Philosophy of Religion

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*To Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, whose
scholarly example and
sacrificial leadership has made
both this and many
like works possible*

Contents

Preface

It has been said that Western philosophy has "carried the burden of God." Despite attempts earlier this century to eliminate God from the philosophical arena, philosophy of religion has emerged again as a prime topic in contemporary thought. Numerous book have been published on the topic, but few have been satisfyingly positive from a theistic viewpoint.

The pressing questions on the contemporary scene are four: First, is there any basis in reality for a religious experience? Men have experiences they describe as religious, but is there a real transcendent object of these experiences (e.g., God)? Or, is the object purely illusory or entirely imaginary? Secondly, is there any basis in reason for belief in God? Can the existence of God be proved or disproved? Is there any validity to the theistic arguments? Thirdly, whatever the basis in experience or reason for belief in God, is it even possible to speak meaningfully of a transcendent Being? What significance do words have when they are torn from their empirical rootage and applied to some transcendent Being beyond the world? Finally, in view of the claim that there is a good and powerful Being beyond this world, how does one account for evil? If God is good, why did He allow this plague of evil? And if He is powerful, why does He not overcome it?

Many theists have written on these topics. But apart from anthologies, there are few texts available that attempt to answer these questions from a theistically positive philosophical perspective. It is my conviction that piecemeal critiques of nontheisms will not suffice. The theist must enter the arena with a positive and comprehensive case of his own. It is in this spirit that we have surveyed the field of issues and presented arguments for classical theism.

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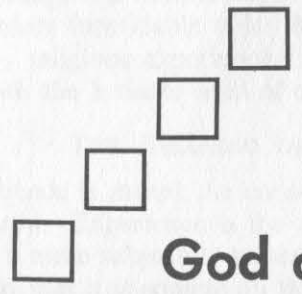
God and Experience

The Nature of
Religious Experience

Defining religion is notoriously difficult. And defining experience is an even more formidable task. But in order to understand what is meant by religious experience it is necessary to do both. Let us begin with the broader area of experience.

THE MEANING OF EXPERIENCE

By experience is meant the consciousness or awareness that individuals have. Experience is the awareness of a subject but not necessarily a mere subjective awareness. That is, all experience is subjective in that it is something that subjects or individuals have; however, not all experience is purely subjective: there are objective referents for at least some experiences. Experience is the state of consciousness of an individual who is aware of something as other whether or not it is really other. Of course, experience may be an awareness of one's self, or self-awareness. But even here there is at least a psychological distinction between the self which is the subject of the awareness and the self of which it is aware.

Experience may be viewed in two ways — generally and specifically. Experience in general is the totality of consciousness like that of being alive. A specific experience is a focusing on a given aspect or moment within the whole of one's consciousness, such as a certain event in one's life. Or, the difference, respectively, is like that between the awareness of *being* in a state of marriage and *getting* married (i.e., the consciousness of taking a wife in the ceremony of marriage). In this study we will be concerned primarily with religious experience in general rather than with specific religious experiences, for the following reasons: First, because ex-

perience in general is the backdrop and basis for particular experiences, just as vision is the general faculty which makes it possible to focus on this or that particular object. Secondly, religious experience in general is more readily available to men in general. Not everyone has had a special religious experience, such as a mystical experience. But, as shall be argued subsequently, religious experience in the general sense is both more readily available to, and more understandable by, men in general. This will be made more explicit once religion is defined. First, however, we must distinguish different levels of experience.

The most basic level of experience may be called primary awareness. It is the basic unreflective consciousness an individual has. Secondary awareness is the consciousness of being conscious; it is being aware of the fact that one has awareness.[1] Unlike men, animals give no evidence of this secondary awareness. Within this secondary awareness there are many activities such as remembering, reflecting, relating, and reasoning. All of these presuppose or build upon primary awareness.

The study of religious experience undertaken here will treat both kinds of awareness. It will recognize, however, that primary awareness is fundamental to secondary awareness, even though secondary awareness may be necessary for getting at primary awareness. Furthermore, it is recognized that in order to get at the religious awareness of other people one does not have direct access to either their primary or their secondary awareness. In order to understand the religious experiences of others one must depend on their expressions of these experiences. In brief, expressions of experience must be studied to understand the experiences behind these expressions, and secondary experience must be studied in order to understand the primary experience behind it. And primary religious experience in general (as opposed to special religious experience) will be the primary center of concern. Special religious experiences may be used to illustrate a focusing or intensifying of the experience which is more generally available for men in general. But precisely what is meant by a religious experience?

THE MEANING OF RELIGION

Attempts to define religion have been generally unsuccessful at gaining universal acclaim.[2] And yet the vast majority of these

definitions include at least one common element: awareness of the Transcendent. They differ, of course, in what kind of awareness is involved and what is meant by the Transcendent. We will begin with what appears to be common to most definitions and then attempt to discover what must be characteristic of an awareness of the Transcendent to make it qualify as a distinctive experience to which we may give the title "religious."

There are at least two senses in which religious experience may involve transcendence. First, transcendence may refer to the *process* of overcoming the conditions of one's finitude, frustrations, etc. This may also be called self-transcendence.[3] Transcendence is also used in the sense of the *object* of religious experience, viz., the Transcendent. It is in this latter sense that we are primarily concerned with religious transcendence in this study.

It should be pointed out that the Transcendent is not intended to be equivalent to the Christian view of God. God as defined by Western theisms is one (specific) form or way of viewing the Transcendent. What is meant by the Transcendent is a much broader, more general, and less specific notion that is inclusive of pantheistic as well as theistic, personal as well as impersonal, religious views. Brahman of Hinduism, Nirvana of Buddhism, the Tao of Taoism, Schleiermacher's All, Otto's *Numen,* and Tillich's Being-beyond-being are all ways of viewing the Transcendent.

The Transcendent not only has many descriptions but may also have many dimensions. It need not be viewed as being "above"; it may be thought of as a transcendence in "depth." Then too, it may be the transcendent "origin" or even the "goal" of one's religious experience. In brief, we do not intend here to narrow down or limit the meaning of the Transcendent to any particular direction or dimension.

"Transcendent" means simply two things. First, something is transcendent if it *goes beyond* or is *more than* one's immediate consciousness. In this sense the subconscious is transcendent, for it goes beyond one's immediate consciousness and yet he is somehow aware that it is there.[4] The transcendental ego is also an example,[5] for we are conscious of it, but we are conscious that it is beyond our consciousness.[6] Even other selves are transcendent, for we are conscious of them, but conscious of them as being be-

yond ourselves. Kant's *noumenon* is transcendent, for he somehow knows *that* the *noumenon* is there, even though he cannot say *what* it is.[7] Further, it is *more* than what is experienced in the way that the whole is greater than its parts (e.g., there is a wholeness, structure, or relationship missing when the parts are scattered). It is more in the way that a word or sentence is more than letters (viz., a unity of meaning not in the parts taken separately), or the way there is more in a painting than the pigment and colors. That is, something is transcendent if there is more in it than "meets the eye." If there is a depth or perspective that is more than the empirical experience of it, then it transcends the empirical.[8]

Second, something is transcendent in a religious sense if it is believed to be ultimate. The Transcendent is that which is the object of a total commitment — that for which one would make even the supreme sacrifice. The Transcendent is the object of ultimate concern because it is thought to be ultimate or final. It is that More in view of which one sees no need of more. It is the Beyond beyond which one seeks no more beyonds. Examples of such commitment outside of religion are difficult to find, but to some degree the patriot's "My country, right or wrong," or the moralist's "Duty for duty's sake," or an artist's commitment to absolute Beauty are examples. It is, as Tillich said, the Ultimate to which one makes an ultimate commitment.[9] Anything less than a total commitment is less than a religious experience. But more about this later (in chapter 2). For now, let us see how a religious experience differs from other kinds of experiences.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER EXPERIENCES

There are two or three kinds of experiences that are sometimes closely associated with religious experience — the moral, the aesthetic, and more recently, the secular. Distinguishing these will aid in understanding just what characterizes a religious experience.

Religious Experience in Contrast to Moral Experience

Since a religious experience is similar to a moral experience and since some thinkers tend to identify them, a few words of clarifica-

tion are in order. Kant's definition of religion as "the recognition of all duties as divine commands" falls into this general category. Bishop Butler said that religion and morality "closely resemble" each other.[10] Ramsey calls them "close logical kinsmen" with "great affinities,"[11] and he suggests that this is the reason that they have so often had the same friends and the same enemies in the history of philosophy. R. B. Braithwaite distinguishes them only in theory not in practice, arguing, "Unless religious principles are moral principles, it makes no sense to speak of putting them into practice." "A moral belief," he said, "is an intention to behave in a certain way: a religious belief is an intention to behave in a certain way (a moral belief) together with the entertainment of certain stories associated with the intention in the mind of the believer."[12] Fromm believes that "the difference between the religious and the ethical is to a large extent only an epistemological one, though not entirely so."[13]

Even those who see a difference between religion and morality tend to stress their inseparability. Tillich wrote, "Morality is intrinsically religious, as religion is intrinsically ethical."[14] Bergson contended that "originally [i.e., among the primitives], the whole of morality is custom; and as religion forbids any departure from custom morality is coextensive with religion."[15]

Despite the interrelationship and seeming inseparability of religion and morality, they involve clearly differing experiences. As Dewey observed, "The religious attitude signifies something that is bound through imagination to a *general* attitude. This comprehensive attitude, moreover, is much broader than anything indicated by 'moral' in its usual sense."[16] William James summed up the difference by arguing that morality *accepts* the yoke of the universe, but religion *welcomes* it; religion is not a mere Stoic submission to the universe, but a love of it. Morality calls for obedience, said James, but religion calls for volunteers.[17] Schleiermacher offers a further distinction when he contends that morality is man's *duty* to the universe; religion is man's *dependence* on it.[18] But even in dependence there is a kind of duty, only it is a more basic duty than moral duty.

Perhaps no one has drawn the distinction between a moral duty and a religious duty more sharply than Kierkegaard in his famous

panegyric on Abraham. [19] The ethical, said Kierkegaard, expresses one's universal duty, but the religious says that "the individual as the particular is higher than the universal." This can also be expressed by saying that "there is an absolute duty toward God for in this relationship of duty the individual as an individual stands related absolutely to the absolute." Or, to summarize Kierkegaard, an ethical experience responds to the moral law; a religious experience responds to the Moral Law-Giver Himself. The moral law says, "Thou shalt not kill"; God told Abraham, "Sacrifice your son Isaac." In this situation then, either the religious is above the ethical or Abraham, far from being the great hero of faith, is a downright murderer. Thus, we are "wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against the fact that Abraham enjoys honor and glory as the father of faith, whereas he ought to be prosecuted and convicted of murder." In reality, Abraham had to transcend the ethical in order to do the religious. This does not mean the ethical is *destroyed* by the religious; rather, it is merely *dethroned* by it. For the ethical is a necessary prerequisite to the religious; one cannot be religious unless he is first ethical. However, the religious is a higher relationship of duty to God in view of which even the ethical must give way. "Abraham, by a religious act of faith, overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher *telos* outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former." In this state of absolute duty to God, "the ethical is reduced to a position of relativity" to the point that "love to God may cause the knight of faith to give his love to his neighbor the opposite expression to that which, ethically speaking, is required by duty." The religious is higher than the ethical as the individual is higher than the universal, or as the concrete is over the abstract, or as the response to the person of God takes precedence over response to mere propositions about God. That is to say, morality is man's responsibility in this world; religion is his response to revelation from beyond this world. The former calls for duty, the latter for worship. [20]

Furthermore, it may be added that religion differs from morality because the latter can point out man's weaknesses or sin but only the former can help him transcend them. That is, religion is higher than ethics because a feeling of grace is higher than a sense of guilt. Morality tells a man what he ought to do; religion can help

him do it. The former provides the transcendent norm; the latter can give the motivation and power for transcending.

In brief, a religious experience differs from an ethical experience in several ways: (1) its commitment is broader in scope, (2) its commitment is different in kind, (3) its object is of a higher order, and (4) its object alone has the power to overcome and unify. Let us take a closer look at each of these. First, a religious commitment is broader than a moral one since the former is a *whole* commitment of the whole man to the whole universe. [21] That is, it is a commitment of man as a whole, including his nonmoral aspects of being (meditating), and acting (such as knowing, art and play). Secondly, even if one defines the moral more broadly so as to include the whole man, a moral commitment would still differ from a religious commitment in that the moral experience as such involves merely the sense of what one *should* do; a religious experience goes beyond this, being characterized by what a man *wills* to do. Morality is a matter of duty; religion is a matter also of desire. Further, a religious experience has a higher object than a moral experience. For morality is man's commitment to men; religion is his commitment to what goes beyond men, to the Transcendent. Finally, only a religious experience can bring complete unity into one's life. Failure in morality can produce guilt; only religion can provide grace to overcome both failure and guilt. One's moral shortcomings call for a religious overcoming. The duality within man calls for a unity beyond him.

There is no need to be long concerned with whether morality flows from religion or religion flows from morality, or whether they are separate streams. [22] Their close historical and logical connections would seem to preclude the latter. As to the former question, Schleiermacher's suggestion is helpful: "Specific actions follow only from specific impulses. Religion is not a specific impulse, so no specific actions can follow from it. Religion produces action only as a sum of activity flows from a sum of feeling, viz., as that which reflects the inner unity of the spirit." "But," he continues, "while a man does nothing from religion, he should do everything with religion. Uninterruptedly, like a sacred music, the religious feelings should accompany his active life." [23]

As Tillich indicated, "If the moral imperative were derived from religion in the traditional sense of the word, secular ethics would

have to sever any ties with religion, for it rejects direct dependence on any particular religion." [24] There is certainly a danger in tying ethics to specific religious beliefs, as Freud rightly noted. For if these religious beliefs are rejected — and men are prone to reject them — then one has lost his basis for morality. [25] However, if one means that morality flows from the far more extensive, if not universal, attitude of men called the religious, then Freud's objection loses its force.

Religious Experience in Contrast to Aesthetic Experience

There is also a close connection between religion and art. Whitehead contends that religion and play have the same origin in ritual. "This is because ritual is the stimulus to emotion, and an habitual ritual may diverge into religion or into play, according to the quality of the emotion excited. . . . " He also observed, "In the modern world, a holy day and a holiday are kindred notions." [26] Otto noted that the sacred and the sublime are similar in two ways: both are inexplicable and both have the dual character of humbling yet exalting the beholder. [27] In fact, the two experiences are so similar than an aesthetic experience may be used to evoke a religious one, as Otto observed. [28] Tillich noted that the religious may even appear in a painting which has no religious content in the traditional sense. [29]

How, then, can we differentiate between these two closely associated experiences? Schleiermacher put his distinction this way: all science is the existence of things in man; art is the existence of man in things. But both art and science are dependent on the universal existence of all things in the Infinite. Or, to say it another way, science is speculative, art is practical, and religion is intuitive. [30]

The problem with this distinction is that an aesthetic experience can be intuitive too, as Plotinus points out. That is, art as a practice, (e.g., man making something beautiful) is no doubt distinguishable from religion as a feeling or awareness of the Absolute. But what about one's awareness of absolute beauty; is this kind of aesthetic experience distinguishable from a religious awareness of the Absolute? For example, in Plotinus there is that absolute Beauty (the "One" or "Good") which is experienced as ultimate and is identified with "God." It is beyond all sensible and even

intellectual beauty and can be known only in a mystical union with it. If by the term "aesthetic experience" one refers to this kind of ultimate intuition, then it would seem that Schleiermacher's distinction between aesthetics and religion would not hold.

Kierkegaard, in a more radical distinction, views the aesthetic, moral, and religious dimensions as three ascending levels or stages of life. [31] The aesthetic level is that of feeling; the ethical, of deciding; and the religious, of existing. The aesthetic stage represents the routines of life, the ethical gives rules for life, and the religious gives a revelation to life. Whereas the first is self-centered and the second is law-centered, the last is God-centered. Aesthetics represents a life without choosing; morality, a choosing of life; religion is the choosing of God. From the aesthetic to the moral is a leap [32] from being spectator to being participator in life, a leap from personal whims to universal norms, from mere deliberation to decision, from being controlled by life to being in control of life. The further leap from the ethical stage to the religious is a leap from the objective realm of abstract, universal moral code, to the subjective realm of concrete, particular conduct, from the essential order to the existential, from propositions about God to the person of God. Briefly, then, aesthetics is something one *has;* religion is something one *is.* The former is impersonal; the latter is personal. Aesthetics is something one knows; religion is something one lives. One grips the aesthetical dimension of life, but the religious grips him.

But even Kierkegaard's radical distinction would not do to differentiate what Plotinus meant by an experience of absolute Beauty from what Schleiermacher meant by a religious experience. Both are ultimate; both are absolute. Perhaps the simplest way to resolve the problem is to say that for Plotinus there is no distinction between a religious and an aesthetic experience of absolute Beauty; in fact, they are identical for him. [33] However, there remains the question of whether this is the normal and customary meaning of an aesthetic experience. At least on the lower levels (sensual, intellectual) or aesthetic experience there is a marked difference between the religious and the aesthetic experiences in Plotinus; the former is ultimate, the latter is not. These lower aesthetic experiences may lead to the higher religious experience, but they are not identical.

In another attempt to distinguish them, Rudolf Otto contends than an aesthetic experience can be used to evoke a religious experience, even though the two experiences differ in kind. For Otto, an aesthetic experience is a sense of the sublime; a religious experience is an awareness of the sacred or holy — a *numinous* experience. And even though there is a hidden relation between the sacred and the sublime, these two experiences differ in *kind* and not merely in degree.[34] Although Otto does not clearly draw out his distinctions, he seems to imply that the difference between them is that of a sense of grandeur on the one hand and a vision of God on the other; like the difference between viewing the Grand Canyon and seeing a holy God (as in Isaiah's vision in the Old Testament). As A. E. Taylor put it, if William Shakespeare walked into the room we should stand, but if Jesus Christ walked into the room we should kneel.[35] The former could occasion an aesthetic experience; the latter would provide a religious encounter. Aesthetics involves a sense of wonder and amazement; religion involves a sense of worship and adoration.

But how can one say they differ in kind unless it can be shown what the difference is? In answer, we would suggest two differences: (1) The *object* of an aesthetic experience, at least in the ordinary sensual or intellectual sense, is not ultimate, whereas the object of a religious experience is ultimate. And in the Plotinian sense of an intuitive experience of absolute Beauty, one is actually describing religious experience in its aesthetic dimension. (2) The *nature* of an aesthetic experience (even in the Plotinian sense of absolute Beauty) is different from a religious experience. Even if the object of both is considered to be one and the same Absolute, nevertheless the attitude of the religious person toward it differs from that of the artist. The artist as such has only an attitude of *wonder* and admiration toward the Absolute, whereas the religious person has a spirit of *worship* and adoration toward it. The artist is drawn by it, but the religious person is also repelled by it. As Otto observed, there is a sense of fear as well as fascination. That is, the religious person is not only devoted to the ultimate but also senses his dependence of it. Furthermore, the artist has an attitude of contemplation; the religious person an attitude of complete commitment. That is, the former as such remains detached

from ultimate beauty whereas the latter is aware of his dependence on the ultimate.

Religious Experience in Contrast to a Purely Secular Experience

An experience need not be secular or nonreligious simply because it is humanistic. Both Fromm's and Dewey's views are humanistic and yet both qualify as religious.

In Fromm's view, what he calls a "humanistic" religion in contrast to an "authoritarian" religion qualifies (under our definition) as religious. For the higher human self, which he calls "God," does indeed *transcend* the individual and it is considered ultimate, i.e., he is ultimately committed to it.[36] Likewise, Dewey's form of humanism is essentially religious. He said, "Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end and against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality."[37] The ideal goal is transcendent and the conviction of it and commitment to it are total.

If this be so, then one may ask just what type of humanistic experience would not qualify as a religious experience. Basically, a nonreligious or purely secular experience would be one in which either (1) no transcendent Other exists beyond the individual, or (2) if there is such, the individual would not be totally committed to it because it would not be considered ultimate. The fact that purely secular experiences are difficult to find is testimony to just how incurably religious man is after all. Even Sigmund Freud's god of human reason, which he calls *Logos*,[38] is not identified with the individual's rational powers and thus qualifies as a transcendent. Likewise, the projected human "self," which Feuerbach says men consider (falsely) to be God, is not the individual human being but human nature in general, i.e., universal or generic man.[39] Of course, he does not consider it to be real, nor does Dewey hold his ideal goal to be real. Nevertheless, it is beyond the individual and it is considered ultimate by the religious person. Therefore, it qualifies as an object of religious experience.

The first way in which one may be irreligious is by a refusal to recognize any kind of transcendence whatsoever. This, said W. C. Smith, is what characterizes contemporary secularity.[40] That is, a completely immanent, this-worldly outlook which is unable (or un-

willing) to transcend in any direction is essentially nonreligious. As Martin Marty put it, "Secularism permits no transcendent. . . . It is self-contained, self-explanatory, self-enclosed." [41] Or as Altizer wrote, "If there is one clear portal to the twentieth century, it is . . . the collapse of any meaning or reality being beyond the newly discovered radical immanence of modern man, an immanence dissolving even the memory or the shadow of transcendence." [42] There are several possible reasons for this failure to comprehend the Transcendent: (1) it is "dead" (*a la* Altizer), (2) our language about it is "dead" or meaningless (van Buren), (3) it is "eclipsed" by conceptualizations about it (as Buber said), or (4) it is "silent" or hiding.

But there is a radically immanent, irreligious stance taken by some contemporary men not only because of the inability to discover the Transcendent but also because of an *unwillingness* to make a total commitment (or even a partial one) to it. This unwillingness is the second characteristic of a nonreligious experience. There are many reasons why some men would refuse to commit themselves to the Transcendent, even if it were there: (1) it is deemed unworthy of their devotion, [43] (2) man considers himself mature enough to get along without the Transcendent, [44] and (3) the individual desires to honor himself as ultimate. [45]

In brief, a man may be irreligious or purely humanistic in two ways. First, because he is unable to see a Transcendent, and second, because he is unwilling to submit to it. In either event, his experience would fall short of being adequately religious.

THE UNIVERSALITY AND REALITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In actual practice, few if any men have attained a state of complete secularity. Most secular experience is still quasi-religious. Tillich argued that all men have an ultimate commitment; even atheists have a center of their personality, a unifying core of concern, he thought. [46] Others, like Otto, have argued only for the universality of the capacity for religion, just as men have a universal capacity for song or art even if they never sing or paint. [47] Eleade amply illustrates the thesis that modern man with all of his secularity has not completely extricated himself from the religious. The secular man, for example, has been unable to shake himself from certain quasi-religious myths. Nudism's nostalgia for

Eden, Communism's desire for the Golden Age, and the aesthetic attempt to escape time via the novel or the theater all indicate man's unshakable religious heritage. [48]

Whether the religious consciousness is only potentially universal or whether it is actually so is moot. What is demonstrable from both believer and nonbeliever is that mankind as a whole has been incurably religious. Even Freud acknowledged that what Schleiermacher called religious, viz., the feeling of cosmic dependence, was indeed a universal experience. [49] Literary existentialists like Kafka and Beckett reflect also modern man's longing for God. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a reflection of Heidegger's phrase "waiting for God." Sartre's designation of the fundamental human project as the desire to be God is an even clearer indication of the essentially religious character of man. To be man means to reach toward being God. "Man makes himself man in order to be God," he wrote. [50] Walter Kaufmann repeats the same point even more dramatically, claiming, "Man is the ape that wants to be God. . . . " [51] In view of all of this, it seems safe to claim some kind of universality for religious experience. The more serious question does not relate to the universality but to the reality of religious experience. Sartre considered the whole project to realize God as fundamentally absurd. Freud was less definitive but perhaps equally discomforting to religious experience when he described it as an illusory wish for a Cosmic Comforter. "We say to ourselves," wrote Freud, "it would indeed be very nice if there were a God who was both creator and benevolent providence. . . , but at the same time it is very odd that this is all just as we should wish it ourselves." [52] The reality of God is suspect because it is an illusory wish, like the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. We will suspend final judgment on Freud's thesis until after we have examined more thoroughly the characteristics and dimensions of religious experience. For now, it will suffice to say that the mere universality of religious experience is by no means a guarantee of its reality or a sure indication of its unreality. Human experiences reveal that some desires are fulfillable and some are not. Which class religion falls into will have to be determined by some criteria other than the experience itself.

