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What an Apophaticist Can Know: Divine Ineffability and the Beatific Vision

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The doctrines of divine ineffability and of the beatific vision seem to contradict each other. According to the former, we cannot know the divine essence. But, according to the latter, we will know God fully. To reconcile these doctrines, we first distinguish between propositional and personal knowledge, that is, between knowing about a person and knowing a person, and, following from this distinction, we then distinguish between propositional and personal ineffability, that is, between it being impossible to know about a person and it being impossible to know a person. We then argue God is propositionally ineffable but personally effable.

According to the doctrine of divine ineffability, God is beyond description and comprehension. The belief in this doctrine is one of the hallmarks of apophatic theology, a system of negative theology common to virtually every major Church theologian during the early times of the Church.[1] One of the most influential of these apophatic theologians was the fifth century Pseudo-Dionysius (Denys). In referring to God ('the Transcendent One'), Denys writes in his *The Mystical Theology*:

> It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding.... It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding.... It has no power, it is not power, nor is it light. It does not live nor is it life. It is not a substance, nor is it eternity or time.... It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness.... It is not sonship or fatherhood and it is nothing known to us or to any other being. It falls neither within the predicate of

[1] For a fuller defence of this claim, see John Hick, 2000: 36.

> nonbeing nor of being.... There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge of it.... It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it... for it is ... free of every limitation, beyond every limitation: it is also beyond denial.[2]

On the same theme, another major figure in early church history was the fourth-century theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, who writes in his *Against Eunomius*,

> The simplicity of the True Faith assumes God to be that which He is, namely, incapable of being grasped by any term, or any idea, or any other device of our apprehension, remaining beyond the reach not only of the human but of the angelic and all supramundane intelligence, unthinkable, unutterable, above all expression in words, having but one name that can represent His proper nature, the single name being 'Above Every Name'.[3]

Furthermore, to borrow from the fifth century liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, God is

> ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever existing and eternally the same, thou and thine Only-begotten Son and thy Holy Spirit.

Moreover, Augustine wrote that 'God transcends the mind'[4] whilst Aquinas noted that 'by its immensity, the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches. Thus, we are unable to apprehend it by knowing what it is'.[5] And this brief survey barely scratches the surface of support the position has received.[6]

However, despite such protestations, according to the doctrine of the beatific vision, a doctrine also accepted by many (but not all) of these same apophatic theologians, we will one day know God as God knows us. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, the Apostle Paul explains that although in this life we see God as through frosted glass, there is a time coming when

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[2] Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987: 141.
[3] Gregory of Nyssa, 1957: 99.
[4] St Augustine, 1953: 259.
[5] Thomas Aquinas, 1955: 96.
[6] See, for instance, Ayers (2004) on the place of divine incomprehension in Orthodox tradition.

> we shall see God face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know God fully, even as I am fully known.

This seeing God face to face, when we know God fully even as we are fully known, is traditionally termed 'the beatific vision'. Thinking of this vision, Aquinas writes concerning the knowledge we will then have of God:

> I answer that final and perfect beatitude can consist in nothing else than the vision of the divine essence. To make this clear, two things must be considered. First, man is not perfectly happy so long as something remains for him to desire and seek. Secondly, the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object. The object of the intellect is 'what a thing is,' i.e. the essence of a thing, as is stated in *De anima*, book 3 (ch. 6). It follows that the intellect attains perfection, insofar as it knows the essence of a thing. If therefore an intellect knows the essence of some effect, whereby it is not possible to know the essence of the cause, i.e. to know of the cause 'what it is'; that intellect cannot be said to reach that cause simply, although it may be able to gather from the effect the knowledge that the cause exists. Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in the man the desire to know about the cause, 'what it is.' And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (1.2). For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, considers that it must be due to some cause, and yet not know what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease until he arrives at knowledge of the essence of the cause. If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than 'that He is'; the perfection of his intellect has not yet directly [*simpliciter*] attained the First Cause, and so the natural desire to seek the cause still remains for him. On account of which he is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to attain to the very essence of the First Cause. And thus it will

> have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists. (ST I-II, q. 3, a. 8)[7]

And later, Aquinas quotes from Augustine who wrote:

