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In Defense of the Argument for God from Logic

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Abstract: This article interacts with critiques (Tony Lloyd, Alexander Paul Bozzo, and Nathan Shannon) of some of the more salient and recent criticisms to our 2011 *Philosophia Christi* article, “The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic.” Yet even by taking seriously such interesting criticisms, we continue to be persuaded by the defense of our original thesis and argument. For example, we are not persuaded that Shannon has identified any false premises or fallacious inferences in our argument, or that he has demonstrated our conclusion to have theologically problematic entailments. Contrary to Lloyd, the laws of logic are “contingent on God” only in the sense that they are metaphysically dependent on God’s existence, in precisely the way that *God’s thoughts* are metaphysically dependent on God’s existence. Moreover, in response to Bozzo, we deny that human thoughts are numerically identical to God’s thoughts, because we deny that human thoughts are identical to the propositions expressed or contained by those thoughts. But we do affirm that the propositions expressed or contained by human thoughts should be identified with divine thoughts.

We are grateful to Tony Lloyd, Alexander Paul Bozzo, and Nathan Shannon for their critical responses to our paper, “The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic,” because it affords us the opportunity to clarify and elaborate on some of the features of our argument.¹ For all the familiar reasons, we cannot respond to every point

¹ James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, “The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic,” *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011), 321-338. Noted philosopher William Vallicella has also briefly responded to our argument

(http://maverickphilosopher.typepad.com/maverick_philosopher/2013/05/from-the-laws-

raised by our critics, but we address what we take to be the most salient and interesting points.

Reply to Lloyd

Tony Lloyd believes he has identified “an equivocation in the argument revealed in a key lemma.”² He claims there is a logical ambiguity in the following statement: “Since [the laws of logic] are true in every possible world, they must exist in every possible world.”³ Lloyd considers several different ways of understanding the logical connection between “true in every possible world” and “exist in every possible world,” and argues that the argument fails on all of the interpretations he considers.

We assumed it would be sufficiently clear to our readers that statements of the form *Since P, Q* are logically equivalent to *If P then Q*. In any event, that reading of our statement was indicated by the actualist argument we offered in support of it: only existents can bear properties, thus if a proposition bears the property of truth in every possible world then it exists in every possible world.⁴ (Lloyd doesn’t identify any flaw in this argument; indeed, he doesn’t even mention it.)

So why does Lloyd think our overall argument fails on this interpretation of the “key lemma”? His criticism rests on this premise: “That the laws of logic are necessarily true entails that they are true whether or not God exists.” But there are two problems here. First, he makes no argument for this counterpossible claim, and the claim itself is questionable. The laws of logic being necessarily true does not entail that they are true *no matter what*; being true in all *possible* worlds is not equivalent to being true in all *impossible* worlds.⁵ The second problem is that Lloyd’s claim clearly begs the question against our

[of-logic-to-the-existence-of-god.html](#)) and we have replied to his criticisms (<http://www.proginosko.com/2013/07/vallicella-on-the-argument-for-god-from-logic/>).

² Tony Lloyd, “An Equivocation in Anderson and Welty’s Argument for God from Logic,” 1.

³ Anderson and Welty, 336.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁵ Compare this counter-possible claim: “If the proposition *God exists* is necessarily true then it is true whether or not God exists.” Or this one: “If the proposition $2+2=4$ is necessarily true then it is true whether or not $1+1=2$.” Such claims are like the one on which Lloyd’s objection hangs: highly questionable counterpossibles that need supporting argument.

argument because it presupposes that the laws of logic are *not* ontologically dependent on God.⁶

In his closing section Lloyd raises what seems to be a different objection, not only to our argument, but to *any* argument from logic to God. As he writes:

Anderson and Welty must establish that the laws of logic are capable of being contingent in order to argue that they are contingent on God. Thus the laws of logic are characterized as thoughts. Thoughts require a mind and, thus, are contingent on minds. ... In short it appears that any argument for God from logic needs to assert both the contingency and the necessity of the laws of logic.⁷

But here it is Lloyd who is guilty of equivocation. The laws of logic are “contingent on God” only in the sense that they are metaphysically dependent on God’s existence, in precisely the way that *God’s thoughts* are metaphysically dependent on God’s existence. This doesn’t entail that the laws of logic exist contingently or are true contingently (where *contingently* is a modal operator equivalent to *not necessarily*). By way of comparison: *being even* is contingent on *being a number*, but it doesn’t follow that *being even* is a contingent property.

