

Divine Perfection

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DIVINE PERFECTION

In recent years a number of arguments have been advanced to show that there are conceptual difficulties with a variety of divine attributes. Some have claimed that there is an inherent inconsistency in the notion of omnipotence, others that omnipotence was logically incompatible with omniscience or omnibenevolence, and yet others that omniscience is irreconcilable with immutability.

I shall attempt to show that these seemingly independent objections may all be met by a single argument based on a simple and fundamental principle involving divine nature in general. If what I am going to say should turn out to be correct then in addition to providing a solution to a considerable number of puzzles we shall be in the advantageous position of having the means for solving any number of other problems ingenious philosophers may construct in the future concerning alleged inconsistencies involving any of the powers and virtues traditionally ascribed to God.

I

One of the problems that deserves more attention than any other of its kind is that of reconciling a belief in divine immutability with the doctrine that God knows everything there is to be known. A. Kenny in his important book *The God of the Philosophers*, as recently as 1979, concludes the chapter devoted to this issue by saying:

A believer in divine omniscience must, it seems, give up belief in divine immutability (p. 48).

The problem, first formulated by Norman Kretzman, may be stated briefly as follows. An omniscient being always knows, among other things, what time it is. A being who knows at time t_1 that it is t_1 , while at time t_2 he knows something else, namely, that it is no longer t_1 but t_2 , undergoes a cognitive change, and is therefore not immutable.

The reason why the particular difficulty in reconciling these two divine attributes may deserve special attention is that it presents us with a singularly slippery issue with more than the usual number of opportunities to fall into error. In the context of this problem there are a variety of sources for confusion: there are unclarities surrounding the theistic notion of immut-

ability; questions concerning what constitutes genuine, as opposed to nominal changes, and of course the notorious difficulties concerning the nature of time.

II

In a recent review of Kenny's book James F. Ross asserts that he is able to show very swiftly that, in spite of what he calls 'the blizzard of considerations' from a large number of philosophers the problem requires no solution at all, since it cannot even be stated coherently:

Where is God to know time? With the earth rotating at a thousand miles per hour, in solar orbit at 65,000 m.p.h., with the sun moving at hundreds of thousands of m.p.h. in the outer reaches of the Milky Way that sweeps at millions both in rotation and away from other 10^{11} galaxies with 10^{22} stars, where is it that God must know 'the' time? The whole project is cosmologically incoherent.¹

Ross seems to make use of the result of Special Relativity, according to which time moves at a different rate in different systems that move relative to one another. But then Special Relativity also teaches us that this is so because light travels at a finite speed and there is no signal travelling faster than light. This of course is merely a contingent matter; logically it is clearly possible for signals to travel at any speed. There is no reason therefore why an omnipotent being should not have at his disposal such a signal – one which, while undetectable by other, enables him to over-come the limitations placed on us by virtue of not having access to faster-than-light signals. It does not even seem too much to assume that an omnipotent being may survey instantaneously the whole of the universe without the aid of any physical signals.

But perhaps Ross wishes to insist that all that matters is human time and that in human terms there just is no single, definite answer to the question 'what time is it now?' throughout the whole universe. Be that as it may, one is still at a loss to see what it is that worried Ross when he asked 'where is God to know the time?'. Surely the answer is *anywhere*! Those who believe in divine omnipresence agree that since His presence fills every part in space, He is in a position at every point to know the correct answer. But even if God is outside physical space He is supposed to know everything about every nook in the universe including its position in time.

III

There seems however a better reason for claiming that the problem of the incompatibility between omniscience and immutability does in fact not arise. P. A. Bertucci in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* offers a simple explanation of the notion of immutability, an explanation which provides a

¹ *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXIX (1982), 413.

convincing reason why a theist should want to insist ascribing that attribute to God. Bertucci says:

A perfect being, one who is 'all finished' cannot be a changing being. Why? Because change, be it in a cabbage or in God, must involve either adding something, for better or worse. If a being is perfect, what can there be to add or to subtract? He would not allow himself to lose anything good, and being perfect, nothing better could be added to his nature. The conclusion is inevitable: God does not change; he is immutable.¹