> Now all knowledge by which the created intellect is perfected is directed to the knowledge of God as its end. Wherefore he who sees God in His essence, even though he know nothing else, would have a perfect intellect: nor is his intellect more perfect through knowing something else besides Him, except in so far as it sees Him more fully. Hence Augustine says (Confess. v.): "Unhappy is he who knoweth all these" (namely, creatures), "and knoweth not Thee: but happy whoso knoweth Thee, though he know not these. And whoso knoweth both Thee and them is not the happier for them but for Thee only." (ST Supplement, q. 92, a. 3)

So, on the one hand, according to the apophaticist, we can know nothing of God, yet, on the other hand, according to the Apostle Paul, we will know God fully. Can both thoughts be held without contradiction or confusion? At first glance, it looks like if God is truly ineffable that would preclude us coming to have *any* knowledge of Him, let alone *full* knowledge. If God is beyond description and comprehension, if He is in some sense unknowable, how on earth (or in heaven) can we come to have *full* knowledge of Him? Conversely, if it turns out that we can know Him even as He knows us, in what sense can God be considered ineffable at all?

Despite this *prima facie* tension, we argue in this paper that the apophatacist can reconcile these two doctrines, but only if the doctrine of divine ineffability is qualified in a certain way. A qualification that is based on a distinction Eleonore Stump makes between two kinds of knowledge, what she calls 'Franciscan knowledge' and what she calls 'Dominican knowledge'. In the first section

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[7] See also Aquinas in SCG III ch. 50:

> No desire leads so high as the desire to understand the truth. For all our other desires, whether of delight or anything else that is desired by man, can come to rest in other things. However, the aforementioned desire does not come to rest until it reaches God, the supreme foundation and maker of all things. For this reason Wisdom aptly says: "I dwelt in high places, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud" (Sir 24:4). And in Prov 9:3 it is said that "She has sent out her maids to call from the highest places in the town." Let them therefore be ashamed who seek the beatitude of man, so highly situated, in base things.

of this essay, we will briefly introduce both kinds of knowledge and her account of the distinction between them. In the second section, we will explore the effect this distinction has on the nature of divine ineffability, namely, that ineffability could be used in reference to only one kind of knowledge or to both kinds. In the third section, we will offer reasons to favour a more limited conception of divine ineffability, and, in the fourth section, we will show how this limited conception of divine ineffability can be reconciled with the *prima facie* contradicting doctrine of the beatific vision.

Franciscan and Dominican knowledge

It is easy enough to say roughly what it is to be ineffable, namely, to be ineffable is to be beyond description, or beyond human concepts. However, saying precisely what it is to be ineffable is notoriously difficult, since even in saying that something is beyond human concepts we have described it and applied a human concept to it.[8] Nevertheless, we will tentatively propose two different ways in which we can think about what it is to be ineffable by employing a distinction made by Stump between two kinds of knowledge, namely, Dominican knowledge and Franciscan knowledge (Stump, 2010: 40-63).

According to Stump, Dominican knowledge is propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge-*that*. Franciscan knowledge, on the other hand, is neither propositional knowledge nor is reducible to propositional knowledge. Such knowledge includes knowledge gained from phenomenal experience and from experience of persons, according to Stump.[9] This much is easy to say. However, in virtue of

[8] Augustine famously made this point in *On Christian Doctrine*:

> God should not be said to be ineffable, for when this is said something is said. And a contradiction in terms is created, since if that is ineffable which cannot be spoken, then that is not ineffable which is called ineffable. (Augustine, 1958: 10–11).

[9] Stump explains this thought in the following way:

> I want to claim, however, that there is a kind of knowledge of persons, a Franciscan knowledge, which is non-propositional and which is not reducible to knowledge that. What could that possibly be?, a skeptical objector may ask. But, of course, if I give an answer to the skeptic's question, I will have an incoherent position: in answering the question, I will be presenting in terms of knowledge that what I am claiming could not be presented that way. (Stump, 2010: 52)

the irreducibility of Franciscan knowledge to Dominican knowledge, finding a way to *illustrate* the differences between each kind of knowledge is challenging, since, while Dominican knowledge can be expressed propositionally, for example, Donald Trump knows that Barack Obama was his predecessor, Franciscan knowledge can't be expressed propositionally – that is the very point of Franciscan knowledge. But we *can* present some thought experiments in which Franciscan knowledge is manifested – we can show the distinction, but we can't describe it, in other words.