NOTES CHAPTER ONE

1. Michael Novak makes a similar distinction between primary and secondary awareness. See *Belief and Unbelief*, pp. 72-75.

2. W. C. Smith wrote: "It is perhaps not presumptuous to hold that no definition of religion so far proposed has proven compelling, no generalization has come anywhere near to Adequacy." *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 16.

3. But self-transcendence can be misleading in a religious context if it is taken to mean transcending by one's self or on one's own. A religious experience involves a sense of dependence, and it cannot in the same way involve an attitude of complete independence from anything beyond man.

4. William James calls the subconscious the "hither side" of the Transcendent, but it is definitely beyond the individual's conscious self. See *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 508; cf. p. 232.

5. Peter Koëstenbaum develops this point in an excellent summary of a phenomenological approach to religion, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in *Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, ed. Clayton Feaver and William Horosz, pp. 186-193.

6. We are not here arguing for the existence of the subconscious, the transcendental ego, or other minds. We are simply saying that if they exist, they would be real examples of what we mean by transcendent. If they do not exist, they would be merely possible examples.

7. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 273, where he says, "On the contrary, it itself limits sensibility by applying the term *noumenon* to things in themselves (things not regarded as appearances). But in so doing it at the same time sets limits to itself, recognizing that it cannot know these noumena through any of the categories, and that it must therefore think them only under the title of an unknown something."

8. See Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 42-50.

9. See Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, pp. 7, 8, 11, passim.

10. As quoted by Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 32, 33.

11. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 34, 42.

12. R. B. Braithwaite, "Religious Statements as Ethically but not Factually Significant," in *"The Existence of God"*, pp. 241, 250.

13. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 93. He does admit that "there is a factor common to certain kinds of religious experience [viz., the mystical] which goes beyond the purely ethical. But it is exceedingly difficult if not possible to formulate this factor of religious experience." P. 94.

14. Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, p. 15.

15. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 123.

16. John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, p. 23. However, in the final analysis Dewey's definition of religion turns out to be one's broad moral goal, which hardly shows that there is a basic difference between them.

17. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 41-45.

18. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, pp. 275ff.

19. Buber said Kierkegaard rejected this sharp distinction in his later works. "Our rejection can be supported by Kierkegaard's own teaching. He describes 'the ethical' as 'the only means by which God communicates with man' (1853). . . . The ethical no longer appears here, as in Kierkegaard's earlier thought, as a 'stage' from which a 'leap' leads to the religious, a leap by which a level is reached that is quite different and has a different meaning; here it dwells in the religious, in faith and service. This ethical can no longer mean a morality belonging to a realm of relativity, time and again overtaken and invalidated by the religious; it means *essential* acting and suffering in relation to men, coordinated with the essential relation to God" (*The Works of Martin Buber*, p. 78). But if this were so, it would necessitate a reversal of virtually everything Kierkegaard said about Abraham, and this is difficult to believe. Kierkegaard often closely identifies the ethical and the religious, particularly when he is contrasting them with the aesthetic. But since he does not anywhere clearly repudiate the sharp distinctions between the ethical and the religious made in *Fear and Trembling*, it seems best to interpret these other isolated statements that seem to identify the ethical and the religious in view of the clear distinction he does make between them and nowhere clearly repudiates. See Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 78, where he wrote, "The ethical is the universal, and as such it is again the divine. One has therefore a right to say that fundamentally every duty is a duty toward God; but if one cannot say more, then one affirms at the same time that properly I have no duty toward God. Duty becomes duty by being referred to God, but in duty itself I do not come into relation with God. Thus it is a duty to love one's neighbor, but in performing this duty I do not come into relation with God but with the neighbor whom I love."

20. All of the above quotes appear in Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 66, 90, 78, 65, 69, 80.

21. See chapter 2 on this point.

22. Tillich writes in this regard: "The question of moral motivation can be answered only transmorally. For the law demands, but cannot forgive; it judges, but cannot accept. Therefore, forgiveness and acceptance, the conditions of the fulfillment of the law, must come from something above the law, or more precisely, from something in which the split between our essential being and our existence is overcome and healing power has appeared." *Morality and Beyond*, p. 64.

23. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, pp. 57-59.

24. Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, p. 30.

25. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp. 62-64.

26. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 21.

27. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 44, 45.

28. For example, *darkness* (as in temples) can evoke a mystical effect; *silence* can provoke a spontaneous reaction to a numinous presence; and *emptiness*, by doing away with the "this" and "here," can draw attention to the "wholly other." Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 72, 73.

29. Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, p. 6.

30. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, pp. 39, 275 - 284

31. These three levels are represented respectively by three of his works, *Repetitions* (the aesthetic), *Either/Or* (the ethical), and *Fear and Trembling* (the

religious), and the overall view of these dimensions in a work entitled *Stages on Life's Way*.

32. Each stage is separated by a crisis of despair and is spanned only by a "leap of faith." Lower levels are not destroyed, only dethroned, by higher levels, and attainment is no guarantee of permanence. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 80.

33. However, there is certainly a distinction in Plotinus between an aesthetic experience on either a sensual or intellectual level and this highest intuitive experience. Cf. *Enneads* I, 6, 6 & 9; V. 5, 12.

34. Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 65, 106.

35. A. E. Taylor, "The Argument from Religious Experience," p. 159.

36. Fromm, *Psychoanolysis and Religion*, pp. 37, 49, 60.

37. Dewey, *Common Faith*, p. 27.

38. Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, p. 88.

39. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 7.

40. Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 127.

41. Martin Marty, *Varieties of Unbelief*, p, 138.

42. Thomas Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*, p. 22.

43. Ivan, in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, reflects this attitude, for even if God were known to exist, Ivan leaves the impression that he would never surrender to Him because of the injustice He has done to man.

44. Fromm states this well: "If mankind is able to produce enough to feed all men, it does not need to pray for daily bread. Man can provide that by his own effort." *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 104.

45. Ayn Rand's philosophy of selfishness is as clear an example of this as one can find. "By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man — every man — is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose." *For the New Intellectual*, p. 123.

46. Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, p. 106; *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 105.

47. Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, pp. 116ff.

48. Mircea Eleade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 202ff.

49. Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, p. 52. However, Freud was unwilling to call the feeling of absolute dependence a religious feeling. It is not this feeling but what a man does with it that is the essence of religion, according to Freud.

50. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 766.

51. Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 354.

52. Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, pp. 57-58.

2

The Characteristics of Religious Experience

The primary purpose of this chapter is to analyze more carefully the central core of a religious experience so that it can be more adequately evaluated. In so doing, it is hoped that some light may be shed on other questions, such as the universality and necessity of religious experience.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE INVOLVES AN AWARENESS OF THE TRANSCENDENT

There have been many attempts to define religion. Most of these definitions have at least one common element, viz., the fact that religion involves an awareness of the Transcendent. That a religious experience involves the Transcendent is held not only by the theists and pantheists but by many atheists as well. The dimension and definitions of the Transcendent differ, but a religious experience involves the Transcendent, nonetheless.

Some have contended that there is little or no cognitive content common to all descriptions of religious experience, but few if any have denied that there is a transcendent dimension which is thought to go beyond the individuals having the experience.[1] Those who believe the Transcendent has a reality of its own beyond the human have identified it with the "Universe" or "All" (Schleiermacher), the "Numinous" or "Holy" (Otto), the "Wholly Other" (Kierkegaard), "Being itself" or the "Being beyond being" (Tillich), the "Transcendental Ego" (Koëstenbaum), and numerous other realities, personal and impersonal, pantheistic, deistic, or theistic. On the other hand, those who deny its objective reality often admit, nonetheless, that *belief* in the reality of the Transcendent is char-

acteristic of religion. Some identify it (at least in part) with the individual's subconscious (James), the collective subconsciousness of men (Jung), the collective consciousness of the group (Cornford), the projection of human imagination (Feuerbach), man's absurd project to become self-caused (Sartre), the illusory object of a universal neurosis (Freud), man's higher or ideal self (Fromm), the imaginative unity of human values (Dewey), and so on. But whatever the description or name for the Transcendent there is something (real or not) which goes beyond the individual in which or by which he transcends his finite conditions.

The Religious Person is Aware of the Transcendent as Other

Not only is it acknowledged that religious experience involves the Transcendent, but it is also recognized that the transcendent Other is *essential* to a religious experience. Feuerbach contended that it is absolutely essential that the religious man *believes* God is really out there, for he would not worship any object as the ultimate Other if he knew it to be nothing but himself. [2] Indeed, if there is to be any kind of experience, there must be at least a mental distinction (if not an actual difference) between the one which is aware and that of which he is aware. Even in the experience of self-awareness there is a distinction between the "I" and the "me." It is difficult to see what the word "experience" (or awareness, consciousness) could mean if there were absolutely no distinction between the "I" (finite individual) and the "Thou," i.e., the Transcendent. As Koëstenbaum points out, religion is an I-Thou, not an I-I, relation. [3] That is, there is no meaning left to the word "experience" if there is an absolute merging of the individual and the Transcendent. [4] And even if it is possible to effect an ontological merging of "man" and "God" (though most mystics probably refer to psychological not ontological merging), this state could hardly be called one of awareness or consciousness (which is what we mean by experience).

If experience by its very nature will involve an "other," then it follows that religious experience must also involve something beyond or transcendent. W. C. Smith summed it up well when he wrote, "What they have in common lies not in the tradition that introduces them to transcendence, nor in their faith by which they

personally respond, but in that to which they respond, the transcendence itself." [5]

The Unity of Meaning of the Transcendent

The point of general agreement among scholars is that religions have a great diversity of experience and expression and little if any unity of content. With regard to the first point, Schleiermacher argued that multiplicity, far from being bad for religion, is necessary for the complete manifestation of religion. [6] James suggests that plurality in religious experience is necessary to fit the plurality of human needs. [7] Tillich thinks that we should not pretend an identity where there is a very fundamental difference in the whole experience and attitude as between Western and Eastern religions (e.g., as to their views on history as cyclical vs. horizontal). [8] Nor does he feel that they should be mixed, for "a mixture of religions destroys in each of them the concreteness which gives it its dynamic power." [9]

Having said this, however, is not to deny any possibility of identifying a common meaning to religious experience. Dewey was no doubt not far from the truth when he argued that there is little if any specifiable content of value which is common to all religions. [10] However, this conclusion can be misleading, for it discourages the effort to find and define the elements that are common to most if not all religious experiences.

The analysis of William James is more profound and reveals a greater appreciation for the common elements of religious experiences. He suggests that all religions have the following three characteristics in common: "1) that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance; 2) that union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end; [and] 3) that prayer or inner communion with the spirit there-of — be that spirit 'God' or 'law' — is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world." [11] Concerning the basic "creed" or cognitive content of all religions, James contended that it is twofold: 1) an uneasiness or sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand; 2) an awareness that we are saved from this wrongness by making proper connection with higher powers. [12]

To rephrase this in our own words, James is saying that religious experience involves transcendence in two ways: first, the need of man to self-transcend, and secondly the awareness of the Transcendent toward which this transcendence is directed. The first is a *process* and the second is the *object* or sphere in which transcendence operates.

The Need for Self-Transcendence

Religious experience involves the need to transcend the unalterable displeasures of life. In this sense Koëstenbaum was right in describing religion as "man's effort to do something about the desperate condition of his own finitude."[13] For that matter, Freud was correct in depicting religion as man's search for a cosmic comforter to help him cope with the fearful eventualities of life, as was Bultmann's "human longing to escape from this world by the supposed discovery of a sphere above this world."[14] There seems to be little reason to dispute Kaufmann when he said, "Religion is rooted in man's aspiration to transcend himself. . . ." "Man," he said, "is the ape that wants to be a god. . . . Whether he worships ideals or strives to perfect himself, man is the God-intoxicated ape."[15] Or as Sartre put it, man's project is to become God.[16] In this sense, one may say that man is the being who is characterized by his need for self-transcendence.[17]

Other humanistic definitions of religion evidence the inclusion of this characteristic feature. Dewey's pursuit of general and enduring ideals despite threats of personal loss[18] is definitely an aspiration for self-transcendence. Even Fromm's self-labeled "humanistic religion" admits the need for self-transcendence. Religious experience "in this kind of religion," he writes, "is the experience of oneness with the All, based on one's relatedness to the world as it is grasped with thought and with love."[19] With this stress on self-transcending love,[20] Tillich's statement agrees. He wrote, "*Agape* is a quality of love, that quality which expresses the self-transcendence of the religious element in love."[21] All the religions of love, then, are illustrative of man's attempt to transcend the conditions of hate and disunity found in this world. Love, said Koëstenbaum, is an a priori category by which the religious man unifies his world and overcomes the opposing otherness and attains self-fulfillment.[22] Whether it is viewed as love or some other

force, religious experience characteristically involves some means by which a man can self-transcend, or go beyond his own frustrating limitations.

Religion Involves the Transcendent

Not only does religious experience involve a process of transcending or self-transcendence but it implies a dimension or sphere which is called the Transcendent. That is, if the religious aspiration to go beyond is to be realized, then there must be a beyond in which or by which this can occur. To some this is a personal God; to others it is an impersonal Force. For some, it is attainable in this life; for others, it is sought in another life. For many, it is the essence of reality; for some, it is an illusive dream sought in another life. But in every religious experience there is a transcendent dimension of one kind or another in which the transcending occurs.

As will be shown later (in chapter 3), this transcendence can and does have many dimensions and descriptions. But in each case there is always a Transcendent involved in religious experience. Many of the definitions or religion make this explicit. The *Oxford Dictionary*, e.g., calls religion a "recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power. . . ."[23] All definitions that use any form of the words "God" or "gods" clearly recognize that there is a transcendent realm germane to religious experience. What is not as obvious, however, is that those forms of religion that do not have any such Divine Being, nevertheless, have a Transcendent of their own. That is, the word "transcendent" is not to be limited to personal theistic concepts nor even to pantheistic or impersonal modes of describing the ultimate object or goal of religious aspiration. Nor is it to be limited to what is commonly called the supernatural.[24] In point of fact, by "Transcendent" we do not mean any or all of the particular conceptual ways of describing God. Rather by "Transcendent" is meant the supposed reality that is beyond all of these ways of designating it. It includes the Buddhistic "Nirvana," Tillich's "Being beyond being," Schleiermacher's "Universe," Otto's "Holy," and so on.

Even among those who deny the reality of the Transcendent there is still an admission that religion involves such an alleged reality. Sartre, e.g., uses the word "God" repeatedly[25] and characterizes man as the one whose fundamental project is to become God.[26]

Fromm is willing to retain the word "God" as the symbol of the Transcendent, providing it be recognized that he speaks of the higher human values. He said, "In humanistic religion God is the image of man's higher self, a symbol of what man potentially is or ought to become. . . . "[27] Although Feuerbach categorically denies any reality other than human behind the term "God," he not only uses it but recognizes that it is essential to religion to believe that there is a transcendent God. Even though, for Feuerbach, consciousness of God is really only consciousness of man himself, nevertheless man is not directly aware of this. On the contrary, he said, "Ignorance of it is fundamental to the peculiar nature of religion."[28] God is really nothing but the projection of man's own nature, but the religious man is not aware of this and that is why he worships this projection as God.[29] However, the present concern is not whether the Transcendent is real. Rather, the concern here is with the fact that religious experience seems always to involve a transcendent dimension.

To sum up, a religious experience is not only one of self-transcendence but one which involves a transcendent realm by which or in which the transcending is made possible and/or toward which it is directed. That is, in order to go beyond, there must be a Beyond (real or imagined) toward which or in which the religious experience moves.

Some Paradigms for the Meaning of Transcendence

Up to this point we have spoken of a religious experience as an awareness of the Transcendent, i.e., as that which goes beyond the conditions of man's finite circumstances. As yet no meaning has been assigned to the use of the term transcendent. In order to elucidate what is meant by this term the suggestion of Anthony Flew will be followed, viz., that of giving some paradigm cases or examples from experience.

Paul van Buren focused the problem when he wrote, "The difficulty of speaking about 'transcendence,' 'ground and end of all things,' or some other oblique phrase substituted for the word 'god' . . . simply begs the empiricist's question. . . . In a secular age, what would that 'more' be? It is our inability to find any empirical linguistic anchorage for that 'more' that has led to our interpretation [that all God-language or its equivalent is dead]."[30]

Since van Buren confessed regard for Ian Ramsey's approach to this question, we will begin with illustrations Ramsey used to explain what is meant by more, beyond, or transcendence. These are what Ramsey calls discernment situations. He lists a series of discernment situations, which are ordinary empirical situations that suddenly "come alive" when the "ice breaks" or the "light dawns," or that take on "depth"; for example, when a judge suddenly recognizes the accused as his long-lost lover, when "eye meets eye," when it dawns on one that the twelve lines on a paper have the "depth" of a cube, when a formal party takes on warmth and a "new dimension," or after someone splits his dinner jacket. In each case, something more is revealed than what is seen in the empirical facts alone — the situation has a "depth of dimension" which goes beyond the sensory.

According to Ramsey, metaphors and verbally odd words have the same disclosure power.[31] For examples of verbally odd words, he uses nicknames that evoke personal response (cf. "sweetheart" vis-a-vis "Elizabeth"). Ramsey also finds some tautologies as "I am I" or "duty for duty's sake," or "love for love's sake" to be significant and revelatory of more than they seem to say linguistically. In fact, he finds first person language ("I-language") and moral language to be the key to "God-language," in that both are verbally odd; both are straightforward but strained, and both gain their meaning in use.[32] That is the way moralists speak of a sense of duty, religion speaks of a sense of the unseen. Both are literally and logically odd but are far from being completely nonsensical. Quite the contrary, odd words and metaphors by their very similarity-with-a-difference can generate insight the way two pictures, rather similar but in some points significantly different, can lead to the apprehension of depth in a 3-D viewer. Another example is first-person subjectivity. That is, "I" cannot be exhausted by all that is said about "me"; "I" am more than everything that can be objectively said about me; subjectivity transcends objectivity.[33] As Novak indicates, even an empiricist "is more of a mystery to himself than his theory allows him to recognize, and every time he acts he uses the first awareness his theory neglects."[34]

Other illustrations of what is beyond the purely empirical experience could be developed, such as the sense in which Kant's *noumenon* or thing-in-itself is beyond the *phenomenon* or thing-

for-me,[35] or the way in which the so-called transcendental ego is beyond the empirical ego. Or the beyond or more may be illustrated by the way the unity of a sentence is more than the words that constitute it or the way the whole is greater than its parts.

However, these illustrations suffice only to show how there can be more in an empirical situation than "meets the eye." What they do not do is show why this transcendent or moreness is the object of what the religious call worship, total commitment, or ultimate concern. Certainly a discernment situation that discloses more than the empirical eye can see is not automatically an experience of religious transcendence. That is to say, when the twelve lines on a paper take on "depth," the viewer doesn't thereby worship the cube. Nor when a formal dinner jacket splits does it "disclose" God. Indeed, these seems to be a missing dimension of transcendence in these illustrations that causes them to fall short of being religious. There must be something more to the meaning of More.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE INVOLVES A TOTAL COMMITMENT

The missing element is found in total commitment. A religious experience involves something beyond a mere disclosure, something unconditional and ultimate; something to which men are willing to commit themselves with utter loyalty and devotion. That is, it involves not only an awareness of the transcendent but an awareness of it *as ultimate* and as demanding an ultimate commitment.

In Ramsey's words, the Transcendent must be something to which one is willing to give a "total commitment" before it qualifies as religious. For commitment situations, he said, are those which have a claim on a man and yet leave him in exercise of his free will. Acting from a sense of duty, the patriot's "my country right or wrong," and one's all-absorbing devotion to his favorite hobby are examples of total commitment. Combining the two sets of illustrations, Ramsey argues that a religious experience of the unseen or beyond is one that involves both discernment of that which goes beyond the mere empirical facts of the situation *and* which at the same time evokes from the individual a total commitment to it.[36]

In a hobby one is *totally* committed to only *part* of the universe (say, to coin collecting); in mathematics, on the other hand, one

is only partially committed to the *whole* universe (i.e., the commitment to given axioms is loose because other axioms are possible, but it is a commitment to apply these axioms everywhere); but in religion one gives a *total* commitment to the *whole* universe.[37]

What Ramsey is getting at with his "total commitment," Paul Tillich called "ultimate concern." He said, "The fundamental concept of religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, by an infinite interest, by something one takes unconditionally seriously, that for which one would be willing to suffer or even die. Ultimate concern has both a subjective and an objective side. Subjectively, it indicates that the subject or individual is being unconditionally serious about something; objectively, it refers to the *object* of our ultimate concern for which Tillich reserves the name "God."[38]

Tillich further argued that every man has an ultimate concern, because without a center of concern there would be no integrating center to one's personality. "Such a state," he said, "can only be approached but never fully reached, because a human being deprived completely of a center would cease to be a human being."[39] This ultimate concern, which all men have, provides the unity and depth to all other concerns a man has and with them to his whole personality.

Of course not every ultimate concern is about something that is really ultimate. "Perhaps the ultimate was once actually the parents, . . . Later another ultimate, perhaps a loved one, girl or boy, liberates us from this."[40] But since a man's faith is inadequate if his whole existence in determined by something less than ultimate, he must always try to break through the limits of finitude and to reach the ultimate itself.[41] For to commit oneself ultimately to something that is not ultimate is idolatry. This is why Tillich at times even rejects the words "God" or "Being" as ultimates and speaks of the "God beyond God" or the "Being beyond Being," since the former terms imply limitations to some. Hence, experience is religious if it involves an ultimate commitment, but it is not adequately religious unless that to which it is committed is really ultimate.

Perhaps the most common way of describing what Tillich called an ultimate commitment is by the term "worship." For an individual responds to something with a total concern because of the

worth he sees in it. This is called worship because it is a response to the worth-ship of the object. In this sense, then, worship is the attitude of admiration and acceptance of the ultimate worth of the Transcendent of which it is aware. Worship in the narrower sense of specific prayer need not be an essential element in religious experience. But in the broader sense of an implicit acknowledgement of the ultimate worth of the object of its devotion or commitment, worship is at the very heart of a religious experience.

Schleiermacher described a religious experience of the Transcendent as a "feeling of absolute dependence."[42] By that he meant a sense of creaturehood or an awareness that one is not independent from, but dependent upon, the All or the Universe. It is a sense of existential contingency, a life in the infinite whole.[43] Otto agreed but felt that the sense of creaturehood resulted from one's awareness of the *Numen* rather than being the basis of it.[44] Even Freud concurred that men have this sense of dependence, only he did not wish to identify it with religious experience.[45] Nonetheless, there is general agreement on the fact that men do have such a sense of dependence, concern, or commitment that we have called "religious experience."

Tillich called it an ultimate concern to the ultimate. For Schleiermacher it was depending for one's all on the All. Ramsey saw it as a total commitment to the Total. But in essence all of these are the same.

They reveal that a religious experience involves at least two fundamental factors: (1) an awareness of the Transcendent, and (2) a total commitment to it as ultimate. There are many different ways the Transcendent has been conceptualized and *expressed*, but these are the two basic factors in the religious *experience* itself.

Furthermore, to say the Transcendent must be *viewed* as ultimate does not mean that it is ultimate.[46] Idolatry is always a real possibility for the religious. However, it is difficult to see how something can deserve the description "object of religious experience" if it is not at least *viewed* as ultimate by the devotee. Nor does the Ultimate have to be static to be ultimate. A commitment to a Hegelian dialectic as the divine unfolding itself in history is an example of a dynamic ultimate. Nor is Dewey's definition of "God" as the imaginative goal of all human values to be excluded from the category of the ultimate. In other words, something does

not have to be permanent and unchangeable to qualify as a religious ultimate. If a man is completely committed to the sum total of human "progress" or "achievement," then it is a religious ultimate for him. All that is necessary for a transcendent to qualify as religious is that it be something final and supreme, something beyond appeal and irrevocable. That is, it must be something capable of evoking a complete commitment, utter loyalty, or ultimate concern on the part of an individual. The question as to whether or not there is anything really ultimate and/or really worthy of an ultimate commitment must wait until the various dimensions of transcendence have been examined. Meanwhile the religious individual must remind himself that the mere fact that he has an ultimate commitment to something he feels is really ultimate and ultimately real does not guarantee either the reality or the ultimacy of the object of his worship. Even the fact that man has an essential thrust to transcend is not proof of the reality of the religious experience. As Sartre contends, the whole fundamental project of self-transcendence may be impossible or absurd. Or, as Feuerbach argued, the projection of what men call God may be nothing more than an objectification of the best in man. God may be a projection of man necessary for the progress of man. Perhaps man cannot see the good that is in himself unless he objectifies it into another whom he calls God. Maybe, as Feuerbach contended, the Transcendent is necessary only ideologically but not ontologically. This thesis will be examined subsequently. But first, a more complete analysis of the various dimensions of religious experience is called for.

