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In his paper "Epistemology Supernaturalized," Mann takes us on a fascinating excursion into philosophical theology, a journey that blends in a quite natural way medieval doctrines about the nature of God with current results in the philosophy of language, metaphysics, and the theory of knowledge. His aim is to give an account of divine omniscience. The basic elements of this account are the following: God's practical knowledge about how to create things and bring about situations, God's intellectual knowledge of his own unimpedable will, the doctrine that all contingent existence and contingent matters of fact are due to God's will, and the claim that God is simple.

Early on, Mann says that his account of God's knowledge will be partial at best, because it will deal only with God's knowledge of contingent fact. Thus, his account will not deal with God's knowledge of necessary truths. However, Mann's theory doesn't even give a complete account of God's knowledge of contingent fact, since such knowledge cannot be accounted for without also accounting for God's knowledge of necessary truth. To see this, consider the fact that a proposition which is a *conjunction* of a necessary truth and a contingent truth is itself a contingent proposition. An example of such a conjunctive contingent proposition is *2 + 2 = 4 and there are horses*. We cannot explain how God knows this contingent conjunction unless we can explain how God knows each of its conjuncts, one of which, *2 + 2 = 4*, is necessary, and the other of which, *there are horses*, is contingent. The problem isn't that God can't bring about the whole conjunction *by* bringing about its contingent conjunct in circumstances where the necessary conjunct obtains independently—for presumably He can bring about this conjunction in that way. The difficulty is that even if He does bring about the conjunction in such a manner, it does not help explain how He knows the whole conjunction. I conclude that God's knowledge of contingent truth cannot be accounted for unless we also account for God's knowledge of noncontingent truth.

A more serious criticism of Mann's theory of divine omniscience is that because it relies on a certain notion of divine simplicity, the theory is incompatible with there being any contingent facts at all. Let us see how this criticism can be developed. To begin with, on Mann's view God is absolutely simple. God has no physical, temporal, or metaphysical parts. Every one of God's properties

is identical with each one of his properties, and each one of these properties that God has is identical with God himself. Mann's doctrine of divine simplicity has the following implications.

    1. God = his omniscience.

    2. God's omniscience = His knowledge that I'm talking now.

By the transitivity of identity, we can derive

    3. God = His knowledge that I'm talking now.

In addition, consider these two truths about God:

    4. God's omniscience is an essential property of his.

    5. God has necessary existence.

I shall argue below that if (3), (4), and (5) are true, then the fact that I am talking now is not a contingent one. First of all, the identity claim in (3) must be either a necessary identity or a so-called contingent identity. Suppose that it is a necessary identity. Then, in every possible world in which God exists, God is identical with His knowledge that I am talking now. This entails that in every possible world in which God exists God knows that I am talking now. Since God exists in every possible world, it follows that in every possible world God knows I'm talking now. Since God's knowing a proposition p entails that p is true, it is a necessary truth that I am talking now. On the other hand, suppose that God is contingently identical with his knowledge that I am talking now. This seems to be a possibility. After all, there appear to be some so-called contingent identities. For instance, the proposition that Blue = the color of the sky seems to express such a contingent identity. In some possible world, Blue isn't the color of the sky—the sky is green instead. Of course, this means that *being the color of the sky* is an accidental property of the color Blue. That is, there are possible worlds in which Blue exists but lacks the property of being the color of the sky. And it certainly appears to be true that if an entity a is contingently identical with *the so & so*, then the property of being the so & so is a contingent or accidental property of a. Therefore, if God is contingently identical with his knowledge that I'm talking now, then his having this knowledge is an accidental property of God. But by (4) God's omniscience is an essential property of his. Yet, no property can be both an accidental property and an essential property of one and the same thing. For this reason, if God is contingently identical with his knowledge that I'm talking now, then God has at least two properties and therefore is not simple. In other words, he has an essential property, *viz.*, his omniscience, and he also has a quite distinct accidental property, *viz.*, his knowledge that I'm talking now. It has now been shown that if God is necessarily identical with his knowledge that I'm talking now, then it is necessarily true that I'm talking now; and if God is contingently identical with his knowledge that I'm talking now, then God is not simple. Since every identity is either necessary or contingent, it follows that either God is not simple or it is necessary

that I am talking now. Given Mann's assumption that God knows every contingent fact, there is an argument parallel to the foregoing one which applies to each contingent fact. Therefore, if God is simple, there are no contingent facts at all—every truth is a necessary one. Finally, notice that an exactly parallel argument can be constructed based on premises concerning God's *belief* that I am talking now and the fact that God essentially has *infallible beliefs*.

The conclusion of the above argument can also be reached via the following route. Suppose that the property God has of knowing that I'm talking now is identical with God. Call this property of God *P*. *P* must either be essential to God or accidental to God. If *P* is essential to God, then since God has necessary existence, it follows that in every possible world God knows that I am talking now. Hence, necessarily, I am talking now. On the other hand, suppose *P* is accidental to God. In that case, since God's omniscience is essential to him, and no property can be both accidental and essential to the same thing, it follows that God has at least two properties and so He isn't simple. Q. E. D.