To begin, phenomenal knowledge, according to Stump, is Franciscan knowledge. She illustrates this with Frank Jackson's (in)famous thought experiment about Mary, the super smart colour scientist:

> Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor. She specialises in the neurophysiology of vision and acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky, and use terms like 'red', 'blue', and so on. She discovers, for example, just which wave-length combinations from the sky stimulate the retina, and exactly how this produces via the central nervous system the contraction of the vocal chords and expulsion of air from the lungs that results in the uttering of the sentence 'The sky is blue'. (It can hardly be denied that it is in principle possible to obtain all this physical information from black and white television, otherwise the Open University would of necessity need to use colour television.)
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> What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a colour television monitor? Will she learn anything or not? It seems just obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it. But then it is inescapable that her

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Stump distinguishes 'knowledge-of-persons' from the 'knowledge-how' ability hypothesis that Laurence Nemirow (1990), David Lewis (2004) and Paul Churchill (2004) discuss. The knowledge-how ability hypothesis suggests that experience gives us an ability and nothing more; an ability to remember, imagine or recognize what it is like to have that experience. There is no *new* knowledge gained at all in this process. The position that Stump takes up, then, is closer to Earl Conee's 'acquaintance' hypothesis (1994). For Conee, there is no new propositional knowledge gained by experience, but there is something gained beyond mere know-how, namely, acquaintance with the thing known.

> previous knowledge was incomplete. But she had all the physical information. Ergo there is more to have than that, and Physicalism is false. (Jackson, 1982: 130)

What is important for Stump's purposes is that Mary's epistemic position is improved on her departure from her black and white room, when she sees colour for the first time. Either she learns something new or she learns something old in a new way.[10] And this improvement in her epistemic position is the Franciscan knowledge she gains by experiencing colour for the first time, this phenomenal knowledge she now has.

Modifying Jackson's thought experiment, Stump asks us to imagine another Mary who has been locked in a room since birth. Mary has never had a second-personal encounter with her mother, and does not have access to any narrative account of her mother. Nevertheless, in Mary's room, Mary has access (through encyclopaedias) to all relevant non-narrative propositional information about the existence of her loving mother, along with all that science can teach about her. Stump writes:

> When Mary is first united with her mother, it seems indisputable that Mary will know things she did not know before, even if she knew everything about her mother that could be made available to her in non- narrative propositional form, including her mother's psychological states. Although Mary knew that her mother loved her before she met her, when she is united with her mother, Mary will learn what it is like to be loved. And this will be new for her, even if in her isolated state she had as complete a scientific description as possible of what a human being feels like when she senses that she is loved by someone else. (Stump, 2010: 52)

Just as the super smart colour scientist Mary's epistemic position is improved upon leaving her black and white room, so is the daughter Mary's epistemic position improved upon leaving her lonely room: either daughter Mary learns something new or she learns something old in a new way upon meeting her mother. With these thought experiments in hand, we now have a way of showing what Franciscan

[10] On Paul Churchland's view, Mary merely learns something old in a new way (Churchland, 1985). In other words, Churchland would want to say that Franciscan knowledge (the something new) is in some sense captured by what was previously known, namely, pertinent propositional knowledge (the something old).[10]

knowledge is, even if we can't describe it. Now, on our view, this kind of knowledge, and its distinction from Dominican knowledge, is crucial for understanding the doctrine of divine ineffability and how it can be held consistently with the doctrine of the beatific vision. To show this, we turn to explaining the nature of divine ineffability using this distinction.

Divine ineffability

In the previous section we introduced Stump's distinction between Dominican knowledge, that is, knowledge expressible by propositions, and Franciscan knowledge, that is, knowledge inexpressible by propositions. In this section, we will briefly examine how the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge might lead to two distinct conceptions of ineffability.

