Article

Noteworthy Problems with God's Immutability, Impassibility, and Simplicity. Should We Treat These Divine Attributes and the Hellenic Conditions of Christian Theism as a Dogma?

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Abstract: The article presents problems that the concepts of God's immutability, impassibility, and simplicity pose for Christian theism. Through the critical analysis, the author indicates the roots of these ideas (mostly, but not only, in ancient Greek philosophy) and the consequences of absolutizing them for the image of God and His relationship to the world. The more general purpose of the paper is to highlight the danger of the strong dependence of religious depictions on philosophical grounds. As concluded in the article, it is a mistake to absolutize the particular solutions that appeared at the junction of *fides* et *ratio* at one of the historical stages. The awareness of this becomes extremely important when reflecting on the divine immutability, impassibility, and simplicity. The author shows some proposals to reformulate their understanding in light of contemporary analytic philosophy. Partial reinterpretation in this regard may help to rethink the concept of the Creator's interaction with creation and to reconcile the biblical image of God with the philosophical one.

Keywords: God; immutability; simplicity; impassibility; Christian theism

1. Introduction

As widely recognized, the concepts of God's immutability, impassibility, and simplicity pose meaningful problems for Christian theism[1]. I present the principal intellectual and cultural roots of these ideas, their joint[2] influence on Christian thought, and the consequences of absolutizing them for the image of God and His[3] relationship to the world. The more general purpose of the paper is to highlight the danger of the unconditional embedding of religious depictions in philosophical grounds[4].

The analysis below mainly belongs to the scope of philosophical theology[5]. I consciously single out the analytic tradition, for it has been too often marginalized in the classical Thomistic milieu when discussing divine attributes[6]. To preserve the clarity of reasoning in the main text, a polemic with some arguments for God's immutability, impassibility, and simplicity is located in the footnotes.

2. Discussion, Objections, and Results

2.1. Between Jerusalem and Athens—An Original Tension and the Problem of God's Immutability

The Christian doctrine evolved under the influence of two prominent intellectual and spiritual traditions. The first of them was Judaism, with its distinct message, language, and use of symbols. The Creator appeared to be dynamically entering into a relationship with His creation, revealing His presence in the world and caring for the work He had accomplished. God was also someone close to man, involved in the fate of humans, revealing personal traits such as joy, anger, or the ability to forgive. The Old Testament emphasized the possibility of meeting God in nature and human history, which was seen as a way to achieve salvation. The Creator remained a faithful companion of creation;

however, He was able to suspend the laws of nature and to change decisions once made (Słomka 2021, p. 25)[7].

On the other hand, Christian thought in the first centuries was influenced by Greek culture. The philosophy it carried emerged in the milieu of polytheistic religions (gods existed in the world, as beings more or less similar to humans), but evolved over time, presenting a specific image of the one and only God. He was distant from mortals, contact with whom would undermine His greatness. Honoring God was conditioned by His ontic difference from creation. The perfection of the Absolute could not be contaminated by immersion into time, physical space, or any display of changeability (Sokolowski 1995, pp. 12–13).

For Plato, immutability was an essential feature of what is most real, and in that context, he argued for the divine unchangeableness (Plato 1992, II, 381b-c). For Aristotle, the paradigm of immutability gained its pinnacle when describing God, who was devoid even of knowledge about the changing world, as this would expose His mind to alteration. The only possible subject of God's reflection was He himself and the general laws that permanently govern the world. There is a fundamental asymmetry in the relationship between God and the world. The aim of the world's pursuit and admiration is the perfection of God, who is not at all interested in the history of what remains essentially fickle and individual. Both the Stagirite and Plato maintained that perfection is manifested through the general and the simple as opposed to the individual and the multiple (Aristotle 1989, 12.1071b; Wojtysiak 2013, pp. 35–42; Gutowski 2016, p. 67).

Trying to adequately clarify the concept of God's interaction with the world, Aristotle used the distinction between the efficient and the final cause. The motion of celestial spheres and the sublunary world comes from God as a final cause, not an efficient one. In this way, the Unmoved Mover is the source of movement without any contact with the perennial matter (Wildman 1998, pp. 117–50).

Theism built on metaphysics dogmatizing immutability in all of its aspects and seemed to allow claims about God's actions only in a metaphorical sense. Contrary to many religious intuitions, any assertions about God that attributed to Him the ability to act could not be taken literally[8]. The understanding of the divine nature, significantly influenced by Platonic (or Neoplatonic) and Aristotelian philosophy, was fundamentally different from the widespread convictions of religious people who believed that God truly works in human life and in the history of the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that some Christian theologians of the first centuries viewed with distrust the manifestations of a strong bond of the Christian image of God and His relationship to the world with Greek thought. What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?[9]—Tertullian famously asked. This prominent apologist believed that the less they had in common, the better. According to Tertullian, combining religious doctrine with Greek philosophy is useless, impossible, and even harmful, as it leads to conceit and heresy[10].

On the opposite side of thinking about the relationship between religious doctrine and philosophy were Christian theologians, for whom Philo of Alexandria was an intellectual authority. The education obtained from his Greek masters, combined with the Jewish tradition taken over from his ancestors, inspired Philo, who lived at the turn of the millennium, to boldly search for the great synthesis of religion (revealed faith) and philosophy[11]. Philo set out to show that religious revelation could measure up to philosophical inquiry and even consume its fruit. On the other hand, he saw a chance for religion to enrich culture, if only by using the interpretation of Scripture, as a kind of opportunity to creatively transform and develop philosophical concepts. Philo intensively participated in many philosophical discussions, earning his own position, which is described as the original "Judaic philosophy", "Mosaic philosophy", or "philonism" (Osmański 2002, p. 444; Alesse 2008).

Philo did not limit his view to reconciling the Jewish religion with Greek philosophy or to show that there was no contradiction between them, but argued that if the revelation of the ultimate truth did come from God, the most important elements of Greek philosophy should be announced in Scripture. Proving this required considerable intellectual skill from

Philo, and resulted in a creative (often allegorical) interpretation of the Bible as well as uncommon employment of Greek philosophy. By studying his works, one may think that Philo read Plato in the context of Moses and Moses in the context of Plato until reaching the conclusion that, in fact, both of them preached the same things. Philo argued that Plato borrowed his ideas from Moses (Philo of Alexandria 2021c, VII:26–29), but Philo's interpretation of the Bible often gives the impression that Moses was Plato's disciple (Wright 2009, pp. 188–215). In this context, St. Jerome—recalling a Greek proverb—concluded that either Plato philonizes or Philo platonizes, so great is the similarity of thought and style (Jerome 1892, 11:7; Sterling 1993, pp. 96–111).

Many Philonian treatises—such as those dealing with creation—abound with Platonic concepts, images, and myths. The clear preference for Platonic terminology resulted from the conviction that it was close to the basic ideas contained in Sacred Scripture. Whenever Philo would conclude that another philosophy was better suited for an exegetical task, he did not hesitate to use it. Thus, philosophical systems served as a ministerial to the interpretation of the Bible. Philo consistently argued the superiority of religious revelation over any pagan philosophy, stressing that all knowledge has its ultimate source in the Mosaic law and that the Greek sages merely took it over. Although the original intention of this approach was to demonstrate the supremacy of the wisdom contained in the Pentateuch over Greek philosophy (as secondary to the "true philosophy" practiced by the Jews), it led Philo to focus his attention on Hellenistic philosophy and to, unusually, transform it. However, this was occurring "on the occasion" of commenting on the Scriptures, as Philo was convinced that all wisdom was ultimately contained in the Mosaic law (Philo of Alexandria 2021d, XIV:79; Osmański 2002, p. 444; Runia 2001).