Reply to Bozzo

After summarizing our argument Alexander Paul Bozzo states that his focus “solely concerns the third premise [in his summary of the argument]: that is, the assertion that something is intrinsically intentional *only if* it is a thought.”⁸ Oddly, however, most of his article is devoted not to this point but to arguing that the conclusion of our argument has a theological unorthodox entailment, viz., “that human beings literally partake of the divine mind.” (Indeed, he later refers to this as his “primary objection.”) In what follows we address both criticisms.

Objection #1: Propositions can be Intentional but Non-Mental.

⁶ This question-begging rears its head in other contexts. Lloyd insists that “being true and being thought are wholly independent properties of propositions,” but he gives no argument for this assumption. If in fact the laws of logic are true if and only if God thinks them, and vice versa, then they’re not “wholly independent properties of propositions.”

⁷ Lloyd, 3.

⁸ Alexander Paul Bozzo, “Are Propositions Divine Thoughts?” 2.

Bozzo seeks to undermine our claim that propositions are best understood as thoughts. He begins by charging us with an inconsistency:

Anderson and Welty repeatedly characterize propositions—specifically, the laws of logic—themselves as thoughts, suggesting there is nothing more to thoughts than the propositions themselves. ... It seems then that propositions just are thoughts. But, in other places, the authors refer to thoughts as beliefs, desires, hopes, and so forth. ... It should be obvious that we have some inconsistency here. Thoughts cannot both be identical to propositions and propositional attitudes plus some proposition...⁹

This perceived inconsistency arises only because Bozzo has mischaracterized our claim. In our paper we consistently used the term *thought* to refer to mental items in general.¹⁰ Moreover, we do not claim that thoughts *as such* are identical to propositions, as though the terms are coextensive (i.e., all thoughts are propositions and all propositions are thoughts). Our claim is only that propositions are thoughts; specifically, divine thoughts. This is entirely consistent with *some* thoughts *not* being propositions. Indeed, our position entails that no *non-divine* thought is a proposition.

To further undermine our claim about propositions, Bozzo attempts to show that a proposition can be intrinsically (i.e., non-derivatively) intentional *without* being mental:

If it can be shown that something—like a proposition—can be intentional without someone’s mind doing the directing, then perhaps this opens the way for something’s being intentional despite its being non-mental.¹¹

He proposes the following counterexample to our claim. Romulus asserts that “The explorer who discovered the Pacific Ocean was adventurous.” This proposition is *about* Balboa and thus refers to him. Yet Romulus (we are told) is ignorant of *which* explorer discovered the Pacific Ocean; thus the proposition is directed towards Balboa, but not by any mental activity or direction on Romulus’s part.

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Anderson and Welty, 334.

¹¹ Bozzo, 4.

We see three reasons why this counterexample fails. First, why *couldn't* we say the assertion is about Balboa in virtue of Romulus's mental activity? After all, Romulus intends to make a claim about "the explorer who discovered the Pacific Ocean." Without that intention, his thought has no hope of being about Balboa. As long as such mental activity is a necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition for the proposition's aboutness and aspectual shape, our argument goes through. So the definite description refers *despite* Romulus's ignorance, but it doesn't refer *apart from* Romulus's intentional activity.¹² In sum, the description "the explorer who discovered the Pacific Ocean" is also "about Balboa" because Romulus is using it to refer to whoever has the property of being the explorer who discovered the Pacific Ocean. Just because the description doesn't refer solely in virtue of Romulus's intentions or mental activity doesn't mean that it can refer *independently* of Romulus's intentions or mental activity. Bozzo has implausibly abstracted away Romulus's intentions from the referential properties of his assertion.