From this it follows that it is quite reasonable in general to maintain that a mere change in knowledge – of even the most trivial proposition – amounts to a lack of immutability in the required sense. For suppose there is some time t_1 at which God knows that p and some other time t_2 at which He does not. It inevitably follows that He suffered a certain amount of deterioration between t_1 and t_2 since He has lost a piece of knowledge represented by p . Consequently at t_2 He is no longer absolutely omniscient and thus not absolutely perfect. Suppose, however, that $p =$ It is t_1 now. God of course knows p to be true at t_1 and inevitably He fails to know the same at t_2 . But not knowing at t_2 that p does not represent any kind of ignorance since it is not the case at t_2 that p is true and yet God fails to know it. Therefore 'losing the knowledge at t_2 that p ' is not a genuine loss of any knowledge; God is as fully knowledgeable at t_2 as at t_1 ; not one iota of excellence has been added to or subtracted from the nature of God between (the time) of t_1 and t_2 . Consequently no change that is a genuine change in the sense relevant to the question of divine immutability has taken place.

It is obvious therefore that an incompatibilist (i.e. someone who holds that divine omniscience and immutability are incompatible) must be subscribing to a different view than the one just presented concerning the nature of the attribute of immutability. He would insist that any transformation, even one which does not in the slightest affect the excellence of the one undergoing it, is, merely by virtue of its amounting to a lack of absolute constancy, an imperfection.

Greater clarity may perhaps be achieved by looking briefly at another example. Let us suppose that it is equally compatible with divine omnibenevolence, and with all aspects of God's plan for the universe, that in 1985 the rain in Spain be higher, as that it be lower, than the average. Let us also suppose that until last week it was God's will that 1985 should be an unusually wet year in Spain, but then He decided just the opposite. It would be fair to assume that Bertucci would consider this to be compatible with God's immutability. Since we have stipulated that making it rain in Spain in 1985 in excess of the average does not render God any more or any less excellent than making it an unusually dry year it is impossible to say that today He is in any way more or less perfect than He was until a week ago.

¹ (Englewood Cliffs, 1951), p. 309.

The change in the divine mind is not to be regarded as 'real' in the sense that it should affect His immutability. On the other hand the incompatibilist does not regard it as sufficient that divine perfection is compatible with either weather pattern in Spain. The fact that there is no significant difference between these two alternatives ensures according to the incompatibilist only, that both God *always* wanting 1985 to be a wet year, as well as Him *always* wanting it to be very dry, are compatible with divine perfection. But not under the circumstances of our story. Here He has changed His mind. That in itself, for the incompatibilist, constitutes some negative quality. A change of mind implies a certain degree of fickleness; it suggests that something happened to *cause* this change, which of course would mean that He was subject to external influences.

We shall continue now with our discussion on the assumption that the second view is not necessarily illegitimate.

IV

Now we turn our attention to an elementary analysis of the temporal concepts relevant to our topic. This is bound to lead us to the conclusion that the alleged incompatibility between divine omniscience and immutability is based on misunderstanding.

During the present century hundreds of articles have been written about the relative merits and shortcomings of the two fundamentally different views philosophers have held concerning the nature of time. The first view, which accords more with common sense, has been championed by J. E. M. McTaggart. He held that the NOW is something that moves relative to the series of points that constitute time. Temporal points from the future, together with the events that occur at those points, keep approaching the NOW, and after momentarily coinciding with it they recede further and further into the past. The NOW is, of course, not conceived as some sort of an object but rather as the point in time at which any individual who is temporally extended is alive, real or Exists with a capital E. I may be occupying all the points between the year 1900, my date of birth, and 2000, the date of my departure from this world, but only one point along this one-hundred-year chunk-of-time is of paramount importance at any given instance, namely, the point that is alive in the present, the point that exists not in my memory or is anticipated by me, but of which I am immediately aware as existing in the present.

A typical event, on this view, to begin with is in the distant future; then it becomes situated in the less distant future; it keeps approaching us until it becomes an event occurring in the present. As soon as this happens the event loses its presentness and acquires the property of being in the near past. The degree of its pastness continually increases. Thus, events approach us (by 'us' I mean that temporal part of our temporally extended selves which

is subject to our direct awareness) from the distant future, become present and then recede further into the past.

