. Abstract properties do not belong to any object. So, there may be an infinite number of properties that exist in themselves, and yet these properties do not individuate or specify an object. The property "being human" could exist even if there were no individual humans existing.¹² In contradistinction, when a property specifies or individuates a concrete object, one says that the object *exemplifies* that property. For example, while writing this paper, my neck is currently aching; thus, I, the concrete object, exemplify the property of "having a neck ache." Thus, the fact that my neck aches at this time is a painful state of affairs.

To my knowledge, I do not know of any place where Plantinga defines what he means by states of affairs. Nevertheless, for Plantinga, state of affairs seems to mean some set of facts. An analogy may be helpful to clarify what I mean. The President's *state of the union address* discloses facts about our nation, and those facts describe some event: the capture of Saddam Hussein, homeland security, etc. Similarly, states of affairs seem to describe some facts about some event or events. For example, the movie "The Passion" partly describes the state of affairs at the end of Jesus' life. Given that every moment, different things are happening, different states of affairs arise.

States of affairs may be actual or possible. To say that a state of affairs is actual means that some facts are actual. As you read this paper, the state of affairs that you are reading this paper is actual. When a state of affairs is actual, one says, "That the state of affairs has *obtained*."¹³ On the other hand, states of affairs may not obtain, and in this case, we say that the state of affairs is possible. For example, it is possible that I buy a plane ticket and fly to Florida today; however, that state of affairs is only possible. Not until I actually purchase the ticket and fly to Florida can one say that the state of affairs has obtained. This notion of possible or actual states of affairs is a nice segue into a discussion of possible worlds.

According to Plantinga, not only does the actual world exist, but possible worlds exist as well. For Plantinga, before God chose to make any world actual, there existed and continue to exist an infinite number of possible worlds that God could have actualized. For example, there exists a possible world W_1 in which Al Gore is president of the United

States in 2004; there exists a possible world W_2 in which Dr. Noel Spock is president of the United States in 2004; etc. Consequently, there are an infinite number of possible worlds. However, what is a possible world? According to Plantinga a possible world is:

... a possible state of affairs—one that is possible in the broadly logical sense. But not every possible state of affairs is a possible world. To claim that honour, a state of affairs must be maximal or complete ... a state of affairs S is *complete* or *maximal* if for every state of affairs S' , S includes S' or S precludes S' Of course *the actual world* is one of the possible worlds; it is the maximal possible state of affairs that is actual, that has the distinction of actually obtaining.¹⁴

In other words, a possible world is a state of affairs that either includes or excludes every state of affairs in that world. For example, let us assume that in possible world W_3 the only state of affairs possible, S_1 , is that a single amoeba exists in that world. If the state of affairs W_3 includes all possible states of affairs, S_1 , then W_3 is a state of affairs that is a possible world. Moreover, that which distinguishes a possible world from *the actual world* is that the actual world has obtained, whereas the possible worlds have not obtained.

Only the actual world has obtained, and “there can’t be more than one possible world that is actual.”¹⁵ Why can only one possible world obtain to the exclusion of all others? More than one possible world cannot be actual because each possible world has differing states of affairs, and mutually exclusive states of affairs cannot obtain.¹⁶ For example, let us say that possible world W_1 has the state of affairs “Bush is president in 2004.” Furthermore, let us say that possible world W_2 has the state of affairs “Bush is not president in 2004.” If both W_1 and W_2 obtained, then Bush would be president in 2004 and Bush would not be president in 2004, and this is contradictory. However, a careful reader may object and say, “It is only contradictory if one affirms that Bush is and is not *actually* president in the same world; however to say that Bush is *actually* president in one world and *actually* not president in another world is not contradictory.”

According to Plantinga such an objection is spurious because the objection implies a counterpart theory, the notion that one has counterparts in other possible worlds, or it entails a contradiction. Plantinga

denies counterpart theories because if one has counterparts in other possible worlds, then the counterparts are different people.¹⁷ In the aforementioned example, there would exist a George Bush₁ in possible world, W_1 , and there would exist a George Bush₂ in possible world, W_2 , but George Bush₁ is not George Bush₂. Moreover, because counterparts are not the same person, the notion of counterparts destroys the very purpose for possible worlds: to provide an ontological referent for conditional counterfactual propositions. In the statement “had I only been one minute earlier, I would have caught the bus,” the clause “I would have” is either referring to oneself existing in some other modality (e.g., oneself existing in another possible world), or it is referring to another person existing in some other modality (e.g., my counterpart existing in another possible world). If it is referring to another person, then the condition counterfactual statement is nonsensical because it is not denoting the same “I,” the same person. However, the statement makes sense; therefore, it cannot be denoting another person.