Preserving the faith of his ancestors, Philo emphasized that God looks after His chosen people and gives retribution to those who persecute them. On the other hand, Philo tried to boldly confront the idea of an interventionist and anthropomorphic God, which stood in the way of bringing religion closer to philosophical–scientific discourse (Philo of Alexandria 2021e, XL:234–37). The anthropomorphism of the biblical descriptions was revealed, for example, in depicting God as seated on a throne, prone to jealousy or even rage. Many Greek philosophers began to depart from such a concept of the divine back in the days of Xenophanes of Colophon, who accused it of naivety and—five centuries before Philo—argued sarcastically that if horses or oxen had their own theology, "horses would draw the figures of the gods as similar to horses, and the oxen as similar to oxen, and they would make the bodies of the sort which each of them had" (Xenophanes of Colophon 1992, B15; Hecht 2003, p. 7). The image of an interventionist God who, in order to keep humanity in check, sends plagues, storms, and fire, and shows his greatness by suspending the laws of nature, could not coexist with the rational view of the world.

The above problems are fundamental to religious doctrine and difficult to solve. It is not easy to reconcile transcendence with the immanence of God or to harmonize the philosophical idea of an unchanging and abiding Absolute while showing that it has a providential influence on the world and is actually present in it. If the inherently immutable God is outside of what is material, how is He related to the physical world and its daily functioning? If God is inconceivable, how can man find and understand Him? How can we expect comfort from a God who is ultimately beyond all reach?

The tension between God's immanence and transcendence was not downplayed by Philo. On the contrary, he even emphasized this problem. Describing the divine nature, he outlined the program of negative theology, drawing from both religious and philosophical sources. God was understood as devoid of attributes because any attempt to positively define what He essentially is would be His limitation. The divine nature is ineffable and unknowable. One can only say that God exists, as clearly indicated in *The Book of Exodus*, expressed—according to Philo—in the language of Platonic metaphysics (Philo of Alexandria 2021b, XI:52; Philo of Alexandria 2021a, XXIV:121). Philo claimed that God transcends all reality, even the highest philosophical principles: He is better than virtue, knowledge, and Good and Beauty themselves (Philo of Alexandria 2021c, II:8). God is

greater than the Oneness and is the source of all perfection. God is omnipresent and covers everything, not in a physical but in a metaphysical sense. God is a simple, immutable, eternal, and a perfect being (ontically and morally). God is self-sufficient; however, He has decided to create a world over which He is lord and king. God was portrayed as somewhat personal, but Philo added that no name or concept fully corresponds to the divine nature.

Philo's accomplishments had a great influence on the Christian thought of the first centuries. The themes present in Philo occur in some books of the New Testament, e.g., the doctrine of the Logos (*The Gospel of John*, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*), as well as the concept of a corporeal, mental, and spiritual man (letters of st. Paul). Quotations from Philo's writings and references to him appear systematically in numerous works of the Fathers of the Church. Philo's method and thought left their mark on the intellectual legacy of (among others) Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Didymos the Blind, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose (and through him on Augustine), and Jerome (Osmański 2002, p. 448).

Philo's influence is evident in the method of interpreting the Scriptures, also applied to the books of the New Testament. This concerned both the types of exegesis and its subject (cosmology, ethics). No less significant is the impact of Philo on accepting the "language of reason"—the philosophical concepts he used to explain the Bible. This gave the possibility for philosophy in theological considerations, and in many respects fostered their development.

On the other hand, the dangers of absolutizing those solutions of Greek philosophy that did not fit the religious view on God were less noticed. Does not God's immutability threaten certain elements of the Christian creed and the very sense of practicing faith? If God is completely unchangeable, is it worth asking God for anything in prayer? Since the constant God is unaffected, can it be argued that He is a personal being, who shares the concerns of the people and cosuffers with them?[12]

2.2. From Immutability to Impassibility

The idea of divine impassibility developed in philosophical and theological circles dogmatizing the invariability of the absolute being in all dimensions. From the first centuries of Christianity, the concept of the impassible God, present in various Greek intellectual currents (Gavrilyuk 2006, pp. 21–36), has challenged the model of the vulnerable God of the Bible. Showing God as a transcendent and completely self-sufficient substance that is not amenable to any change was an essential component of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian theism. God cannot be affected by anything from the outside. His attribute must therefore be impassibility[13]. Otherwise, something might rule over Him and this would reveal God's weakness, some form of inherently variable emotionality or susceptibility to alteration (Weinandy 2000, p. 19).

As a perfect, self-determining, and independent being, God could not suffer. It would be imperfect to show fear, which would be a manifestation of vulnerability to external influences. God must be free from any feelings, including negative ones. Suffering and compassion would mean that God's experience is emotion and pain. Meanwhile, no form of affection can be reconciled with the nature of a God who never becomes, but eternally is (Bauckham 1984, pp. 7–8).

The idea of an impassible God was widely, although not blindly, incorporated into their reflection by many Fathers of the Church[14]. According to Augustine, God's life is through and through blissful, free of any negative *pathe* (Augustine of Hippo 1887b, XIV:9). God feels no compassion with those who are suffering, no pain over the lack of godliness in His ungrateful and sinful creatures. God's eudaimonic state is the steady nonperturbing joy. God dwells eternally in blissful nonsuffering *apatheia*. Nothing that happens in the world alters the divine unperturbed serenity. The Augustinian God is devoid of any passions and unfamiliar with longing. It does not mean that God is fully indifferent to creation. God is in a constant disposition to act benevolently—whatever occurs in the world. (Wolterstorff 1988, p. 199).

Augustine's reasoning became the point of reference for notable theologians. The arguments for God's immutability and impassibility were often taken over and even strengthened, especially from the Middle Ages. Anselm of Canterbury deliberated in *Proslogion*: "How he is compassionate and passionless. God is compassionate, in terms of our experience, because we experience the effect of compassion. God is not compassionate, in terms of his own being, because he does not experience the feeling (affectus) of compassion. BUT how are you compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For, if you are passionless, you do not feel sympathy; and if you do not feel sympathy, your heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate. But if you are not compassionate, whence comes so great consolation to the wretched? How, then, are you compassionate and not compassionate, O Lord, unless because you are compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of your being. Truly, you are so in terms of our experience, but you are not so in terms of your own. For, when you behold us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but you do not experience the feeling. Therefore, you are both compassionate, because you do save the wretched, and spare those who sin against you; and not compassionate because you are affected by no sympathy for wretchedness" (Anselm of Canterbury 1903, VIII).

Aquinas stresses that bodiless God has no emotions: no anger, no fear, and so forth. Having no physiology, God is not is capable of being upset. God is lacking in *pathos*: does not grieve, neither in sympathy nor, as it were, on His own (Thomas Aquinas 1920, I.20:1; Thomas Aquinas 1955–1957, I.89:3; Wolterstorff 1988, p. 205). An absolute being has no receptivity or potentiality. In the God–man relationship, something really new could only appear on the human side (Pannenberg 1971, p. 162; Lee 1974, p. 40; Weinandy 2000, pp. 20–21; Weinandy 2002)[15].

In addition to the statement that God lacks the "sensitive appetites" and the bodily physiology necessary for experiencing passions, Aquinas argued that "in every passion of the appetite the patient is somehow drawn out of his usual, calm, or connatural disposition … But it is not possible for God to be somehow drawn outside His natural condition, since He is absolutely immutable, as has been shown" (Thomas Aquinas 1955–1957, I.89:4). This argument militates both: against God's suffering and against His passion (Wolterstorff 1988, p. 210).

The above position permeated and even dominated Christian theism for many subsequent centuries. Such an approach challenged the personal model of God, who reacts vividly to the fate of individual people, unites with each human being through the Incarnation, and voluntarily accepts suffering[16]. The major revival of the discussion of God's impassibility took place in the twentieth century[17]. However, it was mainly not a result of theoretical academic divagations (often valuable), but of extreme existential experiences. The decline of nineteenth-century optimism and the twentieth-century tragedies of two world wars generated fundamental religious questions and attempts to reconsider the image of God. It seemed that in the context of the manifestations of horrendous pain, it would be possible to defend theism only on the assumption that God was present in the midst of the world's tragedies. God should share human suffering and take part in it, as, otherwise, He would be of little importance to man (Weinandy 2000, pp. 2–3; Varillon 1983, pp. 125–72; Jonas 1987, pp. 1–13).