According to Bertrand Russell and his followers this is a completely false picture. No event has the monadic property of being in the future, as such, to begin with. Consequently, it can never shed this property. An event, E_1 , may occur later than some other event, E_0 , but if this is so at all then it is true for ever that E_1 occurs later than E_0 . Neither can any event be in the past. E_1 may be earlier than E_2 , but once more, if this is so then the fact that E_1 occurs earlier than E_2 is an eternal fact. Indeed, all the temporal properties of events and moments are permanent. E_1 has the unchanging relationship of either before, or after, or simultaneous with every other temporal entity in the universe. Apart from moments and the events that occur at them, there is no extra entity such as the NOW, to which E_1 may have a changing relationship. Also, E_1 is as real at t_1 as E_0 is at t_0 and E_2 at t_2 ; that is, all events are equally real and alive at the times at which they occur and not at others, and they do not come momentarily to life as they are embraced by the NOW.

The controversy concerning temporal relations expresses itself also in argument about what kinds of temporal statements exist. According to McTaggart there are two fundamentally different kinds of temporal statements – A-statements and B-statements. The latter are the more familiar kind, for B-statements, like all statements in general, have permanent truth-values. ' E_1 is before E_2 ' is a typical B-statement, which if true at any time is true at all times, and if false at any time is false at all times. A-statements, on the other hand, are statements whose truth-value is subject to change. ' E_1 is in the future' is an example of an A-statement, as it is true if asserted at any time which is earlier than the occurrence of E_1 but false if asserted at any other time.

Russell denies that there are any A-statements. He holds that all statements have permanent truth-values. The most important point for our purposes is that a sentence such as 'E is in the future' in Russell's opinion expresses a different proposition when uttered at different times. One version of this kind of analysis is due to H. Reichenbach and is also embraced by several other philosophers, among them J. J. C. Smart, according to which ' E_1 is in the future' is reduced to the B-statement ' E_1 is after the event of the utterance of this token', where 'this token' refers to the sentence-token just being uttered. Consequently, when this sentence is uttered on two different occasions, once before E_1 and the second time after E_1 , the first time it is asserted the proposition is true and is unalterably so. The second time the proposition is asserted, it is a different one, because unlike the first proposition, which claimed that E_1 is later than the first token, it claims that E_1 is later than the second token. The second proposition is false and has always been false.

It should be pointed out that the great majority of analytic philosophers

at present accept Russell's view, a view which carries the advantage among others that it presupposes a considerably more parsimonious ontology. It is, however, unmistakably clear that on this view it is not possible even to begin to state Kretzman's problem. For let ' T_1 ' symbolize the token 'Today is Friday' that is uttered on Friday and consequently the statement it conveys is equivalent to ' S_1 ' = 'The utterance of T_1 is simultaneous with Friday'. Obviously, S_1 is true and remains true for ever, and an omniscient being never ceases to know S_1 . On Saturday one may utter 'Today is not Friday' and T_2 may symbolize that token. Clearly then the statement conveyed by T_2 is ' S_2 ' = 'The utterance of T_2 is *not* simultaneous with Friday', which is true now and was true also yesterday. An omniscient being has the eternal knowledge of both S_1 and S_2 and there is no hint of a problem here.

We are thus forced to consider the possibility that Kretzman wished to raise his problem in the context of McTaggart's view. According to McTaggart 'Today is Friday' when uttered on Friday and 'Today is *not* Friday' when uttered on Saturday do in fact make conflicting statements since they assign different temporal locations to the NOW. Still, even McTaggart would not deny that the statement Σ_1 conveyed by 'Today is Friday' when uttered on day d implies and is implied by the statement Σ_2 conveyed by 'Yesterday was Friday' when uttered on day $(d + 1)$. Anyone knowing the truth-value of Σ_1 and the trivial fact that Σ_1 and Σ_2 have the same truth-value, knows the truth-value Σ_2 . An omniscient being who on Friday is cognizant of the truth of Σ_1 is also fully aware of the truth of Σ_2 . He continues to know equally well one day later that both Σ_1 and Σ_2 are true. Hence the passage of time does not change what a temporally fully informed being knows.

Interestingly enough Kenny, who insists on the genuineness of Kretzman's problem, considers this point, but believes he has a major objection against it:

'Today is Friday' on Friday does not express the same knowledge as 'Yesterday was Friday' on Saturday. This can be proved by the argument used by Prior... what I am glad about when I am glad that today is Friday is not at all necessarily the same thing as when I am glad yesterday was Friday. Perhaps Friday is payday, on which I always go out for a massive carouse with my friends: when it is Friday, I am glad today is Friday, but during Saturday's hangover I am not at all glad that yesterday was Friday. Moreover, the power that the knowledge that it is Friday gives me on Friday (e.g. the power to keep engagements made for Friday) is quite different from the very limited power which is given by Saturday's knowledge that yesterday was Friday if unaccompanied by the realization on Friday that it was indeed Friday.¹

Surely, however, this argument in no way implies that knowing Σ_1 amounts not precisely to the same as knowing Σ_2 . Kenny's argument merely illustrates something that no one ever would deny and is illustrated endlessly all the time, that a person may change his attitude towards the same proposition.