Because the conditional counterfactual statement must be denoting the same person, one cannot assert that both possible worlds obtain. Otherwise, one would be asserting that one and the same person is *actually* existing and not *actually existing* in the same sense. For example, if George Bush₁ existed in W_1 and George Bush₁ existed in W_2 , and both possible worlds obtained, then George Bush₁ would *actually* exist in W_1 and He would not *actually* exist in W_1 , for He would be existing in W_2 . However, either a person is *actually existing* or the person is not *actually existing*. Therefore, it is impossible that more than one possible world obtains. Although many possible worlds may exist, only one actual world may exist.¹⁸

The notion of actuality in Plantinga is different from the notion of existence. The notion of actuality connotes that some possible world has obtained. For example, before God created this world, the world existed as a possibility, but it did not exist as an actuality. Not until God actualizes the world did it go from being a possible world to an actual world. For Plantinga, properly speaking, God does not bring objects into existence, for they already exist independent from Him. Rather, God actualizes possibilities that already exist.¹⁹ For Plantinga, existence is an essential property that all objects have; it is a special property like the property of self identity.²⁰

In sum, anything that exists is an object. Objects can be concrete or

abstract. Regardless of whether an object is concrete or abstract, it has properties that specify and determine the object. Properties themselves can be abstract or concrete. Abstract properties can exist independent of any object; however, when they do not exist independent of any object, one says that an object exemplifies that property. Furthermore, states of affairs are sets of facts which may be possible or actual. States of affairs that are maximal or complete are called possible worlds of which there are an infinite number. There can only be one actual world existing, but there are an infinite number of possible worlds also existing. Instead of God creating *ex nihilo*, He actualizes already existing possibilities. With this said, we can proceed to the next section.

PLANTINGA'S PROPOSITIONS

What are propositions? What types of propositions exist? What properties or characteristics appertain to propositions? For Plantinga propositions are abstract objects, things that do not exist concretely, nor contingently.²¹ Propositions exist *per se*, and they exist in all possible worlds. After arguing against those who would say otherwise, he concludes, "The conclusion, I think is that propositions can't be concrete, contingently existing objects such as human mental acts, or brain inscriptions or other arrays of neural material, or sentence tokens, or anything else of that sort."²²

In addition, propositions may be *predicative* or *impredicative*. A predicative proposition is a proposition that predicates a property of its subject. For example, the proposition "Socrates was snubnosed" predicates the property "being snubnosed" of the subject "Socrates." An impredicative proposition is a proposition that *denies* a property of its subject. For example, the proposition "It is false that Socrates was snubnosed" denies that the property "being snubnosed" belongs to the subject, "Socrates."²³

Regardless of the type of proposition, predicative or impredicative, propositions have certain properties: they can be true or false; they can be believed or disbelieved; they can have logical relations; and they can have causal relations.²⁴ First, propositions can have the properties of "being true" or "being false." For example the proposition " $2 + 2 = 4$ " has the property of being true, and the proposition " $2 + 2 = 5$ " has the property of being false. Second, propositions are the type of objects that

can be believed or disbelieved. For example, "I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins, and I do not believe that apart from trusting in Christ an individual can be saved."²⁵ Third, propositions may have logical relations. For example, "Some proposition is true" is the contradiction of the proposition "No proposition is true." Fourth, propositions can have causal relationships. For example, "objects [propositions] can enter into the sort of causal relation that holds between a thought and a thinker, and we can enter into causal relation with them [propositions] by virtue of our causal relation to God."²⁶ In other words, "propositions, properties, and sets can't be *human* thoughts, concepts, and collection."²⁷ Rather, we are somehow related to the propositions in God's mind insofar as we are related to God.

In sum, propositions are abstract objects that are not contingent, and they necessarily exist. Furthermore, propositions may be predicative or impredicative. Nonetheless, propositions are the types of objects that may have the property of being true or being false. They may be believed or disbelieved. They may have a logical relation to other propositions, or they may have a causal relationship between humans and God. It is the notion of relationship and predicative propositions that will require some further analysis.

THE SIGNIFER AND THE SIGNIFIED

In this section, a distinction will be made between the terms of a proposition and the objects designated by those terms. Reasons will be given for why the distinction is necessary. In addition, the relationship between terms, both predicate-terms and subject-terms, and what the terms designate will be analyzed.

Previously, I stated that a predicative proposition predicates some property of an object. For example, the proposition "x is wise" predicates the property "being wise" of some object "x." However, it is not the case that the subject-term "x" is the object. Rather, the subject-term "x" denotes some object "x." Similarly, it is not the case that the predicate-term "wise" is a property. Instead, the predicate-term "wise" denotes some property, "being wise."

There are two reasons for making the distinction between the subject term, the predicate term, and the objects that they denote. First, Plantinga distinguishes between various types of objects and the prop-

erties that appertain to those objects. If one fails to make the aforementioned distinction, one may inadvertently predicate a property to an object which cannot have that property. For example, only propositions can have the property of being true or false, whereas other objects may not.²⁸ Thus, Socrates may have the property of “being snubnosed,” but he cannot have the property of “being true.”²⁹ Similarly, the proposition “Socrates was snubnosed” may have the property of “being true” or “being false,” but it cannot have the property of “being snubnosed.” Second, if there were no distinction between a predicate-term and the property that it designates, then one of two things follows: (1) either the predicate-term is the property, or (2) the property is the predicate term. If the predicate-term is the property, then it follows that propositions have properties such as “being snubnosed,” “being wise,” and “being concrete objects.” However, Plantinga would say that propositions cannot have the aforementioned properties, nor are propositions concrete objects. On the other hand, if the property is the predicate-term, then it follows that objects have predicate-terms. Yet, according to Plantinga, propositions predicate properties of objects, not predicate-terms.³⁰ For example, the term “teacher” does not belong to Dr. Spock, an object. Instead, the property “being a teacher” is a property that belongs to Dr. Spock. Consequently, predicate-terms and subject-terms in propositions are used to designate or denote properties and objects. However, this implies that there must be some type of relationship between the predicate-terms, the subject-terms, and the things that are denoted by them, properties and objects, respectively.