The terrible experiences (symbolized by Auschwitz) led some theists to reinterpret the doctrine of God's immutability. Assuming that a personal God is full of love and compassion, can it be assumed that His immutability does not concern the ontic but ethical dimension?[18] Can God, being in a living relationship with human persons, change not only the heart of man, but also—to some extent—Himself? Such a concept was developed by processualists, as evidenced by the distinction between a primordial (immutable) and a consequent (subject to change) divine nature (Whitehead 1929, pp. 488, 494).

The model of the entirely unchangeable, unconditioned, and impassible God was firmly undermined by Ch. Hartshorne (Hartshorne 1941, pp. 111, 116, 135, 295; Hartshorne 1964, p. 48). As a direct source of this position, he pointed both to the philosophy per-

ceiving change as a manifestation of imperfection, as well as theistic systems ascribing individual features to God to an absolute degree. The consequences of such approaches were difficulties with reconciling God's omnipotence and omniscience with the freedom of beings. Another significant problem was relating the thesis about the immutability of God to the conviction that He reacts to what is happening in the world by entering into a real dialogue with humans (Hahn 1991, p. 41; Słomka 2021, p. 28).

In terms of process philosophy, God undertakes in himself everything that happens in the world. This means that the world not only influences God, but also actually constitutes Him. Thus, all joy, pain, and suffering that arise in the world and human life become real experiences of God. He appears to be a being that is personal and susceptible to alteration. In God's case, change is never a regression, but always an advance. God is a changeable, dynamic being, although His nature has a certain immutable dimension[19].

In conversation with process thought, R. Creel proposed another aspectual understanding of the divine impassibility. Defining impassibility as imperviousness to causal influence from external factors, Creel argued that, while God is impassible in His nature and will, He is passible in His knowledge of the events in the world (Creel 1986, pp. 3–12). Gavrilyuk suggested that passibility and impassibility are correlative concepts, both of which must have their place in any sound account of divine agency (Gavrilyuk 2006, p. 20). In heterogeneous approaches, God's changeableness and passibility are often included among the basic tenets in diverse areas of contemporary inquiry, such as liberation theology, Open Theism, feminist theology, and the science–religion dialogue (Dodds 2008, p. 4; Weinandy 2000, p. 24).

2.3. From Immutability to Simplicity—Classical Foundations

In the mainstream of Christian doctrine, God's immutability has usually been associated with His simplicity (Emery 2009, p. 34). Although such an approach posed various problems for the coherent presentation of the image of God, since the first centuries many apologists believed that without accepting the doctrine of the simplicity of an absolute being, it is impossible to build a rational theistic concept. Some theologians have even maintained that this very attribute integrates all reflection on God's nature (Przanowski 2010, p. 5; Vardy 2015, p. 37; Słomka 2021, pp. 35–44).

One of the first Christian authors to profoundly deal with the question of God's simplicity was Origen. His position is an uncommon manifestation of the conviction that the proper sources of the concept of simplicity should be found directly in the holy books. In his polemics with epicureanism and stoicism, considered to be hostile to the Christian understanding of divine transcendence, Origen emphasized that philosophers were unable to adequately understand God as an indestructible, simple, and indivisible being. According to the author of *Contra Celsum*, the concept of the absolute noncomplexity of a supreme being can only be realized in contact with the Revelation, especially with the idea of God's immutability, which is unequivocally contained in Sacred Scripture (Origen 1885a, IV:14; Przanowski 2010, p. 16).

According to Origen, God is to the greatest extent Monad, Oneness, Source, and unlimited Reason. Complex, material beings are limited by their specific features. God–Reason is not subject to such limitations and is therefore supremely active and at work. In justifying the simplicity of God, Origen did not narrow his argument to the negation of corporeality, but proposed the concept of absolute being as the basic principle of the created being. All things come from the principium, which is the absolute beginning of reality. Beings that derive from it are made up of elements and the principium cannot be composite. The complexity existing in it would require the prior existence of elements, which would blight the fundamental feature of the principium—being the absolute beginning (Origen 1885b, I.1:6; Przanowski 2010, p. 17).

The ideas of simplicity and immutability were applied to reflections on the Third Divine Person and His action in the world. Trying to reconcile the various attributes of God, St. Basil the Great wrote that the Holy Spirit is simple in essence, but multifarious

in power. He is in His whole essence present everywhere, and as such helps everyone. Although—like a ray of the sun—the Holy Spirit impacts everyone, He does not sustain any loss, remaining intact and immutable. To all whom He impacts, the Holy Spirit gives himself fully, and yet to the extent that their limited nature allows them. He himself—concluded the father of Eastern monasticism—remains unlimited (Basil the Great 1895, 9:22–23).

When criticizing pagan theology, in which the gods are parts of a whole, St. Athanasius reasoned: "For God is a whole and not parts . . . [H]e is the Maker of the system of all things . . . For, if he united from parts, he would appear wholly unlike to himself and have fulfilment from unlike things" (Athanasius 1857a, I.28, p. 56). For Athanasius, such God–world mereology is deeply "Greek thinking" to be corrected by the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo and its entailment of divine simplicity (Athanasius 1857b, II.22, p. 192). Duby notices that "in these lines of thinking, there are both negative and positive expressions. On the one hand, God in his transcendent, incomprehensible mystery cannot be drawn into the sphere of created being. On the other hand, he should be recognized in positive terms as the God of perfect integrity and aseity" (Duby 2016, p. 8).

Against commonsense intuitions, in the theological controversies of the fourth century, divine simplicity often served as a mean to protect and explicate trinitarian teaching. In this context, Athanasius denied any composition and division in God. Lest the Father consist of essence and quality, the Son cannot be in the Father as a qualitative wisdom but must himself be actually God from God (Athanasius 1857b, IV.1–5, pp. 467–76). To express a reliable understanding of trinitarian action, Hilary of Poitiers wrote: "God is simple . . . And he is not so diverse with parts of a composite divinity that there should be in him either will after stupor, or work after idleness" (Hilary of Poitiers 1845, IX.72, pp. 338–39). For Gregory of Nazianzus, simplicity secures the equality of the divine persons: as there is one Godhead, so there is one God, and thus one divine person is not 'more' God than another. Instead, the Godhead is "undivided in separate persons" (Gregory Nazianzen 1858, 14, pp. 148–49; Duby 2016, p. 8). Carefully qualifying the trinitarian distinctions, Gregory of Nyssa underlined that God's nature is simple and without any variations proper to created entities. The distinctions present within the Trinity are not quantitative but concern the peculiar idiomata of the persons (Gregory of Nyssa 1863, I, p. 336). Regardless any detailed proposals to shape the doctrine of simplicity, its definite outline was often significantly formed by trinitarian commitments: "the divine essence is simple and undivided but includes the mutual characteristics of the persons, who share the common undivided essence" (Duby 2016, p. 9).

Many nuances related to the concept of God's simplicity were clarified by St. Augustine, who also noted the consequences of presenting this issue for understanding religious language and the Creator's relationship to creation. God and what He possesses are one thing. The substance and the qualities are perfectly identical in Him (Augustine of Hippo 1887b, XI:10; Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, p. 89). God is what He possesses, so—strictly speaking—He does not have wisdom, but is wisdom, He does not have justice, but is justice, etc. The simplicity of God also consists in the appropriate relation of particular attributes to each other: greatness, goodness, truth, and the rest of them are identical (Augustine of Hippo 1887a, VI.7:8; Hughes 1989, pp. 60–62).

The simplicity of God is not impoverishment, but an indestructible possession of ontic fullness. The perfections attributed to God are real and, at the same time, identical to Him. The consequence of the lack of difference between substance and attributes in God is absolute immutability (Stump 2010, p. 273), which occupies a special place in Augustine's reflection. God cannot lose anything or gain anything new. He is perfectly identical with himself, remaining the actual fullness of being. Only God can be said to exist in the full sense of the word (Augustine of Hippo 1887b, XI:10; MacDonald 2001, pp. 84–86).