Of course, if divine simplicity is incompatible with contingency, it is also incompatible with human freedom. And even if simplicity is compatible with contingency, it is hard to see how Mann can allow for human freedom, inasmuch as on Mann's view every contingent fact is produced by an act of God's unimpedable will. How can my taking a walk today be a free action of mine when my taking a walk today is caused by God's unimpedably willing that I take a walk today?

Also, there are further difficulties with the notion of divine simplicity. According to that notion, God's omnipotence is identical with God's omnibenevolence. But is the universal omnipotence the same universal as omnibenevolence? It seems that if theism is true, then omnipotence and omnibenevolence are necessarily coextensive attributes. But there appear to be cases of necessarily coextensive properties which are distinct. For example, it seems that the number 2 has two characteristics, the first of which is most interesting, and the second of which is rather less so: being the even prime, and being the successor of 1. Nevertheless, such examples are controversial and perhaps it is not unreasonable to adopt a theory according to which necessary coextensiveness is sufficient for property identity. However, God's being omnipotent entails that He has the property of being powerful, and God's being omnibenevolent entails that He has the property of being good. Yet the universal, being powerful, is not even coextensive with the universal, being good. But the doctrine of divine simplicity states that all of God's properties are identical with one another, and hence if God is good and God is powerful, then his goodness and powerfulness must be identical. How are we to understand the identity of properties which are not coextensive? Elsewhere, Mann has given an ingenious argument which may provide an answer to this question. The argument is that when one asserts the

identity of God's properties with one another and with God one asserts a token-token identity rather than a type-type identity. According to Mann's ontology, abstract properties or universals, e.g., whiteness (or equininity) as such, should be distinguished from particular properties or tropes, such as the particular whiteness of this page or the particular equininity of Spectacular Bid. In Mann's view, ordinary objects such as tables and chairs are collections or clusters or tropes, and God is a limiting case of such a cluster, since He consists of a single trope which is both identical with Him and identical with each trope that characterizes Him. Given such a theory, and a conception of trope identity which allows tropes that fall under noncoextensive predicates to be identical with one another, Mann might be able to justify the claim that God's goodness is identical with God's powerfulness. And it seems that there is a conception of trope identity which allows tropes falling under noncoextensive predicates to be identical. Such a conception says that trope A = trope B iff trope A and Trope B have the very same causal roles. We can very well suppose that God's goodness has all the same causes and effects as his omnipotence, his powerfulness, his omnibenevolence, his omniscience, his wisdom, and so forth. However, I have a counter-example to a criterion which individuates property tokens by their causal roles. Consider two random quantum events, for example, a particle *a* swerves, and another particle *b* swerves. We may suppose that the swervings of the particles have no causes or effects. Then, the trope which is *a*'s swerving has the same causal role as the trope which is *b*'s swerving, namely, the null causal role. Yet, these tropes are distinct.

Professor Thomas Morris has argued that Mann's theory that ordinary objects are collections of tropes has incorrect implications concerning the essential properties of these ordinary objects.[1] It seems to me that there are some such difficulties with theories like Mann's. For example, suppose we identify an ordinary object *o* with a ordered set *k* whose elements are sets of tropes, where the first element of *k* is the set of all tropes had by *o* at its initial moment of existence, the second member of *k* is the set of all tropes had by *o* at the first time it loses or gains a trope, the third member of *k* is the set of all tropes had by *o* at the second time it loses or gains a trope, and so on. On the plausible assumption that the elements of a set are essential to it, it follows that for any property *p* that *o* has at a certain time *t*, it is essential to *o* that it has *p* at *t*. For example, if a ball is red now, then being red now is essential to *o*. That is, there is no possible world where *o* is green now instead of being red now. This is quite implausible, for it is intuitively plausible that in some possible world I painted the ball green a moment ago, and therefore in that world the ball is green now instead of being red now. Of course, one could argue that this intuition is mistaken. But it seems that one would need a weighty argument to overturn such an intuition. However, I can think of at least three ways in which Mann might attempt to resolve this problem

in his favor. First, he can adopt a counter-part theory of modality. On a theory of this kind, to say that a ball which is red now would be green now instead is to say something like this: a counterpart of that ball (a distinct but similar ball) could exist instead of that ball and be green now. Secondly, Mann could hold that ordinary objects are substances in which particular properties inhere, but God is unique in being a particular property which does not inhere in a substance. Thirdly, ordinary objects are collections or clusters of tropes, but such a collection is not a set which has its members essentially. In other words, Mann might argue that the sort of collection which is identifiable with an ordinary object has this peculiarity: the transworld identity criteria of such a collection, c, allow that in one possible world, c is identical with a collection, c', in another possible world even though the membership of c and c' differs in those worlds. None of these replies on behalf of Mann is obviously incoherent. On the other hand, each of them seems to be fraught with difficulty. First, the counterpart theory of modality is subject to well-known problems. Secondly, it is very odd to suppose that there are substances but God isn't one. Finally, what more is there to a collection beyond its members? Nevertheless, a detailed evaluation of the three replies is not possible here, and I can't claim to have shown that none of them is defensible.