For the sake of brevity, henceforth, predicate-term or subject-term, will be designated as term. Logically, the relationship between a term, *the signifier*, and the object or property, *the signified*, may be either equivocal, analogical, or univocal. In other words, the term may be *totally different* from what is signified; the term may be *partly different* from what is signified, or the term may *not differ* from what is signified.

First, let us consider an equivocal relationship between signifier and signified. If the term “man” denotes a horse, then there is an equivocal relationship between the signifier and the signified. That is to say, the term “man” *differs completely* from what it is suppose to denote, a man.

Second, let us consider an analogical relationship between signifier and signified. If the term “man” denotes a centaur, half man and half

horse, then there is an analogical relationship between the signifier and the signified. In other words, the term “man” *differs in part* from what it is suppose to denote, a man.

Third, let us consider a univocal relationship between signifier and signified. If the term “man” denotes a man, then there is a univocal relationship between the signifier and the signified. That is to say, the term “man” *does not differ at all* from what it is suppose to denote.

Consequently, one sees that only a univocal relationship between the term and that which it signifies allows one to make true and false statements about objects. For if one were to predicate something about a human, but the relationship between one’s term and the object was equivocal, then one’s proposition would not be referring to any humans. Similarly, if one were to predicate something about a human, but the relationship between one’s term and object was analogical, then one’s proposition would not be referring to any humans. Therefore, if propositions predicate properties of objects, the relationship between the term and the object in reality must be univocal.

In sum, propositions predicate properties of objects. There is a distinction between terms, subject-term and predicate-term, in a proposition, and the things that the terms designate, objects and properties. Failure to maintain the aforementioned distinctions may result in predicating improper properties to certain objects. In addition, the distinction implies a relationship between terms and the things that they designate, objects and properties. Logically, the relationship between terms and that which the terms signify may be equivocal, analogical, or univocal. However, only a univocal relationship between the terms and that which is signified allows one to predicate properties of objects. Having laid the groundwork concerning terms and their logically possible relationships to objects, one is now able to turn to the relationships between the term “God” and that which it supposedly denotes, God.

“GOD” AS SIGNIFIER, GOD AS SIGNIFIED

When predicating about God, the relationship between our term “God” and God will be equivocal, analogical, or univocal. In this section, Gordon Kaufman will represent the equivocal God-talk view, the view that espouse that when predicating, the term “God” has an equivocal relationship to God. Thomas Aquinas will represent the analogical

God-talk view, and the section will conclude with Plantinga's view, the univocal God-talk view.

According to Gordon Kaufman, God is beyond the ken of human understanding, and therefore, we do not have access to a real referent (i.e., God); rather, our imagination constructs our available referent. Thus, none of our terms denote God. Consequently, God-talk is impossible.³¹ In other words, no affirmation nor denials can be made about God.

However, Plantinga shows that Kaufman's position is self-stultifying because either Kaufman is making a claim about God, or Kaufman is just speaking about a product of his own imagination, in which case God-talk is still possible.³² In other words, if by the term "God" Kaufman is denoting something in his imagination, then Kaufman's statement is not making a claim about God. On the other hand, if by the term "God," Kaufman is denoting God, then his statement contradicts itself, for it is both affirming that a statement cannot denote God, and it is affirming that a statement can denote God. Thus, it is not the case that the relationship between the term "God" and God are equivocal. If the relationship between the term "God" and God are not equivocal, then it may be the case that they are analogical.

In order to understand the notion of analogical God-talk, three things must first be introduced: (1) what Thomas Aquinas meant by divine simplicity, (2) for Aquinas what terms signify when they are predicated of God, and (3) whether terms about the divine essence are synonymous for Aquinas.

Concerning divine simplicity, Thomas says that in God there is no composition, nor quantity of parts because God does not have a body and because He is not complex in any of the possible ways He could be complex; He does not have composition of form and matter, nor of nature and supposit, nor of essence and existence, nor of genus and specific difference, nor of subject and accidents. It is manifest that God is not composed in any way, but He is altogether simple.³³ In other words, God is not composed of any parts, nor is He divisible in any way.

If God is simple, then God is His essence. Why is this the case? According to Thomas, if a thing exists, whose act of existence is not part of its essence, then it must receive its act of existence as an effect. However, this cannot be said of God because He is the first efficient cause. Therefore, it is not possible to say that there is something in God

called essence and another thing called existence. Moreover, an act of existence is related to an essence as actuality is related to passive potency.³⁴ For example, consider a sixteen-ounce cup. It has the potential to be actually filled with sixteen-ounces of fluid. When the cup is filled with fluid, it no longer has that potential to be filled. In addition, the cup limits how much fluid can be poured in it. Analogously, a created essence has the potential to be actualized by an act of existence, and a created essence limits an act of existence. Thus, the relationship between existence and essence is a relationship between actuality and potentiality. However, in God there exists no passive potentiality because He is pure existence, pure actuality.³⁵ Therefore, God's essence cannot be distinct from His existence. In other words, *what* He is does not differ from *that* He is. Consequently, God is His essence. Thus, any term predicated of God is predicated of His essence. Thomas states, "Accordingly, we conclude that each of these terms signify the divine essence, not comprehensively, but imperfectly."³⁶

Given the simplicity of God, and the fact that multiple terms are predicated of God, it would seem that all terms predicated of the divine essence are synonymous because all terms designate one thing, the divine essence, which is simple. For example, when one predicates "goodness" and "power" of God, these terms have the same extension. In other words, the same thing is being denoted in reality. Thus, it would seem that goodness and power are denoting the same simple essence. However, an objector would say that goodness and power are not the same thing, for a thing may be powerful and not good (e.g., Hitler), or something may be good and not powerful (e.g., Mother Theresa).