The above statement gave Augustine room to grasp the essence of the difference between God and the world: creation is complex and changeable, while the perfectly simple Creator is immutable. The consequence of this understanding of God's simplicity

became a strong emphasis on His transcendence in relation to the world. But is the Creator's interaction with creation real then? How to imagine the participation of the simple and immutable God in the fate of a protean being? Answering these questions seemed to the author of *De civitate Dei* all the more difficult to formulate because the Bible presents a picture of God who is deeply involved in the history of man and the world (Przanowski 2010, pp. 18–20).

The creation of the world in no way contributed to the enrichment of God's being. In Him, there are sempiternal ideas of things that are simple and identical with God. Neither does the participation of created things in ideas make the latter more divine nor does the existence of the world make God more perfect—it is His perfection that perfects creation. The analogy is with divine knowledge: by knowing creatures, God does not learn something that He does not already know. Getting to know the world does not expand the divine knowledge in any dimension. The world could not have come into existence if it had not been known to God beforehand. According to Augustine, God's absolute simplicity and immutability does not "prevent" him from interacting with creation. The Creator's transcendence is not indifference to the world. *De Trinitate* contains a metaphor depicting the nature of God, whose actions can be experienced: "light is troublesome to weak eyes, pleasant to those that are strong; namely by their change, not its own" (Augustine of Hippo 1887a, V.16:17; Dolezal 2011, pp. 4–5).

Reconciling the philosophical concept of the simplicity of an immutable God with the data of Revelation was an important intellectual challenge, since in the Christian religion there are many concepts related to God, the meaning of which is associated with change. Therefore, according to Augustine, a proper understanding of a certain group of names of God, given to Him especially in Holy Scripture, is possible only when one takes into account the specificity of the so-called relative expressions. When we say that God has become a Father to someone, we do not mean that something new appeared in Him, but we conclude that someone has recognized God as his Father. The creature changes under God's influence, and He remains immutable (Augustine of Hippo 1887a, V.16:17, La Croix 1977, pp. 453–68; Przanowski 2010, p. 22).

When asked to write a treatise on the essence of God without referring to the data of Revelation, St. Anselm of Canterbury constructed and expressed his thought in the separated parts of the *Monologion*. As in Augustine, immutability is closely linked with simplicity, but the latter—according to Anselm—must first of all be treated as a requirement of reason recognizing the existence of the highest being. This becomes the starting point and the basis of reasoning. Every complex thing needs ingredients and exists as such because of them and is dependent on them. In contrast, a perfect being has no cause of existence and is a simple being. One cannot think of God in terms of complexity, for it would be a denial of the truth that He is the supreme being, from whom greater cannot be thought (Anselm of Canterbury 1986, I, pp. 57–60; Rogers 2008, p. 108; Duby 2016, pp. 9–10).

Divine simplicity is opposed to any multiplicity. All perfections are one in God. His wisdom is identical with love and with all other perfections. Speaking of God in terms of perfection is to speak of Him in essence, not in terms of His quality or greatness. The essence of God is noncomposite and indivisible; therefore, the terms "righteous" or "merciful" do not refer to one of His aspects, but His entire essence. By concluding that God is good, we declare that He is goodness himself. Augustine wrote about it, but Anselm gives the philosophical foundations for this understanding of God's simplicity. God is what He is by virtue of Himself. Of Himself God is what He is (Anselm of Canterbury 1986, XVI–XVII, pp. 30–31; Dolezal 2011, p. 6; Przanowski 2010, pp. 26–27; Stump 2010, p. 273).

On the one hand, the author of the *Monologion* is thus a faithful disciple of Augustine, combining the ideas of God's simplicity and immutability. On the other hand, there are new terminological nuances and a different method of argumentation. Anselm distinguishes between properties affecting the entity to which they are entitled and relations that do not cause such changes. God's simplicity excludes the occurrence of attributes that generate

changeability. They are not attributes as such, so it can be said that they are not in God at all. Anselm maintains that God's immutability is not "opposed" to His entering into a relationship, for they do not cause any change in Him. God's immutability derives from His simplicity, which acquires philosophical justification by accepting the absolute perfection of the highest being and the aseitas of His nature (Anselm of Canterbury 1986, XXV, p. 43; Przanowski 2010, p. 30).

The doctrine of the divine simplicity presented by St. Thomas Aquinas was under the influence of Boethius' thought rather than that of Augustine (Stump 2012, pp. 135–46). Among the axioms given in *De hebdomadibus*, two seem to be the most relevant to the account of God's simplicity: (a) in each simple entity the existence thereof and what it is are one single thing, and (b) in each composite entity existence is different from what the entity is (Boethius 1847, 64:1311). The primary role plays the concept of Form, which is the Being itself and determines the existence of every being. The way to comprehend the divine simplicity becomes the negation of composition from matter and form. God is an entity in the strongest sense, being what He is: One (Dodds 2008, p. 147, Przanowski 2010, p. 24).

Boethius' grasp of simplicity became the benchmark for understanding the other attributes of God. Simplicity was treated as the metaphysical basis of discourse (Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, pp. 88–89). Thinking in a similar way, Aquinas placed the doctrine of divine simplicity at the beginning *of Summa Theologica*. Thanks to this, other attributes gain a solid foundation (Thomas Aquinas 1920, I:3; Przanowski 2010, p. 25).

Using many valuable elements of the reflections of the authors presented above, and enriching it with the context of everyday experience, Aquinas notices that reality is complex on many levels. The simplicity of some entity resulting from the absence of composition of a certain type is not identical to the simplicity of another entity that may lack a composition of another type. The simplicity of the most fundamental component of the material world is unique, another—a point in the geometric system, and yet another—is the human soul or universal. However, it is possible to identify the common properties of simple entities. This is because simplicity (next to complexity) is the essential way in which things are realized, which the transcendental Oneness (Lat. unum) referred to (Thomas Aquinas 1920, I.11:1).

A simple (as well as a complex) being is one integral wholeness in the sense of internal indivisibility into being and nonbeing. Nevertheless, we can ascribe certain characteristics to simple beings that distinguish them from those whose unity is the unity of complexity. If something is simpler, it has more power, is nobler, and less vulnerable to destruction. The expanded concept of simplicity does not serve Aquinas exclusively to study the nature of God (He remains the only absolutely simple being), but is an integral part of his entire thought, e.g., in logic, in philosophia naturalis, and even in ethics (Thomas Aquinas 1920, II-II.109:2; Przanowski 2010, pp. 8–10; Swieżawski 1999, p. 148).

Such an approach to the divine simplicity is not merely a lecture on the noncomplexity of God's nature, as it also presents two other fundamental elements of his doctrine: the problem of religious language and God's relationship to the world. By creating the structure of *De potentia*, Aquinas in a sense leads the reader deeper into the teaching about God in accordance with the questions that arise. If the Creator is simple and absolutely transcendent, can one have cognitive access to Him and say something meaningful about Him? Can such a God be creatively related to the world, and how? The author tries to provide answers to these questions in the works *On the Power of God, Summa of Theology*, and *Summa against the Pagans* (Torrell 2002, pp. 236–37; Przanowski 2010, p. 14).

In an attempt to bring the specificity of God's simplicity closer, St. Thomas referred to the works of Aristotle[20]. Reference to the categories of act and potency allowed for a hierarchical approach to reality. At its base level, there is a raw, chaotic, unstructured, and formless matter of pure potentiality without any realization. At the next level, there are substances existing in the universe (endowed with real beings). At the highest level, God is a reality devoid of any potentiality. Having any potential would be a manifestation of

imperfection. Only God does not possess it, being pure actuality. God must exist outside of time and cannot have a body because He is not made of parts (Vardy 2015, p. 38).

Also in this theistic system, God's simplicity does not imply any lack. The Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition does not associate simplicity with a negative manifestation of a structure without parts, but rather with perfection. Divine *simplicitas* cannot be compared either with the simplicity of any physical object known to us or with the idealized product of thinking, for example, of a point having no spatial dimensions (Judycki 2010, p. 196).

