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## ДИСКУССИИ

*R.G. Swinburne*

# God's Moral Goodness

***Richard G. Swinburne*** **–** Emeritus Professor. University of Oxford. Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JD, UK;

e-mail: richard.swinburne@oriel.ox.ac.uk

Philosophers have tried to demonstrate the nature of God – either by arguing that it is a priori necessary that there is a perfect being, and that perfection entails having a certain nature (Anselm); or by arguing that the existence and nature of the universe is such as to entail or make it probable that its creator God has a certain nature (Aquinas). In my probabilistic argument I pursue the second way, arguing that the existence and nature of the universe makes it probable that the universe was created and sustained by an essentially everlasting omnipotent person. An omnipotent person will be a "best-acting" God. He will therefore only allow bad states to exist if allowing them is logically necessary for the existence of some good state. I argue against Mark Murphy's claim, that God is so different from ordinary humans that there is no reason to suppose that there is much in common between his obligations and those of humans. A morally perfect being would be not merely a best-acting God, but also a "best-feeling" God. He would allow himself to have the right feelings, which are feelings good in themselves, or right reactions to human actions and situations; or feelings which are logically necessary for a great good, such as the pain felt by Jesus on the cross. This account of God's feelings is consistent with conciliar definitions that God is "impassible" in his divine nature.

***Keywords:*** affections, Anselm, Aquinas, Augustine, God, impassible, moral goodness, Mark Murphy, theodicy

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# Моральная благость Бога

***Ричард Г. Суинберн***

Оксфордский университет. Веллингтон-сквер, Оксфорд, OX1 2JD, Великобритания;

e-mail: richard.swinburne@oriel.ox.ac.uk

Многие философы пытались продемонстрировать наличие у Бога определенной природы, утверждая, что существование совершенного существа априорно необходимо, и что это совершенство влечет обладание определенной природой (Ансельм Кентерберийский), или доказывая, что существование и природа вселенной таково, что это влечет или делает вероятным то, что ее творец, Бог, обладает определенной природой (Фома Аквинский). В моем вероятностном аргументе я следую второму пути, доказывая, что существование и природа вселенной делает вероятным то, что вселенная была создана и управляется бесконечной во времени и всемогущей по сущности личностью. Всемогущей личностью будет Бог «действующий наилучшим образом». Отсюда следует, что Он будет дозволять дурным положениям дел существовать лишь в том случае, если дозволение таковых логически необходимо для существования некоего благого положения дел. Я выдвигаю аргументы против утверждения Мерфи о том, что Бог столь отличен от обычных людей, что нет причины допускать, что есть достаточно много общего между Его обязанностями и обязанностями людей. Морально совершенное существо могло бы быть не просто Богом, действующим наилучшим образом, но также и «совершенно-чувствующим» Богом. Он мог бы позволить себе обладать верными чувствами, причем таковыми, что хороши сами по себе, или Он мог бы верно реагировать на поступки людей и те ситуации, в которых они оказываются, или чувствами, которые логически необходимы для большого блага, как боль, ощущаемая Иисусом на кресте. Этот подход к чувствам Бога совместим с определениями соборов о том, что Бог «бесстрастен» по своей Божественной природе.

***Ключевые слова:*** привязанности, Ансельм, Фома Аквинский, Августин, Бог, бесстрастие, моральная благость, Марк Мерфи, теодицея

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## I. A Best-Acting God

If we understand by "God" the creator and sustainer of the universe, there are two different ways in the history of thought in which philosophers have tried to demonstrate the nature of God. The first way, which was Anselm's way, is to argue that of a priori necessity there is a perfect being who is the creator of the universe, and that in virtue of his perfection, he has a certain nature[1]. It seems to me that this way will never reach an evident conclusion, both because any attempt to prove by a priori means that there is necessarily a perfect being seems to me

[1] Anselm (1903, ch. 15) argues that God has all the properties which are such that it is better to have them than not to have them.

doomed to failure, and also because even if it is accepted that there is a perfect being, any attempt to show what the perfection of such a being would consist in depends on highly contestable moral intuitions. For example, is it, as Scholastic thinkers held, more perfect to be totally unchanging, not merely in timelessly possessing the essential divine properties such as omnipotence and omniscience, but in timelessly possessing detailed intentions for the whole (to us) future of the human race and detailed knowledge of all (to us) future human actions? Or is it more perfect, while having at each moment of time the essential divine properties, to be able at each moment of time to give to some rational creatures free will to do actions which he cannot foreknow, and to be able to change his plans in the light of their actions? The answer doesn't seem obvious to me; and I would certainly prefer to interact with a being of the second kind.