In response, Thomas states "multiplicity in God is only according to differences in the intellect and not in being, and we express the same when we say that He is one in reality and many things logically."³⁷ He also states, "Accordingly, the cause of difference or multiplicity in these expressions is on the part of the intellect, which is unable to compass the vision of the divine essence in itself."³⁸ Because we are finite beings, we need a multiplicity of terms to grasp, the simple, infinite essence of God, to which all our terms apply. Consequently, our terms concerning God denote the same thing, the divine essence; nevertheless, the terms are not synonymous. That is to say, our terms as they relate to the divine essence are partly the same and partly different from what is being denoted, the divine essence; our terms are analogical.

According to Plantinga the notion of divine analogy is absurd for two reasons. First, "if God is identical with each of his properties, then each of his properties is identical with each of his properties, so that God has one property. This seems flatly incompatible with the obvious fact that God has several properties."³⁹ Second, "if God is identical with each of his properties, then since each of his properties is a property, he is a property—a self-exemplifying property. . . . 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 isn't a person but a mere abstract object . . . So taken, the simplicity doctrine seems an utter mistake."⁴⁰

In other words, the relationship between our terms and the divine essence is not analogical. Thus, one finds that Plantinga denies that the relationship between the term "God" and God is equivocal, and he denies that it is analogical. Consequently, the relationship between the term "God" and God are univocal.

IMPLICATIONS OF UNIVOCAL GOD-TALK

What are the implications of univocal God-talk? There are at least four. First, it means that properties apply to God in the same manner that they apply to sensible objects. For example, when I say, "that steak was good," whatever is meant by good, not only does that property belong to the steak, but it also belongs to God. Thus, God-talk is possible and meaningful.

Second, it implies that there can only be a one to one relationship between a term and a property. Why is this the case? If one looks back at Plantinga's denial of analogy, we find that different terms cannot denote one and the same property, for if they did, the terms would be synonymous. For example, imagine that the terms "goodness" and "power" denote a property "x." Does this property "x" exemplify "goodness" or does it exemplify "power"? It cannot exemplify both; otherwise, the terms "goodness" and "power" would be synonymous. However, the terms "goodness" and "power" are not synonymous. Consequently, there can only be a one to one relationship between a term and the property that it denotes.

Third, if one maintains that there can only be a one to one relationship between a term and the property, then one must presuppose that

the property is simple. In other words, in the aforementioned example, it was presupposed that "x" was not constituted of other properties, for had "x" been constituted of other properties (e.g., "y" and "z"), then property "y" could be power and property "z" could be goodness.⁴¹

Fourth, if multiple terms can be predicated of an object or property, then the property or object must be complex, composed of properties. For example, God is said to be "good," "wise," "omniscient," etc. Therefore, corresponding to each one of these terms, there is a property to which the term is related. Thus, God must be complex.⁴²

In conclusion, we find that Plantinga denies equivocal and analogical God-talk. Consequently, Plantinga affirms univocal God-talk, which implies four things: (1) God-talk is meaningful and possible, (2) there can only be a one to one relationship between a term and a property, (3) some properties are simple, not composed of parts, and (4) if multiple terms can be predicated of an object (e.g., God), then each term must have a property to which it corresponds.⁴³

As will be shown, implications (2), (3), and (4) will be inimical to Plantinga's ontology because given his notion of existence and necessary existence, absurdities arise.

THE PROPERTY OF EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON THE PROPERTY OF NECESSARY EXISTENCE

This section will examine the (1) property of existence, (2) the distinction between the necessity of the property of existence and necessary existence, (3) the distinction between necessary beings and contingent beings, (4) the dependence of contingent beings on the property of existence, (5) the dependence of the property of existence on the property of necessary existence, and (6) the importance of the property of necessary existence.

If an object exists, it must have the property of existence. Plantinga says, "Among the properties essential to all objects is existence . . . And indeed it [the property of existence] is special; like self-identity, existence is essential to each object and necessarily so."⁴⁴ That is to say, regardless of whether an object exists in a possible world,⁴⁵ or in the actual world the object necessarily has the property of existence. Stated another way it could be said that no object can exist if it does not have

the property of existence. Consequently, existence is at least a necessary condition for objects. However, if existence is at least a necessary condition for objects, does it not follow that all objects necessarily exist?