Summary and Conclusion

Religious experience is universal. It involves two basic elements: an awareness of the Transcendent and a total commitment to the Transcendent. Further, since man has a fundamental desire to transcend himself and since it is not possible to go beyond oneself unless there is a Beyond (ideal or real) toward which man can transcend, then we may conclude that the Transcendent is necessary to the fulfillment of man's fundamental drive to transcend. And since this transcendent thrust in its most basic dimension is what we call religious experience, then for better or for worse, religion is essential to man. If not a proven fact, this is at least

a thesis which has not only theistic and pantheistic subscribers but also great atheistic subscribers as well.

NOTES CHAPTER TWO

1. It does not seem possible to know *that* something is, without having at least some general notion as to *what* it is. For example, one may know that there are other persons without being able to define precisely what is meant by a person but probably not without some general idea such as they are "speaking somethings."

2. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 13, 30, note 1.

3. Peter Koëstenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in *Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, ed. Clayton Feaver and William Horosz (New York: Van Nostrand-Reinhold Books), pp. 204, 205.

4. In view of this, if the attainment of Nirvana is taken to mean the loss of all awareness, then it would not be a religious experience. It would be the "experience" of losing all experience.

5. W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 173.

6. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 213.

7. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 326, 368, 477.

8. Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, pp. 152, 153.

9. Paul Tillich, *Christianity and Encounter With the World Religions*, p. 96.

10. John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, pp. 7-11.

11. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 475.

12. Ibid., p. 498.

13. Koëstenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," p. 182.

14. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Mythos*, Vol. I, pp. 26ff.

15. Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 354, 355, 359.

16. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 762, 766.

17. Tillich said, "Human potentialities are powers that drive toward actualization. Man is driven toward faith by his awareness of the infinite to which he belongs, but which he does not own like a possession. This is in abstract terms what concretely appears as the 'restlessness of the heart' within the flux of life." *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 9.

18. See Dewey, *Common Faith*, p. 27.

19. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 37.

20. See Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, ch. 1.

21. Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, p. 40.

22. Koëstenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," pp. 210ff.

23. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. VIII, p. 410.

24. For many moderns this term implies a false bifurcation of reality. John Dewey feels strongly that the concept of a "supernatural" religion is a hindrance to the religious experience. See *A Common Faith*, pp. 27, 28. Paul Tillich said antisupernaturalism is fundamental to all his thinking. *Ultimate Concern*, p. 158. See Vol. I of his *Systematic Theology* on reason and revelation.

25. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words;* e.g., pp. 18, 97, 173, 178, 185, 188, 190, 193, 227.

26. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 776.

27. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 41.

28. Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, p. 13.

29. Feuerbach said men come gradually to recognize that they have been worshiping themselves; hence, "what was at first religion becomes at a later period idolatry." Ibid.

30. Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, pp. 79, 197-198. Cf. p. 84.

31. In fact, he goes so far as to say, "What is not verbally odd is void of disclosure power." *Models and Mystery*, p. 69.

32. Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 42-50.

33. Ian Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, pp. 10, 41.

34. Michael Novak, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 74.

35. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 273.

36. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 19ff.

37. Ibid., pp. 35-41.

38. Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, pp. 7, 8, 30, 11.

39. Ibid., pp. 105, 106.

40. Ibid., p. 183.

41. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 57.

42. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 12, 19, passim; *On Religion*, pp. 275ff.

43. Cf. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 39.

44. Cf. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 9-11.

45. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, p. 52.

46. This is not to say that these are all the factors there ought to be in a religious experience. It does not mean that all that is necessary for an adequate or efficacious religious experience is an ultimate commitment to something beyond man which he *thinks* (or feels) is ultimate. First, as we indicated earlier (in chapter 1), the religious man ought to be concerned with the reality of the transcendent, even though some appear to be content with it as an ideal or to hold it merely *as if* it were true. Secondly, it is questionable as to whether or not an ultimate commitment is adequate if it is a commitment to something which is less than ultimate. But we are not here discussing what a religious experience *ought* to be in order to be satisfactory but what in fact it *is* in the experience of religious men. See chapter 5 for a discussion of the adequacy of religious experience.

3

The Dimensions of Religious Experience

Religious experience involves two basic factors: an awareness of a transcendent Other and a commitment to it as having ultimate worth. By this commitment to the Transcendent, man is able to transcend himself. And since man has a fundamental desire to transcend, the religious experience of self-transcendence is germane to his very existence as man. Man must transcend but he cannot transcend unless there is a Transcendent beyond himself by which he can transcend himself. This, of course, does not mean that all men will believe in a theistic God. There are other ways and directions to transcend than the particular way that has been conceptualized in Western theisms. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe these other dimensions of transcendence. In viewing religious experience in its broader and multiple dimensions, two results are desired: first, a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a religious experience; second, a correction of the mistaken tendency to disregard an experience as nonreligious simply because it does not fit a given type of transcendence.

In an attempt to fulfill these two purposes, we offer the following typology of religious transcendence: (1) transcendence toward the Beginning; (2) transcendence toward the Highest; (3) transcendence toward the Outermost (Circumference); (4) transcendence toward the End; (5) transcendence toward the Innermost (Center); (6) transcendence toward the Depth (Ground); (7) transcendence in a Circle. In brief, the major directions of religious transcendence have been backward, upward, outward, forward, inward, downward, and in a circle, literally in every direction in an attempt to go beyond human limitations.

TRANSCENDING TOWARD THE BEGINNING

One of the earliest directions in which the religious man reached toward the transcendent was backward. There was a quest to go back to a beginning or point of origin and discover the Source of religious aspirations. According to Mircea Eliade, this is the characteristic feature of the primitive religious experience. The discussion will begin with Eliade's analysis.

Eliade's Myth of Origins

For Eliade, the Transcendent is called the "Sacred" and this world the "profane." The Sacred is the opposite of the profane. Manifestations of the Sacred he calls a "hierophany" which is always something "Wholly Other" than the profane world.

Since time is continuous for the preliterate, it is recoverable in ritual. That is, mythical time can be made present by repetition in ritual of the original act of the gods. Religious time, then, is cyclical and periodically present by means of rites. It was Christianity, however that radically changed the nature of religious time by asserting that it unfolds (via the incarnation of Christ) in history, but the preliterate "mythical time" is not so.[1] By this ritualistic reenactment of creation the participant becomes contemporaneous with the time of origin which is a kind of eternal present.[2] In this way, the religious man reveals that his desire for transcendence is really in the direction of the original paradise. This "myth of the eternal return," said Eliade, "did not paralyze ancient religious man. It is not a retreat from responsibility but an assuming of it in the creation of the cosmos. It is not for them a retreat to the dream world but a return to the real world, the original world.[3] It is a kind of retrospective transcendence.

"The myth," said Eliade, "relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, ab initio."[4] It is the revelation of a mystery, a recital of what the gods did at the beginning. The function of myth is to fix the paradigmatic model for all significant human activity. Living a myth, then, implies a genuinely religious experience. The religiousness of this experience is due to the fact that one reenacts the creative deeds of the supernatural.[5] By repeating the myth, man remains in the "sacred" or "real," and by continual reactivation of the

original gestures of the gods man sanctifies his world. To forget to reenact the myth is "sin," for it is through ritual and myth that man is in contact with the Transcendent. Only by reactualizing the myth does man have hope. That is, by eternal repetition there is eternal recovery.[6]

The religious life for Eliade assumes the following basic form: the belief that 1) there is an absolute reality that transcends the world but is manifest in the world; 2) life has a sacred origin and man realizes his potential in the degree to which he participates in it; 3) gods created the world, the history of which is preserved in myths; 4) by imitation of the gods man reactualizes sacred history and keeps close to the gods. Nonreligious man, on the other hand, is characterized by 1) his refusal of transcendence and, 2) his acceptance of the relativity of reality or even doubt of its meaning. No such men, said Eliade, are known in archaic cultures; only in modern Western society has "profane" man fully developed.[7]

Eliade's view may be summed up this way: Religion is the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis not only because it can be indefinitely repeated, but also because it is believed to have a transcendent *Origin,* thus enabling man to transcend personal situations and, finally, gain access to the world of spirit. Unlike the "profane" man, the symbols of the religious man are able to "open up" the universe to him. To be sure, secular man has many symbols, but none of them are any more than private and partial mythologies that are not experienced by the whole man. None of them are paradigmatic provisions for retrospective transcendence; they do not take the "profane" man back to the transcendent origin of all things.[8] For the primitive man, the meaning of the world was gained through the myth of origin or cosmogony. Its function is to reveal models and, thereby, to give meaning to the world and to human life. Through myth, the world can be apprehended as an intelligible and significant cosmos.[9]

The Limitations of Transcending Backward

What Eliade describes is certainly one form of religious transcendence, viz., a retrospective kind. The mistake would be, however, in considering this the *only* way one may have a religious experience. If retrospective transcendence via myths or origin were the

only way to transcend, then few men but preliterates have been religious. Furthermore, were transcendence possible only via a backward movement to the mythical origin, then Greek philosophy would have spelled the end to mythical religion. But in fact Greek philosophy opened up the way for a new dimension of transcendence, for the Greek philosophers too were interested in origins but they replaced cosmogony with a cosmology.[10]

Both are answers to the question of origins, but the latter is an attempt to go beyond the myth and find an *archē* or absolute point of beginning by reason. Eliade said that the Greeks attempted to go beyond mythology as divine history and to reach a primal source, to identify the womb of Being. "It was in seeking the source, the principle, the *archē,* that philosophical speculation for a short time coincided with cosmogony; but it was no longer the cosmogonic myth, it was an ontological problem." That is, "the 'essential' is reached, then, by a prodigious 'going back' — no longer a *regressus* obtained by ritual means, but a 'going back' accomplished by an effort of thought. In this sense it could be said that the earliest philosophical speculations derive from mythologies. . . ."[11] So the earliest philosophic speculations are derived from mythologies: that the *mythos* and the *logos* find their common source in an attitude which is religious, viz., the desire to know the answer to the question of origins.

However, the Greek philosophers effected a radical change in the religious myths they inherited. For one thing, instead of viewing them in an emotional or involved way, they looked on them in a rational and detached manner. "A representation of the world-order which had once been a mystery, fraught, in its earlier days, with awful emotion and serious practical consequences, is now put forward as a rational theory, which anyone who can understand it is free to take or leave."[12] But the rationalization was not complete; there were not only remnants of religious thought in Greek thought but there was also a breaking out in a new dimension of transcendence. This can be seen most clearly in the way that Greek rationalism culminated in plotinian mysticism.

TRANSCENDING TOWARD THE HIGHEST

The tendency to transcend upward by leaving the lower world of shadows and images and ascending to the world of pure forms

above is present already in Plato. [13] However, the tendency for vertical transcendence is both more explicit and more clearly religious in Plotinus.

Plotinus: Reaching the God "Up There"

For Plotinus, all things proceed from the One and all things return to it, for all plurality presupposes a prior unity. [14] "Anything existing after the First must necessarily arise from that First," he wrote. Since the One is an absolute unity, all emanations that flow from it must be something less than pure simplicity. In fact, they form with the One a triplicity of unity in a descending order toward greater multiplicity. After the primary unity (the One) there is a secondary unity (One-Many) called *Nous* or Intellect and a tertiary unity (One-and-Many) called World Soul. [15]

The first movement in Plotinian thought is that from unity to multiplicity. This continues to the bottom of the chain of emanation where Matter is, which is the most multiple of all, having the least possible unity. Matter is the place where unity takes its last stand against chaos. It is the place where the whole process of emanation from absolute simplicity (the One) peters out. Furthermore, the farther something is from unity, the less reality it has, for divergence from unity involves a corresponding divergence from reality. In other words, the farther down the emanation extends, the greater is the multiplicity and the less is the reality. And at the very bottom one finds the evil of almost total multiplicity and an almost complete lack of reality, which he calls Matter or Non-Being. It is by contact with this matter that the lower phase of the individual soul of a man is contaminated and, therefore, must purify itself of this proliferation and begin to ascend toward higher and higher unity. [16]

The second great movement in Plotinian philosophy is the return move upward away from multiplicity to a higher unity. Men must be careful lest by continually drenching themselves in the multiplicity of matter, they can become irretrievably fragmented and absolutely evil. But, fortunately, as men wander in this foreign land of evil they have a natural homesickness for the Fatherland of good. That is, being unsatisfied in the multiplicity of evil, they are pulled together by a higher unity. Since the move from unity to

multiplicity is outward and downward, the move up toward greater unity again will be inward and upward. [17]

The first step in the move upward toward higher unity is *from the sensible to the intellectual*. It begins in the realm of sense, where one is "busy about many things." Here it is in sensation that, noting the flux of things, it knows at once that from elsewhere comes the higher unity that floats on things below. Looking at the multiple images of sensation, man recognizes in them a unity which, as a fugitive, has entered the realm of matter. So as one beholds the unity below, he is impelled to pursue the images of sensation to their higher source. That is to say, the sensible images point upward from their own multiplicity to a higher unity; the roads of the many lead to the one. But the road that leads upward first leads inward. Man has an intellectual unity that is greater than sensation. The inner unity of his intellect is greater than the outward multiplicity available through his bodily senses. [18]

The next step in the ascent toward greater unity moves *from the intellectual to the intuitional*. Since every particular thing has a unity of its own to which it may be traced, as one mounts upward from sensation, he must come first to the immediate unity for soul, which is found in the intellectual realm called *Nous*. Here the intellect joins in a higher unity where knower becomes identical with the known. [19] However, even in the intellectual realm there is this basic duality of knower and known and the multiplicity of Forms or Ideas by which things are known. Hence, it is necessary for the one seeking absolute unity to press upward, beyond intellectual knowledge to an intuition of absolute Simplicity.

In this final stage in one's vertical transcendence he finds himself *alone with the Alone*. For "the Supreme is not known intellectually." Hence, one wishing to contemplate what transcends the Intellectual attains contemplation of it by putting away all that is of the intellect. For "knowledge of the One comes to us neither by science nor by pure thought . . . but by a presence which is superior to science . . . for science implies discursive reason and discursive reason implies manifoldness. He then misses the One and falls into number and multiplicity." To know the Supreme, one must merge with the Supreme and become one with it, center coinciding with center. Just as one must become godlike and beautiful if he cares to see God and Beauty, so one must become

one with the One if he is to know the One. The soul must put away all multiplicity, sensible and intellectual so that "alone it may receive the Alone." [20] It is at this point that one's vertical transcendence is realized, when he has reached the Top of the pyramid in which the many beings meet in an absolute simple source of all Being. He has transcended upward to the Highest.

So in Plotinus the Greek rationalization went beyond itself, beyond reason, and returned to its religious roots. As Emile Brehier said, the Greek yearning for philosophical unity had fulfilled itself in the mystical unity; mysticism had completed rationalism. [21] But the religious transcendence involved in this mystical union is not the same as for prephilosophical man. There are no myths for Plotinus. It is not a question of origin but of unity; not a search for what is at the Beginning but for what is at the Top. That is, transcendence is not retrospective but vertical. And, furthermore, transcendence is no longer supernatural but natural for Plotinus, a fact with which the Neoplatonic Christians would find some difficulty in reconciling with divine grace. [22]

TRANSCENDING OUTWARD OR TOWARD THE BEYOND

Mystics have not always limited the direction of their transcendence to the upward; sometimes it is broadened to the "outward" realm. That is, the religious man presses beyond himself by reaching to the "outermost" limits of his being. God or the Transcendent is found at the uttermost extremity of human experience.

God Is the Circumference of All Things

According to Master Eckhart, "God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." [23] By this he meant that there are no boundaries to God and that from any center man can transcend outward to God and yet never reach a limit. Speaking of the Transcendent in terms of a limitless sphere indicates that the movement of transcendence is outward from oneself in any direction. God is found at the infinite circumference of life, and man must transcend outward from himself in order to reach God.

Using similar analogies, Nicholas of Cusa described God as the greatest possible circle with the smallest possible curvature. Hence, a circle infinite in size would also be an absolutely straight line. In

infinity, therefore, the maximum of straightness is identical with the minimum of curve. An infinite circle is identical with a straight line. In brief, God is the "coincidence of opposites." [24] It is in this regard that transcending outward to the circumference is also at the same time a transcending inward toward the center. The Beyond is also the Within.

Transcending Toward the Beyond Out There

Perhaps the most general way of describing this dimension of transcending outward is to call it the Beyond or the Out There. The religious man functioning in this dimension finds it necessary to move from within himself to beyond himself. He transcends away from his own center to what surrounds him and for which he can find no limits. The Transcendent is "out there" and he attempts to reach it by going beyond himself. It is neither up nor down as such but merely out and away from himself.

Reaction to the God "Up There" or "Out There"

Some thinkers have not been content with vertical transcendence, since they feel that it too involves a mythological view of the universe. Contrary to what the Greek philosophers did in seeking the reality of the logos in the mythos, these contemporary thinkers have denied any reality *in* the mythos whatsoever. Rather, they have sought a reality *behind* the myth, by stripping the myth of its historical trappings to get at the ontological truth. Rudolf Bultmann is a good example of this reaction to the God "up there" or "out there."

Bultmann contended, for example, "The whole conception of the world which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New Testament generally is mythological." By this he meant the conception of the world as being structured in three stories, heaven, earth, and hell; the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the course of events; and the conception of miracles. According to Bultmann, "These mythological conceptions of heaven and hell are no longer acceptable for modern men, since for scientific thinking to speak of 'above' and 'below' in the universe has lost all meaning. . . ." [25]

In this mythological structure it would be necessary to speak of God as "up there" or "out there." [26] It is in this sense that Bult-

mann's "demythology" would oppose even the concept of vertical transcendence. "To demythologize," said Bultmann, "is to reject not Scripture or the Christian message as a whole, but the world-view of Scripture. . . . " It is "to deny that the message of Scripture and of the Church is bound to an ancient world-view which is obsolete. . . . Therefore, it is mere wishful thinking to suppose that the ancient world-view of the Bible can be renewed." [27]

However, demythologizing does not mean a rationalizing of the Christian message, Bultmann assured us. "Not at all! On the contrary, demythologizing makes clear the true meaning of God's mystery." It is to seek the "deeper meaning which is concealed under the cover of mythology." [28] He held that "the purpose of demythologization is not to make religion more acceptable to modern man by trimming the traditional Biblical texts, but to make clearer to modern man what the Christian faith is." What "I am fighting against is just this fixation of God as an objective entity. . . . Therefore my attempt to demythologize begins, true enough, by clearing away the false stumbling blocks created for modern man by the fact that his world view is determined by science." [29] What Bultmann is against is the objectification which mythology implies. In this sense, modern science can be as guilty as ancient mythology. [30] In brief, to demythologize means to de-objectify. It is in this respect somewhat the reverse of the Greek rationalization.

What does one discover in demythologizing the biblical concept of the God "up there"? According to Bultmann, one discovers "the transcendence and hiddenness of God as acting." This is because "the invisibility of God excludes every myth which tries to make God and His action visible; God withholds Himself from view and observation." That is to say, "man's life is moved by the search for God because it is always moved, consciously or unconsciously, by the question about his own personal existence." Of course, "the question of God and the question of myself are identical," wrote Bultmann. But, "from the statement that to speak of God is to speak of myself, it by no means follows that God is not outside the believer," he reminds us. "Thus, the fact that God cannot be seen or apprehended apart from Faith does not mean that He does not exist apart from faith." What this does show, said Bultmann, is that God cannot be objectified. [31]

From this it is clear that Bultmann's demythologization of vertical transcendence, of the God "up there," is by no means to be construed as a negation of all transcendence. To be sure, "for scientific thinking to speak of "above" and "below" in the universe has lost all meaning, but the idea of the transcendence of God . . . is still significant," he wrote. [32] There is a "God" or "Transcendent." He is active in man's personal, existential experience. He does in some sense exist apart from man, but He does not exist "up there."

If God doesn't exist "up there," then where is He to be found? In which direction does man transcend in a religious experience for Bultmann? In brief, the answers are respectively "in Christ" and "forward." Bultmann, as a Christian, believes that God is revealed in Christ and that "it has become more and more clear that the eschatological expectation and hope is the core of the New Testament preaching throughout." "Today," he wrote, "nobody doubts that Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God is an eschatological one — at least in European theology and, so far as I can see, also among American New Testament scholars." What Bultmann finds, then, in New Testament eschatology "is not simply the idea of transcendence as such, but of the importance of the transcendence of God, of God who is never present as a familiar phenomenon but who is always the coming God, who is veiled by the unknown future." In brief, "this, then, is the deeper meaning of the mythological preaching of Jesus — to be open to God's future which is really imminent for every one of us . . . ; to be prepared, because this future will be a judgment on all men who have bound themselves to this world and are not free, not open to God's future." [33]

From Bultmann's demythological rejection of the upward dimension of transcendence, then, one is led naturally to consider more seriously the view of eschatological transcendence. As the Greek rationalization made retrospective transcendence obsolete, so also demythologization makes vertical transcendence untenable for some modern men. Hence, there is a turn in a new direction, that of transcending forward, or eschatological transcendence.

TRANSCENDING TOWARD THE END

Only on the view that history is going somewhere is the position of transcending forward toward the End or Eschaton possible. For if history is not moving toward an ultimate End or Goal, then

man cannot transcend in that direction. Such a linear view of history is unknown to ancient and Eastern ways of thinking. For the archaic societies, Eliade pointed out, time is *mythical* and not *historical*.[34] However, with the Hebrew prophets appears the first clear indication that there is an end or goal for time, i.e., a culmination or climax towards which human events are moving.[35] Even more decidedly clear is this point in the New Testament. As Eliade observed, Christianity radically changed the nature of time by sanctifying it through the incarnation of Christ.[36]

God Is Dead

Hegel wrote that God is dead[37] and Nietzsche took it seriously.[38] And Altizer drew out the religious implications for this in a kind of eschatological transcendence. In fact, Altizer contends that Nietzsche was the first radical Christian.[39]

When Altizer says God is dead he does not mean that God has always been dead (i.e., that there never was a living God) or that the idea or word "God" has ceased to be effective today (as van Buren said),[40] or that God is merely hidden from man's view (as Buber held). For "every man today," Altizer wrote, "who is open to experience knows that God is absent, but only the Christian knows that God is dead, that the death of God is a final and irrevocable event. . . . "[41] He feels that too many thinkers have been attracted by Martin Buber's idea of the "eclipse" of God. "God is not simply hidden from view, nor is he lurking in the depths of our unconscious or on the boundaries of our infinite space. . . . "[42] We must confess, he adds, that ". . . the death of God is so to speak an actual and real event, not perhaps an event occurring in a single moment of time or history, but notwithstanding this reservation an event that has actually happened both in a cosmic and in a historical sense."[43]

When did God die? God died in the incarnation of Christ. "To know that God *is* Jesus," Altizer remarked, "is to know that God himself has become flesh: no longer does God exist as transcendent Spirit or sovereign Lord. . . . " Why? Because as spirit becomes the word this empties the speaker of himself and the whole reality of spirit becomes incarnate in its opposite. That is, "if Spirit truly empties itself in entering the world, then its own essential or original Being must be left behind in an empty and lifeless form." Or,

to put it another way, if Christ is identical with God, then heaven was emptied of its God when Christ came to earth.[44]

Further, God not only died in a general sense by becoming incarnate, i.e., by entering the realm of flesh (and thus leaving the realm of Spirit), but God also died in a specific sense when Christ died on the cross. "Yes, God dies in the Crucifixion: therein he fulfills the movement of the Incarnation by totally emptying himself of his primordial sacrality." In fact, "only in the Crucifixion, in the death of the Word on the Cross, does the Word actually and wholly become flesh." And, "finally, the Incarnation is only truly actually real if it effects the death of the original sacred, the death of God himself."[45]

How does the Incarnation effect the "death" of God? To understand this, said Altizer, one must speak of God as a dialectical process rather than as an existent Being. That is, "progressively but decisively God abandons or negates his original passivity . . . becoming incarnate both *in* and *as* the actuality of world and history." In fact, to the extent that the Christian Word fails to negate its original form it cannot be a forward-moving process or a progressive descent into the concrete. That is to say, "only a sacred that negates its own unfallen or primordial form can become incarnate in the reality of the profane." To cling to a transcendent and wholly other God is a denial of the historical reality of the Incarnation. For "dialectically, everything depends upon recognizing the meaning of God's total identification with Jesus and of the understanding that it is God who becomes Jesus and not Jesus who becomes God."[46] In brief then, God must die in the Incarnation, for God is a historical and dialectical process which can come to realization only by negation.