Secondly, Bozzo equivocates on the term *about*. It is true that the proposition expressed by Romulus's assertion *refers indirectly* to Balboa, since Balboa uniquely satisfies the definite description in the assertion. But the proposition *itself* is not about Balboa, since that designator ('Balboa') does not constitute part of the semantic content of the proposition. "The explorer who discovered the Pacific Ocean was adventurous" expresses a *different* proposition than "Balboa was adventurous," even though the two propositions are logically equivalent.

Thirdly, even if Bozzo were right that the proposition in question possesses intentionality independently of Romulus's mind or mental activity, that would be entirely consistent with our argument. For our argument does not depend on the claim that if a mind entertains a proposition then the intentionality of that proposition derives solely (or even partly) from *that* mind. What Bozzo needs to show is that the proposition could have intentionality in the absence of *any* minds or mental activity. But he has given us no reason to accept that stronger claim.

¹² Keith Donnellan's "Reference and Definite Descriptions" famously distinguishes different uses of definite descriptions, and there could hardly be such *uses* apart from the intentional activity of agents.

Objection #2: The Argument's Conclusion is Theologically Unorthodox.

Bozzo's "primary objection" is formulated in several ways. It's important to note at the outset that this objection doesn't identify a fault with any of the premises of the argument, or with any of its inferences, but only with its conclusion. Bozzo's first formulation of the objection runs thus (where '=' denotes numerical identity):

- (1) Thoughts *just are* propositions. [assumed *arguendo*]
- (2) Therefore, (God's thought that A) = A and (Romulus's thought that A) = A.
- (3) Therefore, (God's thought that A) = (Romulus's thought that A).

According to this objection then, our argument implies that some divine thoughts are numerically identical to some human thoughts, and this "violates the fundamental division between creator and creature."¹³ As we explained above, however, we do *not* claim that all thoughts are propositions, nor does our argument depend on that claim. So this first formulation of the objection fails.

The second formulation of the objection can be summarized as follows. Suppose that thoughts are the conjunction of a propositional attitude (e.g., believing) with some proposition. We argue that propositions are divine thoughts. But then it follows that "Romulus's thought [that A] contains as a constituent an element internal to God's mind. ... Romulus's thinking that A entails that Romulus has within *his* mind an item internal to *God's* mental life—namely, A itself."¹⁴ And this also appears to violate the Creator-creature division.

It's hard to make out the precise objection here, because the key phrase "has within his mind" is left vague and ambiguous. Depending on how it is understood, the claim that Romulus "has within his mind" a divine thought is either false or theologically benign. Let us consider three plausible interpretations.

(A) *The phrase means "entertains in his mind."* On this interpretation, there's no problem to be found here. Suppose that Romulus "has within his mind" Remus in that specific sense (i.e., Romulus is thinking about Remus). Does it follow that there's some sort of ontological overlap between Romulus and

¹³ Bozzo, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

Remus? Of course not. Remus isn't somehow located in the mind of Romulus, and neither are propositions (whether understood as divine thoughts or not) somehow located in the mind that takes up some propositional attitude toward them.

(B) *The phrase means "has as a proper part of his mind or one of his thoughts."* On this interpretation, our conclusion would indeed have theologically objectionable entailments. But why think that Romulus's taking up some propositional attitude toward a proposition (believing, asserting, etc.) entails that the proposition is a proper part of his mind or one of his thoughts? Bozzo gives us no reason to think that this must be the case.

(C) *The phrase means "has as a (non-mereological) constituent of his mind or one of his thoughts."* (This reading is suggested by Bozzo's statement that, on our view, "Romulus's thought contains as a constituent an element internal to God's mind.") On this interpretation, it isn't at all obvious how our position would violate the Creator-creature distinction. There are different ways to construe the constituency relation, and Bozzo doesn't indicate which (if any) he has in mind—or why we should be committed to any particular construal. If this is what Bozzo means by "within his mind" then at the very least he owes us a more precise formulation of the objection.