Justifying the simplicity of God's nature, Aquinas pointed to the lack of imperfections and complexities typical of matter. He also emphasized that in God there are no accidents. Their ontic status is different from the divine attributes. The latter do not violate the simplicity of God, since they differ in relation to His nature and one another only conceptually. The richness of divine nature gives us the ability to use a variety of terminology to describe God (Kowalczyk 2001, pp. 323–24; Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, pp. 91–92; Weigel 2008, pp. 23–90).

The identity of the individual and its nature, which constitutes simplicity, was also the starting point for stating the Oneness of God (Lat. *unicitas*). It is an attribute not only defining ontic unity, but also uniqueness in nature and the impossibility of reduplication of divinity. There is only one Absolute possible, with an identity of nature and individuality in Him. For this reason, He is God and He is this unique God (Kowalczyk 2001, p. 325; Duby 2016, pp. 11–17).

For classical theism, the absolute simplicity of God is an attribute that constitutes the sufficient condition for His other attributes: incorporeality (not assembled from parts), nonspatiality (no locality), atemporally conceived eternity (no "before" and "after"), immutability (no property or states), intrinsic unconditionality (no intrinsically contingent parts), and—the most important for Aquinas—aseity (absolute independence, existence "of itself", not being composed of essence and existence)[21]. Assuming that aseity entails mathematically immeasurable infinity and modal necessity, simplicity becomes their sufficient condition (Wojtysiak 2013, pp. 213–15)[22].

2.4. God's Simplicity under Discussion

D. Hume suggested that taking simplicity seriously makes it impossible to formulate any judgments about God, even leading to atheism. The author of *Dialogues on Natural Religion* accused the propagators of the idea of God's simplicity of using empty words and depriving the entire religious discourse of any sense (Hume 1779, IV; Hughes 1995, pp. 53–54). The achievements of classical metaphysics in the discussed area were undermined by G. W. F. Hegel and W. James. The latter criticized the scholastic way of predicating God in terms of metaphysical attributes as meaningless from the point of view of practical religion (Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, pp. 93–94).

Contemporary discussions on God's simplicity are delivered in two main areas. The first one belongs mainly to systematic theology, taking into account the data of Christian revelation. The point is not so much to analyze the attribute of simplicity itself, but rather its relevance to the model of God's immutability. The rejection (or fundamental reinterpretation) of the understanding of God's immutability leads to the undermining of the doctrine of His simplicity. Many authors emphasize that the image of a loving, compassionate God, susceptible to human requests and participating in the transformations of the world and one's fate, cannot be "reconciled" with the philosophical idea of simplicity. God, who is not composed of act and potency, remains invulnerable to any external influence and is therefore incapable of dialogue with man (Przanowski 2010, pp. 51–53; Weinandy 2000, pp. 2–6).

In the field of philosophy, classical arguments for God's simplicity are invoked, but they are simultaneously the subject of criticism by many contemporary theists. The authors defending this doctrine emphasize that God is a pure act and there is nothing potential in Him. God is not a complex entity—there is no difference between essence and existence in Him. Pure act is not composed of substance (understood as a substrate) and accidents.

If God had properties different from His very being, He would lose absoluteness and sovereignty.

The unchanging being is timeless, so no temporal properties or "elements" can be distinguished in Him. The ontic perfectness and simplicity of God constitute the basis for cognition and the correct understanding of His other attributes. Simplicity is a formal attribute and a foundation both for the rejection of any literal statements on God, as well as for the hierarchy of divine qualities. After all, attributes are applicable to God to differing degrees.

The fullness of actuality, together with the fact that *Actus Purus* is not a substrate of any accidental qualities, create an identity between God and His attributes. There is no real difference among individual attributes. Such a claim, known as the thesis of identity, constitutes one of the burning points in the discussion concerning God's simplicity. Its adoption causes elementary problems when studying divine nature and the metaphysical meaning of judgments concerning God (such as indicated below in the works of A. Plantinga). On the other hand, the understanding of divine nature must be intrinsically noncontradictory and connected to the doctrine of God's ontic and epistemic transcendence, which can be attained by the reference to the idea of simplicity (Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, pp. 94–95).

The concept of God's simplicity was severely criticized by processualists. Hartshorne portrayed God as a "*compound individual*". God is not a single, actual being (beyond time), but a sequence, or an array, of actual beings, following one another in time (Gutowski 1995, p. 96).

When it comes to denying the multitude of attributes and the difference between them and God, there are serious difficulties in the model of simplicity. Plantinga maintains that its consequence for the manners of speaking about God is ridiculous, as well as leads to the rejection of His personal character. The negation of the fact that God is a complex being makes problems that are difficult to solve. If God remains identical with His properties, and the latter are identical among themselves, then God is a single property. Therefore, God has only one property: Himself. This cannot be considered compatible with being able to distinguish certain attributes, such as goodness or omnipotence. Thus, a fundamental question arises, whether such a God can be portrayed as a personal, omniscient, and loving Maker. God, being His own property, seems to be an abstract being rather than a characteristic for Christian theism person (Plantinga 1980, pp. 46–47; Przanowski 2010, pp. 54–55; Davies 1987, p. 53)[23].

Another considerable problem, analyzed by Aquinas and his followers up to the present (Stump and Kretzmann 1985, pp. 353–91)[24], regards the compatibility of simplicity with the freedom of God's will in relation to the world, starting from the act of creation. Does God, as a simple, and therefore necessary and immutable being, remain free in the actions He undertakes? The answer to the stated question determines how coherent the classical concept of God is. Equally important is bringing together God's unchanging knowledge and will with man's freedom (Richards 2003, pp. 168–71).

In a simple and immutable God, there is one indivisible act of the will through which He wills both Himself (as a necessary being) and the created world. The unique character of this act reveals particular problems with the coherence of the simplicitas Dei doctrine. Christian theism held that creation is a contingent act and originates solely in the divine will. God, who is free to act (in the libertarian sense), can act differently than He does. If the act of creation is not necessary, can it be assumed that God does not create? It seems that it is impossible to consistently state that God does not possess any intrinsic accidental properties, as according to the doctrine of simplicity, and that at the same time it is possible that there is a God who does not decide to create the world (Hughes 1995, p. 39).

It is doubtful that God desires Himself and the world by one undivided act of will while simultaneously assuming that "self-wanting" is an absolutely necessary act of God's will, when creation is not. A "God who does not decide to create" would differ to some extent from a "God who makes the decision to create"[25]. In this context, it is difficult to present arguments reinforcing the thesis that God has no accidental properties, and that all

the attributes credited to Him are what constitutes His very core, and therefore are a unity. The importance of the presented problems and fundamental questions concerning how coherent classical theism are echoed in the discussion conducted among many of theism's well-known representatives (Przanowski 2010, pp. 60–61, Appendix II).

How to make God's simplicity compatible with the possibility of God either creating another world or not creating at all? In the specified cases, the reason for God's action would be rooted in the distinction between His will and His decision. In the two different possible worlds, God would differ in the terms of His nature. Accepting that such a difference exists should be understood as introducing an internal accidental property in God[26]. Otherwise, the only solution is the assumption that God's creation of a particular world is necessarily related to His existence, which is not free in regards to this action. If God's actions are not perceived from a deterministic point of view, the simplicity model would be under threat. By extension, it proposes the correlation of God's internal state, His reason for taking action, recognition of the necessary conditions to achieve the goal, and the intention to act. Such a correlation seems to require that, in the case of a distinct contingent world order, God's internal states should differ from one another. Therefore, the current intention to create the world still remains somewhat contingent (Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, p. 98; O'Connor 1999, pp. 405–12).