Let us take stock for a moment. We've seen that Mann's theory of divine simplicity is incompatible with there being any contingent facts, and that there are further metaphysical problems with the theory and its implicit ontology. Thus, in order to allow for contingency and human freedom, I'm inclined to reject the doctrine of divine simplicity. If we reject this theory and also deny a strong version of the doctrine of divine immutability, then we may hold that God is a temporal being who can be effected by contingent things. Of course, if God is in time, then, necessarily, God is in time, since God's temporal nature is essential to Him and He has necessary existence. God's having a temporal nature implies that there are certain constraints on his power. In particular, there are certain states of affairs which God can bring about at one time, but which He cannot bring about at another time. For example, suppose that in 1984 God can bring it about that Jessica walks for the first time. Further suppose that in 1984 God doesn't bring this about, but that in 1984 Jessica walks for the first time. Then in 1985 God can't bring it about that Jessica walks for the first time, for it can't happen again that Jessica walks for the first time. There being such constraints on God's power does not mean that God isn't omnipotent. For a temporal omnipotent God can only be required to have the ability at a time t to do that which it is possible for him to do at t given what happens both at t and prior to t. Joshua Hoffman has made the suggestion that there may also be constraints on God's omniscience as well. I would like to sketch an account of temporal divine omniscience along these lines which is in many ways attractive. It is an account which is based on a number of plausible assumptions about God,

knowledge, causation, and human freedom. My aim isn't to establish this account, but only to outline it and give some of the reasons which support it. It will be interesting for us to compare this account with Mann's because it embodies a theory of divine omniscience which although compatible with theism is at the opposite pole from the theory of omniscience Mann has developed. To begin, there seem to be only two ways in which a temporal God can know future contingent propositions, including propositions about future free acts. First, by means of some sort of prescience or precognition; and secondly, by means of a deductive or inductive inference from past and present contingent propositions. But as Mann points out, it appears that precognition presupposes backwards causation. And, in turn, this might lead us to suppose that precognition is impossible. If so, then any knowledge God has of future contingents must be inferential. If God knows each future contingent proposition by means of a *deductive* inference from premises stating the laws of nature and certain initial conditions, then it is hard to see how humans could have incompatibilist free wills. But because God is perfectly good, he populates any world he creates with persons who have incompatibilist free wills. The reason for this is that freedom is a necessary ingredient for any best possible world, and only those persons who have incompatibilist free wills can truly possess freedom. We must then suppose that any knowledge God has of a future contingent proposition concerning a free act is based on an inductive inference, for example, an inductive inference either from past and present contingent propositions or from statistical laws of nature and certain initial conditions, and so forth. Perhaps, for instance, on creation day God actualized and had knowledge of all of the laws of nature and initial conditions; and while some of these laws are deterministic, others, including certain ones concerning human thought and behavior, are statistical or nondeterministic. Viewed in some such light, divine foreknowledge of future free acts seems no more incompatible with freedom than human foreknowledge of future free acts. Of course, we may want to say that none of this is *knowledge*, but only justified or probable true belief. This is an issue I won't attempt to settle here. But in any case, a diety of the sort described above is still the theistic God—He is essentially omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, and has necessary existence. Of course, many of the properties attributed to God by medieval theologians do not apply to Him on this account. But on this account, God remains the most perfect being possible, it just turns out that given certain necessary features of reality, including God's own goodness, the impossibility of precognition, and so on, the most perfect being has to settle for probability instead of certainty when it comes to his foreknowledge or forebelief of future free actions. After all, if freedom or an open universe is so valuable and great a good that God must permit a considerable amount of evil in order to secure it (as much of traditional theology has held), then why shouldn't this very freedom,

openness, or indeterminacy in the universe find a reflection in the perfect being himself, in the fact that He can have at best inductive evidence for propositions about future free acts? On my assumptions, it is difficult to see how this fact could be regarded as implying that God has a defect.

Finally, I'd like to address the problem Mann raises about the reliability or trustworthiness of divine memory and divine self-observation; a problem which is clearly relevant to the above account of divine omniscience. Now, even *human* memory, perception, and self-observation are highly reliable. In addition, it is at least arguable that for a limited range of one's mental states, one's self-observation is absolutely infallible. Why, then, isn't it possible for there to be analogous divine cognitive faculties which are even more reliable and comprehensive—to the point of being absolutely reliable or infallible and unlimited in scope? I see no reason to reject this possibility. Indeed, I find this possibility at least as easy to envision as Mann's hypotheses of divine simplicity and atemporality, without being subject to their difficulties.

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NOTE

1. Thomas Morris, "On God and Mann," unpublished manuscript.