It's important to recognize that Bozzo's objection, if it were cogent, would actually furnish us with a quick-and-easy refutation of propositional realism *in general* (i.e., the view that propositions are real, necessarily existing, non-spatiotemporal abstract entities). Here's the argument:

- (1) Propositional attitudes are attitudes toward necessarily existing, non-spatiotemporal abstract entities.
- (2) Therefore, human thoughts "contain as a constituent" necessarily existing, non-spatiotemporal abstract entities.
- (3) Therefore, human minds are partly constituted by necessarily existing, non-spatiotemporal abstract objects. These are objects "within" human minds.
- (4) Since human minds are contingently existing spatiotemporal concrete objects, (3) is false and by *reductio* (1) is false as well.

Any propositional realist worth his salt will deny (2). Adopting some propositional attitude toward A doesn't require A to be a constituent of the mind adopting that attitude, such that A is ontologically "within" that mind. Once we see the weakness in this argument against propositional realism, we can thereby see the weakness in Bozzo's objection to the conclusion of our argument.

Since we believe Bozzo's objection to our argument is ill-conceived at the outset, we need say little about the second section of his critique in which he reviews various possible responses to his objection. We do find here, however, what appears to be a more precise statement of the objection. According to our position, if Romulus and God are "thinking the same thing" (i.e., the same proposition) then "an element of Romulus's thought [specifically, its propositional content] ... is numerically identical to God's thought ... or numerically identical to a part or feature of God's thought."

Once again, the criticism suffers from a debilitating vagueness and ambiguity. What does it mean for a proposition to be an "element of" a human thought? Consider again three plausible interpretations:

(A) "*Element of*" means "*proper part of*." In that case, we reject the premise, along with most other propositional realists. Propositions are not proper parts of the thoughts that contain or express them.

(B) "*Element of*" means "*non-mereological constituent of*." In that case, we simply repeat our earlier response. Bozzo needs to be more specific about this constituency relation and how it would violate the Creator-creature distinction.

(C) "*Element of*" means "*referential object of*." In that case, there is no violation of the Creator-creature distinction. A thought can have a referential object without violating the ontological division between the thought and its object.

Moreover, as we pointed out, if propositions being "elements of" human thoughts were a problem for our position then it wouldn't be one *distinctive* to our position. It would one that afflicts any version of propositional realism.

Bozzo's central concern is to honor the Creator-creature distinction—a concern we share, of course. At one point, however, he seems to suggest a quite different problem with our argument: "Thus, Romulus's thoughts get at aspects internal to God's mind, rendering them publicly accessible."

Unfortunately Bozzo doesn't elaborate on this alleged problem. Why would it be objectionable for "aspects internal to God's mind" to become "publicly accessible"? Isn't that precisely what divine revelation does? If humans learn some truth, doesn't that obviously entail that they have accessed the contents of God's mind (assuming divine omniscience)? We confess we are at a loss to see what is theologically suspect about any of this.

Bozzo summarizes his critique in his closing paragraph:

The suggestion that propositions are divine thoughts (or constituents of divine thoughts) leads to undesirable conclusions. I have shown that this contention entails that human thoughts are either numerically identical

to God's thoughts, or that human thoughts contain elements numerically identical to elements internal to God's mind. Either alternative is unacceptable for the orthodox theist.¹⁵

Our response to his critique can be summarized in three points:

1. We deny that human thoughts are numerically identical to God's thoughts, because we deny that human thoughts are identical to the propositions expressed or contained by those thoughts. Contrary to Bozzo's claim, we have not argued that all thoughts are propositions.
2. We affirm that the propositions expressed or contained by human thoughts should be identified with divine thoughts. Bozzo hasn't provided a clear argument as to why that is metaphysically or theologically problematic. He needs to be more specific about how the key terms *element* and *constituent* in his argument should be understood, and why we must concede that propositions are elements or constituents of human thoughts *in those senses*.
3. With respect to the concerns Bozzo expresses, our position—that propositions are divine thoughts—ought to be no *more* metaphysically or theologically problematic than traditional propositional realism (according to which propositions are abstract entities existing independently of any minds). What does it mean for a human thought to “contain” a proposition? What does it mean for a proposition to be “within” a human mind? Take any senses of these terms that would be agreeable to a propositional realist, apply them to our position, and it should be clear that no tenets of Christian orthodoxy have been violated. Indeed, our position is *more* theologically orthodox than traditional propositional realism because it preserves divine aseity in a way that the latter does not.