If Franciscan knowledge is indeed by its very nature beyond description, and if, roughly speaking, to be ineffable is to be beyond description, all Franciscan knowledge must be in some sense ineffable. Let us call this sort of ineffability 'propositional ineffability' – the impossibility of capturing something through propositional description. Divine ineffability, where 'ineffability' is understood as 'propositional ineffability', seems fairly straightforward. If knowledge of other persons can be propositionally ineffable, (in Stump's modified thought experiment, the knowledge Mary gains as she learns what it is like for her mother to love her would be propositionally ineffable), it is easy to see how God, too, could be, in some comparable sense, propositionally ineffable (simply replace Mary's mother with God in Stump's modified thought experiment).[11]

Now, there is one important difference between knowledge of God and knowledge of persons. On Stump's thought experiment of daughter Mary, Franciscan knowledge could lie in her learning something old in a new way. But, for the apophaticist, that is simply not possible for our knowledge of God. It *cannot* be the case that what we learn of God at the beatific vision is something old in a new way, for if the doctrine of divine ineffability is correct, there is a sense in which we can know

[11] Given this, it is only a matter of degree that separates total propositional ineffability (supposed in God) from partial propositional ineffability (in you or me). One could, for instance, imagine a world where some (and perhaps all) propositionally effable knowledge of some person is subtracted.

nothing old (i.e., nothing fundamental that is reducible to propositional form) about God.[12] And this usefulness, we think, gives us one reason to at least pay serious consideration to Stump's account.[13]

But at this point a putative objector might respond: surely divine ineffability is all or nothing, at least with respect to propositions. It is not just that there are *aspects* of God that are propositionally ineffable. If the doctrine of divine ineffability is true, unlike Mary's mother, God is (at the very least) *entirely* propositionally ineffable. And yet surely we *do* want to attribute to God certain propositional claims. Does divine ineffability require that we jettison propositional beliefs such as 'God is good' or 'God is three in *hypostasis*, one in *ousia*'? Jonathan Jacobs tackled this objection in a recent paper, arguing that these beliefs need not in fact be jettisoned. Indeed, Jacobs argued, we can, without contradiction, believe that it is literally, mind-independently true that God is good, and at the same time believe that it is true that God is ineffable. A proposition, he argued, can be fundamentally true (actually carving reality at its joints), or non-fundamentally true (representing an artificial or gerrymandered structure of reality). For Jacobs, divine ineffability asserts that God is fundamentally ineffable, but leaves room for God's non-fundamental effability (for instance, it is non-fundamentally true that God is fundamentally ineffable).[14] He writes:

> We can, using non-fundamental propositions, describe God correctly. We can say lots of true things about how God is intrinsically. He is wise, loving. He is three in *hypostasis*, one in *ousia*. Such propositions need not be metaphorical. They can be

[12] In this case, it might be true in one sense that Mary knows all propositionally reducible knowledge of God whilst in confinement, it just so happens there is *no* (fundamental) propositional knowledge of God to be had. Of course, Stump has a story about how Franciscan knowledge can be transferred through testimony, and through narrative, so Stump requires the qualification that all information she has be in non-narrative propositional form. Were Mary to have access to narrative, for instance, biblical narrative, she might possess certain limited (or 'dim', as certain older translations of 1 Corinthians 13:12 read) Franciscan knowledge of God, but that this is possible serves only to reinforce the argument we are presenting.

[13] For a further defence of Stump's position, see Wolterstorff, 2016. Note that Wolterstorff describes 'Franciscan' knowledge as 'object-knowledge', and he too distinguishes 'object-knowledge' from 'know-how'.

[14] Jacobs thinks all truths have two elements, a truth-bearer and a truth-maker. A truth-bearer represents supposed metaphysical structure, whilst a truth-maker is the feature(s) of reality that make the truth bearer correct. Truths thus consist in the relationship between these two elements. Having established this position, Jacobs suggests that truth-bearers can be made true in more than one way. If a truth-bearer actually does 'carve reality at its joints' it is a fundamental truth-bearer. If it proposes an artificial or gerrymandered structure on reality (if it is 'ontologically imperspicuous') it is a non-fundamental truth-bearer. When we describe God in propositional terms, Jacobs concludes, all our descriptions are grounded in God (as an object), but they also all fall into the latter category.