Getting closer to sum up this paper and expressing its author's opinion, it is hardly possible to make the concept of God's simplicity coherent with the idea of Him being a Maker free in his actions (Leftow 2015, pp. 45–56). Objections formulated not only by—mentioned directly in this article—Leftow and Ross, but also by Hasker (Hasker 1986, pp. 192–201), Grant (Grant 2003, pp. 129–45), and others (Vallicella 2008) are regarded as very strong, even in the Thomist milieu (Przanowski 2010, p. 332). The classical theism—in spite of long-term investigations—does not give indisputable responses to some significant questions regarding God's attributes. Various theistic traditions help to find (partial) answers in this context, although prospects for the decisive solution are not clear.

The simple, impassible, and completely unchanging God may appear more like an abstract being than a person (Stump 2010, p. 272). There is no easy way to include these attributes in the image of God, one that is full of life, loving, responds to human prayers, and is a participant in the transitions of the world and the fate of the people. Declarations uttered by theists who claim that simplicity, impassibility, and immutability do not make God far from a personal being are often not backed by strong enough arguments.

3. Conclusions

Theologians need to comprehend and properly assess the intellectual value of culture in a given period of time as a means of conveying the contents of religious faith. In such a way, philosophy becomes "ancilla theologiae" in the proper sense. An illuminating example of the fruitful impact can be found in the history of Aristotelian hylomorphism, which was adopted by Christian medieval theologians to better investigate the nature of the sacraments and the hypostatic union[27]. The famous concept formulated by the Stagirite was not recognized as true or false, but as one of the most notable proposals offered by Greek culture to be understood and analyzed in terms of its usefulness to clarify various domains of theology. Similarly, theologians of our times "might well ask, with respect to contemporary science, philosophy and the other areas of human knowing, if they have accomplished this extraordinarily difficult process as well as did these medieval masters" (John Paul II 1988).

I am convinced that the above-mentioned process has not been accomplished by contemporary Christian theologians. Moreover, many of them do not undertake this task, since they treat some conceptions (rooted mainly in Greek philosophy) as a dogma and undisputed foundation of religious doctrine. In my opinion, it is a mistake and a clear manifestation of an absolutization of solutions proposed at any of the historical stages at the junction of fides et ratio. The awareness of this danger becomes extremely important when reflecting on the simplicity, impassibility, and immutability of God. As I have argued, these

ideas—despite their attractiveness—pose considerable difficulties for Christian theism. Perhaps, therefore, it is worth rethinking these divine attributes[28], as well as agreeing (at least) to their aspectual approach (Życiński 1988, pp. 42–46)[29]. Partial reinterpretation of theism in this regard may help in (among others) the renewed expression of the concept of the Creator's interaction with creation and in attempts to harmonize the biblical and philosophical image of God.

Reconciling the "God of the Bible" with the "God of the philosophers" is one of the most difficult problems of Christian theism. A certain distance and respect for autonomy are necessary here, remaining a natural component of the different research perspectives of philosophy and theology. After all, advocates of the Platonic, Neoplatonic, or Aristotelian–Thomistic approaches to theism must be aware that neither the noncomplex "Actus Purus" nor the unshakable and immutable "Primus Motor" will ever fully reflect the character of God, whom the Christian message speaks about. It shows God present in the world and deeply involved in the fate of man.

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Notes

1.   A synthetic presentation of this issue can be found in: Stump 2010, pp. 270–77 and Creel 2010, pp. 324–28. I am aware that, if we assume that God is mutable, passible, and composite, a number of difficulties arise, although the minute analysis of these problems goes beyond the scope of my paper.

2.   That is why I reflect upon the concepts of God's immutability, impassibility, and simplicity in one paper. God's immutability and impassibility are analyzed jointly, e.g., by Creel, who claims additionally that one of the most important arguments for God's immutability comes from the concept of the divine absolute simplicity (Creel 2010, p. 322). When exploring the thought of Aquinas, Emery points out that the acknowledgment of divine simplicity "excludes the possibility of [. . .] the "suffering" of God. It also provides the foundation for the affirmation of divine immutability" (Emery 2009, p. 59).

3.   Since the theistic tradition has been deeply embedded in patriarchal culture, male pronouns for God dominate the theological-philosophical discourse. I understand the modern call to use inclusive language in reference to God; however, this problem has no primary importance in my paper. Nb. The editors of the leading *Companions to Philosophy of Religion* do not oppose the use of male pronouns for God (e.g., Stump 2010, p. 272).

4.   In my opinion, there is no doubt that the Christian doctrine has been influenced by various philosophical conceptions. Moreover, I recognize this fact as valuable for the rational religious reflection. The significant challenge consists in identifying the proper line of demarcation in the fruitfull exchange of ideas and in weighing the benefits against the risks in the particular cases. The fundamental problem is often mistakably identified with finding an unequivocal answer to the question: does one share the Harnack thesis or not? The devil is, however, in many other details I am trying to present. Nb. P. Gavrilyuk, who oposes the Harnack thesis, deliberating on God's suffering, admits: "It is true that among educated pagans, whose philosophical views tended towards later Platonism, the divine impassibility did acquire the status of a universally shared opinion" (Gavrilyuk 2006, p. 34).

5.   This is why I disregard various nuances of the analyzed issue that should be minutely undertaken within revealed theology (although, in the footnotes, I delineate some Christological problems, important for my paper) and within systematic theology (e.g., the difference between the catholic, the orthodox, and the protestant view on the Hellenization of the Christian doctrine).

6.   The classical Thomists would probably express the similar opinion concerning the marginalization of their tradition in the analytic milieu. In this context, Analytical Thomism is a praiseworthy example of developing the classical tradition.

7.   The Scripture does often present God as immutable (e.g., *The Book of Malachi* 3:6; *The Letter of James* 1:17). Nevertheless, even the Thomists admit that biblical statements often concern not so much ontic immutability but God's unchanging love for us (see footnote 15). Moreover, among the classical Thomists there are different views on the important aspects of the problem. Salij writes: God is most literally infinitely perfect, there is no (never has been and never will be) becoming in Him (Salij 2018). Przanowski, when analyzing Aquinas' view on the Incarnation, claims: Becoming (fieri) actually took place, but there was no change (mutari) in the divine nature (Przanowski 2017, p. 335). Others minimize the meaning of the biblical assertions regarding

God's mutability by the emphasis on the specific language of the Scripture: "While such statements say something literally true about God, they are, I believe, not to be taken literally" (Weinandy 2001). The last opinion does not close the discussion, although the issue of language used in the Scripture is extremely important and the differences among the literal, metaphorical, figurative, analogous, and mystical language of the particular expression have to be carefully taken into account see for example: (Alston 2005, pp. 220–44; Soskice 2007). Nb. When depicting the causes of suffering, Weinandy overlooks the specific language of the Bible (see footnote 15).

8   For G. Emery: "God's immutability should not be thought of as inactivity: God acts by a voluntary impulsion from within rather than being swayed from without. The immutability that is proper to God guarantees precisely the *transcendence* and the *perfection of his free action*" (Emery 2009, p. 29). But "a voluntary impulsion from within" need not exclude "being swayed from without". Why and how does one's immutability guarantee the perfection of their free action?

9   The following quotation shows how strong was Tertulian's position regarding the relationship between *faith* and *reason*: "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with (Plato's) Academy, the Christian with the heretic? Our principles come from the Porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord is to be sought in simplicity of heart. I have no use for a Stoic or a Platonic or a dialectic Christianity. After Jesus Christ we have no need of speculation, after the Gospel no need of research. When we come to believe, we have no desire to believe anything else; for we begin by believing that there is nothing else which we have to believe" (Tertulian 1956, p. 36).