The second way in which philosophers have tried to show the nature of God, which was Aquinas's way, is to argue that the existence and nature of the universe is such as to entail or make it probable that its creator God has a certain nature, a consequence of which determines which kind of perfection he has[2]. This seems to me the more profitable way to proceed, and so I shall summarize very briefly my own probabilistic argument, developed at length in other places[3] for the existence of a God of a certain kind, from which it follows that he will be perfectly "morally good" in the same sense as morally good humans are imperfectly morally good.

I begin with four evident very general phenomena: that there is a physical Universe; that it is governed by very simple natural laws, that those laws are such as to lead to the existence of human bodies, and that those bodies are the bodies of conscious reasoning humans who choose between good and evil. Theism, the claim that there is a God, is an explanatory hypothesis, one which purports to explain why certain observed phenomena (that is, data or evidence) are as they are. There are two kinds of explanatory hypothesis – personal and inanimate (= scientific) hypotheses. A personal hypothesis explains some phenomenon in terms of it being caused by a substance (that is a thing) whom I will call a "personal being", such as a human being, acting with certain basic powers (in the case of ordinary humans, powers to move their limbs or cause some conscious events), certain beliefs (about how to do so), and a certain purpose (or intention) to bring about a particular effect. I (a substance) cause the motion of my hand in virtue of my powers (to move my limbs), my belief (that moving my hand will attract attention) and my purpose (to attract attention). An inanimate explanation is usually represented as explaining some phenomenon in terms of it being caused by some earlier state of affairs and the operation on that state of laws of nature. The present positions of the planets are explained by their earlier positions and that of the Sun, and the operation on them of Newton's laws. But I think that this is a misleading way of analysing inanimate explanation – because "laws" are not things; Newton's law of gravity being a law

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2 Aquinas (1963–, Ia) claims to prove the existence of God in Question 2, and then proceeds in Question 3 to argue from the kind of God which he "proved" to exist, that God is simple, from which he concludes in Question 4 that God is perfect.

3 For a full account of my probabilistic argument which I summarise very briefly here, see [Swinburne 2004]; for a shorter and simpler account see [Swinburne 2010].

just consists in every material body in the universe having the power to attract every other material body with a force proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of their distance apart, and the liability always to exercise that power. So construed, inanimate explanation of some phenomenon (e.g. the present positions of the planets) explains it in terms of it being caused by substances (e.g. the Sun and the planets), being in certain states (their past positions and velocities), having certain powers (to cause material bodies to move in the way codified in Newton's laws) and the liabilities always to exercise those powers. Construing inanimate explanation in this way shows the similarity between the two kinds of explanation. Both kinds of explanation explain phenomena in terms of the actions of substances having certain powers to produce effects. But while personal explanation explains how substances exercise their powers in virtue of their purposes and beliefs, inanimate explanation explains how substances exercise their powers when in different states in virtue of their liabilities to do so.

I suggest that we judge a postulated hypothesis (of either kind) as probably true, given certain evidence, insofar as it satisfies four criteria. First the evidence must include many phenomena which it is significantly probable would occur and no phenomena which it is significantly probable would not occur, if the hypothesis is true. Secondly, it must be much less probable that the former phenomena would occur in the normal course of things, that is if the hypothesis is false. Thirdly, the hypothesis must be simple. That is, it must postulate the existence and operation of few substances, few kinds of substance, with few easily describable properties correlated in few mathematically simple kinds of way. We can always postulate many new substances with complicated properties to explain anything which we find. But our hypothesis will only be rendered probable by the evidence if it is a simple hypothesis which leads us to expect the various phenomena that form the evidence. And fourthly, the hypothesis must fit in with our knowledge of how the world works in wider fields – what I call our "background evidence". In judging competing explanations of the existence and nature of the universe, the fourth criterion is irrelevant – because there are no wider fields of which we have any knowledge, other than those which it seeks to explain.