> strictly, literally true. And they can be importantly true. We can know them, and understand them. Some may be more fundamental than others, but God is ineffable because no matter what we say truly, we have failed to assert a perfectly fundamental truth. God is non-fundamentally effable, and fundamentally ineffable. (Jacobs, 2015: 167)

Having said this much, might Jacob's solution resolve our initial tension between divine ineffability and the beatific vision? Could this artificial or gerrymandered propositional knowledge of God be sufficient for the sort of knowledge wanted at the beatific vision? There is at least one good reason to think not. Recall that at the beatific vision the Apostle Paul taught that we will come to know God *as God knows us*. Whilst it might seem plausibly the case that we can only come to artificial or gerrymandered knowledge of God, it seems very strange indeed to say that God's knowledge of us, His creation, is *only* artificial or gerrymandered, however these terms are to be understood. But if God's knowledge of us captures fundamental truths about us, whilst our knowledge of God captures only non-fundamental truths about Him, we do not see how it could be the case that we would know God as God knows us.[15]

That point aside, even if we can sensibly talk about God being (fundamentally) propositionally ineffable, there is another sort of ineffability, reserved for those who do not (or cannot) make themselves open to any sort of second-personal interaction. For want of a better expression, we will call this 'personal ineffability'.[16] Could God be personally ineffable? Simply put, to qualify for personal ineffability God would have to refrain from making himself open to any second-personal experience (or more strongly, that God's creation would be necessarily incapable of second-personal experience of God). Furthermore, God would have to refrain from any revelation of Himself through narrative (or again more strongly, that it is impossible for God to reveal Himself

[15] One might quibble that we are putting too much weight on one verse, however we also feel the force of Aquinas' argument here as well (see footnote 7). Could our desire to know the essence of God, our cause, be satisfied with only non-fundamental truths about him? We are not sure it would.

[16] Note that we recognise this personal *effability* sounds quite strange, given that what is personally effable cannot be communicated propositionally, however we take it to be that what is personally effable can still be communicated, albeit communicated *non-propositionally*.

through narrative), for, Stump argues, Franciscan knowledge can be conveyed through narrative as it can through unmediated second-personal experience.[17]

With respect to the divine, in both propositional and personal ineffability, ineffability involves propositional (or 'Dominican') ineffability.[18] The difference between them is that in the case of propositional ineffability, what it is to be ineffable does not include 'Franciscan' ineffability, whilst in the case of personal ineffability, it does.

Limited divine ineffability

So we have proposed two kinds of ineffability. Certainly, there is nothing *logically* preventing God from being *both* propositionally and personally ineffable. However, if God was indeed personally ineffable, it seems difficult to see how we could come to know God as God knows us (or at least, without suggesting that God does not know us very well), and so the doctrine of the beatific vision would remain in tension with the doctrine of divine ineffability.

Preserving the doctrine of the beatific vision certainly seems like a good reason to favour propositional ineffability over personal ineffability, however is this reason alone sufficient to defend the idea that God is in fact personally effable? Perhaps, but it need not do all the work. To the doctrine of divine ineffability may be added the doctrine of divine revelation, that is, the doctrine that through creation, the incarnation[19], and through scripture, God has in fact revealed something of Himself to humankind. If Franciscan knowledge can be transmitted through second-personal experience and

[17] Stump makes clear to qualify in her recasting of the Mary thought experiment that it is for this reason, that is, that Franciscan knowledge can be transmitted through narrative, it is essential all previous information Mary has of her mother is presented in non-narrative propositional form.

[18] There is, of course, a third option: where something is effable in a Dominican sense but ineffable in a Franciscan sense (this might apply, for instance, in the case of an atom or quark), however it is difficult to see how propositional effability could ever sensibly cohere with the doctrine of divine ineffability, so we mention this only to leave it to one side.

[19] See John 14:9, 'Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father…"' Note that if the doctrine of divine ineffability is true, it may be the case that *all* such revelation is Franciscan in character. In the case of the incarnation, one might have to concede that all pieces of seemingly Dominican knowledge we have of Christ pertain to his human and not his divine nature. What such a concession entails, or whether this concession even makes sense, is beyond the scope of this paper.

narrative as Stump maintains, and if God has indeed revealed something, indeed anything, of Himself in a creation we can experience, through second-personal interaction in the incarnation, or through the narratives in scripture, it looks like God cannot be personally ineffable.[20] The cost of defending personal ineffability is seemingly, therefore, that both the doctrine of the beatific vision *and* the doctrine of divine revelation are false – and this is, to our minds, a substantial enough cost to justify associating divine ineffability with mere propositional ineffability alone.[21]