No! According to Plantinga, there is a distinction between (1) an object necessarily having the property of existence, and (2) an object existing necessarily. In other words, (1) states that *if* an object is to exist, it must have the property of existence. For example, if Dr. Spock is to exist in any possible world,⁴⁶ then it is necessary for Dr. Spock to have the property of existence in whatever world in which Dr. Spock may exist. However, Dr. Spock does not have to exist in all possible worlds. In contradistinction, (2) states that an object necessarily exists in all possible worlds, and it is impossible that an object fails to exist in any possible world. For example, God exists in all possible worlds, and He cannot fail to exist in any possible world. Consequently, God is a necessary being.⁴⁷

A necessary being is an object that exists in all possible worlds. In other words, there is no possible world in which this object fails to exist. What type of objects are necessary beings? According to Plantinga, numbers, properties, pure sets, propositions, states of affairs, and God are necessary beings.⁴⁸ Yet, if some objects are necessary beings, whereas other objects are not necessary beings, what accounts for the distinction?

That which differentiates necessary beings from non-necessary beings, which henceforth I will call contingent beings, is the property of necessary existence.⁴⁹ In other words, numbers, properties, pure sets, propositions, states of affairs, and God have the property of necessary existence, whereas contingent beings do not have this property.⁵⁰ For example, the reason that Dr. Spock does not exist in every possible world is because he lacks the property of necessary existence, and the reason that God exists in all possible worlds is because God has the property of necessary existence.

Consequently, contingent beings **depend** on the property of existence. What is meant by “depend” is not obvious, so I will take time to explicate. According to Plantinga, if an object exists in any world, whether possible or actual, it must have the property of existence.⁵¹ No object can exist without the property of existence.⁵² However, it is possible that no contingent beings exist in a possible world. Nevertheless,

the property of existence necessarily exists in that world because all properties have the property of necessary existence, “the property that an object has if it exists in every possible world.”⁵³ Thus, the property of existence exists in all possible worlds. That is to say, the property of existence can exist apart from any contingent being, but no contingent being can exist without the property of existence. Consequently, contingent beings depend on the property of existence for their existence.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the property of existence “depends” on the property of necessary existence. Without the property of necessary existence, the property of existence could not exist in all possible worlds.⁵⁵ Yet, the property of necessary existence can exist without the property of existence. For example, God, propositions, and states of affairs *have* the property of necessary existence, yet none of the aforementioned objects *are* the property of existence.⁵⁶ Thus, the property of existence depends on the property of necessary existence in order to exist in all possible worlds, but the property of necessary existence does not depend on the property of existence to exist in all possible worlds.⁵⁷

Therefore, if contingent beings depend on the property of existence for their existence, and the property of existence depends on the property of necessary existence for its existence in all possible worlds, it follows that all contingent beings ultimately depend on the property of necessary existence. For example, Dr. Spock, a contingent being, is dependent on the property of existence in whatever world in which he exists, and the property of existence is dependent upon the property of necessary existence in order to exist in all possible worlds. Hence, Dr. Spock is indirectly dependent on the property of necessary existence in every possible world where Dr. Spock may exist. Similarly, God, a necessary being, has the property of existence, which itself has the property of necessary existence. Therefore, God depends on the property of necessary existence.⁵⁸

One sees that the property of necessary existence is *the* foundational property in Plantinga’s ontological system, for if the property of existence lacked the property of necessary existence, the property of existence would not exist in all possible worlds. Also, if the property of existence did not exist in all possible worlds, then states of affairs, God, properties, and proposition, which exist in all possible worlds, would either (1) exist without the property of existence, which according to Plantinga is not possible, or (2) states of affairs, God, properties, pure

sets, and propositions would not exist in all possible worlds. In addition, if the property of necessary existence did not exist, there would be no possible worlds, nor would there be an actual world. Thus, let us examine the property of necessary existence.

THE PROPERTY OF NECESSARY EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON THE THOMISTIC DOCTRINE OF ANALOGY

This section examines: (1) the distinction between necessarily having a property and the necessary existence of that property, (2) the property of necessary existence existing by virtue of the property of existence, (3) the property of necessary existence existing by virtue of the property of necessary existence, (4) the property of necessary existence existing by virtue of itself, and (5) the problems with the property of necessary existence existing by virtue of itself.

Plantinga's notion of necessary existence is problematic because it fails to take into account the distinction between necessarily having a property and the necessary existence of that property. In other words, Plantinga says that if an object exists, it necessarily has the property of existence. For example, if Dr. Spock exists in any possible world, he necessarily has the property of existence in that world. Yet, the existence of that object is not necessary. For example, Dr. Spock need not exist in all possible worlds. Similarly, a property is a type of object.⁵⁹ Therefore, if the property of necessary existence exists, then one must ask, "By virtue of what property is the property of necessary existence a necessary being?"

The property of necessary existence exists by virtue of some property other than itself, or it exists by virtue of nothing other than itself. If the property of necessary existence exists by virtue of something other than itself, what can it be? Probably, it exists because of some property. However, in Plantinga's system, objects exist because they have either the property of existence or the property of necessary existence. In other words, if an object lacks the property of existence, it cannot exist, and if an object lacks the property of necessary existence, it cannot exist in all possible worlds. Therefore, let us examine whether the property of necessary existence can exist because it has the property of existence or because it has the property of necessary existence.

If the property of necessary existence exists because it has the prop-

erty of existence, then it follows that the property of existence depends on the property of necessary existence for its existence, and the property of necessary existence depends on the property of existence for its existence. However, this is circular, and it would entail that the effect is ontologically prior to the cause. For example, if property "A" exists because it has property "B," then existence of property "A," which is the effect, results from having property "B," which is the cause. Similarly, if property "B" exists because it has property "A," then the existence of property "B," the effect, results from having property "A," the cause. However, such a notion is as absurd as saying that one gave birth to one's father, who in turn gave birth to oneself. Consequently, the property of necessary existence cannot depend on the property of existence for its existence.