I now argue that the simplest explanation of the personal kind of the existence of the universe and its most general features which I described, is that they are caused to exist and sustained by an essentially everlasting omnipotent person. An explanation by the operation of such a being would be the simplest kind of personal explanation there could be; it postulates just one substance to whose power and length of life there are 0 limits, 0 being a very simple number, and all the other divine properties follow from those[4]. An omnipotent being will be able intentionally to do any logically possible action, and so have the power to cause the universe and all its features to exist. A truly omnipotent being will not be influenced by unchosen inclinations, and so will choose which effects to produce solely in virtue of his knowledge of the nature of those actions. So he will know which of the actions available to him are morally good, and which are morally bad and which are

[4] For my latest detailed account of how the other divine properties follow from God essential everlasting omnipotence, see [Swinburne 2016, especially part 2].

morally indifferent; and which are better than other actions and which are worse than other actions.

To believe an action to be morally good to do entails having some motivation to do it. One would not have the concept of moral goodness unless believing an action to be morally good inclined (=motivated) one to do it. Likewise to believe an action to be morally bad to do entails having some motivation not to do it; to believe an action morally better than another action entails having greater motivation to do the former than to do the latter; and to believe an action morally worse than another action entails having greater motivation not to do the former than not to do the latter. (Henceforward, whenever I write "good" I mean "morally good", and similarly for other evaluative terms). We humans of course do not always do what we believe to be good, when we have the power to do so, because we are subject to unchosen inclinations of a non-rational kind to which we sometimes yield. But an omnipotent being would have no such inclinations, and so in any situation would always do the best possible action where there is a best action available, and an equal best action (one which is equally good as some other action or actions, all of them being better than any other actions) where there is no unique best action. He will however often have a choice between an infinite number of incompatible actions, each of which is less good than some other action; in that situation there can be no best or equal best possible action. For example, given that stars are good things and plausibly therefore the more stars the better, whatever number of stars he chooses to create, he could always do a better action by choosing to create more stars. So the best sort of personal being there could be would be one who never does a bad action, always does the best action where there is a best action, an equal best action where there is no unique best action and a good action where there is no best or equal best action. If there is a best (or equal best) kind of action, but no best (or equal best) action of that kind, he will do some action of the best (or equal best) kind. He will never do a bad action. I will call such a being a "best-acting" God. My argument shows that the simplest kind of personal God would be a best-acting God.

Is it probable that such a God would create and sustain our universe? All actions of causing good things are, as such, good actions. Our universe has many good features – I suggest that the ever-expanding interacting system of galaxies, stars, and planets, is a very beautiful and so very good thing, and so is our earth and the plants and lower (and therefore, I suppose, non-conscious) animals which inhabit it. The higher animals are however more valuable than the lower animals in that they are conscious and have beliefs about the effects of their actions and act for the good reasons of conserving their own lives and – very frequently – the lives of their offspring and other animals; and to all appearances, mostly enjoy their lives. It is good that there are animals who do good actions. But they will only be able to save their own lives and those of other animals if they know that there is a serious danger that if they did not act, they would suffer and die. So the very existence of the higher animals involves the occurrence of suffering and death. Yet the less similar in their brain structure are animals to humans, the less likely it is that they suffer as much as we do; and the smaller is their range of choice and understanding than is ours, the less suffering animals can cause in comparison with the suffering that humans can cause. Nevertheless humans are much better things than the higher

animals, because we can do so much more good than they can, and we also have the power freely to choose whether to do good or bad, independently of the causes which influence us (or so it seems to most of us when we make choices, and so we should believe in the absence of counter-evidence). Still, the existence of humans makes it very probable that the world will contain much more bad unprevented-by-God.