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 47.

For example various polls seem to indicate that the statement

S^* = Reagan receives considerably more votes in the Presidential elections of 1980 than Carter

is a statement whose truth was a source of joy to tens of thousands of people for whom by 1982 it constituted a source of sorrow. Clearly no one would want to say that S^* – which is beyond all philosophical controversy, since it is tenseless and clearly of permanent truth-value – has in any way changed its content. Admittedly some of the participants in the survey stated that now they realize that Reagan's assuming the presidency turns out to amount to something different from what some of his supporters expected it would. Obviously, however, there has been no change in the actual meaning of S^* . What the disenchanted people are complaining about is that the President acts differently from the way they were led to believe he would act. Similarly the statement

S° = On Friday I have enough money and so I purchase and consume large quantities of alcohol

has a fixed meaning. Having the knowledge that S° is true is to possess an absolutely unchanging piece of information. Except of course that the very same information may gladden my heart contemplating it on Friday when parched with thirst and turn into a source of regret thinking about it on Saturday while supporting a huge bag of ice on my aching head.

v

While divine knowledge of the right time at any given moment does not seem to create difficulties, a somewhat different problem, not discussed before but also involving time's passage and its apparent incompatibility with immutability, appears to present a more real source of perplexity. It might be claimed for instance that the event of the outbreak of World War II, which of course was always known to God to take place in 1939, was cognitively related to Him very differently at different times. It is correct to say for instance that in 1930 He *foresaw* this event, while in the year 1950 he could *recollect* it as a past event. Hence, rather than attempting to make up a case that the contents of true statements known to God may undergo transformations, we might want to claim that the nature of divine awareness with respect to all events might change: events He used to *anticipate* He later *recalls*.

It seems that the most one can do is to mitigate the amount of change that is bound to take place but not do away with it altogether. It could be claimed that statements like 'I anticipate E' and 'I remember E' ascribe very substantively different properties to me. 'Anticipating E' and 'remembering E', when predicated of me, denote very different mental states. At t , when I am predicting E, E is not recorded in my memory, but I may be trying

to form an image of E on the basis of its assumed resemblance to some events that are recorded in my memory; I may also be trying to guess the precise nature of E while looking forward (impatiently or apprehensively, etc.) to its occurrence. At t_1 , on the other hand, when I am recalling E, E is recorded in my memory but with decreasing vividness as time goes on; there is no role for acts of imagination or guessing and I may be engaged in conducting a post mortem while looking back (with relief or regret) on the cessation of E.

There are theologians who would insist that nothing of all this is remotely applicable to God. Events are not engraved in His memory; image forming and guessing has no role to play with Him, and the event of the outbreak of World War II was precisely as vivid to Him a thousand years ago as it is now or will be a thousand years hence. He certainly need not search His memory or 'look in a given direction' in order to perceive past events and then 'turn around' and 'look in the opposite direction' in order to perceive a future event. Nor of course do any events arouse in Him emotions like anticipation or nostalgia.

However, with a certain amount of persistence one might still continue to create a difficulty involving immutability. What I mean is, that a philosopher determined to find fault with this particular divine attribute and prepared to make assumption many would refuse to grant could succeed in doing so. The assumption in question is that immutability extends far beyond the properties traditionally ascribed to God and it applies also to relational properties, in particular to the property of *being contemporaneous* with. The objector would thus point out for instance, that at one time God has the property of being contemporaneous with Socrates while at another time He does not.

This objection might be construed in two different ways. It could be claimed to be an empirical objection: it is a fact that a physical universe exists in which there is change, individuals are born while others pass out of existence, in consequence of which God is contemporaneous with different things at different times. One could however, present it as a more basic objection: God is omnibenevolent. His goodness requires that He should create a physical universe. But once there is a physical universe, birth and decay are inevitable and hence the problem. On this construal, what we have is a clash between the attributes of immutability and benevolence.

We shall soon see, however, that upon gaining a basic understanding of the nature of divine attributes all problems disappear, regardless of what assumptions we are prepared to concede to the objector concerning what are genuine properties of God.