Reconciling divine ineffability with the beatific vision

If we postulate that God is propositionally ineffable but personally effable, God remains both beyond (fundamental) description and beyond (fundamental) human concepts, in that knowledge of him can never be fully comprehended by or captured in (fundamental) descriptions or concepts, and in this way, the doctrine of divine ineffability can be upheld. Nevertheless, through some sort of intense second-personal experience at the beatific vision,[22] God can still be *personally* known, fully and completely, just as we are taught in the doctrine of the beatific vision. To see how this might be the case, recall Stump's previously mentioned Mary thought experiment. When it comes to Mary's knowledge of her mother, both Franciscan and Dominican knowledge ally together. However, both kinds of knowledge are not simultaneously required for Mary to have *some* knowledge of her mother. We can see that this is the case as prior to meeting her, we take it that Mary had only Dominican knowledge of her mother. But Mary's knowledge need not be limited to Dominican/Franciscan or Dominican only. Nothing in this thought experiment requires that Mary has access every piece of Dominican knowledge about her mother. And, if the thought experiment still works (albeit without

[20] Adding to doctrine of the beatific vision and the doctrine of divine revelation, are the testimonies of those who claim to know God (even if the knowledge is presently 'dim'). If divine ineffability entailed personal ineffability, such people could not, in fact, know God, and would therefore be mistaken in their claims.
[21] We recognise that this isn't a particularly strong argument, however we can't see any other way around this. As we see it, given the seeming logical possibility of each, arbitration between these two positions comes down to which position incurs the greatest cost, where the cost is measured in terms of accepted doctrines one must sacrifice, and the route we are defending sees us sacrifice the fewest accepted doctrines.
[22] See [removed for peer review] for one way in which to view the form such intense second-personal experience might take. Somewhat analogously, this second-person experience would be a more intense version of Mary's initial meeting with her mother in Stump's earlier described thought experiment.

some of its rhetorical force) if one of Mary's encyclopedias was missing a few pages, it can also work if we subtract from Mary's room all of Mary's encyclopedias. Mary now has *no* Dominican knowledge of her mother.[23] If we substitute Mary's mother for a (fundamentally) propositionally ineffable God, and have this (fundamentally) propositionally ineffable God somehow reveal Himself to Mary, we might say that Mary now knows God, but her knowledge is purely Franciscan.[24] And so, if this limited conception of divine ineffability is accepted, the doctrines of divine ineffability and of the beatific vision can be both simultaneously upheld and indeed therefore reconciled by the apophatic theologian.

If what we have argued about how to interpret divine ineffability is correct, then even in the beatific vision God remains ineffable, in that, our full and complete knowledge of Him will not be able to be stated propositionally. But that is no great objection to the (merely propositional) view of divine ineffability we are proposing, since (i) it is part of the beauty of our richest and most intimate relationships that they go beyond what we can say in words, and (ii) just as God remains ineffable in the beatific vision, so do we, since even God cannot capture what it is to know us propositionally. Thus, on the view of ineffability we are proposing, persons are, in some sense, perhaps, essentially ineffable, both God and us.[25]

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[23] Besides, perhaps, a vague inkling that her existence was probably caused by something.

[24] Of course, Mary may have an inkling that God caused her to be, and so she might come to have some (non-fundamental) propositional knowledge of God before the fact, but we could also imagine that she is completely ignorant of this fact. One does wonder what sort of experience she would have of God in this case, the sort of experience that left her (at least to begin with) with *no* propositional knowledge of God! But maybe all we need to assert is that Mary has no *fundamental* propositional knowledge of her mother, or of God. Perhaps this thought experiment retains its force if Mary merely possesses (or, in some second-personal interaction, comes to possess) some degree of non-fundamental propositional knowledge of her mother, or of God.

[25] In defense of this claim, Stump herself concludes:

> There are, then, more things in heaven and earth than are captured by analytic philosophy. The knowledge of persons conveyed to us through our own second-person experiences and narratives about such experiences can, however, help us to apprehend them. There is a story told about Aquinas that seems to me just right here. Aquinas is the quintessential Dominican, in the literal as well as the typological sense, and he was one of the greatest philosophers and theologians in the Western tradition. But after a religious vision he quit writing. He said that, by comparison with what he had seen of God, the theories and arguments in his work were nothing but straw. This Dominican is contrasting (typologically understood) Dominican and Franciscan kinds of knowledge and decidedly privileging the Franciscan as regards the deity. (Stump, 2010: 61)

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