Bearing these points in mind, is it probable that a best-acting God would cause a universe of our kind, which includes so much good and quite a lot of bad? Clearly it is sometimes a good action to cause (or allow to occur) a bad state of affairs if doing so is the only way in which some good state of affairs which is at least as good as the bad state is bad, can be caused. Thus it is good for a surgeon to cut off someone's limb if it is the only way to save their life, even if the surgeon has no access to anaesthetics and so will cause great pain in the process of saving the life. But God who is omnipotent can do anything logically possible, and so he will only cause a universe in which bad states occur if doing so is the only logically possible way of bringing about some good states. Hence the answer to our question whether a best-acting God would cause a universe of our kind depends on whether there is a successful theodicy which shows that allowing each bad state of the universe is a logically necessary condition for the existence of a good state of at least comparable goodness. A successful theodicy also needs to show that the best-acting God has the right to allow each such bad state to occur for the sake of the good state which it makes possible. Someone may have good reason to believe that there is a successful theodicy, even if they do not know what it is. This will be because they have reason to believe that the available evidence other than the evidence about the bad states of the world makes it so probable that there is a God of the kind analysed above, that it is not outweighed by the evidence of the bad states; and so leaves it significantly probable that there is a best-acting God, even if they cannot work out why he would have allowed the bad states to occur. However, if the evidence available to an enquirer (either evidence of the sort that I have described or of some other sort) makes it only a little more probable than not that there is such a God, the enquirer does need a successful theodicy in order to have a justified belief that there is a God, I believe that there is such a theodicy[5].

Even if there is such a successful theodicy for the bad states of our universe, it is not necessary that God would create such a universe, because obviously he could create a universe in which there were no bad states, and all conscious rational creatures were programmed to do good acts. I do not know of an argument showing that that would be a worse kind of universe than a universe of our kind, even if the good actions of animals could not include the heroic actions of saving their own lives and those of their offspring, and the good actions of humans would not be the result of their own free choice. For that reason, I suggest that – given that there is a successful theodicy for the bad states of our universe – it would only be an equal best action to create a universe of our kind, rather than universe in which there were no bad states. If that is correct, then there would be a probability of ½ that God would create a universe of our kind. But that is certainly a significant probability.

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[5] For my theodicy, see [Swinburne 1998]; or [Swinburne 2004: chs. 10 and 11].

So, I claim, given such a theodicy, the hypothesis of a "best acting" God provides the simplest personal hypothesis which makes it significantly probable that there would be a universe with the features which I described. But the question remains whether there is an equally or more simple kind of inanimate hypothesis which would make it just as probable that there is such a universe. Such a hypothesis would need to postulate one entity (un-extended, because otherwise it would have parts and so be less simple) with the power to produce a universe with the kind of balance of good and evil which our universe has, and the liability of a probability of at least ½ that it would exercise that power. That a personal God would have that power and it being as probable as not that he would exercise it follows from his having the simple property of omnipotence. But an inanimate entity would have to have built into it a very specific power (to produce just that balance, rather than a universe with less bad or more bad in it (for example, some rational beings suffering for ever, not through their own choice) and the particular liability (with a probability of at least ½) to exercise it, which would not follow from any other property as simple as omnipotence. For this reason the simplest inanimate hypothesis which makes it significantly probable that there would be a universe with the features which I have described would be much less simple than the simplest personal hypothesis, and so then I claim that the hypothesis of a best-acting God satisfies better than any other hypothesis the first and third criteria for a probably true explanation – that it leads one to expect the phenomena with significant probability and is simple.

My second criterion is that it must be much less probable that the phenomena would occur in the normal course of things, that is if the hypothesis is false. So is it at all probable that if the best personal and the best inanimate hypothesis were both false, that there would be a universe of an uncountable number of fundamental particles in which every particle has the same power of gravitational attraction (and of the other natural forces) as every other particle, of such a kind as to lead to the evolution of human bodies connected to consciousness? I suggest that this enormous apparent coincidence would be massively improbable, and so my hypothesis and also the best inanimate hypothesis satisfy the second criterion very well indeed.

Hence, given the equal satisfaction of the first and second criteria by the best personal and the best inanimate hypothesis and the better satisfaction of the third criterion (so simplicity) by the best personal hypothesis, the best personal hypothesis is the one most probably true on the evidence of the most general features of the universe – on the assumption that there is a successful theodicy. This is the hypothesis of a "best acting" God.