Is transcendence totally lost, then, in the immanence of the Incarnation and death of God? Certainly what we have called retrospective and vertical transcendence are eliminated by Altizer. For "as the result of a total movement from transcendence to immanence, we must be freed from every attachment to transcendence, and detached from all yearning for a primordial innocence." That is, "the Crucifixion embodies and makes finally real a divine movement from transcendence to immanence. . . . " So then "the Christian who wagers upon a totally incarnate Christ must negate every form and image of transcendence, regardless of what area of con-

ciousness or experience in which it may appear." In fact, it is suicidal for the contemporary Christian to cling to transcendence, since both guilt and repression result from clinging to a transcendent God. Above all, said Altizer, theology must abandon a religious form, wholly and consistently repudiating the religious quest for the primordial sacred, for unless it does, theology will remain bound to a primordial or transcendent Word and thereby it will remain closed to the present and human actuality of history. In brief, "the death of God abolishes transcendence, theology making possible a new and absolute immanence, an immanence freed of every sign of transcendence." [47]

Regardless of the very categorical sound of Altizer's statements, he does not eliminate *all* dimensions of religious transcendence. He does repudiate retrospective and vertical transcendence but he does not eliminate eschatological transcendence; in fact his own view involves a kind of eschatological transcendence. He wrote, "An incarnate Word embodying a real transfiguration of Spirit into flesh cannot be sought in a heavenly beyond, nor can it be reached by a backward movement to primordial time; it is only in the actual and contingent processes of history that Spirit becomes flesh." [48] What Altizer is saying is that man cannot transcend backward or upward; he must transcend in the forward movement of history.

Like Bultmann, Altizer argued that the New Testament concept of the "Kingdom of God" is decidedly eschatological, that the believer must remain open to the future. Said Altizer, "Radical faith is a total response to the actual presence and the forward movement of God in history." As a distinctively Christian form of faith it "must ever be open to new epiphanies of the Word or Spirit of God, epiphanies that will not simply be repetitions of the original manifestation of God . . . truly new epiphanies whose very occurrence either effects or records a new actualization or movement of the divine process." [49] It is this forward movement of Christianity that distinguishes it from other movements of transcendence. "Yet such a forward movement cannot culminate in an abolition of the opposites by returning to a primordial Beginning. Like its analogue in the prophetic faith of the Old Testament, it must be grounded in an eschatological End. . . . " That is, man "must move forward beyond the death of a primordial or original sacred to an

eschatological *coincidentia oppositorum* that reconciles and unites the sacred and the profane." So any authentically kenotic movement of incarnation must be a continual process of Spirit becoming flesh, of eternity becoming time, or of the sacred becoming profane. However, this does not mean that the sacred becomes and remains the profane, thus ending the forward transcendence. For the movement of the sacred into the profane is inseparable from a parallel movement of the profane into the sacred. "Consequently, a consistently Christian dialectical understanding of the sacred must finally look forward to the resurrection of the profane in a transfigured and thus finally sacred form." [50] Just what this "transfigured" form or "new epiphany" will be is not known nor is it important for present purposes. What is significant is to observe that the radical Christian has an eschatological hope; that when the Transcendent could no longer be discovered in the realm up there but rather came down here in human history, it keeps moving forward. In brief, transcendence is not dead for Altizer, the traditional backward and upward forms of it are dead, but the forward direction is open.

The Secularization of Christianity

While the radical theologians await the transcendent future, the Christian life must be lived in the present without a Transcendent. God is dead and so is any transcendent equivalent. All theology must be transformed into anthropology. God cannot be found beyond the world but only in the other man. God is loved only by loving others. Jesus led the way when he said, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40 RSV). All present theology and ethics is immanentistic. The only transcendence is eschatological.

Even theological language is nontranscendent. Van Buren went all the way and denied meaning to any kind of theological language whatsoever. "Today," he wrote, "we cannot even understand the Nietzschian cry that 'God is dead!' for if it were so, how could we know? No, the problem now is that the word 'God' is dead." [51] In brief, atheism is not only theological in that God died (a la Altizer) and ethical in that we must live as though God were dead (a la Bonhoeffer), but it is semantical as well in that we cannot even speak meaningfully of God or the Transcendent. The

transcendent language of the past is dead and the theological talk of the present is meaningless unless it is translated into immanent, anthropomorphic language arising out of empirical experience.[52] The result is the thoroughgoing secularization and immanentizing of religion. For the Christian, "God" can be known only in the man Jesus who said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9 RSV).

So then, statements about transcendence must be translated or understood in terms of immanence; statements about God must be translated into statements about man. In this way religion can be secularized by being humanized, i.e., by being understood in purely human terms. But if one must look inward for an understanding of the Transcendent, it is only natural that men would explore the center or depth of human experience.

TRANSCENDING TOWARD A CENTER

The Primitive Mythical Center of Life

Looking inward for a divine center of human existence is not new in the history of religious experience. Eliade noted that pre-literate religions speak of the manifestation of the Sacred at the "center" of the cosmos. This center serves as a "doorway" or "gateway" to God. It is at this center that the altar of the temple is built and around which the primitive man orients his life. This "opening" is considered the "Center of the World" and the organizing of one's life around it is called "cosmosizing," i.e., the forming of a microscopic creation. It is the place where the primitive mythology is repeated.[53] In short, the religious man seeks to situate himself at the "center" of the world where the Sacred breaks through. Herein is the place of transcendence.

The Mystical Center of the Universe

As was noted earlier, the mystics often speak of God as the Center of all things. Eckhart called God the "infinite sphere whose center is everywhere." Plotinus spoke of God as a Center in whom man centers himself as he becomes one with the One. For in the mystical union man goes beyond himself, "he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into it, one with it: centre coincides with cen-

tre. . . ."[54] Just as one circle becomes identical with another when their centers are identical, so man goes beyond himself and merges with God when he finds his center in the Center of the universe by mystical union.

The Center in the Divine Milieu

Teilhard de Chardin attempts to avoid both a primitive mythology and medieval mysticism and yet preserve a transcendent Center which he calls the "Divine Milieu." God, he says, "reveals himself everywhere . . . *as a universal milieu,* only because he is *the ultimate point* upon which all realities converge. . . . No object can influence us by its essence without our being touched by the radiance of the focus of the universe. . . . This focus, this source, is thus everywhere. . . . It is *precisely because* he is the centre that he fills the whole sphere." Hence, "however vast the divine milieu may be, it is in reality a *centre.* It therefore has the properties of a centre, and above all the absolute and final power to unite (and consequently to complete) all beings within its breast. In the divine milieu all the elements of the universe *touch each other* by that which is most inward and ultimate in them."[55]

Since God is the Center of the universe, man should transcend in that direction. Chardin urges, "Let us leave the surface, and, without leaving the world, plunge into God. . . . Let us establish ourselves in the divine *milieu.*" However, one must not lose himself in the Center. Rather, he must seek *"to be united* (that is, to become the other) *while remaining oneself."* It is this distinction that, says Chardin, marks off the true Christian mystic from his counterfeits. Furthermore, for the Christian, "the immense enchantment of the divine milieu owes all its value in the long run to the human-divine contact which was revealed at the Epiphany of Jesus. If you suppress the historical reality of Christ, the divine omnipresence which intoxicates us becomes, like all other dreams of metaphysics, uncertain, vague, conventional — lacking the decisive experimental verification by which to impose itself on our minds, and without the moral authority to assimilate our lives into it." So, however far we may be drawn into the divine Center opened to us by Christian mysticism, "we never depart from the Jesus of the Gospels."[56] In short, we transcend toward the divine Center which is focused in the historical Christ.

TRANSCENDING TOWARD THE DEPTH OR GROUND

Another way to transcend within one's experience is to go to the depth or ground of his experience. Transcendence in depth is by no means new. The mystics have long sought the Divine in the "depth" of their own soul. The Bible speaks of God as the foundation of the believer's life (Ps. 18:2; 1 Cor. 3:11). However, there is a definite connection between this modern transcendence in depth and the rejection of the other dimensions of transcendence discussed earlier, such as the Transcendent "up there" or "out there."

Robinson's God "Within"

Various influences in the contemporary world have converged to direct the religious man downward in search for the Transcendent. First, the stress on immanence is obvious in all the secular theologians. Then, the inapplicability of objective or empirical language about God leads naturally to a search for a more subjective approach. Also, the very fact that two of the traditional forms of transcendence (retrospective and vertical) have been so emphatically rejected left little option for those who viewed the world with a "modern mind." But since men are incurably religious and must transcend, then if they cannot transcend backward or upward, they may try transcending downward in depth.

Bishop Robinson led a reluctant revolution in the direction of depth transcendence. Echoing Bultmann, he argued that God can no longer be conceived as being "up there" at the top of a three-story universe. He can no longer be thought of as the "Most High" who on occasion "comes down" to man or the one to whom some men are "caught up." Robinson said men must drop the primitive concept of a "Sky god" or "High god" as well as the equally false mental image many modern have of "an Old Man in the sky." Nor can the outmoded, prescientific conception of a God "up there" be replaced with the equally unacceptable one of a God "out there." That is, God is not beyond outer space. Such a crude projection of God has been destroyed with the coming of the space age, Robinson argues. Hence, this spatial way of picturing God is more of a stumbling block than an aid to belief in God today, wrote Robinson. [57]

However, Robinson makes it clear that his intent is not to replace a transcendent God with a pantheistic and purely immanent one. "On the contrary, the task is to validate the idea of transcendence for modern man." What Robinson proposes, following Tillich, is to reject the symbolism from a God of "height" for one of "depth" in order to make religious language more relevant. For the word "deep" means more than the opposite of "high"; it also means the opposite of shallow. This is why "height" so often signifies unconcern while "depth" denotes concern, for a remote God cannot really be involved. It should be further noted that "this is not just the old system in reverse, with a God 'down under' for a God 'up there.'" God is not another being but is the "depth and ground of all being" (as Tillich said). [58]

So then, "theological statements are not a description of 'the highest Being' but an analysis of the depths of personal relationships . . . it is saying that *God,* the final truth and reality of 'deep down things,' *is* love." And furthermore, Robinson wrote, "If statements about God are statements about 'ultimacy' of personal relationships, then we must agree that in a real sense Feuerbach was right in wanting to translate 'theology' into 'anthropology.'" This does not mean, of course, that God is nothing but man, as Feuerbach would have it, for this would lead to the deification of man. But rather, as Buber said, "Every particular *Thou* is a glimpse through to the eternal *Thou.*" That is, it is between man and man that we meet God, but not as Feuerbach said that man is God. [59]

For Robinson the necessity of the Transcendent within human experience "lies in the fact that our being has depths which naturalism, whether evolutionary, mechanistic, dialectical or humanistic, cannot or will not recognize." That is, "the man who acknowledges the transcendence of God is the man who *in* the conditioned relationships of life recognizes the unconditional and responds to it in unconditional personal relationship." In other words, "God, the unconditional, is to be found only in, with and *under* the conditioned relationships of life: for he *is* their depth and ultimate significance." [60] And as Tillich observed, to speak of the Transcendent in this sense means that within itself the finite world points beyond itself. [61]

In brief, Robinson is suggesting that in view of the obsolescence

of a transcendence in "height" men may profitably speak of a transcendence in "depth." That is, if it is not possible to speak of the Transcendent "up there," men may speak of the transcendent ground beneath us.

God and the Subconscious

Speaking of the God within the "depth" of human experience is neither new nor without problems. It was a natural way to describe God even before the Freudian elaboration of a subconscious depth to human experience. However, since Freud, there has been the temptation to consider the subconscious either identical with or closely associated with the Transcendent because it is beyond, mysterious, and a realm over which men allegedly have no conscious control. Rather, in some way it controls them.

Eliade, for example, said that the unconscious displays the structure of a private mythology. Further, he contends "not only that the unconscious is 'mythological' but also that some of its contents carry cosmic values. . . . It can even be said that modern man's only real contact with cosmic sacrality is effected by the unconscious, whether in his dreams and his imaginative life or in the creations that arise out of the unconscious." [62]

James also closely associates the sublimal and the supreme. He contends that the spontaneous source of religious conversion is the subconscious. For James, it is not the source or root of a religious experience that is important: "If the *fruits for life* of the state of conversion are good, we ought to idealize and venerate it, even though it be a piece of natural psychology." James does not say that the source of conversions is *purely* natural, that the subconscious *is* God. He admits that "the reference of a phenomenon to a sublimal self does not exclude the notion of the Deity altogether," for "it is logically conceivable that *if there be* higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so *might be* our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them." That is, James does not deny that there is more meant by "God" than the subconscious; what he did say is that the Transcendent is *at least* "the subconscious continuation of our conscious life." [63]

But it is precisely this close association of the Transcendent with man's subconsciousness that raises anew the question of the reality

basis for religious transcendence. For if one admits with James that sudden religious conversations can be explained on a purely natural basis and that there are no unmistakably unique characteristics of so-called supernatural conversions; if one admits that there is in the subconscious a transcendent realm of spontaneous power capable of transforming lives, [64] then one cannot help but wonder whether or not the subconscious is *all* that is meant by the Transcendent. Indeed, this is precisely the position taken by Carl Jung who identifies God with the collective subconscious of men. And even those who do not make this indentification are sometimes haunted with the possibility that there might be no more to the Transcendent than what transcends the consciousness of individual men, viz., the subconsciousness of the race. But since we take it that the term "reality" implies independence of the subconsciousness of men, whether individual or collective, this raises afresh the question of how to test the reality of the Transcendent.

TRANSCENDING AROUND IN A CIRCLE

Transcendence by Eternal Recurrence

It is commonly but wrongly thought that atheists have no form of transcendence. Atheism, it is said, is a denial of all transcendence. That this is not the case can be shown from the writings of the great atheists (see chapter 4). Nietzsche is a prime case in point. On the surface, no one appears to be more anti-God and against all forms of religious transcendence than Nietzsche. "God is dead! God remains dead!" was his cry. [65] Elsewhere Nietzsche exhorted, "I beseech you my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of other worldly hopes!" [66] God is "the formula for every slander against this world . . . the deification of nothingness, the will to nothingness pronounced holy." [67]

But despite the categorical sound of Nietzsche's pronouncements against God, Nietzsche could not avoid the need to transcend. In a letter to Overbeck (July 2, 1885) Nietzsche complained of the unbearable solitude of a life without God. "My life now consists in the wish that it might be otherwise," he wrote. [68] Conceptually, Nietzsche never gave in to any kind of theism or even pantheism. But existentially he moved inescapably toward re-

placing the traditional forms of self-transcendence with one of his own. This substitute form of transcendence was called "willing the eternal recurrence of the same state of affairs." He says that "eternal recurrence" is superior to the loss of God because it is this-worldly and man-centered. It is the only way of overcoming complete nihilism. Since everything is in flux and since time is cyclical, the only way man can overcome the utter vacuity of life is to will the return of the same state of affairs eternally. This life, then, is more than something fleeting; it is something eternally reappearing. Thus, in contrast to all religions that despise this life as something fleeting, eternal recurrence is really the "religion of religions." [69] In short, the eternal Center is replaced by the eternal Cycle; the transcendence outward toward an infinite circumference is replaced by transcendence around a never-ending circle. Linear time transcending toward an ultimate End is replaced by cyclical time transcending within its own Eternal Circuit.

Transcendence by Eternal Absurdity

Albert Camus sees a form of religious transcendence in all existential philosophies. For they all "without exception suggest escape, . . . they deify what crushes them and find reason to hope in what impoverishes them. That forced hope is religious in all of them. It deserves attention." So "the absurd becomes god (in the broadest meaning of this word) and illuminates everything." But Camus, on the contrary, does "not want to found anything on the incomprehensible." Rather, says he, "I want to know whether I can live with what I know and with that alone." [70] He does not wish to negate God but neither does he desire to appeal to God. He knows of no meaning beyond that which a man gives to life and, in fact, he is a rebel against any alleged superior meaning. Life is absurd and the absurd does not lead to God.

In view of the ultimate absurdity of the world, Camus admits that suicide is the number one philosophical problem. However, he concludes that suicide is wrong because it would abolish man's freedom and conscious revolt against any ultimate meaning. Only by living can one keep the absurd alive and resist any final resolution of the problem. Life is lived all the better if it has no meaning. In fact, life is as meaningless as the myth of Sisyphus wherein a man was condemned to roll a stone up a hill only to have it return

so that he could roll it up again, and so on forever. Now it is at this point that Camus' resignation to absurdity looks very much like Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. That is, man transcends himself by rebelling against nihilism in the eternal affirmation of the cyclical nature of his absurd life. To be sure, there is no God to help in the transcendence or to console man either by giving a superior meaning to his life, or by aiding him via an immortal escape from it. Nonetheless, there is a self-initiated and self-effected form of transcendence that seeks to overcome the otherwise nihilistic demands of an absurd universe. Eternal rebellion against supernatural meaning in support of the recurrent absurdities of life becomes the replacement for God. There is no God who transcends absurdity and there is no reason to make absurdity into God. However, by willing the eternal absurdity of life one can transcend personal nihilism. And in this sense Camus, too, is committed to a kind of circular transcendence.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Religious experience always involves transcendence. This transcendence has taken at least seven directions: among the primitives transcendence was backward to the Origin; the Neoplotinians transcended upward to the Highest possible reality; and other mystics sometimes transcend either Outward or Inward. But due to demythologization, many modern religious men have been unable to transcend in these traditional directions and have transcended either forward to the final End or downward to the Ground of all that is. [71] Others, who deny religion, nevertheless transcend in a Circle.

Three important observations emerge from this analysis. First, religious experience has many dimensions. It is much broader than theism. Second, man is incurably religious. When one way to transcend is cut off, men find another. When fully religious ways are not possible, then quasi-religious means will be devised, as is evidenced in secularized societies (e.g., communism). For better or for worse, in reality or illusion, man must transcend. If traditional religious symbols or myths are incapable of evoking an experience of ultimate transcendence, new ways will be devised. The history of mankind, sacred or secular, supports the thesis that by

nature man has an irresistible urge to transcend himself. And even those who see no ultimate meaning or religious significance in their form of transcendence admit, nonetheless, that they too seek to transcend fundamental nihilism.

Third, one of the basic differences between those who see religious significance in their transcendence and those who do not lies the question of the reality of the transcendent dimension or direction toward which self-transcendence moves. The truly religious man seeks reality. And the honest unbeliever refuses to take meaning from or consolation in what he believes to be devoid of either ultimate meaning or discoverable reality. The residual question, then, is whether or not the transcendent dimension which goes beyond man (in whatever direction) is real. This is the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES CHAPTER THREE

1. See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 108-112.

2. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 13.

3. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 92-94.

4. Ibid., p. 95. Cf. *Myth and Reality*, pp. 5, 6.

5. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 19.

6. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 98, 99, 101. (Cf. *Myth and Reality*, pp. 144, 145.)

7. Ibid., pp. 202, 203.

8. Ibid., pp. 210, 211.

9. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 144, 145.

10. As Eliade points out, this type of mental attitude is not exclusive to archaic societies: "The desire to know the origin of things is also characteristic of Western culture." *Myth and Reality*, p. 76.

11. Ibid., pp. 111, 112.

12. F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 50.

13. See particularly Plato's famous Cave Analogy in *Republic*, VII.

14. Plotinus, *Enneads*, III. 8, 9; V. 3, 15.

15. Ibid., V. 4, 1; V. 3, 15; V. 1, 8.

16. Ibid., II. 4, 11; I. 8, 7; VI. 2, 5; I. 8, 3; I. 8, 5; I. 2, 4.

17. Ibid., I. 8, 13; IV. 8, 4; I. 6, 7.

18. Ibid., I. 3, 4; I. 6, 2-8; VI. 9, 11; I. 3, 6.

19. Ibid., V. 3, 4.

20. Ibid., VI. 7, 35; V. 5, 6; VI. 9, 4 (Katz' translation); VI. 9, 10; I. 6, 9; VI. 7, 34.

21. Emile Brehier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, p. 162.

22. Even Augustine was still sorting out the Neoplatonic incompatibilities with his Christian philosophy at the end of his life as the many modifications and revisions of his "platonism" made in his *Retractions* reveal.

23. From *The Book of Twenty-four Philosophers*, ed. C. Baeumker, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1913, p. 31.

24. *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 13.

25. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, pp. 15, 20. Cf. pp. 36, 38.

26. Robinson, *Honest to God*, pp. 11ff.

27. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, pp. 35, 36, 38.

28. Ibid., pp. 43, 18.

29. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologization," in *Myth and Christianity*, pp. 59, 50.

30. "Mythical thinking is just as objectifying as scientific thinking, for instance, when the former represents the transcendence of God in terms of remoteness in space [way 'up there']. . . ." "For all human world-views objectivize the world and ignore or eliminate the significance of the encounters in our personal existence." Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, p. 61, n. 1; p. 83, cf. p. 62.

31. Ibid., pp. 83, 84, 53, 70, 72.

32. Ibid., p. 20.

33. Ibid., pp. 13, 22-23, 31-32.

34. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 72, 112.

35. A recent historian wrote, "The Hebrews broke sharply with all these prevailing conceptions of time and history. Instead of recurring events, they saw a series of distinct episodes, each involving a unique intervention by Yahweh, unrepeatable and irreversible. Instead of circular patterns, they saw history moving in a straight line toward the fulfillment of divine purpose." Trygve R. Tholfsen, *Historical Thinking*, p. 43.

36. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 72, 112.

37. Hegel, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, near the beginning of the section on "Revealed Religion" wrote that unhappy consciousness "is the bitter pain which finds expression in the cruel words, 'God is dead.'" *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p. 506.

38. Henry D. Aiken wrote, "Hegel said, but Nietzsche believed, that 'God is dead.'" *The Age of Idealogy*, p. 206. Nietzsche's famous passage comes from his *Gay Science*, No. 125, where the Madman cries out, "Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? — for even gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" Cf. *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, pp. 95-96.

39. Thomas Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*, p. 25.

40. Altizer lists ten different senses of 'God is dead' on pp. x-xi, *Radical Theology*.

41. Altizer, *Gospel of Christian Atheism*, p. 111.

42. Altizer, *Radical Theology*, pp. 125-126.

43. Altizer, *Gospel of Christian Atheism*, p. 103.

44. Ibid., pp. 67, 68 (Altizer admits to a Hegelian interpretation here. See pp. 62-69, 80), 69, 92.

45. Ibid., pp. 113, 54, 90, 86, 153, 149, 82, 83.

46. Ibid., p. 83.

47. Ibid., pp. 136, 139, 143, 145, 77, 154.

48. Ibid., pp. 45, 46, 156. See also his *Radical Theology*, p. 150.

49. Altizer, *Gospel of Christian Atheism*, pp. 105, 84.

50. Altizer, *Radical Theology*, pp. 150, 151, 152, 155. Of course this does not mean that the whole Christian life is merely anticipatory. While he is waiting for the new epiphany, the Christian must go out into the world in seeking Jesus.

51. Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, pp. 64-68, 83, 84, 103.

52. Ibid., pp. 103, 196, 147.

53. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 10ff., 30, 45, 52, 65.

54. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V. 9, 10.

55. de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, p. 114.

56. Ibid., pp. 116, 117.

57. Robinson, *Honest to God*, pp. 11-17.

58. Ibid., pp. 44, 54, 130, 44, 45-48.

59. Ibid., pp. 49-53.

60. Ibid., pp. 54, 55, 60.

61. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 8.

62. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 77.

63. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 232, 237; cf. pp. 265, 508.

64. Ibid., pp. 233-237.

65. Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, p. 168.

66. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 125.

67. *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, pp. 585, 586.

68. Ibid., p. 441.

69. Ibid., pp. 364-365.

70. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 24, 30, 40, 41.

71. No attempt has been made to categorize Eastern religions on this seven-fold typology, but since they have no linear view of history eschatological transcendence is ruled out. More primitive forms tend to fit Eliade's transcendence toward Origin or Center. The more sophisticated forms of Hinduism and Buddhism fit the transcendence toward the Height or Depth types.