On the other hand, if the property of necessary existence exists because it has the property of necessary existence, then an infinite regress will ensue. For example, let property "N1" represent the property of necessary existence, and let us say that "N1" exists because it has property "N2," the property of necessary existence. One might ask by virtue of what property does "N2" exist? One may respond that "N2" exists because it has "N3," the property of necessary existence. One can quickly see that an infinite regress will ensue, so there would be no ontological ground for any necessary beings, and hence, no ontological grounds for Plantinga's ontology.⁶⁰ Consequently, if the property of necessary existence is going to exist in Plantinga's system, it may not do so by virtue of the property of necessary existence.

If the property of necessary existence cannot exist by virtue of another, then it remains to be seen if the property of necessary existence may exist by virtue of itself. In other words, can the property of necessary existence exist such that it is not dependent on another property for its existence. For example, if property "N1" is the property of necessary existence, can it exist in all possible worlds and not depend on any other property for its existence? This seems to be the position that Plantinga would like to maintain; however, this position is problematic because of implications (2), (3), and (4) in the section entitled *Implications of Univocal God talk*.

If we recall according to Plantinga there can only be a one to one relationship between a term and a property. In addition, some properties are simple. Furthermore, if multiple terms can be predicated of an

object, then each term must have a property to which it corresponds. However, the property of necessary existence can have two properties predicated of it: *aseity*, the property by which an object exists independent of any other properties,⁶¹ and *existential causality*, the property which an object must have to bring another object or property into existence.⁶² Therefore, it must be the case that the property of necessary existence is complex, composed of properties, and this is problematic. Why?

The property of aseity is a property by which an object exists independent of any other property. Consequently, the property of aseity is not dependent on any other property for its existence. Yet, the property of aseity cannot sustain another object or property in existence. An analogy may be helpful. Just because an individual can keep himself afloat in a pool, it does not follow that he can keep other people afloat as well. Similarly, just because the property of aseity can exist without depending on any other properties, it does not follow that it can bring or sustain any other properties in existence. Hence, the property of aseity can exist in all possible worlds, but it cannot cause anything to exist. As a result, the property of aseity cannot bring the property of "existential causality" into existence.

On the other hand, if the property of existential causality exists, it can cause objects other than itself to exist, but it does not have the property of aseity. Therefore, it is dependent on some other property for its existence, and this other property cannot be the property of aseity, for the property of aseity cannot cause something else to come into existence. Moreover, the property of "existential causality" cannot depend on the property of "existential causality" because an infinite regress will ensue.⁶³ Consequently, in Plantinga's system, there is no property that can bring the property of existential causality into existence; thus, the property of existential causality cannot exist. As a result, the property of necessary existence is reducible to the property of aseity, which can only account for its own existence. Therefore, the property of necessary existence is a simple property that can exist in virtue of itself, but it cannot account for the existence of anything else.

Plantinga can escape this dilemma by affirming that the property of aseity and the property of existential causality can both be predicated of the simple property of necessary existence. However, if he does so, then it is possible to predicate multiple properties of a simple entity (e.g.,

God), and he has to allow for Aquinas' analogical God-talk.

In sum, the property of necessary existence cannot exist in virtue of another property because either an infinite regress will ensue, and there will be no ontological ground for Plantinga's ontology, or a vicious circle will result, and an effect will be ontologically prior to its cause. Thus, the property of necessary existence must exist in virtue of itself. However, just because a property can exist independent of any other property (e.g., aseity), it does not follow that it can sustain other properties or objects in existence. Therefore, the property of necessary existence must be a complex property composed of the property of "aseity" and "existential causality." However, one quickly finds that the property of 'aseity' cannot bring anything into existence, and the property of 'existential causality' cannot be brought into existence; hence, the property of necessary existence is reducible to the simple property of aseity, which cannot account for the existence of any property other than itself. Plantinga can escape this dilemma by allowing multiple properties to be predicated of the property of necessary existence, a simple property, but this would allow Aquinas to have analogical God-talk.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

In this section, I will deal with four possible objections: (1) the objection from creation, (2) the objection from states of affairs and necessary existence, (3) the objection from "existential causality," and (4) the objection from necessary condition.

First, some may argue that the property of existential causality is not necessary in Plantinga's system because God accounts for existential causality. However, if one were to object in this fashion, one would show that one has not understood Plantinga. In Plantinga's system, God does not confer existence on objects; instead, God actualizes possible worlds so that a certain state of affairs obtains. As a matter of fact, the existence of propositions, states of affairs, and possible worlds are not within God's control; they exist independent of God.⁶⁴ God is not the Creator, who brings objects into existence. He is the Actualizer, who makes possible worlds into an actual world.

Second, some may argue that I have misunderstood Plantinga. It is not the case that an object exists in all possible worlds because it has the property of necessary existence; rather, it has the property of neces-

sary existence because it exists in all possible worlds. One needs to ask, given that possible worlds are not actual, how can they cause necessary beings, who are actual, to have the property of necessary existence? In other words, how can that which has the potential to be actual, but is not actual, actualize something? This is to put the cart before the horse.