It will be useful at this stage to take a very brief look at three difficulties that have been discussed recently by philosophers and which involve the notion of omnipotence.

(1) Originally the following definition was advanced:

X is omnipotent iff X is capable of performing any logically possible action.

Plantinga, however, rejects this as inadequate, since for example an object not created by God does not seem to be an object whose creation requires a logically impossible action, yet God cannot create an object He did not create.

Let us not spend too much time in trying to figure out what exactly Plantinga's objection is supposed to amount to. It is not merely that it is unclear whether one can speak of 'an object God did not create' when there *is no* such object and one might even contend that there *could be no* such object. One could also be wondering: after all presumably God cannot create an object (after t) which He *did* create (at t) since it is reasonable to assume it to be necessarily false that an already existing object is now being created or brought into existence. But then if Plantinga was referring to time before t , where t is the time of that object's creation, then it is hard to see what difficulty there is to begin with. Be that as it may, Plantinga then advances the following:

X is omnipotent iff X is capable of performing any action A such that the proposition ' X performs A ' is logically possible.

Plantinga argues, however, that this definition is also entirely inadequate since it would confer omnipotence on any number of exceedingly feeble beings. Consider for example an almost perfectly impotent person X^* who may be described as 'the man who is capable of nothing except scratching his ear'. It should be quite clear that X^* satisfies the last definition whereby he qualifies as omnipotent.

Because of these difficulties, Plantinga and others have concluded that there just is no adequate definition of omnipotence. Everything seems, however, straightened out once we recall St Anselm's compelling idea that God does not have a large number of independent properties but that all of them are tightly interrelated; they are implied by the central property of being perfect. In the second chapter of the *Proslogium* he claims that it is the essence of our concept of God that He is a being greater than which nothing can be conceived; that is, He is an absolutely perfect being. Further, he claims that if He is a being than which nothing greater can be conceived, then it follows that He is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent and so on for each attribute commonly ascribed to God. But as soon as we view omnipotence as constituting just one of the many manifestations of

divine perfection or of the fact that God is a being greater than which nothing can be conceived, matters appear in a different light and our difficulties disappear. It is clear then that what is essential in connection with divine might is not its infinite magnitude nor its being equal to any task whatever, but that it exists in the sufficient amount that is required for divine perfection. Thus if we should discover various tasks that seem to be beyond the scope of His power, that is not necessarily of any consequence as long as it is evident that the ability to perform the tasks in question is not the kind of ability that enhances the greatness of the individual having it. To put it slightly differently, if God lacks the power to perform a certain task, but it can be shown that it is logically impossible to have an individual not lacking it and at the same time be superior by virtue of having that power, then the absence of that particular power does not detract from God's perfection. In that case therefore He is omnipotent in the required sense.

We need therefore, for instance, not be perturbed to find, that God may be incapable of creating a stone too heavy for Him to lift. For the relevant question to ask is: is it conceivable that there should be someone more excellent in the sense that he could create a stone too heavy for *him* to lift? The only conceivable being who could create such a stone is a being who is not fully capable of lifting every possible weight and thus ultimately inferior to a being who can lift anything whatever though incapable of creating the stone in question. Thus God remains the most excellent being possible in spite of this special power deficiency.

Finally it should be noted that there is no particular difficulty in formulating an adequate definition of omnipotence. The following might for instance be suggested:

X is omnipotent if it is logically impossible to increase *X*'s power in consequence of which *X* might gain in excellence.

(2) Almost thirty years ago J. L. Mackie raised the following difficulty: can an omnipotent being make things which he cannot control? It is clear that this is a paradox; the question cannot be answered satisfactorily either in the affirmative or in the negative. If we answer 'Yes' it follows that if God actually makes things which he cannot control, he is not omnipotent once he has made them: there are then things which he cannot do. But if we answer 'No' we are immediately asserting that there are things which he cannot do, that is to say that he is already not omnipotent.¹

Since then theists have kept trying to provide an answer to Mackie's challenge, and as recently as 1979 Kenny proposed a solution which was criticized in 1980 by W. S. Anglin in a paper called 'Can God create a being He cannot control?'² In the course of their discussions these philosophers have advanced some interesting suggestions, for example that we should

¹ 'Evil and Omnipotence,' *Mind*, LXIV (1955), 210.