10   Despite his well-known statements against philosophy, Tertullian uses a lot of philosophy to do theology.

11   In a sense, the relationship between revealed faith and philosophical reason already started with *The Septuagint*—the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

12   It has to be noticed that there is no single Greek view of the divine, and "there is no one unified account of the divine emotions and of the divine involvement advocated by major Hellenistic schools of philosophy, let alone the Hellenistic religions at large" (Gavrilyuk 2006, pp. 21–22). In this regard, essential differences between various Hellenistic schools of philosophical thought are depicted by Rowe (Rowe 1994, p. 88). Kearsley warns: "The question 'What is God in ancient Greek philosophy?' would furnish the perfect tide for someone wishing simply to write a really long book. Aristotle, Plato and Zeno would each give a different answer, even if you were fortunate enough to get only one answer from any of them! We should therefore be a little suspicious of sweeping statements to the effect that Christians have grafted 'the Greek view of God' on to a simple, pristine and pure Christianity. Just as the philosophical schools of the early Christian centuries were eclectic within a broad spirit and rationale, so Christian 'philosophical theologians' did not import entire systems of thought from any particular philosopher or school" (Kearsley 1992, p. 308).

13   In this context, one can doubt whether God is active in the face of human sufferings. Defenders of the thesis that the God of the classical theism is not inactive accentuate that the absolute being is pure act. But this is not sufficient argumentation, which creates particular problems, e.g., weak consistency: "by being pure act, God possesses the potential to perform acts that are singular to His being pure act" (I have underlined the words to be found in Weinandy's analysis). There are also (insufficient) arguments from ignorance: "While we cannot comprehend how God, as pure act, acts, the act of creation is God acting as pure act, whereby created beings are related to God as He is and so come to exist" (Weinandy 2001). Moreover, one of the analogies in the Thomistic argumentation for God's immutability presents a passive God. When recalling Aquinas' view on the Creator–creation relationship, Przanowski asserts: "our intellect apprehends God in relation to creation in the way in which it comprehends the object of cognition in relation to knowledge. God (in this analogy: the object of cognition) is therefore in mental (conceptual, logical) relation to creation (in this analogy: knowledge), while creation exists in a real relation to Him.... The statement that God is in a mental (conceptual, logical) relation to creation does not mean the negation of any reference, but the negation of any change introduced by that reference" (Przanowski 2017, p. 332). Now, the object of perception is static in relation to the one who apprehends it.

14   There is no place here to introduce minutely the reflection of the Church Fathers upon the divine impassiblity. For comprehensive study in this regard, see: Gavrilyuk 2006, pp. 47–63. A separate attention should be paid to the thought of Cyril of Alexandria, for "it was Cyril's vision that determined the key questions in the discussions of divine (im)passibility in the centuries that followed" (Gavrilyuk 2006, pp. 19, 135–71). Obviously, the idea of God's impassibility (as well as that of God's immutability) did not penetrate the Christian doctrine of the first centuries solely due to the process of Hellenization. Christian thinkers made a theological interpretation of these concepts; for example, God's impassibility became not only an aspect of the God's strong separateness from the world, but also made the very foundations of soteriology: God can redeem us from evil, sin, and suffering, because He himself is not subordinated to them at all (Strzelczyk 2006, p. 169).

15   I am not convinced by the following way of arguing for God's impassibility: "only if He existed in the same ontological order in which the evil was enacted could He then suffer" or "God is absolutely impassible because He is absolutely passionate in His love" (Weinandy 2001). Nb. The latter argumentation stresses the ethical dimension of God's immutability (see footnote 7). In his reasoning, Weinandy assumes the privation theory of evil: "since evil, which causes suffering, is the privation of some good, it would mean that a suffering God was deprived of some good and thus He would no longer be perfectly good". Such a view on evil was criticized for many reasons (see for example: Calder 2007, pp. 371–81). There is also a problem of the cause of suffering. Weinandy asserts: "The compassion of God is seen then not in His suffering in solidarity with humankind, but in His ability to alleviate the cause of human suffering—sin" (Weinandy 2001). This conception—dispite any of Weinandy's

declarations regarding the proper understanding of the first part of *The Book of Genesis*—originates in its literal interpretation and creates widely recognized problems. Can it be rationally and satisfactory explained that the suffering of a terminally ill child is caused by sin? Whose sin? The ultimate cause of any suffering should be rather found in the contingency of the world, which characterizes thereof in each place and moment of the history. Nb. When delineating the cause of suffering, Weinandy reflects upon various examples of suffering, but disregards the above-mentioned case (as well as the suffering of some animals with a developed nervous system).

16 Some theologians are so strongly fascinated by the concept of impassibility that in its analysis they miss the problem of Incarnation (Charamsa 2003, pp. 259–77). Other thinkers, when analyzing the issue of Incarnation and redemption, underline exclusively the duality of Christ's nature: "since it was the Son of God who suffered, did He not equally experience such suffering within His divinity? No, for suffering is caused by the loss of some good, and while as man the Son was deprived of His human well-being and life, He was not deprived of any divine perfection or good" (Weinandy 2001). Such an argumentation neglects the personalist dimension of suffering and refers to the position of St. John of Damascus: "The Word of God then itself endured all in the flesh, while His divine nature which alone was passionless remained void of passion. For since the one Christ, Who is a compound of divinity and humanity, and exists in divinity and humanity, truly suffered, that part which is capable of passion suffered as it was natural it should, but that part which was void of passion did not share in the suffering . . . Observe, further, that we say that God suffered in the flesh, but never that His divinity suffered in the flesh, or that God suffered through the flesh." (John of Damascus 1899, III:26). In the context of such statements, the following question arises: Can we not claim that Christ suffered as a person? Emery gives the positive answer to this in the following way: "the *person* or *hypostasis* of the Son suffered *by virtue of the human nature he had assumed*" (Emery 2009, p. 31).

17 Already in the nineteenth century, some Anglican theologians challenged the conception of God's impassibility (for example Andrew M. Fairbairn). One should also note the influence of the nineteenth century German Kenoticism (the school represented by G. Thomasius and F. Rohmer, as well as the more radical group of thinkers such as W. Gess and F. Godet) to the twentieth century British Kenoticists (such as C. Gore, F. Weston, A. M. Fairbairn, C. A. Dinsmore) and through the latter to the critics of God's impassibility (Weinandy 2002, pp. 110–23).

18 See note 7 and 15.

19 There are important differences among the particular theoretical proposals of the processualists concerning the question: what does it mean that God is active and dynamic? Hartshorne's conception of God substantially differs from that of Whitehead. The latter is much closer to the classical Christian theism.

20 Aquinas often grounded his argumentation for God's simplicity (and immutability) on the Aristotelian physics, which was largely a result of commonsense beliefs, containing many oversimplifications and errors (Dodds 1986, pp. 119–40).

21 As stressed in one of the reviews to my paper, this is the most personal achievement of Aquinas in this field. From Origen to Bonaventure, most Christian theologians put matter in every creature in order to distinguish creatures from their Creator: the presence of matter means that every creature is composite while God is simple. Aquinas does not need this distinction because he has efficiently introduced another one: between essence and existence.

22 In such a foundationalist view on God's attributes, it is hardly surprising that the Thomists strongly defend their position. It has several advantages; however, I present some reasons for keeping the discussion open: rational counterarguments and the value of alternative approaches.

23 The specific status of affirmations about God was deeply studied by Aquinas (Thomas Aquinas 1920, I.3:premium) and his many followers, e.g., by Stump, who claims: "What the doctrine of simplicity requires one to understand about all the designations for the divine attributes is that they are all identical in reference but different in sense, referring in various ways to the one actual entity which is God himself or designating various manifestations of it . . . 'Perfect power' and 'perfect knowledge' are thus analogues for 'the morning star' and 'the evening star': non-synonymous expressions calling to mind quite distinct manifestations of one and the same thing referred to. There is as much truth and as much potential misinformation in 'Perfect power is identical with perfect knowledge' as there is in 'The morning star is identical with the evening star'" (Stump 2005, pp. 99–100). When formulating statements on the divine attributes one has to realize that—to give an example—the content of the phrase "God is wise" conveys a different meaning than "God is good". Only in this sense can it be asserted that God has various properties. Simultaneously, one can rationally state that God's wisdom does not differ from His goodness. Analogically, "the wisdom of God" does not signify something essentially different from what is conveyed by the name "God" (Przanowski 2010, p. 56). Contemporary supporters of the doctrine of God's simplicity often maintain that Plantinga understood it incorrectly. According to Leftow, Plantinga thinks that, when he states that there is no difference between God and His nature, it is assumed that He possesses all of the attributes usually connected with divine nature, and lacks the attributes associated with the word "God", which are inconsistent with the attributes commonly ascribed to it. This is a mistaken reasoning—underlines Leftow—because the statement "God=God's nature" signifies only that what is identical to divine nature is not an example of attributes ordinarily associated with the nature of God. Therefore, the thesis of identity does not lead to the conclusion that God is an abstract being (Leftow 1990, p. 593; Leftow 2006, pp. 365–80; Przanowski 2010, p. 55; Słomka 2021, p. 41). Davies points out that Plantinga did not sufficiently understand the negative character of the divine simplicity: this doctrine refers to what God is not rather than to what He is (Davies 1987, p. 59). Rogers, in turn, reproaches Plantinga for omitting the (essential for Aquinas) connection between the simplicity of God and His unique "mode of existence"—*Actus Purus*. Simplicity does not generate an abstract, impersonal,