Reply to Shannon

Responding to Nathan Shannon's lengthy critique of our paper presents a considerable challenge, not only because of the many and varied criticisms it makes (and the rather obscure way in which some of those criticisms are expressed) but also because of the many and varied mischaracterizations and

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

philosophical confusions it contains. To deal with each one would require a response longer than our original paper. In what follows therefore we will content ourselves with addressing what appear to be the most salient and least opaque objections.

Objection #1: The Argument Confuses De Dicto and De Re Necessity.

In the first section of his critique, Shannon considers our argument for the necessary existence of the laws of logic. He writes:

The reasoning is this: If a proposition is necessarily true, and propositions exist, a necessarily true proposition exists necessarily. Note the equivocation: the metaphysical property, *existing necessarily*, replaces the propositional property, *being necessarily true*; *de dicto* necessity is swapped for *de re* necessity, but these are not the same thing at all. AW offer no argument for the *de re* necessity of the laws of logic or necessarily true propositions. Benefiting from this ambiguity, AW's argument slips smoothly from the realm of contingent being to the realm of necessary being; but the transition is spurious.¹⁶

Shannon has apparently missed or misunderstood our arguments on this point. The core argument is grounded in the actualist thesis that only existents can bear properties. As we wrote:

If only existents can bear properties, and the laws of logic are propositions that bear the property of *truth* in every possible world, then we can only conclude that the laws of logic *exist* in every possible world, as the bearers of that property.¹⁷

To spell out the argument more explicitly:

- (1) The laws of logic are necessarily true.
- (2) Therefore, the laws of logic are true in every possible world.
- (3) Therefore, the laws of logic bear the property of truth in every possible world.
- (4) Necessarily, something can bear the property of truth only if it exists.

¹⁶ Nathan D. Shannon, "Necessity, Univocism, and the Triune God: A Response to Anderson and Welty," 3.

¹⁷ Anderson and Welty, 332.

- (5) Therefore, the laws of logic exist in every possible world.
 (6) Therefore, the laws of logic exist necessarily.

The only transition from *de dicto* to *de re* necessity (if it can be considered that) lies in the deduction of (3) from (2). We assume, reasonably enough, that if a proposition is true then it bears the property of truth. In section IV of our paper we defended this assumption against deflationary accounts of truth, and Shannon has given no reason to doubt it.¹⁸ So he is quite mistaken to claim that we have offered no argument on this point.

Shannon tries to reinforce his criticism by charging us with failure to distinguish truth *in* a possible world from truth *of* or *at* a possible world:

To be true *in* a possible world, a proposition must exist in that world; to be true *of* or *at* a possible world, the proposition need only describe that world. A proposition can be true of a possible world without existing in it. AW blur this distinction... To be true *in* a possible world, a proposition must exist *in* that world; to be true *of* a possible world, the proposition need only describe that world, but need not exist in it.¹⁹

The claim that a proposition can be true *of* a possible world (as a description of that world) without being true *in* that possible world (as an existent proposition within that world) is a controversial one. Indeed, it is hard to make sense of the idea that some proposition P could be true-*of*-w without also being true-*in*-w. If P is true-*of*-w—that is to say, if P describes w truly—it surely follows that P would be true if w were the actual world. (What else would it mean for P to be true-*of*-w?) But if P does not exist in w, then P would not be true even if w were the actual world; for as we have argued, a proposition cannot be true if it doesn't exist.

Think of it this way. Take any possible world w and ask this question: Would the laws of logic be *true* if w were the actual world? Surely they would. But if w were the actual world, the laws of logic would also have to *exist*, for there can be no truths without truth-bearers. And that is just to say that for any possible world w, if w were the actual world then the laws of logic would exist—which is equivalent to saying that the laws of logic exist in every possible world.

¹⁸ Ibid., 329-330.

¹⁹ Shannon, 4.

Objection #2: The Argument Uses Terms Univocally.