## II. An Argument Against God Being Best-Acting

Most theists claim that God is a "best acting" God, whether on the basis of an argument of my kind or on the basis of some other argument, but in either case it would seem that theism could be true only if there is a successful theodicy. However in a recent book Mark Murphy [Murphy 2017], arguing for his account of the divine nature from his intuitions about perfection and not on the basis of probabilistic arguments, claims that an "Anselmian being" (his name for a perfect God) is so different from ordinary human beings, that there is little reason

to suppose that there is much in common between his obligations and those of ordinary humans. Murphy denies what he describes as a Kantian thesis that (to put it in terms of "obligations" rather than his expression "requiring reasons") any differences in the obligations of all rational beings arise as consequences of some common obligation for rational beings with different natures or circumstances. "So while it may be true that I have a reason to teach students at Georgetown that you do not have, I have this reason in virtue of a reason that we both share (a reason to keep one's agreements) plus a circumstance that I am in that you are not (I have agreed to teach Georgetown students, while you haven't)" [Murphy 2017: 47]. But, while both God and humans are rational beings, they are – he claims – rational beings of such different kinds that they do not have many obligations in common. Hence, he holds, God has no obligation to bring about any of the good states of the creatures whom he creates, which we humans have obligations to bring about in our own children, even if that can be done without diminishing some other good state or bringing about a bad state. He accepts that God has a "justifying reason" to eliminate the sufferings of the world (that is, it would be a good thing if he did eliminate them), but he denies that God has a requiring reason (that is, an obligation) to prevent the occurrence of bad states of affairs such as pains, which are not logically necessary for the occurrence of some good state.

Murphy does however claim that he knows enough about what God would do, to know that he "never intends evil" [Ibid.: 117], for example "never lies" [Ibid.: 115]. But, strangely, although he admits that "natural selection involves creaturely evils", he claims that since "God obviously intended natural selection as a means to bring about rational animals", that does not entail that God intended "evils". He claims that God foresaw the evils, but did not intend them. Yet, since as Murphy admits, God could have brought about rational animals without natural selection, this seems implausible. Maybe God intended natural selection as a means but not as an end, but he still intended it. Now it is the case that the use by writers on "the problem of evil", of the English word "evil" to refer to both bad states of affairs and to malicious actions can be misleading, since in these senses of the word bringing about an evil state is not necessarily an "evil action". The suffering involved in natural selection is clearly a bad state of affairs, but causing it would not, I suggest, be an evil action if its occurrence was logically necessary for the occurrence of some state as good as the bad state was bad, which God had the right to cause. Murphy also denies that it was an evil act, but he sees no reason to argue that it was logically necessary for any good state. So, Murphy concludes that "as the features of the created world are a matter of divine discretion, there are no such reasons that so much as dispose, however mildly, the Anselmian being to create one way or another" [Ibid.: 109].

There seem to me three major difficulties in this view. The first is the implausibility of Murphy's claim that his view does not entail that God "intended" to bring about evil states. The second is that his account of what the perfection of a perfect being would consist in seems implausible – surely a perfect being would not allow his creatures to suffer for no good reason. And thirdly, it has the consequence that there cannot be a cogent probabilistic argument from the observed features of this world to the existence of God – because those features will only make it

significantly probable that there is a God if, if there is a God it is significantly probable that the universe will have these features (which is a consequence of my first criterion for the success of such an argument). If we suppose that we do not have the slightest idea of what sort of universe a God would make, we cannot use the observed features of our universe as evidence that he made it. So Murphy will have to rely on some ontological-type argument for the existence of a perfect being: and in my view all such arguments are unsound.

Those of us who depend on probabilistic arguments for a belief in the existence of God, understand them to show the existence of a creator who is like humans in being a substance who exercises his powers intentionally to bring about effects in virtue of his knowledge of what the effects are like. Murphy and most other theists acknowledge that God possesses such properties, although they emphasise that God possesses these properties, as Aquinas writes, "in a more eminent way" [Aquinas 1963–: Ia. 13.3]. So the obligations to the creatures of whose existence and nature he is the full cause must have some similarity to the obligations of human parents to the children of whose existence they are only a very small part of the cause. (Our power to produce children is sustained in us by God, and we do not choose who our children will be.) Our understanding of moral responsibility involves the recognition that if an agent is the cause of some effect which he has an obligation to make good rather than bad, then the greater his share of causing this effect, the greater is the resulting obligation on him or her to ensure that the effect is a good one. If it depends almost entirely on one physician not making a mistake whether a patient lives or dies, then the obligation on him or her to keep the patient alive is greater than if there is only a small chance that if that physician makes a mistake the patient will die. Hence God's obligation to ensure that our lives are good must be immensely greater than our obligations to ensure that the lives of our own children are good. And clearly we do have a considerable understanding of what makes for a good human life – if we did not, then we would have no understanding of moral goodness at all, and could not attribute any such property to God. So, I conclude, contrary to Murphy, that God does have "a requiring reason" (that is, an obligation) to prevent these intrinsically bad states of affairs, such as pains, from obtaining, unless their occurrence is a logically necessary condition of some good at least as good as the bad state is bad.