Third, some may argue that Plantinga never mentions the property called “existential causality,” so mentioning the property of “existential causality” is a strawman fallacy. However, this objection fails for two reasons. First, regardless of whether the expression “existential causality” is mentioned in Plantinga’s writings, nevertheless, at least two different properties can be predicated of the property of necessary existence. The first property is “the property by which an object exists independent of any other property.” The second property that can be predicated of the property of necessary existence is “the property which causes the existence of some other object or property.” The former property Plantinga names aseity. Because Plantinga does not give a name to the latter property, I have called the latter property existential causality. Whether, you want to call the latter property “existential causality” or “bubba” or “property x” is inconsequential, for Plantinga has conflated the ability to exist independent of other properties with the ability to cause something else to exist. Second, the objection confuses the *teaching* of a fact with the *expression* of a fact. For example, Christians affirm the notion that God is a Trinity. However, the term “Trinity” is never used in the Bible. It does not follow that such a fact is not taught in the Bible because the term is not used in the Bible.⁶⁵ Similarly, just because Plantinga does not use the term “existential causality,” it does not follow that the fact is not implicitly expressed via the property of necessary existence.

Fourth, some may argue that the property of existence is only a necessary condition for the existence of object, and the property of necessary existence is only a necessary condition for the existence of the property of existence. Consequently, neither the property of necessary existence nor the property of existence plays a causal role in Plantinga’s system. However, if one grants the aforementioned, then the perennial question must be asked, “Why does anything exist?” In other words, if one grants that the properties of existence and necessary existence are not necessary and sufficient conditions, then Plantinga’s system does not account for the existence of anything. In addition, although neces-

sary beings have the property of existence and the property of necessary existence, nonetheless, having these properties is not sufficient to account for their existence. Therefore, there must be something apart from the aforementioned properties that is causing God, propositions, states of affairs, etc. to exist, yet Plantinga has not told us what this may be.⁶⁶ Lastly, Plantinga affirms that properties and abstract objects can stand in a causal relationship.⁶⁷

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Plantinga holds a univocal notion between terms and property. Consequently, there is a one to one relationship between a term and a property. If multiple terms can be predicated of a property, then the object must be complex. For Plantinga, existence is a property that is dependent on the property of necessary existence for its existence. In addition, all contingent beings are dependent on the property of existence, and the property of existence is dependent on the property of necessary existence. Thus, the property of necessary existence is foundational to Plantinga’s ontology. When one examines the property of necessary existence, one finds that it cannot exist by virtue of the property of necessary existence for an infinite regress would ensue, nor can the property of necessary existence exist by virtue of the property of existence because the effect would be ontologically prior to the cause. Hence, one finds that necessary existence must exist in virtue of itself. But this is problematic because it entails that the property of necessary existence has both the property of aseity and the property of existential causality. Therefore, either multiple properties can be predicated of a simple property, which is contrary to Plantinga’s denial of divine simplicity, or the property of necessary existence is complex.

If necessary existence is a complex property that contains the property of aseity and existential causality, then one finds that the property of existential causality does not exist in any possible world, for it cannot be caused to exist. Hence, only aseity can be predicated of the property of necessary existence, so the property of necessary existence cannot account for the existence of anything other than itself. Consequently, either Plantinga must affirm that multiple properties can be predicated of a simple object, or the property of necessary existence cannot cause anything to exist. The property of necessary existence cannot be used to

account for the existence of propositions, states of affairs, properties, sets, and other necessary beings. However, if the property of necessary existence cannot account for the existence of any object, then there is no account for the existence of the property of existence. Thus, there is no account for the existence of any object, for the existence of all objects had been accounted for by the property of existence. In other words, Plantinga has given no account why anything exists.

Furthermore, if it is argued that the property of necessary existence and the property of existence do not play a causal role, then the objection is contrary to Plantinga's notions that property and objects can stand in a causal relation. One needs to ask, "In what sense is Plantinga's system an ontology?" Typically an ontological system gives an account as to (1) what type of things exist, (2) how they exist, and (3) why things exist. In other words, why is it that there is something rather than nothing? Maybe this question is not philosophically important to Plantinga because the roots of his Platonism can ultimately be traced back to Parmenides, for whom "there is [that which is] and it is impossible for it not to be."⁶⁸ In other words, objects just exist, and there is no reason or cause for their existence. However, for the classical Christian, who believes in *ex nihilo* creation, Plantinga's answer is contrary to the faith.

In conclusion, historically the church has affirmed that God has a simple nature, and traditionally, natures account for what things are. Contemporary analytical philosophers have come up with a new conception of nature which accounts for the individuation of things, but it does not account for *what* a thing is. To account for what things are, contemporary analytical philosophers refer to the amalgamation of properties, which are associated to an individuating essence. This new conception of nature results in a new understanding of God, which affirms that God is not simple. Among those who deny the simplicity of God is Alvin Plantinga who embraces this new understanding of nature. Consequently, Plantinga explicitly denies the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. Nevertheless, his ontological system relies on the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. Without the Thomistic doctrine of analogy, the property of necessary existence, which is the foundation of his ontology, cannot account for the existence of anything. Therefore, though Plantinga rejects the Thomistic doctrine of analogy explicitly, he affirms it implicitly, and in doing so, he inadvertently does two things: (1) he opens the door for the classical Christian to affirm that God's nature is

simple, and (2) he implies that the traditional notion of nature should not have been abandoned for the contemporary notion of nature.