4

Testing the Reality of Religious Experience

The reality of religious experience is not axiomatic. Simply because the religious devotedly believe there is a Transcendent does not guarantee the reality of it. Illusion is a fact of life and religion is not immune to it. The data of religious experience, like that of the data of any other kind of experience, must be critically examined. And the unexamined religious life is no more worthwhile living than any other kind of life.

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Before examining the reality basis for religious experience, it would be well to review what is meant by religious experience.[1] Religious experience has been taken in the broad sense of an awareness of the Transcendent and not in the narrow sense of specific religious experiences such as mystical experiences. Not that special religious experiences are not considered to be legitimately religious, for there is a sense in which they may be even more intensely religious than the other kind. That is, there may be a heightened or more highly concentrated awareness of what is sensed in the religious experience in general. But the reason for limiting our analysis to religious experience in the broad sense is that it is available to a much broader group of persons who have not had these special religious experiences.

The Awareness of the Transcendent

One of the fundamental factors in a religious experience is an awareness of something that lies beyond the individual, that is, a Transcendent. We have seen that the individual religious man al-

ways senses a More or Beyond. That is, he always feels that there is something beyond himself that is more ultimate than himself. He is convinced that there is an All or Whole of which he is only a "part" and on which he is dependent.

Now this Transcendent takes on various dimensions and descriptions in different religious experiences. In some, it is viewed as the transcendent Origin which can be reached by going back via myths of origin (cf. Eliade). Others view it as the transcendent Top or point of absolute Unity which can be approached only by going upward in a vertical transcendence (cf. Plotinus). Other mystics view the Transcendent as either a Center or a Circumference (cf. Eckhart, Cusa). Still others consider the Transcendent to be the ultimate End of a forward or eschatological transcendence (cf. Altizer). And, finally, there is the religious experience that transcends toward the ultimate Depth (cf. Robinson) or the attempt to transcend in a Circle (a la Nietzsche). But whatever the direction taken by religious experience or the description given to the Transcendent, the religious experience always involves a dimension or Object toward which the individual transcends.

A Total Commitment to the Transcendent

Not only does religious experience always involve a consciousness of a transcendent object but it also involves a total commitment to that object as ultimate. Simple awareness of it does not render the experience religious; submission to it is necessary. For, as the Ultimate, it demands an ultimate commitment; a partial commitment will not suffice. To qualify as religious, one's commitment must be total. Partial commitments and concerns are not enough; there must be an ultimate concern.

Of course, if one is completely committed to this Transcendent, it is because he sees worth in it — ultimate worth. And it is in this sense that a religious experience is one of worship, because of what the religious person feels to be the worth-ship of the transcendent Object. That is, he worships It because he finds It completely worthy of his complete adoration.

Also implied in a total commitment is a sense of absolute dependence on the Object of religious experience. For one would not need to be totally committed to it if he felt that he could live independently of it. It is basic to the religious experience that one

feels a sense of utter dependence on what he considers the Ultimate. The religious person feels that he cannot transcend completely on his own without the aid of the Transcendent.

THE CHALLENGE TO THE REALITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

There is no reason to doubt that men have religious experiences. What is subject to question is the basis in reality for such experiences. In order to decide this issue we must determine first what is meant by "reality."

The Meaning of Reality

There are several things that are *not* meant by reality. After we see what is not meant by the word "reality" (the first four points below), then we can more fully appreciate the problem of trying to determine the reality of the Transcendent. The last two points attempt to provide a more positive characterization of the meaning of "reality."

1. *Reality is more than a subjective condition of human experience.* That men have experiences which they feel are ultimate and religious no one can reasonably doubt; it is not the experiences but their reality basis that is in question. The problem is compounded by the fact that in many religious and mystical experiences there seems to be no sure way to separate the hallucinatory from the real. As Henri Bergson noted, even the great mystics have recognized this fact and have warned their disciples about it.[2] There is always the possibility that one's religious experience can be explained on a purely psychological level.[3] There is no question that religious experience is subjective; if it were not, it would not be an experience, for all experience is subjective. The important question is: Is it *more than* subjective? As even religious men admit, "There cannot be any important sense in which God is *for me* unless there is some real and objective sense in which God is, irrespective of my belief or my lack of belief."[4] Religious transcendence must be more than a subjective condition in religious experience before it should be called "real."

2. *Reality is more than a projection of human imagination.* Further, religious transcendence is not real if Ludwig Feuerbach is right that it is *nothing but* a projection of human nature, an

objectification of man which he calls "God." Feuerbach wrote, "The nature of God *is nothing else* than an expression of the nature of feeling" for "the object of any subject is *nothing else* than the subject's own nature taken objectively." But the object of religion is not real if man makes it. If what man thinks is God is actually nothing but an unconsciously worshiped projection of the best in his own human nature, then it is grossly misleading to call it real. If consciousness of God is no more than unwitting self-consciousness, if while adoring God one is worshiping nothing but his own nature,[5] and if every advance in religious thinking is nothing but an advance in self-knowledge, then certainly it is a meaningless use of words to call it real. As Karl Marx wrote, "Man, who looked for the superman in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the *reflexion* of himself, will no longer be disposed to find but the *semblance* of himself, the non-human [*Unmensch*] where he seeks and must seek his true reality."[6] That is, if man is a reality seeker and should he discover that religion is but a projection of his own imagination, he will turn to the human reality instead of worshiping the mirror that reflects it.

3. *Reality is more than an object of wish-fulfillment.* Freud contended that religion is an illusion, not in the sense that it is necessarily untrue, but because it resulted mainly from a wish that there be a God. "An illusion," he said, "is not the same as an error, it is indeed not necessarily an error. . . . It is characteristic of the illusion that it is derived from men's wishes." He differentiates an illusion from a delusion which is necessarily false, whereas "the illusion need not be necessarily false, that is to say, unrealizable or incompatible with reality." However, the reality of religion is highly suspect for several reasons. First, because of the primitive (ignorant) period in which it arose, then because of the specious, inauthentic grounds upon which men justify it. Furthermore, it is suspect because of its very nature as an illusion, viz., that human wishes play a dominant role in its motivation. "We say to ourselves," wrote Freud, "it would indeed be very nice if there were a God who was both creator and a benevolent providence, if there were a moral world order and a future life, but at the same time it is very odd that this is all just as we should wish it ourselves."[7] In view of this, we hold as minimal to the definition of real that it be more than an illusion in Freud's sense. That is,

it must be more than something men wish, or even deeply wish, to be so; it must actually *be* so, apart from their wishes.

4. *Reality is more than a subconscious force in human experience.* William James somewhat sidestepped the basic issue when he defined the "hither" side of the Transcendent in terms of the subconscious. He wrote, "Whatever it may be on the *farther* side [and that is the crucial question], the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."[8] The "farther" side is a matter of what James called "over-beliefs" which he personally justified on pragmatic grounds.[9] But the concern here is not with how James justified the "farther" side of transcendence but whether there really is a "farther" side. Certainly one should not consider the "hither" side or "subconscious continuation of our conscious life" to be the Transcendent of which the religious man speaks. There would be no difficulty in saying, as James admits is possible, that the subconscious is the doorway to the divine,[10] that the ultimate transcendence which men call God works in and through the subconscious. But to identify the Transcendent with the subconscious forfeits the right to call it real in a meaningful sense of the word.

It seems undeniable that certain subconscious patterns of mental activity and symbolism occur and have depths of meaning not always obvious to the consciousness of the individual in whom they occur.[11] In view of this fact, men cannot help but wonder whether the object of their religious experience is anything more than a product of subconscious symbolism. Nor will it suffice to do as Jung did and call the collective subconscious the real, for, as Fromm observed, this does not in itself show that the Transcendent is more than a mass delusion.[12] As Alfred N. Whitehead indicated, to move toward the dark recesses of the subconscious is to surrender finally any hope of a solid foundation for religion.[13] If by the reality of ultimate transcendence one does not mean something more than the human subconscious, whether individual or collective, it seems inadvisable to call it real.

5. *Reality means to have an independent existence.*[14] If the Transcendent is to be more than a mere subjective experience, more than mere human imagination, more than what men deeply

wish to be true (viz., an illusion), more than the realm of human subconsciousness, then it must mean that which has an independent existence of its own.[15] That is, the Transcendent must mean that which exists outside of the minds of the men who conceive it and outside the experience(s) of the men who experience it. For it is certainly not proper to attribute to the Transcendent a reality of its own if it exists only in the consciousness of finite men. That is to say, if the Transcendent is dependent on the consciousness of others for its reality, then it seems unfitting to attribute to it an independent existence of its own.

By "real" we mean something like a material object (viz., something that exists outside of a mind) as opposed to the existence of a number (which, say, exists only in a mind). This is not to say that only things like material objects can be real, for things like minds or spirits can be real too. But this is to say that the Transcendent will not be considered real unless it has an existence of its own outside of the reality of other things that exist, including human minds.

6. *Reality means to have an objective existence*. Another way to describe what is meant by real is to say that it refers to what has an objective existence. By "objective" we do not mean that something is merely an object (of a mind) nor objectified, for in both of these senses something is *not* real. Rather, by "objective" we mean what is not merely the objectification made by a subject but what is itself a subject or thing. It should be noted that the meanings of subject and object have reversed since the Middle Ages. For the scholastics, *subiectum* meant that which exists (objectively) in itself and *obiectum* meant that which was only (subjectively) represented in a mind. Whereas, in common usage today (due to the influence of Idealism) objective means "real in itself" and subjective means "not having an independent existence of its own."[16]

So when we say that "real" means to have an objective existence, we mean objective in the modern sense, which is what to be a subject (*subiectum*) meant in the medieval sense. To claim that the Transcendent is objectively real is not to say that it is a mere object or objectification of a mind (that is, objectified by a subject), for then it would not have an independent existence of its own. In brief, then, the question about the reality of the Transcendent

is whether the Transcendent object of religious experience has an independent and objective existence apart from the subjective and mental states in the religious person(s) who sense it.

The Need for Verification

It seems evident that the reality of religious experience is not axiomatic. Deception and illusion are possible and, hence, there must be some means of determining whether or not there is a basis in reality for religious experience. But lest the need for verification be taken as self-evident, one must address Kierkegaard's objection about attempts to demonstrate the reality of God.

For Kierkegaard the very need to give evidence for God reveals that one has already rejected Him. It is like asking one's wife to prove her identity before loving her. The whole attempt to verify God's presence is ridiculous. "For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset," Kierkegaard continues, "in beginning my proof, I will have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain. . . , since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist." One does not prove Napoleon's existence from his deeds. "His existence does indeed explain his deeds, but deeds do not prove his existence, unless I have already understood the word 'his' so as thereby to have assumed his existence." Likewise, "in the beginning of my proof [for God] I presuppose . . . that the God exists, so that I really begin by virtue of confidence in him." One is not led to God by reason; only a leap of faith brings one to God. The need for proof already reveals a lack of faith in God. And the believer who attempts to prove God knows that he has really begun with God. For "deepest down in the heart of piety lurks the mad caprice which knows that is has itself produced the God."[17] God is present to the believer from the beginning, and God cannot be proven to the unbeliever. Verification is unnecessary.

There is an important distinction that can help build a bridge between the verificationists and the fideists, viz., this: there is a difference between the basis for believing *that* there is a God and the basis for believing *in* God. One needs evidence to know that there is a God there, but he needs faith to commit himself

to the God which the evidence indicates is really there. To illustrate: it would be an insult to one's wife to demand reasons for loving her. But it is not an insult to her to demand that one have evidence that it is really she (and not the neighbor's wife) before one kisses her. Likewise, one must have some evidence that there is an ultimate reality before he makes a really ultimate commitment to it. Once one has sufficient evidence to believe *that* there really is an ultimate value, there is no reason he should not believe *in* it for its own sake and not because of the evidence. It is unworthy of God (if there is a God) to believe in Him *for the sake of the evidence*. For if there is an ultimate value in the universe, then it ought to be believed in *for its own sake*. On the other hand, it would be unworthy of a reasonable creature to not examine the evidence that there is an ultimate value before he makes an ultimate commitment to it. Verification demands that one look before he leaps, that one makes sure that it is his wife before he embraces her, and that one is assured God is there before he believes in Him for His own sake.

VERIFYING THE REALITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

There is no question that men have what we have called a religious experience, i.e., that men sense a basic need for God. Both theists and atheists have confessed to a feeling of absolute dependence, an ultimate commitment, a sense of contingency, etc. The crucial question is this: Is there really a God there to fulfill the need which men sense? The answer in part emerges from a closer analysis of the sense in which men need the Transcendent.

The Need for the Transcendent

It is well known that Freud analyzed man's need for religion as purely psychological. Religion grows out of the illusory wish to have a Father-Protector. It is an infantile neurosis of mankind. The evils of the world spawn the desire for a Cosmic Comforter, a kind of heavenly "Linus Blanket." As Freud noted, anyone with a sense for reality will be discontent to believe in God simply because he wishes God to be there. "Man cannot remain a child forever; he must venture at last into the hostile world. This may be called 'education to reality'!"[18]

The Sense of Absolute Dependence. But while Freud denied this psychological wish basis for religion, he did not deny that men have what we have described earlier as a religious experience. Indeed, Freud himself had a religious experience in the sense in which we have defined it. Freud does not deny that there is "a sense of man's insignificance and impotence in the face of the universe. . . . "[19] Freud admitted that even the scientific man "will have to confess his utter helplessness and his insignificant part in the working of the universe; he will have to confess that he is not the centre of creation. . . . "[20] Science can never overcome man's finitude or sense of cosmic contingency. Unlike primitive religion, science can aid man in controlling the forces of the world instead of personifying them into gods and befriending them. But nothing can alter the fact that man is and feels dependent on the Universe.

Now Schleiermacher takes this sense of cosmic need to be the essence of religion. Not just any feeling of dependence is religious. But a sense of absolute dependence is religious. For in religion one surrenders his all to the All. He engages in a whole-soul dependence on the Whole. All men have this feeling of absolute dependence but not all describe it the same way. And not all men refer to its object by the name "God." Nevertheless, the experience is universal and the fact of dependence is inescapable.[21] So, like Freud, Schleiermacher recognizes man's need of the All, his dependence on the Universe. Unlike Freud, Schleiermacher is willing to call this experience religious. What the experience is called is not important here, but the fact of the experience is significant. Men are dependent, contingent creatures, and both believers and nonbelievers recognize it. There is a need for what transcends man, for the Transcendent. Just what this Transcendent is called, how it is characterized, and whether it is real or imagined is not the question here. Men do sense a need for some Transcendent whether it is really there or not.

Man's Being-Unto-Death. There are other indications that man needs the Transcendent. Heidegger characterized human life as "being-unto-death." We find ourselves "thrown" into a world as though on a one-way, downhill track toward death. The evidence of this objectless fear of death or nothingness is man's "anxiety." I am, but I need not be and will not be. Man asks himself, "Why is there something rather than nothing at all?" Further, why am

I, and why am I going to not be? All of these questions evidence man's ontological dependency, his need for a grounding for his being. [22] Man finds himself thrust into a world, facing nothingness, without a ground for his being.

Paul Tillich began at this point and posited, beneath man's being, a Ground of Being. Beyond the immediate there is an Ultimate which is the object of man's ultimate concern. Finite being is ungrounded; it needs a Ground for its being. This need for a grounding for man's being is his ultimate concern and is found only in an ultimate Ground. Anything less than an ultimate Ground for an ultimate concern is inadequate, says Tillich. For a finite object of unconditional loyalty — whether it is one's mother, one's country, or whatever — is idolatry. Men need an ultimate Ground for their ultimate concerns; anything less is inadequate and idolatrous. The problem, however, is not with the inadequacy of the Ground for man's being but with its *reality*. Does the need for God as an ontological grounding of one's being imply that there really is such a grounding? [23]

The Existential Need for God. Further testimony that men at least need God, whether God is there or not, comes from the French atheist, Jean-Paul Sartre. In his autobiography Sartre confessed, "I needed God, He was given to me, I received Him without realizing that I was seeking Him." Furthermore, continued Sartre, "I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself." [24] Although this youthful quest for God seems psychologically based, Sartre's mature philosophy makes it very clear that man has more than a psychological need for God.

There is in man as man a fundamental, existential need for God. Sartre wrote, "To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God." [25] Man's fundamental project in life is to be God. That is, man seeks to be self-determined or self-caused. Man is nothingness desiring Being; he is freedom wanting determination; he is the "Being-for-itself" which seeks to be the "Being-in-itself." The very existence of man cries out for God to give it definition and essense. Of course, the whole project is absurd for Sartre. For how can man transcend himself and discover himself? How can the uncaused become self-

caused? How can the free become determined? Man is a thrust toward the Transcendent, but there is no Transcendent there. Man is an empty bubble of the sea of nothingness. The whole human project is an abortive ontological quest. Man has a fundamental and essential need for God, but there is no God to fulfill this need. Nevertheless, Sartre makes an important admission. Man does need God and the need is more than psychological; it is a fundamental existential need.

Other Expressions of Man's Need for the Transcendent

Sartre was not alone in expressing man's need for God. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is reminiscent of Heidegger's phrase "waiting for God" and reflects a craving of contemporary man to hear from God. Likewise, the novels of Franz Kafka express lonely man's unsuccessful attempts to be in communication with some meaningful cosmic otherness beyond oneself. [26] Walter Kaufmann is more pointed in his acknowledgement of man's need for the Transcendent. "Man is the ape that wants to be god. . . . Religion is rooted in man's aspiration to transcend himself. . . . Whether he worships idols or strives to perfect himself, man is the God-intoxicated ape." [27] Even Nietzsche found life unbearable without God and finally went mad. Speaking of Dante and Spinoza, he wrote: "Of course, their way of thinking, compared to mine, was one which made solitude bearable; and in the end, for all those who somehow still had a 'God' for company. . . . My life now consists in the wish that it might be otherwise with all things that I comprehend, and that somebody might make *my* 'truths' appear incredible to me. . . . " [28] In short, Nietzsche found his atheism unbearable. Sartre, too, complained of the seeming unlivability of his position, declaring that "atheism is a cruel and long-range affair." [29]

The experience of these atheists is reminiscent of the skepticism and agnosticism of Hume and Kant. Hume confessed that when he could no longer bear his own skeptical thoughts he would leave them for a game of backgammon. (Schopenhauer found his release in art.) Immanuel Kant, after he had allegedly demonstrated the impossibility of arriving at God rationally, found it *practically necessary* to postulate a God to make sense out his moral life. [30] That men generally, if not universally, manifest a need for the

Transcendent seems incontestable. The sense of contingency, the feeling of cosmic dependence, the need to believe in some sort of Transcendent is apparently present in all men. The residual but most essential question is this: Is there any basis in reality for this God-need which both believers and nonbelievers have confessed to having?

The Possibility of Fulfilling the Need for the Transcendent

Some men have stopped short in the search for a reality basis for religious experience because they have judged in advance that the project is hopeless. This seems a bit abortive if not even cruel to the universally expressed need for the Transcendent. For if men, both believers and nonbelievers, have expressed such a deep-seated need for God, then surely one is cruelly unjust to himself to give up in despair before he has searched diligently for an answer. Indeed, upon examination, all of the alleged disproofs of the possibility of there being a Transcendent Reality have failed.[31] One of the basic reasons for their failure is this: it is extremely difficult to rule out in advance, a priori, the possibility of the existence of something. Logic is not the way to eliminate the possibility of the existence of unicorns. Looking, not logic, is the means to determine reality. Of course, if the existence of something is impossible, then obviously it is not possible for it to exist. Square circles cannot exist. But the existence of the Transcendent is not obviously an impossibility. Pure logical disproofs of God are no more successful than purely logical proofs for God. And before one judges, a priori, that it is impossible for God to exist, he should consider more seriously the possibility that God could exist.

The momentousness of the question of the reality basis for religious experience makes it even more imperative that one not dismiss in advance the possibility of God's existence. If the need for God is even half as great as even the nonbelievers have indicated, then the question of God's reality is worth pursuing. Especially is this true in view of human expectations. Men expect that there are ways of fulfilling their basic needs. They anticipate that there are solutions to their problems. Science is predicated on this expectation, as is social activity. Dismissing as impossible what men sense so deeply as a basic need is like saying there are no mothers simply because a particular child is bereaved. Likewise, individual

and local failures to find a reality basis for religious experience cannot be transformed into universal impossibilities. On the other hand, the mere fact that a child desires a Fairy Land is not in itself a guarantee that one really exists. Human desires and needs must be subject to verification. Psychological desire alone is an insufficient ground for establishing the actual reality of something.

Establishing the Reality of the Transcendent

There have been many attempts to establish rationally the existence of God or a Transcendent. These will be discussed later. Here it is not a question of proof or rational demonstration that is in question. Rather, it is a matter of experiential verification. Is there any way to test the alleged reality of the object of religious experience from an experiential point of view? The problem is this: How can one use experience to test experience? Men do experience the need for God. But that experience is not its own proof. And how can another experience support the reality of religious experience when religious experience cannot support its own reality?

The circle is not as vicious as it seems. For there is a premise based on experience that can provide an answer, namely this: *what men really need really exists.* This premise is based on human experience in two ways. First, it is in accord with basic human *expectations.* Experience teaches us that men do expect that there are answers to their problems, that there are fulfillments of their needs. Men do in practice assume that the universe is not ultimately irrational. Even though men have sometimes *thought* differently, nevertheless they have *lived* as though the universe is meaningful. Hume and Kant could not live their theoretical skepticism, nor can anyone else. Those who have tried have gone insane and/or committed suicide. Nietzsche wrote of the discomforting nature of his atheism which ended in madness. Sartre spoke of the cruelty of his attempt to be consistently atheistic.

The American painter Jackson Pollock, who denied there was any purpose or design in life, became exhausted by his method of chance painting and committed suicide (1956). John Cage held that the universe operates through blind impersonal chance and composed his music by tossing coins. However, when it comes to his hobby of mushroom hunting, he wrote, "I became aware that

if I approached mushrooms in the spirit of my chance operations, I would die shortly. . . . So I decided that I would not approach them in this way!" [32] Men cannot lead a life built on total absurdity. A totally meaningless life is contrary to human expectation.

There is a second confirmation from human experience for the principle that real human needs are fulfillable. Experience shows that even though basic human needs are not always actually fulfilled in the case of given individuals, nevertheless, needs are characterized by *fulfillability*. Indeed, often these needs are actually fulfilled. To illustrate, simply because a man is dying of thirst in a desert does not mean that he will find an oasis. His particular needs may go unfulfilled. However, to assume that the whole world is a spiritual desert in which men thirst for God and that there is no God anywhere to fulfill that need is quite another matter. That men die of thirst in no way proves there is no water to be found anywhere. Or, to put it positively, the fact that men need water and expect it to be somewhere obtainable indicates that there really is water somewhere. Basic human expectations and experience lead men to believe that if men need water, then there is water somewhere. If men need food, then there is food to be found. And even though some men die of thirst and hunger, history has demonstrated that water and food do exist to fulfill man's needs. For it is contrary to both human expectation and human experience to suppose that what men really need is really not there to fulfill that need. It is in opposition to man's very fiber as man to ask him to believe that there is thirst and no water, that there are males but no females, that there are sucklings and no mothers' breasts, that there is the need to be loved and no love anywhere to fulfill that need. Some men may *think* that there are real but unfulfillable needs, but few men (if any) will really *believe* it, and no man can consistently *live* it.

We may conclude, therefore, that what men really need really exists. From this it would follow that there really is a God or Transcendent. For it was argued earlier, from both believer and nonbeliever, that men really need God. There is that sense of contingency and dependence, that need for transcendence within man that cries out for fulfillment. And if men really need the Transcendent, then there must be a Transcendent somewhere to fulfill that need, even if some men do not find it. To believe otherwise

would conflict with both human expectations and human experience. For just as some men have claimed satisfaction from hunger through food and some have had the need to be loved fulfilled through marriage, so others have experienced the fulfillment of their need for God through a spiritual experience. Not only does the need for God show that there is a God somewhere to satisfy that need, but the fulfillment of the need for God in some men indicates that an experience with this God is actually achievable.