Hence I repeat my claim that a justified belief in the simplest and so most probable kind of God, requires reason to believe that there is a successful theodicy showing that allowing each bad state of the universe is a logically necessary condition for the existence of a good state of at least comparable goodness, and that a best-acting God has the right to allow the bad state to occur in order to cause the good state which it makes possible – all this given an understanding of badness and goodness which is largely accessible to ordinary humans.

## III. A Best-Feeling God

However, it is plausible to suppose that the moral goodness of a morally good God does not consist solely in the actions which he does; he needs to have the right feelings as well. Above all he needs to love those rational beings whom he has

created, just as good finite creatures need to love their children, which is more than doing good to them. As St.Paul wrote, "if I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). So when a morally good God acts to save sentient creatures from some misfortune or irresistible temptation, and also when he acts to punish them, he must act out of a love for them of the kind that good parents have for their children. And when he sees any good or bad state of his creatures, it is plausible to suppose that he must have the appropriate feelings for his creatures in that state – such as "rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep" (Romans 12:15); and perhaps also being angry at those who do wrong. Like a good physician, God will have compassion for the suffering of humans; like a good parent, God will rejoice when humans triumph over temptation, perhaps feel angry when they yield to temptation and hurt each other, and certainly feel pity and so show mercy when they repent; but not of course anger at someone who has done no wrong, or excessively strong anger at someone who has done only the smallest wrong. But a compassionate physician does not have sufferings of the same kind as his patients suffer, nor – barring special circumstances – would it be good that he should do so. So, by analogy, there is no good reason to suppose that, when we suffer, God should always suffer in the kind of way that we suffer.

The Council of Ephesus declared that God "without a body" (that is, God in his divine nature) is ἀπαθὲς,"incapable of suffering" [Tanner 1990: 42], which is often translated "impassible". Timothy Pawl [Pawl 2016: 153], in his analysis of the claims of the first seven Ecumenical councils, concluded his discussion of this subject "with the claim that the early councils, the majority of the eastern and western fathers, and later confessional statements of Catholic and Protestant confessional bodies affirm the truth of divine impassibility". However very many modern theologians have denied that God is "impassible". But before affirming or denying this, we need to clarify what it means for God to be "impassible", and see whether in one sense, it is acceptable, although in another sense unacceptable[6]. In the widest sense of "impassible" the doctrine of divine impassibility rules out God having any passive states. One argument for this is an argument endorsed by Aristotle [Aristotle 1960: 256b] writing that "Anaxagoras did well to say that 'Intelligence' was unaffected (ἀπαθής)… and free from admixture, since he regarded it as the principle of movement and it could only be so if itself motionless, and could only control it if itself unmingled with it". That understanding of "impassible", as

[6] Creel (2005) considers sixteen possible meanings of "impassible". He accepts my view that understanding "impassible" as "not able to be causally influenced" would rule out God's knowledge of our free actions. Indeed he claims more strongly, that "God must be passive to what is going on in the world, even when what is going on in the world is determined entirely by his will" [Creel 2005: 205]. This is because if God were "to know what is happening in the world, merely by knowing his will for the world, then he might know what was happening in the world, but he would not know those things themselves." While Creel accepts that God has a loving disposition towards all creatures, he seems to me (though I am not certain that I have understood Creel's view here) to reject the view that this involves any feeling. And he certainly rejects the view that God can have what I have described as "good reactions to the actions or situations of his creatures", and so he holds that there can be no emotional tinge to his anger, pity, and such like.