NOTES

1. Generally, the terms "nature," "essence," and "substance" are used interchangeably. Though there are technical philosophical differences between these terms, the differences have no impact on what is being stated in this paper, and the terms will be used interchangeably.

2. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper, 1880), 24-25.

3. *Ibid.*, 66.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 606.

5. Contemporary analytical philosophers tend to use the term "essence" as opposed to "nature." Therefore, in presenting the contemporary position, the term "essence" will be used.

6. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., s.v. "essentialism."

7. The notion of divine simplicity affirms that God is not composed of parts; God is not divisible in any way, potentially nor actually.

8. Alvin Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, ed. Matthew Davidson (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22-23.

9. *Ibid.*, 110.

10. *Ibid.*, 139.

11. *Ibid.*, 197-198.

12. Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), 47.

13. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 48.

14. Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 44-45.

15. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 37.

16. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 36-37.

17. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 102-120.

18. Someone may argue if it is contradictory to assert that the same person *actually* exists in more than one possible world, then it is just as contradictory to assert that the same person possibly exists in more than one possible world. However, for some reason, objects existing in multiple possible worlds do not seem to be a problem for Plantinga.

19. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 78, 79, 146.
20. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 110.
21. Ibid., 229.
22. Ibid., 231.
23. Ibid., 91.
24. Ibid., 229, 233.
25. It is possible for a proposition to be true, and yet it is not believed, and it is possible for a proposition to be false, and yet it is believed. Just because a proposition is believed, it does not follow that it is true.
26. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 233.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 110.
29. Socrates can never have the property "being true" though one may say "Socrates is a true individual." However, in this sense, it is being used metaphorically to denote that Socrates is the type of person who does not lie.
30. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 200.
31. Gordon D. Kaufman, *God the Problem* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 86, 111.
32. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 24.
33. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, Opera Omnia (Romae: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1882), I^a q. 3 a. 7 co.
34. Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, I^a q.3 a.4 co.
35. Ibid., I^a q. 12 a.1 co.
36. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God (Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei)* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1952), Book III, q.7 a.5.
37. Aquinas, *On the Power of God (Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei)*, Book III q.7 a.6.
38. Ibid.
39. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 47.
40. Ibid.
41. It should be noted that Plantinga's ontology, the theory of nature of reality, will allow for a complex property, a property composed of other properties. However, ultimately complex properties are reducible to simple properties; otherwise, an infinite regress would ensue, and one would end up with a finite property made of infinite parts. This is absurd because the parts would be greater than the whole. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 47. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 10.

42. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 140.
43. Ibid.
44. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 110.
45. A possible world is a world that could have been actual, but it is not actual.
46. Included in the possible worlds is the actual world because before God actualized the actual world in which we live, it was a possible world. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 47.
- Moreover, only impossible worlds cannot be actualized. A world whose book of propositions contains contradictions cannot be actualized. For example, if the proposition "there is a square circle" was contained in a world book, then the world containing that state of affairs could not obtain. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 48.
47. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 110.
48. Ibid.
49. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 61.
50. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 110.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 198.
53. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 61.
54. In logical terms, the property of existence is a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of some object.
55. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 61.
56. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 110.
57. Necessary existence is necessary and sufficient condition for an object or property to exist in all possible worlds.
58. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 68.
59. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 47. If it is objected that properties are not objects, one need only remember that according to Plantinga, if God were simple, then He would be a property, an abstract object; hence, properties are a type of abstract object. In addition, properties, propositions, God, and states affair all have the property of necessary existence. "the property that an object has if it exists in every possible world." Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 61.
60. Someone may assert that an ontological ground is not needed, but the objection would not represent Plantinga's position. For necessary beings (e.g., states of affairs, propositions, properties, and God) are the foundation for his ontology. To assert that an ontological basis is not needed is to assert

that states of affairs, propositions, properties, and God are not needed in Plantinga's system.

61. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 54.

62. In the same manner that "goodness" and "power" cannot denote the same simple property, "aseity" and "existential causality" cannot denote the same property because "aseity" denotes the property of existing independent of any other property, whereas "existential causality" denotes the ability to bring something into existence, or it denotes the ability to maintain something in existence. However, existing independent of any property is not the same as bringing something into existence, nor is it the same as sustaining something in existence.

63. For an explanation of why an infinite regress would ensue, one need only look at the example of necessary existence depending on the property of necessary existence at the beginning of this section. *Mutatis Mutandis*, the same applies to the property of existential causality.

64. Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?*, 78, 79, 146.

65. Rom. 15:6, Titus 2:13, Acts 5:3-4.

66. The notion that God is being caused to exist by another does not seem to be problematic for Plantinga because if the property of existence is causal, then God is being caused to exist by that property. Moreover, even if the property of existence is not causing God to exist, nonetheless, it is one of many material causes, properties that cause God to be *what* He is. Consequently, in Plantinga's system, either *that* God is or *what* God is or both are caused by some property or properties.

67. Plantinga, *Essays in the Metaphysics of Modality*, 233.

68. Milton Charles Nahm, *Selections from Early Greek Philosophy* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), 92.