But could not the sense of religious fulfillment be a mere illusion? Is it not possible that all religious men are being deceived? Admittedly, this is a logical possibility. For no contradiction has been shown in affirming that the universe is completely deceiving men. It is possible that all of life is mocking man, saying, "You have this need for God and you think there is a God and that He is fulfilling your need, but you are completely wrong." It is logically possible that the world is braying at us like a malevolent demon, mocking our very needs and even the sense of their fulfillment. From the standpoint of mere experience we must admit that this is all possible, but it certainly is not believable. The position that man has needs that are not fulfillable is unbelievable because it goes against the very grain of a man's hopes and of man's history. Men do expect that there are real objects of their real needs. And men have found by experience that these needs have often been fulfilled. The problem with atheism is that it admits man's need to transcend but it allows no *object* to fulfill this need. This is an existential cruelty to such an irrevocable need as the religious need.

We may reverse the tables on unbelief and say that to deny the reality of the Transcendent is unbelievable. For it must assume that one of man's most basic needs is being completely mocked by the world, leaving him with the real need for God but without a real God who can fulfill that need. Further, the denial of the reality of the Transcendent entails the assertion that not only some men have been deceived about the reality of God but that indeed *all* religious men who have ever lived have been completely deceived into believing there is a God when there really is not. For if even *one* religious person is right about the reality of the Transcendent, then there really is a Transcendent. Now it seems much more likely that such self-analyzing and self-critical men like Augustine, Pascal, and Sören Kierkegaard were not totally deceived than

that total skepticism is right. It is simply unbelievable that every great saint in the history of the world, yes even Jesus Christ himself, was completely deceived about the reality of God.[33] Unless it is true that no man in the history of the world has ever really been truly critical of his religious experience, then it follows that the reality of God has been critically established from human experience. Experience — hard, critical experience — indicates that men are not being totally deceived. There is a reality basis for at least some religious experience. And hence, there is a God (or Transcendent) to fulfill men's need to transcend.

Notes Chapter Four

1. See chapter 2 for a fuller treatment of the nature of religious experience.

2. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 229.

3. See William Sargant's *Battle for the Mind* in which he explains religious experience like brainwashing in a behavioristic way along the line of Pavlov's conditioned response.

4. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 34.

5. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, pp. 9-12, 13, 12, 29.

6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion*, p. 41.

7. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp. 52-53, 53, 40-50, 54, 57-58.

8. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 502.

9. William James, "The Will to Believe," *Pragmatism*, pp. 193-213.

10. Ibid., pp. 232, 237, 265.

11. Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, p. 16. Even though Sartre strongly denounced Freud's view of subconscious determination in his *Existential Psychoanalysis*, he admitted to a "depth of consciousness" that would not necessarily conflict with the above assertion of Smart.

12. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 15.

13. Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 120.

14. The word "existence" is not meant here to imply that the Transcendent has to be *a* being to be real. The verbal forms "existing" and "*be*-ing" are better.

15. This does not mean that nothing dependent can exist; it can have a dependent existence (say, dependent on the Universe, God, etc.) and yet exist independently (i.e., separately from other things). That is, everything except a necessary existence would in some way be a dependent existence. But things that are dependent ultimately for their existence can still have (relatively speaking) an independent or separate existence of their own.

16. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology" in *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 62.

17. Sören Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 49, 50, 53, 56.

18. Freud, *Freud, Future of an Illusion*, pp. 88-89.

19. Freud does not wish to call this feeling of dependence a religious feeling. Religion for Freud is what a man does in *response* to this feeling, as a remedy against it; *op. cit.*, p. 57.

20. Ibid., p. 88.

21. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, pp. 37, 47, 50.

22. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 290-311.

23. See Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, pp. 43-46.

24. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Words*, pp. 102, 97.

25. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 762, 766.

26. See William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, p. 63.

27. Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 354, 355, 359.

28. Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, p. 441.

29. Sartre, *Words*, p. 253.

30. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 525ff., 630ff.

31. See chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of this point.

32. See Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, pp. 71-74.
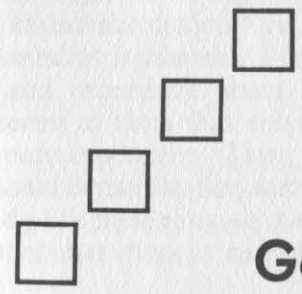
33. See Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 146ff.

Two

God and Reason

The Function of
Theistic Proofs

Most theists object to resting the case for the reality of God on the level of experience alone. First, at best the conceptual content of the Transcendent is minimal. For not much if anything is known via unanalyzed experience about the nature of such a reality. Second, it seems to them that only reason can transcend the subjectivity of pure experience. Third, the argument from experience is not a rational demonstration such as many theists offer for their belief in God. For these reasons, theists have offered rational proofs for their belief that there is an objective basis for their religious experience.

MODERN ATTITUDE TOWARD PROOFS FOR GOD

From a least the time of Plato on, philosophers have offered proofs for the existence of God. Traditionally, these rational arguments have been categorized into four basic kinds of arguments with different variations within each. The teleological argument (from *telos,* design or purpose) has reasoned from the apparent design within the world to the need of an intelligent Designer of the world. The cosmological argument (from *cosmos,* world) has generally begun with the existence of the finite world or some condition within the cosmos, such as change, and argued that there must be a behind-the-world Cause of sufficient reason to explain the existence of this kind of world. Because it is based on causality, it is sometimes called aetiological (from *aetios,* cause). The ontological argument (from *ontos,* being) has insisted that the very concept of an absolutely Perfect Being or necessary Being demands that such exist. The moral argument, although it did not begin as

a proof for God,[1] has evolved into a rational argument which contends that the moral law of the universe requires that there be a Moral Law-Giver behind it.

Not all proponents of these arguments have offered them as rational demonstrations or proofs in the strict sense. But many have defended one or another of these arguments as rationally inescapable. And certainly most theists have felt that their theistic argument is more reasonable than any other alternative.

The attitude of nontheists toward theistic proofs, as well as those who believe in God on nonrational grounds, has been understandably different from that of the theists. Peter Koëstenbaum summarized succinctly some of the basic objections to theistic proofs when he wrote, "The arguments are logically invalid, epistemologically defective, and axioligically misplaced."[2] We may perhaps expand the list of objections to five.

1. *Proofs Are Psychologically Unconvincing*

Rational proofs for God are generally unpersuasive to outsiders. Martin Marty noted that "apologists know that proof is convincing only when people are already predisposed to believe."[3] Others have pointed out that the most persuasive force for religion "is not rational theology but mystical theology, not the principle of objectivity but of subjectivity, not the clear . . . arguments of Aquinas but the record of the tormented inner experience of Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, which are found most appealing."[4] The reason for this, William James suggested, is that human needs go deeper than the rational. In fact, the rational nature of man is impressed with arguments only after his feelings have been impressed. That is, experience is more convincing than logic because the rational nature of man is at best secondary as compared with his private, inner life.[5] In other words, a man finds reasons for something because he already believes it; he doesn't believe it because he already has reasons for it. Psychological persuasion precedes rational demonstration. Proofs are psychologically unconvincing because they tend to be academic and formal; they often do not touch men where they live. John Dewey, commenting on theistic proofs, said, "The cause of the dissatisfaction is . . . that they are too formal to offer any support to religion in action."[6] In other words, a rational proof does not meet man's existential

needs. Rational proofs like the mathematical proofs are cold and do not call for a commitment of the whole man. As Ian Ramsey pointed out, "There are no placard-bearers in mathematical departments with legends like 'There'll always be a Euclid,' or 'Prepare to meet thy Riemann today.'"[7] Likewise, there is little tendency for most moderns to join the cause to an "Uncaused Cause" or to be deeply moved by Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover." In brief, even if rational "proofs" for God were valid, they seem not to be vital; they seem too speculative to mean much for man's practical life. And even if the arguments could "prove" God, they leave many unpersuaded. For what value is it to have been rationally driven to the theistic waters from which one is unconvinced that he should drink?

2. *Proofs Are Logically Invalid*

But not only are theistic proofs psychologically unpersuasive to the modern mind, they are also widely considered to be logically invalid. As Kaufmann argued, "Can we prove God's existence with a valid argument in which God does not appear in any of the premises?" For "clearly, if God does not appear in any of the premises, he will not appear in the conclusion either: if he did, the argument would have to be invalid."[8] That is, logically, the conclusion can be no broader than the premises. If one begins with God in the premises, he has already begged the question. And if one does not begin with God in the premises, there is no logically valid way to come up with God in the conclusion, Kaufmann insists.

This same objection may be put in another way. The cosmological argument says: Every finite thing is caused; the world is finite; therefore, the world has a cause.[9] But in this form of the argument the word "cause" in the conclusion seems to have a different (broader) meaning than it has in the premise. For in the premise it means finite cause and in the conclusion it is supposed to mean an infinite Cause (viz., God). From a logical standpoint, this seems to be a "four-term" fallacy.

Another way of alleging the logical invalidity of theistic arguments is put briefly by David Hume who contended that "whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as nonexistent. There is no being, therefore, whose nonexistence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being whose existence is demonstrable."[10]

That is, it is not rationally inescapable to conclude the existence of God, since it is also logically possible to posit the opposite of whatever is said to exist.

This argument is directed particularly at the ontological argument which Kant held was basic to all the other proofs for God. For no argument, Kant argued, can conclude that God necessarily exists, unless it demonstrates that God is a necessary Being. "But experience can only show us that one state of things, often or at most commonly follows another, and therefore affords neither universality nor necessity."[11] So the only nonexperiential argument which could possibly show that the existence of God is necessary is the argument for a necessary Being, i.e., the ontological argument. This ontological argument, however, is not rationally inescapable since it is not contradictory to reject it. For, Kant said elsewhere, "to posit a triangle, and to reject its three angles, is self-contradictory; but there is no contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles."[12] In brief, it is argued (a la Kant) that the other theistic arguments are based on the ontological argument and the ontological argument is logically invalid.

3. Proofs Are Epistemologically Defective

Closely associated with the criticism that the proofs for God are logically invalid is another criticism that has been widely echoed since Kant's time. It is the charge that the proofs are epistemologically defective. In Kant's words, "Through concepts alone, it is quite impossible to advance to the discovery of new objects and supernatural beings [as in the ontological argument]; and it is useless to appeal to experience, which in all cases yields only appearances."[13] That is, all that one can know is the phenomenon (thing-for-me) and not the noumenon (thing-in-itself). Kant did not deny that there is a reality behind appearance, but he did say that "we know not this thing as it is in itself but only know its appearances, namely, the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something." One of the arguments Kant used to support this position is that "if the objects of the world of sense are taken for things in themselves . . . contradiction would be unavoidable."[14] That is, on the assumption that we know the noumenon and not merely

the phenomenon, the human reason eventuates in inexorable contradictions or antinomies.[15]

There are other reasons leading Kant to conclude that our knowledge is limited to appearances. They may be summarized as follows: all knowledge begins with experience but does not arise from experience. There are certain necessary a priori conditions for experience which make experience possible. These "forms" of sensation (like Time and Space) and "categories" of understanding (like Unity, Causality, Necessity) provide the structure of sensation and knowledge while experience provides the content or "stuff"; experience provides the data and the mind the determination of our knowledge. Therefore, all that one knows is what the thing is to him (phenomenon) as the mind has formed or determined it and not what it is in itself (noumenon) independently of this.[16] In brief, Kant is arguing that knowledge constructs reality but does not correspond to it.[17] He is saying that one cannot know the way things really are but only the way the mind constructs them. If this be the case, then all attempts to prove the existence of God would be incapable of building any rational bridge across the chasm that separates the way things appear and the way they really are.

4. Proofs Are Ontologically Inadequate

There is another more sophisticated critique of theistic proofs which grows out of some of the previous criticisms. It argues that even if one could devise a rational proof for God, it would not necessarily follow that God really existed. It argues that even if it were rationally necessary to conclude that there is a God, it does not follow from this that God really exists. For there is always the possibility that the rationally inescapable is not real. Perhaps the way men must think is not in the final analysis the way things really are.

The basis of this reaction to theistic proofs may be traceable to Kant's contention that men must act and think as if there is a God. On one interpretation of this it could be argued that God does not really exist, but it is necessary to think that He does in order to have unity in one's thoughts. Whether or not Kant actually took this position, it is at least a possibility that a theistic proof could be logically valid even if there were no God. Norman Malcolm

offered an ontological proof for God but said of it, "I can imagine an atheist going through the argument becoming convinced of its validity, acutely defending it against objections, yet remaining an atheist. . . ."[18]

But just how can something be rationally inescapable without being ontologically so, one may ask? Those who object that the theistic arguments do not really prove God exists could argue in the following way. In order to defend the proposition that the rationally inescapable is real, the theist would have to prove that the principle of noncontradiction, which is at the basis of all rational arguments, is necessarily true of reality. But the traditional defense of this principle is that it cannot be denied without affirming it, therefore, it must be so.[19] For one must assume that the very statement (or thought) by which he denies the principle of noncontradiction is itself noncontradictory, otherwise the very denial is meaningless. But all this really proves is that the principle of noncontradiction is *inescapable;* it does not prove that it is *true* of reality. That is, for one to say that it is unavoidable is not the same as affirming that it is ontologically so. For even though one cannot *affirm* it to be false, he can *believe* it to be false. Furthermore, the argument goes, even though it cannot be *demonstrated* to be false, it might still *be* false.[20]

Arguing in this same vein, C. I. Lewis suggests, "If we should be forced to realize that nothing in our experience possesses any stability . . . that denouncement would rock our world to its foundations," and " . . . yet such a world-shaking event is still quite possible . . . simply because, on this view, not even the law of non-contradiction is necessarily true of the real world."[21]

5. *Proofs Are Axiologically Misplaced*

Even though Kant gave up any rational *proofs* for the existence of God, he did hold that it is morally necessary to *posit* God. This shift from what is *rationally* necessary to what is *morally* required signals another shift in the modern attitude toward rational proofs for the existence of God. Kant argued, e.g., that moral duty demands that men seek the highest good (the *summum bonum*) which is the union of virtue and happiness. But this is not possible in this life, since doing one's duty does not always bring him the maximum of happiness. "Thus God and a future life are two

postulates which, according to the principles of pure reason, are inseparable from the obligations which that same reason imposes upon us."[22] Kant felt that by connecting God with a man's concrete moral values rather than his abstract reason a man would have a more valuable orientation for his religious convictions. This is why Kant could say, "I inevitably believe in the existence of God and I am certain that nothing can shake this belief, since my moral principles would thereby be themselves overthrown, and I cannot disclaim them without becoming abhorrent in my own eyes."[23]

Not all modern religious thinkers agree with Kant about the need to posit God in order to secure the fulfillment of man's moral duty. However, many have followed Kant's basic axiological orientation by relating their religion to man's basic moral values. And in view of this the value of rational proofs is seen to be secondary at best. James, e.g., contended that modern man wants to know what will be the "cash value" of religion in their lives and world.[24] Sören Kierkegaard took a more radical position, arguing that it is folly even to attempt to prove the existence of God.[25] Michael Novak's view is not quite so extreme but it too reflects this same axiological reorientation toward proofs. "A formal argument for the existence of God is not of much use in the life of one who is trying to decide between belief and unbelief." For "there are many layers of point of view, inquiry, and new horizons to come through before one can understand the formal argument."[26] That is, there may be a secondary (or tertiary) role or value for a formal rationalization of one's experience of God. But to consider a rational proof to be the prime importance in one's religious experience is a misplacement of values.

RELATING TO THE MODERN ATTITUDE TOWARD PROOFS

The modern attitude toward theistic proofs is not without some justification. They do have a corrective value for theism. And any theist who desires to be contemporary cannot avoid relating to them. On the other hand, the current distaste for demonstration must not deter theists from stating the full force of their case. No retreat to fideism is necessitated by the modern reaction against attempts to support the existence of God by reason. Philosophical substantiation of beliefs is as essential for contemporary man as

it was for his predecessors. Let us examine the modern attitude toward proofs one by one, hoping to gain from them some clarification of the whole theistic enterprise.

1. *Proof or Persuasion?*

The statement that proofs are not psychologically persuasive is generally misleading and often flatly wrong. If it is true that men are never swayed by proof, we must assume that there is no intellectual integrity among scientists and great thinkers. It is asking too much to expect one to believe that mathematicians are not persuaded that the pythagorean theorum is correct when they see the demonstration. One's credulity is stretched beyond limits to hold that chemists and physicists are not convinced by what they can demonstrate in the laboratory, even if they believed otherwise before the experiments. Why, then, should we believe that philosophers are never persuaded by rational demonstrations?

Most men do not live by leaps of faith into the absurd. They live and move on the sufficiency of the evidence. And what is true of their everyday life is not entirely untrue of their religious life — with one difference which will be discussed in a moment. Theists have not usually come to believe that there is a God because they think this is the most unreasonable view they could hold. On the contrary, theists almost always believe their position is most reasonable. Tertullian's alleged "I believe because it is absurd" is untrue. Indeed, Tertullian never said *absurdum* (contradictory); he said *ineptum* (foolish).[27] He was not speaking of the grounds for belief in God but of the mystery of the crucifixion of Christ which the apostle Paul said was "foolishness" to those who do not believe (1 Cor. 1:18ff.). And Christians who do believe in God or Christ without any reasons are acting contrary to the command of Peter "to make a [reasoned] defense (*apologia*)" for their faith (1 Peter 3:15). Most theists believe in God because they have been persuaded by evidence that it is most reasonable to do so. So there must have been somewhere along the line some reasons that persuaded them of this position.

It is true that proofs do not always persuade. This is no doubt part of the modern reaction to proofs. But there are two factors here that should not be overlooked. First, a proof for God as such, if it is successful, leads a man only to believe *that* there is a God

and not necessarily to believe *in* that God. A man may decide not to believe in (i.e., commit himself to) the God which the evidence indicates is really there. Disbelief does not always indicate disproof. Persuasion is not a purely intellectual matter, it is a volitional matter as well. Why is it that some great minds are not convinced by theistic arguments (Nietzsche, Sartre, Russell, et al.)? Granting that there are theistic proofs known by the nonbeliever, there are several possibilities as to why they reject these arguments. First, some atheists do not accept any kind of proof. Second, some do not allow the kind of arguments for God which they would allow for other areas of life. Third, some nonbelievers choose not to commit themselves to God, despite the fact that the evidence indicates He is there. Only a psychological and spiritual analysis could indicate what is the cause in each particular case. The point here is that their lack of persuasion is not necessarily a fault of rational proofs as such; it is a result of their own *choice*. In order for a proof to be persuasive there must be a cooperation of the will with the mind. If one is unwilling to look at a proof, or unwilling to accept any proof, or unwilling to accept the validity as a proof as applied to God, or unwilling to accept the God the proof concludes, then he will not be persuaded by theistic arguments. On the other hand, men of good will who are seeking the truth will be persuaded by good reasoning. And it is up to the theist to come up with these good reasons.

2. *Proofs and Logical Validity*

The question of the formal validity or invalidity of theistic proofs can be determined only by a careful and detailed analysis of the proofs. This will be attempted in the next two chapters. Any final decision as to their validity must await that discussion. Meanwhile, we must content ourselves with a couple of observations. First, a formal invalidity in some theistic proofs does not mean that there are no formally valid proofs. Second, even if no theist has stated a formally valid proof, it does not follow that it cannot or will not ever be done. (There was a time when no living men could state a valid formula for splitting an atom.) Third, even if theistic proofs do not meet the formal criteria of some logical systems, it does not follow that they are invalid. Some con-

clusions can be formally invalid in one logical system but actually valid by another. [28]

Furthermore, (and, *fourthly*) it is not formal validity that interests the theists; it is actual truth. For instance, even if there were no way to prove the formal validity of the statement "I exist," it is obviously true. The theist is interested in the actual existence of God and not formal validity of proofs about God. And when it comes to arguments for existence, one may very well be in a different "ball park" from that of formal validity. But simply the fact that something does not follow formally does not mean that it does not follow at all. One would be hard-pressed to produce a formally valid argument for the existence of his wife. But from this inability it by no means follows that she does not exist nor that one has no good reason to believe that she does exist. In like manner, it is possible (but not necessarily so) that theistic arguments provide good reasons to believe in God's existence while the arguments lack in formal validity.

3.   *Are All Theistic Proofs Epistemologically Defective?*

It has been stylish since Kant to assume that theistic arguments are epistemologically defective, that no argument can really get at existence or reality. This is surely not the case. For if it were, then even Kant's position that it is makes no sense. For how can one meaningfully make about reality a universal statement that affirms that no meaningful statements can be made about reality? It does not make any sense to say that reality cannot be known. For the very statement implies a knowledge about reality. As A. J. Ayer put it, "How can he [Kant] tell what are the boundaries beyond which the human understanding may venture, unless he succeeds in passing them himself?" [29] Or as Wittgenstein said, "In order to draw a limit to thinking, we should have to think both sides of this limit." [30] In brief, there is no way to deny that our knowledge can reach reality unless our knowledge has already reached it. Complete agnosticism is self-defeating.

Kant's view that all our knowledge is constructive of reality cannot be so. For if it were true that we knew only the *phenomenon* (thing-to-me) and not the *noumenon* (thing-in-itself), how could we make the distinction between them? In order to distinguish appearance from reality one must know what reality is. Otherwise

he would have no ground for the assertion that thus and so was appearance but not reality. If what we call reality is nothing but a construction arising out of our own forms of perception and categories of thought, then we certainly would have no way of knowing that was the case. For the alleged knowledge that man is constructing reality, and not actually understanding it, purports to be a knowledge about reality. If this were not so, how could one who is locked into his own forms and categories of thinking about reality ever get outside of them to enable him to know that he is really locked into them? There is a vicious circle involved in the categorical assertion that we cannot know reality.

Hence, it is not possible to demonstrate that all theistic arguments are epistemologically defective. Each argument must be evaluated on its own basis. The possibility is open that reality can be known. Indeed, this has been one of the most persistent assumptions in the history of philosophy. Men have been and still are in the pursuit of reality. And any reasoning that would eliminate this possibility a priori is not only self-defeating but runs against the major current of the philosophical pursuit.

4.   *Is the Rationally Inescapable Real?*

Is it so that one could rationally demonstrate the existence of God and yet God not really exist? This objection to theistic proofs is built on the assumption that what is rationally inescapable is not necessarily ontologically so. There are three things that should be said here. First, the admission that the theistic arguments are rationally inescapable could be taken as a triumph for theism. For whatever is rationally inescapable ought to be accepted as true by the rational mind. This would seem to put the "monkey" on the back of the nontheist. For if theism is rationally inescapable, then surely the atheist is being unreasonable in not accepting theism.

Second, even if no argument could be devised to prove the premise that the rationally inescapable is real, it is still true that such a premise is a very basic, if not necessary, assumption of human thought. It is humanly necessary to operate on the premise that reality is not contradictory, even if reality is not that way. Men must think the way they must think. And if they must believe that reality cannot be otherwise than the way they must *think* about it, then it matters little if reality can *be* otherwise than this.

For if it is inescapable to affirm that the rationally inescapable is real, then we cannot go beyond that and may as well content ourselves with the belief that the rationally inescapable is real.

But this brings us to a third point. If it is inescapable for us to affirm that the rationally inescapable is real, then is not this an argument that it is *really* so? We propose the following argument.[31] There are only three meaningful or affirmable positions with respect to the question: "Is the rationally inescapable real?" First, it *cannot* be true; second, it *may* or *may not* be true; third, it *must* be true. These exhaust the logical possibilities. Note first, the question is not "Is the *rational* real?" Rather, it is this: "Is the *rationally inescapable* real?" Not everything logically *possible* is real, e.g., centaurs and mermaids. But is it not true that everything that is logically necessary to affirm is real? We argue that it is. For there are only three possible positions and two of them are meaningless.

By rationally inescapable we mean that the only logical alternatives to a noncontradictory view are contradictory. Hence, to say that the rationally inescapable is not necessarily real entails either the premise that logic does not necessarily apply to reality or the premise that it cannot apply to reality. The latter premise is self-contradictory and the former is meaningless. To say that logic cannot apply to reality is to apply it to reality. For this statement (that logic does not apply to reality) purports to be a noncontradictory statement (otherwise it is meaningless). But it is a statement about reality. And as a noncontradictory statement about reality it cannot thereby inform us that reality must be contradictory. For to claim that the only noncontradictory position cannot be true is to affirm that a contradictory position must be true. To say that reality cannot be noncontradictory is to claim that it is contradictory. But the sentence "Reality must be contradictory" is contradictory, for it assumes that reality is not contradictory in order to make that statement about reality.