"not able to be causally influenced" by anything outside himself, yields a very wide sense of "impassible" which would seem not merely to rule out God having any emotions evoked by human actions or situations, but also have the consequence that God could not know which free acts humans do – since, I suggest, God could come to know what humans do freely only by human free actions causing God to have that knowledge. In his study of patristic thought about divine impassibility Paul Gavrilyuk [Gavrilyuk 2006: 35] however notes "that the early patristic authorities show no awareness of this highly technical point of Aristotle's metaphysics".

One very general modern argument sometimes given[7] for the opposite view that God must be able to have all the feelings which we have is that he could not understand what it is like to have some feeling unless he had had it himself, or at least was capable of having it – just as, it is often claimed, no one can know what colour is, unless they have seen a coloured object, or at least were capable of seeing it. That argument, however, seems to me clearly mistaken. Suppose I know what colour is because I have seen many different coloured objects. Suppose now that I am cloned; a physical duplicate of me is made in a laboratory having an identical brain to mine which produces the same mental states as my brain produces. Then, if I know what colour is, my clone will also know what colour is; but my clone will not know this on the basis of having previously seen coloured objects. My clone has simply been made with the ability to recognise coloured objects, and so knows what colour is – an ability which has been formed in me by my past experiences. Suppose now that the clone is made blind and so is unable to see anything; then he still knows what colour is, although he has never seen it and is not now capable of seeing it. He knows what colour is because he would be able to recognise it if he were capable of seeing it. Analogously, someone could simply know what it is to feel pain because they could recognise pain if they were to feel it, even if it is not possible for them to feel it. I conclude that God can know what it would feel like to be in pain, without ever being able to be in pain. Hence this general argument against any kind of divine impassibility must fail.

If arguments for God being able to have all kinds of feeling, and arguments against God being able to have any kind of feeling, are rejected, we should consider whether God's "impassibility" can be construed as ruling out certain kinds of feeling and allowing other kinds of feeling. It seems clear to me that the claim of the Council of Ephesus (and of later councils) that God is "impassible" means simply that God cannot suffer with the kind of pain that we have when our bodies are injured, which I shall call "bodily pain", bearing in mind that it is surely logically possible for someone to suffer from such bodily pain even when they do not have a body. It is clear that this is what the Council of Ephesus was claiming from the context in which this claim is made, being one where God in his divine nature is contrasted with God incarnate in his human nature where he suffered bodily pain on the cross. Gavrilyuk comments that pre-Nicene fathers did not have much to say about which (if any) emotions God in his divine nature could have, and finds in them "nothing amounting to a doctrine, or to a universally endorsed body of teaching" [Ibid.: 47] on this topic. There were disputes about whether some of God's properties which we

[7] One version of this argument is to be found in [Sarot 1992].

regard as emotions such as anger, jealousy, and patience, consist merely in a certain pattern of response to human actions or whether they have also some felt content [see: Gavrilyuk 2006: 51–60]. This discussion about what a somewhat wider understanding of "impassibility" allowed continued both in the East and the West.

Anastasia Scrutton (2011) brings out how Augustine and Aquinas both used "passions" ("*passiones*") as a general term for emotions, and also distinguished among them passions in a narrower sense which involve "arousal in the soul", from affections ("*affectiones*"); an affection "is a movement of the will, which is part of the higher, inner, intellectual self, while a passion is an act of the appetite, an aspect of the lower, outer, sensual self" [Scrutton 2011: 38]. So, Aquinas held, "The words 'love', 'desire', and so on are used in two senses. Sometimes they mean passions, with some arousal in the soul… But they can be used to denote simple attraction ("*affectus*"), without passion or perturbation of soul, and such acts are acts of will. And in this sense the words apply to angels and to God" [Aquinas 1963–: Ia.82.5 ad1]. *Affectus* might seem to denote a passive state and not a mere pattern of behaviour, while an affection being "an act of will" might suggest a mere pattern of behaviour. We can reconcile these two interpretations by supposing that an affection is a passive state, but one caused by a voluntary act of will; and that, whether or not this is a correct interpretation of Augustine and Aquinas, my previous arguments suggest is the kind of emotion which a good God would have. Augustine and Aquinas also connect something being an affection with it being in accordance with reason [see: Scrutton 2011: 50]. And so it is natural to understand an affection being "without passion or perturbation of soul" as one influenced by reason alone, and not by irrational felt inclinations. An emotion which accords with reason is one which is good to have; an emotion which does not accord with reason is one which it is not good to have.

