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IMMUTABILITY AND IMPASSIBILITY

Defining Changelessness

There are numerous senses in which a thing may be immutable or changeless. The strongest sense, entailed by the concept of eternal timelessness, is that, necessarily, God cannot change with respect to any of his intrinsic or real properties. Scholastic theologians distinguished between real changes in a being and merely relational changes. A real change involves a change in God himself or in his intrinsic properties rather than his merely extrinsic properties. For example, suppose that unknown to me there is a person who is exactly two miles from me who moves away from me. As a result of this change, I come to lack a property I earlier had—the property of that person being about two miles away from me. Yet we cannot conclude that there is really any change in me; rather, there is a change merely in my relation to the person who has moved. However, if I had known that the person were two miles away and then I came to know that he was more than two miles away, then there has been a real change in me—in the property of my knowing that this person is exactly two miles from me.

Similarly suppose that Kid Rock has faith in God at t_1 but at t_2 no longer believes in or has faith in God. At t_1 (assuming God is temporal) God has the property of being the object of Rock's faith and at t_2 God lacks this property. However, this change is merely a change in Rock's relation to God and not in God himself. It is a real change in Rock, or a