The second alternative that "reality may or may not be contradictory" is more subtle, but it turns out to be meaningless. For to affirm that "reality may be contradictory" is to say that "it is possible that the law of noncontradiction does not apply to reality." What makes the sentence meaningless is that there is no possible meaning to the word "possible," unless the law of noncontradiction

does apply to reality. Obviously the sentence "It is possible that reality may be contradictory" does not mean that it is *logically* possible for reality to be contradictory, for this is precisely what it assumes is not the case. For it admits that it is logically necessary to *think* of reality as noncontradictory, as do all three positions. Further, the statement is not that "reality may be *thought* of as contradictory," for it is readily admitted that it cannot be so thought. Rather, the statement is that "reality may *be* contradictory." This is an ontological statement and not a purely logical one. It is intended as a description about the actual state of affairs and not merely about a possible state of affairs. But if it is a statement about reality, then it makes no sense. Because in order to make sense it must at least be noncontradictory. But it is clearly contradictory. For if it is a noncontradictory statement about reality, then it cannot at the same time inform us that reality may be contradictory. Since if reality were contradictory, then the statement would be contradictory and meaningless. And if reality is *not* contradictory, then the statement is contradictory, since it alleges that reality *may be* contradictory. And if it is a contradictory statement about reality, then it is obviously an untrue statement, for contradictory statements are untrue. Hence, the statement "Reality may be contradictory" is self-defeating. For it is either contradictory or not. If contradictory, then it is clearly untrue. If it is not contradictory, then it implies that reality is not contradictory, for it is a statement about reality. But if reality is not contradictory, then the statement cannot be true, for it claims that it is possible for reality to be contradictory when reality is actually not contradictory.

If, then, there are only three possible positions that can be affirmed and two of them are either contradictory or meaningless, then the other position must be true. The other position is this: "Reality cannot be contradictory." But if reality cannot be contradictory, then the rationally inescapable is the real, which is what we set out to show.

The usual objection to this kind of argument is that it uses the law of noncontradiction to prove that the law of noncontradiction is true. It is saying that there are only three logically possible positions and two of them turn out to be logically contradictory; hence, it is logically necessary to conclude that the third one is correct.

Actually, it is charged, one has used the necessity of logic only to prove the necessity of logic. Or, to put it more specifically, one has only said that it is rationally inescapable to conclude that the rationally inescapable is real. What has this proven except that it is rationally inescapable for us to *think* that the rationally inescapable is real, not that it must *be* that way.

This objection is not quite so. First, we have not used the law of noncontradiction as the *basis* of the proof of the law of non-contradiction: we have used noncontradiction *in* the proof but not *as* the proof. Anyone using any kind of meaningful argument must employ the law of noncontradiction, because there is simply no way to make meaningful assertions without the law of noncontra-diction. Everyone must agree that the principle of noncontradic-tion is at least linguistically or humanly necessary for meaningful statements and arguments. But it is one thing to use noncontra-diction in the *process* of a proof (and we all must use it if we are to make sense), but it is quite another thing to use it as the *basis* of the proof. The basis of our proof that "the rationally inescap-able is real" was not the law of noncontradiction but self-stultifi-cation. It is not that no other position is *conceivable* but that no other position is *affirmable*. For it is conceivable that nothing is real (i.e., that nothing exists). But it is not affirmable that nothing is real (or exists), for one cannot deny his own reality (or ex-istence). Hence, since something is real, it is necessary to affirm that it is not impossible. What is rationally inescapable to affirm is real.

Our basis for holding that the rationally inescapable is real is that the other "positions" turn out to be nonpositions because they are meaningless or self-contradictory. The view that logic applies to reality is *undeniable*. The only meaningful and affirmable posi-tion is that "logic must apply to reality." Since no other position is affirmable and this one is affirmable (i.e., noncontradictory), then it must be true that the rationally inescapable is the real. The basis for this argument, then, is the *undeniability* of the state-ment that the rationally inescapable is real. Since no other position is affirmable, then this one must be true. Hence, the theist need not be concerned about showing that God's nonexistence is *incon-ceivable* but only that it is *undeniable*. After all, what the theist seeks is not mere rational inconceivability but existential undenia-

bility. That is, the theist seeks a necessary *Being*, not a necessary Thought at the end of his argument.

5. *Are Proofs Axiologically Misplaced?*

Is there any value to theistic proofs? If so, is this not often a misplaced value? What precisely is the value of proofs and where do they fit into the total religious experience? These questions are too weighty for anything more than a summary treatment here. Perhaps a parable will help. Suppose we come upon a man drown-ing on an overcast day. We respond to his cry for help by re-minding him that his whole way of life in this world depends on an invisible sun beyond the clouds and that he would never have been alive, nor even able to cry for help were it not for the sun's solar support of his whole way of life. In desperation he replies, "That is irrelevant, man! Don't give me philosophy about what makes life possible. Throw me a rope; I need help." Who is right? Obviously both parties are right and for different reasons. The drowning man is right about his *immediate* need but *ultimately* the man on the shore was correct about the source and support of life itself.

Theists find themselves in a similar difficulty. True, we should not spend our time throwing out mere theoretical arguments to men whose existential dilemma calls for an immediate response. Men on skid row, e.g., need food and love, not theistic arguments. On the other hand, the theists must never allow men's immediate needs to rule out any consideration of the more ultimate problems of life. Changing the illustration will help to express the point. What if the man on the shore had replied by saying, "I will throw you this rope. Hold onto it and I will pull you in." But the drown-ing man replied, "No, I do not trust ropes. I fell from one when I was young. Give me a life jacket." But there is no life jacket, and the only way you have of saving him is the rope. At this point you must *prove* to the man that the rope will do it or at least *reason* with him to try it. The point is this: reasoning can be important even for a person's immediate, existential needs, as well as for ultimate needs. One's evaluation of his here-and-now needs can be strongly influenced by reasoning. If there is a God who loves all men, then this is very important data which could signif-icantly affect a man attempting suicide, if he could only be con-

vinced of it. Likewise, the evidence supporting the existence of God can have an important influence on those who see no value in life. And the theists would be disregarding basic values to ignore completely all the reasons for God and spend their time in helping men who need God but find it unreasonable to believe in Him.

Proofs can play a very practical role, indeed a crucial one. For, in the final analysis, if men really need God, then only God can really supply that need. And if only God can supply men's need and they are not convinced there is a God there to supply that need, then men's basic spiritual need will go unfulfilled. Proofs are not necessarily axiologically misplaced. It is as essential that men be convinced that there is a God before they trust in Him as it is that a groom be convinced that there is a girl standing there at the altar with him before he says, "I do."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The modern reaction to theistic proofs has been basically negative and skeptical. Rational proofs are widely considered to be psychologically unconvincing, logically invalid, epistemologically defective, ontologically inadequate and/or axiologically misplaced. These criticisms are not totally lacking in justification, particularly for theistic arguments that would make God's nonexistence rationally *inconceivable*. The theist, however, may attempt to show the *undeniability* of God's existence and the practical relevance of this truth to the practical needs of men. Minimally, the theist must not retreat to fideism. Reasonable men do not adopt a position because it is the most unreasonable alternative, and they are not likely to make an exception in the case of theism. Religious experience reveals that men need God, and if reason can aid in assuring men that there is a God there to fulfill that need, so much the better. If, on the other hand, the theistic arguments turn out to be unreasonable, then there may be a God, but no good reasons for believing God exists have been provided. Only a thorough examination of the arguments can decide which is the case.

NOTES CHAPTER FIVE

1. Kant devised this view as a *practically necessary postulate* in view of the fact that God could not be *proven* to be *rationally necessary* and yet that man's moral life demanded that he live as if there is a God.

2. Peter Koëstenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," in *Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, p. 178.

3. Martin Marty, *Varieties of Unbelief*, p. 209.

4. Michael Novak, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 105.

5. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 72, 73.

6. John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, p. 11.

7. Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language*, p. 37.

8. Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 169.

9. Allan B. Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, p. 44.

10. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, part IX.

11. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 62.

12. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 502.

13. Ibid., p. 530.

14. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena*, pp. 60, 62, 91.

15. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 396ff.

16. See ibid., pp. 65, 175, and *Prolegomena*, pp. 42-74.

17. On this point see F. H. Parker, "Traditional Reason and Modern Reason" in *Faith and Philosophy*, pp. 40, 41.

18. Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Argument," in *The Existence of God*, p. 67.

19. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, c. 4, 1006a, *Basic Works of Aristotle*.

20. F. H. Parker, "The Realistic Position in Religion" in *Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective*, pp. 86ff.

21. C. I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, p. 306.

22. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 639.

23. Ibid., p. 650.

24. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 433, 435.

25. Sören Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 49ff.

26. Novak, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 130.

27. See Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, Chapter V in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, p. 525, n. 10.

28. For example, "All three-sided figures are triangles; this is a triangle; therefore, this is a three-sided figure" is formally invalid but actually so. It is formally invalid because it affirms the consequent. But we know it is actually so. Hence, there must be some other way to show its validity.

29. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, p. 34.

30. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus, Preface*.

31. See my article, "The Missing Premise in the Ontological Argument," in *Religious Studies*, 1973.

6

Teleological and Moral Arguments

Classically, there have been four kinds of attempts to establish the existence of God. These have been called the teleological, moral, ontological, and cosmological arguments, denoting their differing starting points in *design,* the *moral law,* the *idea* of a necessary Being, and the existence of a *world.* We will examine the basic argumentation related to the first two of these arguments in this chapter.

TELEOLOGICAL PROOFS AND PROBLEMS

The teleological argument for God's existence begins with' the apparent design in the world. In essence, it argues that this apparent design is evidence of an intelligent Architect of the world.

Paley's Watchmaker

One of the most popular forms of the argument was given by William Paley (1743-1805), the archdeacon of Carlisle. Paley insisted that if one found a watch in an empty field, he would rightly conclude that it had a watchmaker because of its obvious design. Likewise, when one looks at the even more complex design of the world in which we live, he cannot but conclude that there is a great Designer behind it. Let us put the argument in summary form.[1]

1. A watch shows that it was put together for an intelligent purpose (to keep time).
   a. It has a spring to give it motion.
   b. It has a series of wheels to transmit this motion.
   c. The wheels are made of brass so that they do not rust.
   d. The spring is made of steel because of the resilience of that metal.
   e. The front cover is of glass so that one can see through it.
2. The world shows an even greater evidence of design than a watch.
   a. The world is a greater work of art than a watch.
   b. The world has more subtle and complex design than a watch.
   c. The world has an endless variety of means adapted to ends.
3. Therefore, if a watch calls for a watchmaker, then the world demands an even greater intelligent Designer (viz., God).

Cleanthes' Great Machine Maker

In David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* the theist Cleanthes offers a similar form of the teleological argument which may be stated as follows:[2]

1. All design implies a designer.
2. Great design implies a great designer.
3. There is great design in the world (like that of a great machine).
4. Therefore, there must be a great Designer of the world.

The argument extends beyond Paley's on several points. First Cleanthes uses other illustrations of design than that of a watch or a machine. The human eye, male-female relation, a book, and a voice from heaven are all used to illustrate design. Second, he makes it clear that the teleological argument is an argument from analogy, insisting that like effects have like causes. Third, Cleanthes alludes to chance as an improbable explanation that a distinct voice from heaven could have been an accidental whistling of the wind. Finally, he insists that whatever irregularities are in nature, they do not affect the argument, thereby implying that these are the exception which establishes the rule.

Mill's Objection to the Watchmaker Argument

John Stuart Mill (1806-73) objected to Paley's form of the argument from analogy and then offered what he thought was a

better one. His objection is not a destruction but a weakening of the argument. It runs as follows: [8]

1. Paley's argument is built on analogy that similarity in effect implies similarity in cause.

2. This kind of analogy argument is weaker when the dissimilarities are greater.

3. There is a significant dissimilarity that weakens this argument.

   a. Watches imply watchmakers only because, by previous experiences, we know that watches are made by watchmakers, not by anything intrinsic in the watch as such.

   b. In like manner, footprints imply men, and dung implies animals only because previous experience informs us that this is so, not because of any intrinsic design in the remains.

4. Therefore, Paley's argument is weaker than he thought.

After criticizing Paley's form of the teleological argument, Mill offered what he considered to be a stronger expression of it. It is built on Mill's inductive "method of agreement." This argument was the weakest of Mill's inductive methods but he considered the teleological argument to be a strong form of this kind of induction. Mill began with the organic rather than the mechanical aspect of nature.

1. There is an amazing concurrence of many diverse elements in a human eye.

2. It is not probable that random selection brought these together.

3. The method of agreement argues for a common cause of the eye.

4. The cause was a final (purposing) cause, not an efficient (producing) cause.

But Mill admitted that evolution, if true, diminishes the strength of even this stronger form of the teleological argument. For much of what appears to be design is accounted for in evolution by the survival of the fittest.

Russell's Evolutionary Disproof

Bertrand Russell later offered a disproof of the teleological argument from evolution as follows: [4]

1. The adaptation of means to end in the world is either the result of evolution or else the result of design.

2. This adaptation is the result of evolution.

3. Therefore, this adaptation is not the result of design.

If adaptation can be accounted for by the survival of the fittest, there is no need to invoke design to explain it, Russell argued. Obviously, Russell's argument does not follow. For there is no logical reason why adaptation cannot be the result of *both* evolution and design. Furthermore, one need not grant that natural selection can explain *all* adaptation. And if it cannot explain all apparent design, it leaves the door open for some force in the design argument. Hence, Russell's argument does not disprove the teleological argument; at best it only forces a modification in the argument.

Hume's Skeptical Alternatives to Teleology

Although some feel it is his view, Hume places in the mouth of the skeptic, Philo, two responses to the teleological argument. The first is based on the assumption that there is design in nature and argues that the God indicated by this design assumed that design would be at best: [5]

1. *different* from human intelligence, since human inventions differ from those of nature.

2. *finite,* since the effect is finite (and the cause is like the effect).

3. *imperfect,* for there are imperfections in nature.

4. *multiple,* for the creation of world is more like the co-operative building of a ship.

5. *male and female,* for this is the way humans generate.

6. *anthropomorphic,* for His creatures have eyes, ears, noses, etc.

The *best* one could conclude from assuming there is design in the world is that (1) the world arose from something like design.

At *worst,* the world may be the crude product of some infantile god(s) or the inferior result of some senile deity or deities.

The second argument of Philo does not assume that there is design in the world. It insists that it is possible that the world arose by chance. The argument may be stated as follows: [6]

1. The apparent order in the world resulted from either design or from chance (but not both, for they are mutually exclusive).

2. It is entirely plausible that the world resulted from chance.

   a. It is possible that the universe of matter in motion is eternal.

   b. In an infinity of chance operations every combination will be realized.

   c. Combinations that best "fit" will tend to perpetuate themselves once they happen.

   d. What does not "fit" tends to move around until it, too, "settles down."

   e. Hence, the present "ordered" arrangement of the universe may be the result of pure chance.

Philo adds two other new points to the overall development of the teleological argument and alternatives. (1) First, he insists that animal adaptation cannot be used to prove that they must be designed, for there is no way they could survive unless they did adapt to their environs. One cannot use what could not have been otherwise as an evidence of intelligent planning. (2) However, Philo admits that it is difficult to explain extra organs not needed for survival on the chance hypothesis, such as two eyes, two ears, etc. Noting that the design theories have problems and absurdities, Philo suggests a complete suspense of judgment on the whole question of whether there is a God.

Taylor's Anticipatory Design

It seemed obvious enough that the survival of the teleological argument hinged upon its ability to handle both the evolutionary and chance alternatives. This is precisely what Taylor hoped to accomplish with his argument based on the apparent advanced planning within nature. Let us summarize his argument. [7]

1. Nature reveals an anticipatory order, i.e., it plans for its own preservation.

   a. Bodily need for oxygen is anticipated by membranes which provide it.

   b. Many insects deposit eggs where food is available for their babies to eat it.

   c. A cat's movements are prospectively adapted to capture its prey.

2. Nature's advanced planning cannot be accounted for by physical laws alone, for there are countless ways electrons *could* run, but they *do* move in accord with the advanced planning of preserving the organism.

   a. This is true in healthy and unhealthy organisms (cf. antibodies).

   b. On the basis of physical laws alone, misadaptations would be as probable as adaptations.

   c. Unless we retreat to the absurd, there must be something more than physical laws to account for the indefinitely high improbabilities involved.

3. Mind or intelligence is the only known condition that can remove these improbabilities against life emerging despite these improbabilities.

   a. The human mind is direct evidence of anticipatory adaptation.

      1) Men plan ahead. (Even aged people make wills.)

      2) No jury considers a man guilty of first-degree murder unless he anticipated the result of his actions.

   b. Even scientists who reduce anticipation to complicated reflex action do not live that way themselves. E.g.,

      1) They write books in hope that others will read them.

      2) They vote for a better future.

4. The mind or intelligence that explains anticipatory adaptations cannot be explained as a result of evolution, for

   a. Mind is not a life-force that resulted from evolution and then took over and captured lifeless matter (since the advanced planning which gave rise to mind can only be explained as a result of Mind).

1) We use tools which other minds make, but some mind had to make the tool to begin with.

2) Likewise, the fact that mind can use nature as a tool assumes that the process of nature that produced mind is itself intelligently directed.

b. The very appearance and persistence of species is impossible without preparatory adaption of the environment.

1) With different chemicals, life would not have been possible.

2) With the right chemicals and different conditions, life would not be possible.

c. Therefore, either prospective adaptation is meaningless or else there is a Mind beyond man that is guiding the whole process.

5. Darwinian natural selection cannot explain the advance planning evident in nature, for

a. The fittest are not necessarily the best; the most stupid sometimes survive (e.g., a drunk in an accident).

b. Even mutations imply design, since to make evolution work, mutations

1) must not be random and impartial but in trends, implying design;

2) must be not small and gradual but large and sudden, indicating design.

c. Darwinianism does not explain, but merely presupposes, life with a preparatory environment.

d. The human mind cannot be explained by survival of the fit or adaption to its environment, for

1) there is no reason these adjustments should produce foresight in man;

2) the human mind does not adapt to the environment but transforms it.

e. Therefore, if mind was not totally produced by nature, then it must have been active in the producing of nature (since nature indicates advanced planning explainable only by intelligence).

Taylor admits that there are objections leveled against the teleological argument, but he contends that they do not affect the basic argument but are applicable only to certain unjustifiable assumptions that have sometimes been connected with the argument. The teleological argument itself, at least as based on the design apparent in the anticipatory adaptations of nature is valid.

R. E. D. Clark: Design and Thermodynamics

Another attempt to substantiate the teleological argument in view of the possibility of the chance hypothesis that the apparent order is only a "happy accident" is typified by R. E. D. Clark's *The Universe: Plan or Accident?* Clark argues against chance by the second law of thermodynamics as follows: [8]

1. Whatever had a beginning had a Beginner.

2. The universe had a beginning (as evidenced by the second law of thermodynamics).

a. The universe is "running down" and, hence, cannot be eternal.

b. The second law applies to the whole universe so far as we know.

c. A "rewinding" of the universe on its own is not probable (for there is no scientific way to explain this).

3. Therefore, the universe had a Beginner.

4. This Beginner must be:

a. intelligent, since He engaged in advanced planning, and

b. moral, because He obviously valued creation.

Since intelligence and morality are characteristic of personality, the Beginner of the universe must be personal. He may be more than personal but He cannot be less than personal.

In essence the teleological argument has now taken a form which goes like this:

1. The universe resulted either from design or from chance.

2. It is highly improbable that it resulted from chance.

3. Hence, it is highly probable that the universe was designed.

The high improbability of a chance happening is due to the fact that there is not, as Hume's Philo assumed, an eternity of time in which to realize the ordered arrangement in which things now find themselves. There are only so many billions of years for things to take their present arrangement. As someone else put it, the chances that the universe happened by chance is about that of the chances that Webster's Unabridged Dictionary resulted from an explosion in a printing shop.

Loophole in the Argument Against Chance

Of course the proponents realize (and opponents stress) that it is still possible that the universe happened by chance, even though there is only a limited duration of time for such an occurrence. The chances that one will get two sixes when he rolls two dice is one in thirty-six, but this does not mean that it will actually take thirty-six rolls to get two sixes. One may get it on the first roll. Likewise, even though the a priori odds against the universe happening by chance alone are immense, nonetheless, in actual fact (a posteriori) it may have happened that way; although, admittedly, the chances are incomprehensibly remote.

Aldous Huxley, an arch defender of evolution, estimated that at the known rate of helpful mutations over the known time scale the odds against evolution happening by pure chance alone were three million zeros (1500 pages of zeros) to one.[9] Huxley felt, however, that natural selection was the process that overcame these stupendous odds. But from the teleologist's point of view, natural selection functions as a kind of supreme intelligence, deciding with apparent foresight at thousands of points against a thousand-to-one odds. What but intelligent advance planning could possibly make the right selection so consistently against such overwhelming odds?

F. R. Tennant: Filling in the Loophole of Chance

Perhaps the gravest objection to the teleological argument comes from the chance hypothesis, viz., the design in the knowable universe may be only a temporary and fragmentary episode in the history of the whole universe (a kind of oasis of design in the much wider desert of chance). F. R. Tennant replies to this alternative

by pointing out that it is conceivable but highly improbable because:[10]

1. The probabilities of the knowable world cannot be used to refute mere possibilities within the unknowable world.

2. There is no evidence to support the thesis that the knowable world is a lie to the unknowable world.

3. The knowable universe is not isolatable from the unknowable but interwoven and interdependent with it.

4. Thermodynamics makes completely random development unlikely.

5. Chance reshuffling of matter by mechanical forces cannot explain the origin of mind and personality.

6. The qualitative greatness of human values in the "oasis" of the knowable world outweigh the quantitative immensity of the unknowable world.

After plugging up the alleged loophole in the teleological argument, Tennant offers his own revised form based on what he calls a "wider" teleology, i.e., on the conspiration of innumerable cases to produce and maintain by united and reciprocal action a general order of nature (and not merely this or that particular design within the world). The value in arguing that nature *as a whole* is designed is, according to Tennant, that such an argument is not susceptible to many of the criticisms to which the "narrow" teleology is open. For instance, a wider teleology does not demand that every detail of the process be foreordained. A purposeful process may produce as a by-product some inevitable evils. (For example, a by-product of there being lakes to enjoy is that some persons will drown in them.) Tennant sees six areas in which the world reflects its wider teleology; viz.,

1. adaptedness of thought to thing (the thinkability of the world),

2. adaptedness of the internal part of organic beings,

3. adaptedness of inorganic nature to purposeful ends,

4. adaptedness of nature to man's aesthetic needs,

5. adaptedness of the world to human moral goals, and

6. adaptedness of world process to its culmination in man with rational and moral status.

The conspiration of all the parts and process of the world to produce the human value it has places beyond any reasonable doubt the fact that the world was planned.

Kant: Ontological Defects in the Teleological Argument

Immanuel Kant exemplifies a general feeling toward the teleological argument. He neither offered a disproof of God nor suggested a complete disregard of the teleological argument.[11] Kant did, however, insist that the teleological argument was inconclusive. For,

1. The teleological argument is based on experience of design and order in the world.

2. But experience never provides us with the idea of an absolutely perfect and necessary Being. For,

   a. If God is only the highest in an actual chain of experienced beings, then a higher is *possible*.

   b. And if God is separate from this chain, then He is not being based in experience. (And we have thereby left the experiential basis for the argument and imported an invalid ontological argument from pure thought.)[12]

3. Hence, a necessary Being cannot be proved from design in the world. This is not to say, however, that there is no force to the teleological argument. Kant, too, was impressed when he looked at the stars. When he put this experience in logical form it took this shape:

   a. There is everywhere in the world clear indication of intentional arrangement.

   b. The fitness of this arrangement is foreign to the things themselves (they possess this order contingently, not spontaneously).

   c. Hence, there is a sublime and wise cause (or causes) which arranged the world.

   d. That this cause is one may be inferred from the reciprocal relation of the parts to the whole universe in a mutual fit, forming a *unified* whole.

The argument, of course, is not conclusive but it does have value. (1) First, the teleological argument, while not proving a creator, does indicate an architect. (2) Since the cause can only be proportioned to the effect, the architect is only a very great being and not an all-sufficient being. (3) The argument at best yields only the *highest cause* which is not a sufficient basis of religion. (4) The step from the highest actual cause indicated by experience to the highest possible cause demanded by pure reason is an unjustifiable ontological leap. Kant concludes that theists using the teleological argument to prove the existence of God have made a desperate leap from the soil of experience to fly in the thin air of pure possibility without even admitting that they have left the ground.