It is good to have emotions which are intrinsically good always to have, and to have emotions which are the right reactions and so good reactions to different situations and actions of creatures. It is always good to have love for all creatures as well as for oneself. It is good to have pity for creatures who are emotionally hurt, compassion when they suffer pain, joy when they rejoice or do good actions, and perhaps anger when they do wrong. These are the emotions to which, I suggest, it would be appropriate to apply Aquinas's term "affections". But it would be bad to have a reaction of greater or lesser degree than the situation or action of the creature requires. It would be bad to be very angry at someone who had committed a very small wrong, or to show great compassion for someone who was very sorry for themself enduring some very small misfortune. These are the emotions to which, I suggest, it would be appropriate to apply Aquinas's term "passions" in the narrower sense; and so in this sense God would be "impassible". But clearly an omnipotent God who is not subject to involuntary inclinations can only experience emotions if he freely chooses to allow himself to experience them, the possibility of which for God in his divine nature was not explicitly much discussed in earlier patristic times[8], but was clearly not excluded. I have argued that it would be a best action for God to allow himself to experience the good emotions, and so that a "best acting" God would then be also a "best feeling" God.

[8] But see [Scrutton 2011: 19–20] for the discussion of this by Lactantius and Gregory Thermatourgos.

Suffering from bodily pain is not naturally described (in English) as an "emotion", but it is a feeling, and naturally considered to be a πὰθος. Clearly it is an intrinsically bad state, and since a good reaction to the suffering of others does not as such involve suffering oneself, a best-acting God would not allow himself to suffer except in circumstances where allowing himself to suffer in this way is a logically necessary condition for a good at least as good as the suffering is bad. The obvious such circumstances affirmed by central Christian doctrine, is when Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, suffered in his life on earth, and above all, in his Passion leading up to his crucifixion. Just as a cogent argument for the existence of God requires a theodicy for ordinary human bodily suffering, so a cogent argument for the central Christian doctrine of the suffering involved in the human life and Passion of Christ requires a theodicy for divine bodily suffering. There seem to me to be two different reasons why it would be good that God should acquire a human nature, lead a hard human life, and suffer (in consequence of having a human nature[9]) in the same way as humans suffer when their bodies are afflicted by crucifixion, which are not reasons for God to suffer in his divine nature. The first reason, not often stressed by patristic or mediaeval writers, is that if God imposes suffering on humans (and animals) for the sake of a great good, it is a great good that he should share our suffering – just as when a King compels his citizens to endure considerable hunger in order to win a just war, it is good that he also should endure hunger. In these cases, the great good, for which suffering is a logically necessary condition, is having suffering of the kind which the sufferers suffer at the time and in the circumstances when they suffer. Thereby God or the King identify with those whom they cause to suffer for a good reason. Hence there is a good reason for God to become incarnate as a human and to suffer in the way in which humans suffer, that is bodily pain, and thus to suffer in his human nature, but not in his divine nature. The second reason is that the suffering of God is logically necessary for providing the best means of making available to humans atonement for their sins. There are in Christian tradition several different theories of how the Passion of Christ made available atonement for our sins, and was the best means of doing this, which – for obvious reasons of space – I will not discuss here. But all these theories also stress that what made the suffering of God the best method of effecting that atonement was that it was the suffering of God incarnate, and so the suffering of God in his human nature. It would not have been nearly as good a means of atonement if God had not become incarnate, but nevertheless endured a similar kind and amount of suffering in his divine nature. And all these theories also insisted that it was a voluntary act of God to provide this atonement by allowing himself to suffer, not one which he had an obligation to do, but one which it was very good that he should do[10].

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9 The Council of Ephesus declared that, while God the Word could not suffer "in his own nature", that is the divine nature, when he became embodied, his body suffered, and so "he is said to have suffered" [Tanner 1990: 42].

10 See my arguments in defence of these two reasons why it would have been good for God to become incarnate and share some of the worst of our suffering, in [Swinburne 2008: chs. 3 and 4]; and see later chapters of that book for a defence of the view that God did become incarnate to share our suffering and make available atonement for our sins. I contrast my preferred theory of the Atonement with other theories in my [Swinburne 1989: ch. 10].

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