image of God. God always acts in a rational way, and He can be perfectly identified with His own action (Rogers 1996, p. 171; Przanowski 2010, p. 57; Słomka 2021, p. 42). In contrast, Copan and Craig argue that "if God is not distinct from his essence, then God cannot know or do anything different from what he knows and does. He can have no contingent knowledge or action, for everything about him is essential to him. But in that case, all modal distinctions collapse and everything becomes necessary. Since 'God knows that *p*' is logically equivalent to '*p* is true,' the necessity of the former entails the necessity of the latter. Thus, divine simplicity leads to an extreme fatalism, according to which everything that happens does so with logical necessity" (Copan and Craig 2004, pp. 178–79).

24   "By virtue of God's simplicity, God cannot be or do other than God is or does. God's act, which is God's being, is absolutely necessary. At the same time, the doctrines of God's free creation, creation from nothing, and the gratuitousness of God's saving grace all likewise follow from God's independence. But creation and salvation are divine acts. Therefore, there is an apparent contradiction: for what is supposed to be perfectly free is actually completely necessary. Older thinkers recognized the potential puzzle and proposed to dissolve it with a distinction. They distinguished between two kinds of necessity: one, absolute necessity, and the other known variously as hypothetical, conditional, or suppositional necessity. Absolute necessity is that necessity by which God exists and exists in a certain way. It is the kind of necessity that God's aseity, and so God's simplicity, involves. The latter, hypothetical necessity, is the necessity by which God creates and saves. It is the kind of necessity that an absolutely necessary being imposes on the things it knows or does *ad extra*" (Pedersen and Lilley 2022, p. 129). Aquinas stressed that the distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity rests solely on the source (or ground) of a thing's necessity in relation to its essence or concept (Thomas Aquinas 1955–1957, I.81–83). Only when the predicate forms part of the definition of the subject, or when the subject forms part of the notion of the predicate, is a thing absolutely necessary. A hypothetical necessity is one in which the opposite is true, and the source of a thing's necessity is extrinsic to its concept (Thomas Aquinas 1920, I.19:3, resp.; Pedersen and Lilley 2022, pp. 131–32). Pedersen and Lilley notice that theists "from Boethius to Leibniz have been satisfied that this distinction in sorts of necessity is adequate to distinguish the way God necessarily exists from the necessity of the effects God freely produces" (Pedersen and Lilley 2022, pp. 129–30), recent thinkers, however, "have been less satisfied. Some now argue that the distinction collapses. Because, they argue, the distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity reduces to absolute necessity, it cannot be used to solve the puzzle in the way older thinkers thought it could. The result, they charge, is that God's effects, such as the world, are as necessary as divine being. The puzzle is now a serious problem, and the available solutions are accordingly more extreme. Most rely on the abandonment of premises that were important to thinkers from Augustine and Aquinas to the Protestant scholastics. In many cases, the *point* of the argument is precisely to force the abandonment of such premises—premises such as 'strong' notions of divine aseity and simplicity. This strategy is, once again, sometimes known as the argument from modal collapse. And one of its main contentions is that "*because simplicity entails a modal collapse, we should revise or abandon the doctrine of simplicity*" (Pedersen and Lilley 2022, p. 130). Duby admits that to "the extent that advocates of divine simplicity wish to retain the freedom of God in the work of creation, this represents a significant challenge—indeed, perhaps the most difficult for a traditional understanding of divine simplicity" (Duby 2016, p. 194). Richards proposes that God's being includes potentiality, for this secures the freedom of God to create or not to create the world. In Richard's opinion, if God is without any residual potency (actus purus), He should do all that He possibly can do, including creating all possible worlds, which He has not done (Richards 2003, pp. 234–35; Duby 2016, p. 193). Even some Thomists opt to 'weaken' divine simplicity. Stump and Kretzmann openly concede that "God is not the same in all possible worlds". Only given an '"nitial-state set"—a set of chosen creaturely circumstances on which the (formerly indeterminate) will of God is now terminated—is God fully in act and determinate (Stump and Kretzmann 1985, pp. 355, 362–69). Ross underlines that such weakening is an enervation of divine simplicity and that, if this doctrine is to be preserved, it must preserve God's 'trans-world' simplicity (Ross 1985, pp. 383, 387–88; Duby 2016, p. 194).

25   One of my anonymous reviewers noticed that Thomists would take exception with this statement. In my paper, however, I follow the interpretation of Stump, who—in the context of the Aquinas' reflection upon God's choice of creation and accidental properties—claims: "this is the sense in which we should understand that God has no accidents—not that God is exactly the same in all possible worlds in which he exists but that there is nothing at all incomplete or insubstantial about God in any respect, even though God is not the same in all possible worlds" (Stump 2005, p. 113).

26   This statement would be rejected by the Thomists. O'Connor attempts to solve the analyzed problem by means of eliminating the causally intermediating intention of creating the world: God creates a contingent order directly. God's action is not constituted by a certain internal state but by a particular "execution" of divine power which efficiently "produces" a given state of affairs. In such a way, no God's internal states are presupposed apart from the reasons behind creating this or that possible world. The will to create a given world is not an internal state distinct from God. The contingency of various world orders does not imply the existence of any accidental properties in God's nature (O'Connor 1999, pp. 405–12; Koszkało and Pepliński 2016, p. 99; Słomka 2021, p. 43).

27   In the second half of the thirteenth century, leading academic centers were quickly permeated with the Stagirite's works, brought to Europe by the Arabs. Then, in order to meet the needs of the times, notable theologians strived to reconcile Aristotelian thought with the doctrine of the Church (Słomka 2021, p. 54).

[28] It is worth noticing that, even to some classical theologians, these divine attributes are not absolutized. According to Augustine, God is in some way moved. Aquinas understood this in regards to God's knowing, willing, and loving: "motion of this sort can be affirmed of God" (Dodds 1986, p. 150).

[29] For example, Creel proposes the path "toward a unified position" regarding God's immutability and impassibility (Creel 2010, pp. 324–27). Among twentieth century theologians, an interesting interpretation of the divine impassibility was formulated by K. Rahner, who utilizes the conception of "communicatio idiomatum", which was rooted in the old Christian tradition and played a significant role in the formation of the Christological dogma. By distinguishing the "natures" of the Son of God, we place suffering unambiguously on the side of humanity, leaving divinity above it. At the same time, however, we can point to the person of the Son of God, the eternal Logos, as the ultimate subject of what was experienced by humanity: also suffering and death. When asked "what suffered?" from the perspective of the "communicatio idiomatum", we answer—humanity; to the question "who suffered"—Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, one of the Trinity. Such classical Christology has placed suffering at the very heart of the life of the Triune God! The question of the divine nature's ability to suffer was relegated to the background when facing the fact of Incarnation. The Son of God has—irremovably—also a nature capable of suffering... Therefore, in the light of the dogmatic tradition of the Church, the statement that one of the divine persons has become the subject of suffering is not of a purely metaphorical or anthropomorphic character (Strzelczyk 2006, pp. 170–72).

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