² *Analysis*, XL (1980), 220-3.

distinguish between an inability due to a lack of power and an inability due to lack of opportunity, the latter not implying a weakness.

In the light of the point made before, it is clear that we need not avail ourselves of any of the distinctions, and that we need not even make up our minds whether the ability to create an uncontrollable being or the inability to do so is to be assigned to God, in order to remove all traces of a difficulty! Let us consider two possible beings *X* and *Y*. Both are postulated to be omnipotent in the normal sense, but *X* is capable of creating a being he cannot control while *Y* is not capable of creating a being *Y* cannot control. It is universally conceded that it is just not conceivable that someone could be superior both to *X* and *Y* not having the weakness of either, that is, someone who could create a perfectly uncontrollable being and thereby having greater power than *Y* but at the same time being also more excellent than *X* in not having anyone whom he could not control.

The question we now ask is: who is more excellent, *X* or *Y*? It turns out to be entirely irrelevant what the correct answer may be; either way Mackie's objection fails to get off the ground. Suppose, for instance, that the right answer is that *X* is superior to *Y*. In that case we say to Mackie that God must be like *X*, since by definition He is the most perfect, possible being. It would clearly be misguided to try to object: but *Y* is a conceivable being and possesses a capacity *X* does not possess. Since *Y* manages to possess the ability in question only at the expense of missing out on an ability *X* has, an ability we have decided outweighs the first, *Y*'s power to control every possible being is bought at a cost which ultimately makes him inferior to *X* because less powerful in an overall sense. Thus the fact that God is like *X* makes Him more powerful than anyone conceivable.

(3) Consider a person *S* who is unique in the sense that he knows a secret no one else knows. We may ask ourselves whether God could create such a person. If the answer is yes, then He ceases to be omniscient since there is a secret known to *S* only but not to Him. If the answer is no, then of course He is not omniscient since there is a coherently describable human being whom He lacks the power to create.

Although this was a somewhat oversimplified version of an argument devised by La Croix, it would seem not to matter since basically the same answer applies to the argument irrespective of how it is formulated. On the Anselmian view, omnipotence is essentially an aspect of divine excellence and therefore it basically amounts to having all the power that contributes to His perfection. Divine omnipotence implies therefore that it is inconceivable for there to be someone with more power and thereby more perfect. In parallel fashion omniscience is not to be interpreted as necessarily knowing every proposition whether it be true or false. Rather it means not lacking any knowledge the acquisition of which would enhance one's excellence. In other words '*X* is omniscient' means '*X* has so much knowledge that it is

inconceivable for anyone to have more and in consequence to be more perfect'.

Let us now consider the possible beings *V* and *W*. These beings are both omnipotent and omniscient in the usual sense, and *V* is also capable of creating *S* while *W* is not. *V* is thus more powerful in one sense than *W*, but then *W*'s knowledge is more total than that of *V* since there can be no secret whatsoever with respect to him. It is of course inconceivable to have a being who has neither the weakness of *V* nor that of *W*, hence a maximally perfect being must have at least one of their weaknesses. The question that arises of course is: whose deficiency is smaller; is *V* or *W* the more excellent being? We do not have to be able to answer this question, however, in order to see that the so-called problem of omnipotence and omniscience is no real problem. Suppose the correct answer is that *V* is superior to *W*. It inevitably follows then that God is like *V* rather than *W*. It would clearly be a mistake to object that after all *W* is also a conceivable being and his knowledge is more all-embracing since nothing can be hidden from him. *W*'s added cognitive powers do not contribute to his greater perfection, since it is acquired at the expense of giving up something more important that *V* possesses. It is quite obvious that should the correct answer be that *W* is preferable to *V* we would argue along parallel lines that in that case there is no problem either.

VII

It is no longer hard to see, given the argument presented here, that no puzzle involving the incompatibility between perfect permanency and any other divine attribute can arise in any shape or form. Absolute immutability, like the rest of the perfection-making characteristics, means the presence of all the constancy required to enhance God's excellence. From this of course one may not infer that no change will be allowed to take place in a divine feature even when retaining that feature inevitably involves the loss of a more precious characteristic. Thus, should a particular kind of change turn out to be highly advantageous, so that undergoing it is bound to result in a greater total sum of perfection to which the various divine attributes add up, we should expect God to be subject to that desirable mutation.¹

¹ I am indebted to Professor W. J. Peck for the enlightening discussion we had on divine perfection.