Shannon's second objection is that our argument uses key terms such as 'mind', 'thought', and 'necessity' univocally. This is a remarkable objection, since an argument would normally be criticized for *not* using terms univocally!

Underlying this criticism, however, is a serious theological concern about honoring the Creator-creature distinction. As Shannon puts it, "Univocal terms imply unitarian ontology."²⁰ While he doesn't define the term "unitarian ontology," we assume it refers to the notion that there is only one kind of being or existence, and that one kind is exemplified by both God and his creation. Shannon states his objection thus:

In their argument, all of these terms, familiar to us in the created realm, in the context of our knowledge and familiarity, are applied univocally to the mind and being of the uncreated God. When we say "a thought requires a mind," what do we mean by mind? If no distinction appears, the use of the term suggests that there is one kind of mind; and of that kind, [Anderson and Welty] argue, there must be at least one which exists in all possible worlds, but that "necessarily existing" mind is essentially of a kind with minds that exist in only some possible worlds.²¹

It seems to us, however, that the objection is based on a non sequitur. To say, for example, that orangutans have legs and fireflies have legs does not imply that orangutans and fireflies have the same *kind* of legs, still less that there is only one kind of leg. It implies only that orangutans and fireflies have a particular feature in common, a feature that can be described at a certain level of abstraction.

Likewise, to say that humans have thoughts and God has thoughts does not imply that humans have the same *kinds* of thoughts as God.²² Nor does it imply that there is only one kind of thought. All our argument requires is that the terms in question can be truthfully predicated of God. If Shannon wishes to argue that in principle no terms "familiar to us in the created realm" can be

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² Indeed, our position implies the very opposite: God's thoughts are original and necessary while our thoughts are derivative and contingent. It is only because of the fundamental difference between divine thoughts and human thoughts that our argument works; rather than violating the Creator-creature distinction, the argument actually presupposes and accentuates it.

truthfully predicated of God, he is free to do so—assuming he is willing to embrace radical apophaticism and its self-referential pitfalls.

It's important to note that Shannon's second objection doesn't specifically target our argument. If it were cogent it would rule out *all* theistic arguments, since every such argument relies on premises with terms "familiar to us in the created realm." If this is his position—if he rejects all theistic arguments in principle—he should come clean and concede that his criticism doesn't identify any problem distinctive to our argument.

Shannon devotes several pages to "the problem of a univocal notion of necessity." Our argument, he suggests, commits the mistake of assuming that "notions of logical relations and of logical necessity ... apply equally to man and to God." In fact, we make no such assumption. We assume only that the notion of (broad) logical necessity can be meaningfully applied to matters of God's existence and God's thoughts; specifically, that God exists in every possible world and thinks certain thoughts in every possible world.

If Shannon could show that such modal concepts should never be applied to God, his criticism would have some bite. But in that case he wouldn't be practicing what he preaches, because he himself applies modal concepts to God throughout his paper.²³ In short, he wishes to deny us the right to make the modal claims about God that we do, all the while making similar modal claims about God.

In sum, the univocity objection can be interpreted either weakly, as the claim that terms applied to the creation do not apply to God in exactly the same way, or strongly, as the claim that terms applied to the creation do not apply to God at all. On the weak interpretation, our argument escapes unscathed, while on the strong interpretation, Shannon falls under the condemnation of his own strictures.

Objection #3: The Argument's Conclusion Raises Theological Problems.

In the third section of his critique, Shannon discusses what he takes to be three theological problems that emerge from our argument. The first of these arises from our claim that the laws of logic are "nothing other than what God thinks about his thoughts *qua* thoughts."²⁴ Shannon thinks there is something incoherent about the idea of "second order thoughts in the divine mind" (i.e.,

²³ See, for instance, the paragraph beginning "According to the doctrines of divine simplicity and aseity," in which Shannon applies the notion of logical necessity to both God's existence and God's thoughts. Shannon, 5.

²⁴ Anderson and Welty, 337.

divine thoughts about divine thoughts). Despite several readings of his argument, we confess we cannot make sufficient sense of his objection to address it. We are content to leave it up to other readers to judge whether there is a cogent criticism here.

The second alleged problem appears to be that our argument fails to prove the existence of the *Christian* God: its conclusion doesn't entail that God is triune, that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, that God had revealed himself in the Bible, and so forth. This we admit. But since our conclusion is *consistent* with Christian theism, this observation does nothing to show that the argument is unsound (given the truth of Christian theism). Moreover, if our argument is theologically deficient because it fails to prove all the distinctive claims of Christian theism then *every* theistic argument that we know of (and that Shannon knows of) must be theologically deficient for the same reason. Once again we're presented with a criticism that isn't targeting our argument in particular, but rather applies to all theistic arguments.

In the fact that our argument doesn't prove full-blown Christian theism Shannon somehow finds confirmation that the argument depends on univocal terms and a "unitarian ontology," and from this he draws the further conclusion that "the god(s) this argument purports to prove *simply cannot be the Christian God.*" We have already rebutted the charge of univocism. In any case, surely it is obvious that *not proving P* doesn't amount to *proving not-P*.

Shannon's third theological concern is less than fully perspicuous, so we will quote it here rather than paraphrase:

According to the doctrine of divine simplicity, God's thoughts are identical to his being. Indeed, AW think this much is true of any mind: ". . . thoughts belong essentially to the minds that produce them" (336 n.31). So if we think thoughts that are essential to God's being—exactly those thoughts that God thinks about his own thoughts as thoughts—are we not participating in the divine essence? The same thoughts—univocal thoughts—belong essentially to our minds and to God's mind. Given simplicity, in other words, unless we deny that our thoughts are ever identical to God's, we flirt with pantheism or apotheosis. Or, hoping to maintain simplicity and the ontological distinction between God and creation, we may say that the laws of logic are abstract objects existing independently of both God and man.²⁵

²⁵ Shannon, 12.

As best we can tell, the objection amounts to this: if propositions are divine thoughts and God's thoughts are identical to his being (as the doctrine of divine simplicity implies) then propositions are identical to God's being. Thus, on our view, when we think certain propositions our thoughts must be identical to God's thoughts. But that would violate the ontological Creator-creature distinction.

If this is indeed the objection, it is based on a confusion between human thoughts and the propositional content of those thoughts. We do not identify human thoughts with divine thoughts. Rather, we identify *the propositions expressed or contained by human thoughts* with divine thoughts. If Shannon believes that even this claim raises the specters of pantheism and apotheosis, we would simply direct him to our response to Bozzo.

In sum, we are not persuaded that Shannon has identified any false premises or fallacious inferences in our argument, or that he has demonstrated our conclusion to have theologically problematic entailments.

As a postscript we would note that in the course of his critique Shannon asserts or implies all of the following:

- If the word “God” isn't used in a sense synonymous with “the God of Christianity,” and all that entails, then it isn't a proper noun and should be spelled with a lower-case ‘g’.²⁶
- Propositions are “essentially parasitic” on their referents in such a way that if their referents do not exist then the propositions have no meaning and cannot bear truth-values.²⁷
- There are possible worlds in which God does not think that if all men are mortal, and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal.²⁸
- If a necessarily true proposition exists necessarily and is necessarily about something, whatever that proposition is about must also exist necessarily.²⁹
- Only “God's speaking” has *de re* necessity.³⁰
- Having a property essentially is logically equivalent to having that property in every possible world.³¹ (If this were so, anything with essential properties would exist necessarily.)

²⁶ Ibid., 2, fn. 2.

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ Ibid., 6. Counterexample: “If Moses exists then Moses is identical to himself.”

³⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

- The truth-value of $A=A$ must be determined “on a case by case basis.”³²
- A floating iron axe-head violates the laws of logic.³³
- The very idea that God has thoughts about his own thoughts is incoherent.³⁴ (One wonders then how Isaiah 55:8-9 could be a divine revelation.)

We will be the first to concede that anyone who looks favorably upon claims such as these will be unlikely to find our original argument cogent.

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³² Ibid., 8.

³³ Ibid., 9.

³⁴ Ibid., 11.