Ducasse: Cosmological Problems in the Ontological Argument

According to C. J. Ducasse, the teleological argument suffers from several other defects.[13]

1. First, it does not prove a perfect creator.

   a. The design in the world is not perfect, and it needs only an imperfect cause to explain it (man is just as capable of judging what is not purposeful as what is purposeful).

   b. Evil, waste, and disease all show lack of purpose.

2. Further, designers can even be inferior to what they design (microscopes, steam-shovels, and computers all have powers their inventors do not).

3. Finally, the teleological argument has the same defects as the cosmological argument, viz.,

   a. If the world needs a designer then so does that designer, ad infinitum.

   b. But if *everything* is caused (a la the principle of sufficient reason), then there can be no first cause.

Ducasse offers what he considers a more plausible alternative to the teleological argument which may be stated in this way:

1. The most economical explanation is probably the correct one.

2. The world is more economically explained by a purposeless

craving within man (a la Schopenhauer) than by some intelligence beyond the world.

   a. It is simpler, since it is located in man and not dependent on causes beyond the world.

   b. It explains things as well as God does (e.g., the eye is a purposeless craving for sight which is never satisfied).

3. Therefore, it is more probable that the world is the result of a purposeless craving (than of intelligent design).

This argument is far from definitive. It is open to challenge at several points. (1) Is the principle of economy or simplicity appropriately applied to the question of the cause of the universe? (Hume's skeptic argued against applying it, and skepticism cannot have it both ways.) (2) Even granting that the simplest explanation is the best, is a purposeless craving really the simplest explanation? (It appears far more obscure and complicated in some respects.) (3) Finally, how can a purposeless craving result in purposeful activity?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

In Hume's *Dialogues* Philo was the skeptic, Demea was the pantheist and Cleanthes was the theist defending the teleological argument. Offering his own opinion at the conclusion, Hume said, "I confess that, upon a serious review of the whole, I cannot but think that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth." [14] It seems to me that Hume was correct. Along with Hume and Kant, it seems necessary to grant some weight to the teleological argument. However, in accord with theirs and others' criticisms, it seems necessary to admit that the teleological argument as such falls short of a demonstrative proof of an absolutely perfect God. In particular, we conclude the following: the teleological argument as such —

1. makes it probable but not certain that there is some kind of intelligence behind the design manifested in the world (chance is possible though not probable);

2. favors the unity of this cause (viz., one mind rather than many);

3. does not demand that this cause be absolutely perfect;

4. does not *ipso facto* explain the presence of evil and disorder in the world;

5. is based on the cosmological argument, claiming that there must be a *cause* for the design in the world.

This last point is important. For if the principle of causality cannot be supported, then, admittedly, one cannot insist that there must be a cause or ground of the design in the world. Design might just be there without the need for any cause. Only if there is a purpose for everything can it follow that the world must have a Purposer behind it. The teleological argument does depend on the cosmological argument in this important sense that it borrows from it the principle of causality. As can be readily seen from every form of the design argument, the underlying assumption is that there needs to be a cause or reason for the order in the world. Deny this and the argument fails, [15] for the alleged design (if uncaused) would be merely gratuitous or given.

MORAL ARGUMENTS AND OBJECTIONS

Another basic approach to the existence of God is the moral one. At first it was not used as a rational argument but as a practical postulate. Later forms of this approach, however, have been presented as bona fide attempts to establish God's existence by rational argumentation.

Kant: Positing God out of Moral Necessity

Kant categorically rejected any theoretical *proofs* for the existence of an absolutely perfect or necessary Being. He did, however, offer in their place a God which must be practically *posited* in order to make sense of our moral experience. This is not a *rational* demonstration for Kant but a *practical* presupposition. His reasoning runs like this: [16]

1. Felicity (happiness) is the *desire* of all men (what they *want*).

2. Morality (the categorical imperative) is the *duty* of all men (what they *ought* to do).

3. Unity of these two is the greatest good (*summum bonum*).

4. The *summum bonum* ought to be sought (since it is the greatest good).

5. The unity of duty and desire (which is the greatest good) is not possible by finite man in limited time.

6. But the moral necessity of doing something implies the possibility of doing it (ought implies can).

7. Therefore, it is morally (i.e., practically) necessary to postulate —

   a. deity to make this unity possible (i.e., the *power* to bring them together) and

   b. immortality to make this unity achievable (i.e., the *time* beyond this life to do it).

Kant's moral postulate may be stated in another form which is somewhat more simplified:

1. The greatest good is that all men have happiness in harmony with duty.

2. All men ought to strive for the realization of the greatest good.

3. What men ought to do, they can do.

4. But men are able to realize the greatest good neither in this life nor without God.

5. Therefore, it must be assumed that there is a future life and God to achieve the greatest good.

There are several obvious objections to this as a proof for God's existence. (1) It was not offered as a proof by Kant. And, as he said, it is in no sense rationally necessary. It is only practically required in order to make sense of one's moral experience. (2) If against Kant's intentions, it is construed as a rational proof, then it has several loopholes. (a) It is possible that the *summum bonum* is not achievable. Many philosophies have held that it is not. (b) Further, it is possible that ought does not imply can. Some theologians (e.g., Luther) have held that men are indeed incapable of living up to God's moral requirements of them. (c) Some have challenged the premise that duty and desire cannot be achieved

in this life. One's duty may be to do the desirable or pleasurable thing, as hedonists and utilitarians contend. (3) Finally, the argument as such only calls for one to live *"as if"* there is a God and immortal state. That is to say, Kant's argument necessitates only the conclusion that one must live *as though there were a God.* Kant does not contend that the moral experience demands that one postulate that there really is a God. These objections will suffice to show that, despite Kant's intents, the argument by no means demands that one conclude that there really is a God.

Rashdall: Positing God Is Rationally Necessary

However, what Kant did not do with the moral argument, others did. Hastings Rashdall, beginning with the objectivity of a moral law, argues that there must be an absolutely perfect moral Mind. [17]

1. An absolutely perfect moral ideal exists (at least psychologically in our minds).

2. An absolute moral law can exist only in an absolute mind, because:

   a. Ideals can exist only in minds (thoughts exist only in thinkers).

   b. Absolute ideas exist only in absolute minds (not in individual minds).

3. Hence, it is rationally necessary to postulate an absolute mind as that in which the absolute moral ideal exists.

In support of the objectivity of the absolute moral idea Rashdall offers the following arguments:

1. Morality is generally understood as objectively binding.

2. The mature mind understands morality as being an objective obligation.

3. Moral objectivity is a rationally necessary postulate [something cannot be judged as better or worse unless there is a standard of comparison].

4. Objective moral ideals are practically necessary to postulate.

If the moral law is objective and independent of individual minds, then it must reside in a Mind which exists independently of finite

human minds. It is rationally necessary to postulate such a Mind to account for the objective existence of the moral law.

Sorley: An Expansion of the Moral Argument

The moral argument rests heavily on the objectivity of the moral law, a premise which has not gained universal recognition. It is understandable, then, that the proponents of the argument would offer an expanded defense of this point. W. R. Sorley does precisely this in his statement of the moral argument. It runs like this: [18]

1. There is an objective moral law independent of men's consciousness of it and despite their lack of conformity to it, as evidenced by the facts that —

    a. Men are conscious of such a law.

    b. Men acknowledge its claim on them even while not yielding to it.

    c. Men admit its validity is prior to their recognition of it.

    d. No finite mind can fully grasp its fulness.

    e. All finite minds together have not reached agreement on its meaning nor conformity to its ideal.

2. But ideas exist only in minds.

3. Therefore, there must be a supreme Mind (beyond all finite minds) in which this objective moral law exists.

Briefly, Sorley is arguing that since there exists a moral law superior to, prior to, and independent of, all finite minds, then there must be a supreme Mind from which this objective moral ideal is derived.

Further, Sorley notes an important difference between the argument from natural law and the moral law argument. Natural laws can be explained as part of the observational universe (having only formal necessity). Not so with the moral law. Being prescriptive on the world and not merely descriptive of the world, the moral law cannot be considered part of the scientific universe. It is more than the way nature *is* and more than what men *do;* it is what men *ought to do* whether they are doing it or not. And since this moral ought is beyond the world, unlike a natural law,

it cannot be considered a formal part of the universe. The moral law calls for an explanation beyond the natural world, for it comes from beyond the observable universe. It is a prescription on man's activity which is not descriptively reducible to man's activity.

Trueblood: Further Refinement of the Moral Argument

Elton Trueblood adds some significant dimensions to the moral argument, though his formulation falls generally in the tradition of Rashdall and Sorley. Trueblood formulates the argument in the following way:

1. There must be an objective moral law, otherwise —

    a. There would not be such great agreement on the meaning of it.

    b. It would follow that no ethical disagreements have ever occurred (each man being right from his own perspective, if there is no objective view),

    c. No moral judgment has ever been wrong (each being subjectively right).

    d. No ethical question could even be discussed (there being no objective meaning to any ethical terms).

    e. Contradiction would result (since opposites could both be right).

2. This moral law is beyond individual men and beyond men as a whole.

    a. It is beyond *individual men,* for they often sense a conflict with it.

    b. It is beyond *all men,* for they collectively fall short of it and judge the progress of the whole race by it.

3. This moral law must come from a moral Legislator because —

    a. Law has no meaning unless it comes from a *mind* (only minds emit meaning).

    b. Disloyalty makes no sense unless it is to a *person.*

    c. Truth is meaningless unless it is a meeting of mind with mind.

d. Hence, duty to and discovery of moral law makes sense only if there is a mind or person behind that moral law.

4. Therefore, there must be a moral personal Mind behind the moral law.

C. S. Lewis: Further Expansion of the Moral Argument

In recent years the moral argument has gained a wider hearing and reception through the writings of C. S. Lewis. His argument falls in the tradition of Rashdall-Sorley but takes on some additional arguments of Lewis' own thought. Here is a summary of his reasoning: [19]

1. There must be a universal moral law, or else —
   a. Disagreements would make no sense (as we assume they do).
   b. All criticisms are meaningless (e.g., "The Nazis are wrong").
   c. Promise and treaty keeping are unnecessary.
   d. We would not make excuses for breaking the moral law.

2. This moral law cannot be herd instinct, or else —
   a. The stronger impulse would always win, which it does not (for the moral law sometimes sides with the weaker impulse).
   b. We would always be acting *from* instinct, which we do not. We sometimes act *for* instinct to bolster the weaker impulse (e.g., to help someone in trouble).
   c. Some instincts would always be right, which they are not (even mother love and patriotism are sometimes wrong).

3. This moral law cannot be mere convention, because —
   a. Not everything learned is a mere social convention (e.g., math is learned *through,* but is not *based on,* society; it is valid independent of society).
   b. Judgment about the moral progress of a society makes sense only if the basis of that value judgment is independent of human society.
   c. Variations in value judgments are largely factual, not moral (e.g., witches are no longer treated as murderers,

not because murder is now right but because *as a matter of fact* witches are not thought to be murderers).

4. The moral law cannot be identified with a law of nature, since —
   a. The moral law is not a descriptive "is" but a prescriptive "ought."
   b. Situations equally factually inconvenient differ morally (e.g., a man who gets the seat I want in a bus because he was there first vs. the man who jumped in front of me to get it).
   c. Sometimes factually more convenient situations are morally worse than those less convenient (e.g., a man who accidentally trips me is not wrong as is a man who tries to trip me but fails).
   d. Factually convenient situations can be wrong (e.g., a betrayal of one's friend).
   e. To argue that something is factually convenient to the whole race does not explain why *I* should do it when it does not pay *me* (unless I am under some universal moral obligation to do it, despite the fact that it is not desirable to me).

5. The moral law cannot be mere fancy because —
   a. We cannot get rid of it even though we would sometimes like to do so.
   b. We did not make it; it is impressed upon us from without.
   c. Value judgments would be meaningless without it.

6. Man is the key to understanding this moral law because —
   a. He has inside information that is more than merely descriptive (the prescriptive "ought" cannot be derived from a mere descriptive "is").
   b. The source of this moral law must be more like man (mind) than nature (law). Moral laws come from minds, not from matter.
   c. The source of the moral law cannot be merely part of the (descriptive scientific) universe any more than an architect is no more than the building he makes.

7. Therefore, there is an absolutely perfect power outside of mankind which is more like mind than anything we know, since —

   a. It gives us moral commands.

   b. It is very much interested in our behavior (i.e., in the keeping of these commands).

   c. If it were not absolutely good, then all moral effort would be futile in the long run (e.g., we may be sacrificing our lives for the vain cause of "right" unless there is really an absolute "right").

   d. This source of all right must be absolutely good, for the standard for all good cannot be less than completely good himself).

Before concluding this argument, Lewis takes a swipe at Bergson's creative evolution which would account for the presence of the moral law as a kind of immanent Life-Force within nature. This, says Lewis, has the *comfort* of believing in God (as opposed to a blind force) without the *cost* of believing in God (in terms of one's responsibility to a moral Being beyond this world). This view, wrote Lewis, is the greatest achievement of wishful thinking in the world. Furthermore, if the Life-Force can strive and purpose, then it is really a Mind after all, which is precisely what the moral argument contends.

Russell's Moral Law Disproof of God

Bertrand Russell offered a kind of moral disproof of God. It is brief and to the point:

1. If there is a moral law, it either results from God's fiat or it does not.

2. If it results from God's fiat, it is arbitrary (and then God is not essentially good).

3. If it does not result from God fiat, God too is subject to it (and if God is subject to it, then God is not ultimate; the moral law is).

4. So, either God is not essentially good (because He is arbitrary about what is right and wrong) or else God is not

ultimate (because there is a moral law to which even He is subject).

5. But neither an arbitrary God nor a less than ultimate God is worthy of an ultimate commitment (i.e., neither is religiously worthy).

6. Therefore, there is no God (who is worthy of religious devotion).[20]

To say the least, the argument is clever. It is put in dilemma form and, hence, the theistic alternatives will reply to that form. (1) First, some theists (following Ockham) have admitted that the moral law flows from the will of God but deny that this is arbitrarily and wrong. If God's will is the ultimate, then what God wills is the ultimate basis for all right and wrong. (2) Others (following Aquinas), have insisted that it is a false disjunction. The moral law flows from the nature of God by way of the will of God. God's will is subject to God's nature, which nature is the basis for the moral law. And God is subject to His own nature. Of the two alternatives the latter seems a more plausible alternative for a theist. And either one would invalidate Russell's disproof.

Usually the fact of evil and injustice in the world is not used as a categorical disproof for an absolutely perfect God, but merely as lending probability that such a God does not exist.[21] However, on occasion, such a disproof is offered. To qualify as a disproof of the theistic God, an argument need not demonstrate that no God exists but merely that no absolutely perfect God could exist. Thus any argument that could prove a God finite in love or justice would be a disproof of traditional theism. Most arguments for a finite God do not claim to be demonstrative and, hence, would not qualify as disproofs of an infinitely perfect God. Some antitheists, however, seem to feel that an absolutely perfect God can be ruled out on moral grounds.

Bayle: The Basic Form of the Dilemma

Pierre Bayle's (1647-1706) famous dilemma gives the basic logical form of the moral argument against God. According to his formula,[22]

1. Evil exists.

2. An omnipotent God could destroy evil.

3. A benevolent God would destroy evil.

4. Therefore, since evil is not destroyed, then either —

   a. God is omnipotent and, hence, malevolent in some way, or —

   b. God is benevolent and, hence, impotent in some way, or

   c. God is both malevolent and impotent, or

   d. There is no God at all.

For several reasons, most nontheists have not pressed the argument as a definitive disproof. (1) First, it is possible that God is doing something to destroy evil. (2) Second, it is possible that there is some greater good in permitting evil. (3) Or, it is possible that what seems to be evil is part of a larger picture of good. (4) Fourth, it is possible that it would be in some way contradictory to God's nature to destroy evil, and even an omnipotent being cannot do the contradictory. (5) Finally, it is possible that God is all-perfect but not all-powerful. If so, the problem of evil is explained and the perfection of God is retained, since He would destroy evil if He could. These logical possibilities notwithstanding, there are some who would insist that the logic of injustice lends itself to a kind of disproof of God.

Camus: Theism Is Contrary to Humanitarianism

The literary expression of this argument is forcefully expressed in Camus' *Plague*. Speaking of a plague brought by rats into the city of Oran before the Second World War, Camus insists that: [23]

1. Either one must join the doctor and fight the plague or join the priest and not fight the plague.

2. But not to join the doctor and fight the plague would be antihumanitarian.

3. But to fight the plague is to fight against God who sent it.

4. Therefore, if humanitarianism is right, theism is wrong.

Thus, if humanitarianism is right, there cannot be an all-loving God. And if there is some kind of God, he must be worked against, since he is the cause of evil. Since other arguments against

theism follow this basic form, let us examine them first before looking at the theistic objections to the argument.

Other Forms of the Moral Argument Against God

In response to John Hick's defense of theism, [24] Ronald Puccetti argued as follows: [25]

1. There are instances of innocent suffering.

2. An all-wise, all-powerful, all-good God would not allow innocent suffering.

3. Therefore, such a God does not exist.

Puccetti anticipates objections from the theistic point of view concerning premise two. In support of this premise Puccetti argues that it is not necessary for him to prove that God's nonexistence is logically necessary. It is sufficient for him to point out that theistic attempts to give reasons for innocent suffering always are inconsistent with the nature of such a God. That is, it is not *logically* impossible for there to be both a God and innocent sufferers, but it is *practically* impossible. For to say God is all-good, even though He allows innocent suffering, is like saying one does not know of any good reason that Eichmann should have killed all those Jews nor may one ever be found. But he believes there is a good reason for his doing so because he believes him to be a morally good man. Puccetti's argument takes this form:

1. Any view one can supply no plausible reason for is a practically (though not logically) impossible position.

2. The theist can supply no plausible reason why an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God should allow the innocent to suffer.

3. Therefore, it is practically impossible that there is such a God.

Theists have responded in several ways to this argument. (1) First, it does not logically disprove an all-perfect God, since it admits that it is logically possible that such is compatible with innocent suffering. (2) Innocent suffering is not the same as unrewarded and unredeeming suffering. The former is not necessarily

incompatible with theism; the latter is. (3) No suffering is purely innocent. There is always some fault, not of God, involved in human suffering. (4) There are plausible explanations as to why God permits innocent suffering.[26] Answers two and four seem to offer the most hope out of the dilemma for theism. Their plausibility would definitely invalidate the argument against an all-perfect God.

J. L. Mackie has summarized the basic logic of the moral argument against God in the following form:[27]

1. An all-powerful God could eliminate evil and an all-loving God would stop it.

2. There is evil in the world that is not being eliminated.

3. Therefore, either there is —
   a. no God with both attributes, or
   b. no God who is all-powerful, for He *cannot* stop evil, or
   c. no God who is all-loving, for He *will not* stop evil.

Of course, here too, it is possible for a theist to challenge the assumption (1) that God is not trying to eliminate evil or (2) that evil is not being destroyed nor will be destroyed. Further (3), it is always possible that the evil in the world is somehow necessary to a greater good in the world. Unless these possibilities can be eliminated, the attempt at a moral disproof of God fails.

One last attempt to disprove God via evil must be examined. McCloskey's argument may be put in this way:

1. Either we should work to eliminate all suffering or we should not.

2. If we should not work against all suffering, then the moral law is wrong (for it declares it our moral duty to work to eliminate all suffering).

3. If we should not work against suffering, then theism is wrong (because God's existence is not justifiable unless suffering is justified as a condition to a greater good).

4. But the moral law is right (viz., we should work to eliminate all suffering).

5. Therefore, theism is wrong (i.e., an absolutely perfect God does not exist).

It would appear that theists would want to grant premises one, two, and four but not the conclusion five. If so, the theist would ask for proof of premise three. McCloskey would provide the following proof for premise three:[28]

1. The theist is morally obligated to promote the greatest good.

2. The greatest good cannot be achieved by eliminating suffering, for —
   a. If the necessary condition for achieving something is eliminated, then the possibility of achieving that something is eliminated.
   b. And eliminating evil would (according to theism) eliminate the necessary condition for achieving a greater good.
   c. Hence, the greatest good cannot be achieved by eliminating suffering.

3. Therefore, the theist is morally obligated in accord with his own thesis not to work to eliminate all evil.

The whole case against God from the moral unjustifiability of suffering can be more briefly stated like this:

1. If suffering is justifiable, then it is wrong to work to eliminate it.

2. It is not wrong to work to eliminate suffering (it is right to do so).

3. Hence, suffering is not justifiable.

4. But if evil is not justifiable, then the theistic God does not exist.

5. For God's existence is incompatible with unjustifiable suffering.

6. But there is unjustifiable suffering (premise three above).

7. Therefore, the theistic God cannot exist.

In this final form of the moral argument against God it becomes obvious that if the conclusion is to be denied, the theist must reject the major premise. The theist may hold that what causes suffering (viz., sin) is wrong and thus work to eliminate the cause. But to work merely against the result of sin without attacking its cause is

futile. The theist does not believe that all pain is good as such, otherwise he should refuse pain pills. But the theist may contend that permitting suffering (without promoting it) as the condition to a greater good is not wrong for God, since God can achieve a greater good by permitting it than not. That is, the theist may insist that God is working against suffering and evil, and He desires us to do so as well, even though God knows that the presence of evil is a condition for a greater good. This solution is at least *possible* (its plausibility will be discussed later in chapters 16 and 17), and as such it invalidates any moral disproof of God.

Two final observations are in order on attempted moral disproofs of God. First, they all appear to be doomed to failure, for in order to establish that there is really some injustice in the world that militates against God, they must assume some standard of justice beyond the world by which the situation is judged to be *un*-just, i.e., *not*-just. In fact, in order for the antitheist to affirm that the situation is *ultimately* unjust, he must assume an ultimate standard of justice. [29] In short, he proves too much by trying to disprove too much. For an Ultimate Justice is what theists claim to be the nature of God. Hence, the antitheist's disproof can backfire into an argument for God. This leads to the second observation. Even if the antitheist insists that an ultimate standard of justice is not to be identified with God but perhaps with something like the Platonic Good, nonetheless he has granted a major premise in the theistic argument — the objectivity of the moral law — and leaves for the theist to establish only the premise that ultimate moral laws imply an Ultimate Moral Law-Giver.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE MORAL ARGUMENT

Several summary comments may now be stated: (1) First, no rationally inescapable moral proofs for God have been offered, for it is still logically *possible* (however improbable) that (a) there is no objective moral law (it may be merely a psychological projection or a social convention), or (b) that there is an objective moral law but no Moral Law-Giver behind it. That is, this may be a universe with an objective moral standard (apart from God) to which, if there is a God, He does not measure up. (2) Secondly, neither has any definitive moral disproof of God been offered. For it is always *possible* (and shown to be plausible by further

argument) that evil is being permitted for a greater good. (3) Thirdly, the theistic argument is not complete until it presents its case for the plausibility of evil being a condition for a greater good. (4) Fourthly, when the antitheistic argument is pressed too far, it backfires either into an argument for God (i.e., for Ultimate Justice which the theist identifies with God) or at least it grants a major premise in the theist's argument, viz., an objective moral law. (5) Fifthly, even granting an objective moral law, the theistic argument depends on a premise borrowed from the cosmological argument, viz., that laws need causes or explanations. This is not true in an absurd universe or one in which the law of sufficient reason does not apply. In brief, whatever weight the moral argument possesses is derived from a cosmological type of argument. We must await the exposition of the cosmological argument to see if there is a firm basis for the moral argument.

NOTES CHAPTER SIX

1. See Donald Burrill, *The Cosmological Argument*, pp. 165-170. (Earlier forms of the teleological argument are found in Socrates [see Xenophan's *Memorabalia* I, IV, 4ff.,] Plato [*Phaedo*], Philo [*Works of Philo*] III, 182, 183, Sect. 33, and Aquinas' [*Summa Theologica* I, 2, 3] "fifth way.")

2. Ibid., pp. 171-176.

3. Ibid., pp. 177-184.

4. See *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, p. 589.

5. See Burrill, *Cosmological Argument*, pp. 184-191.

6. Ibid., pp. 191-198.

7. Ibid., pp. 209-232.

8. R. E. D. Clark, *The Universe: Plan or Accident?*

9. Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action*, p. 46.

10. F. R. Tennant in John Hick, *The Existence of God*, pp. 120-136.

11. See next chapter for Kant's objection to the ontological argument.

12. Burrill, *Cosmological Argument*, pp. 199-207.

13. Ibid., pp. 234-239.

14. Ibid., p. 189.

15. See chapter 8.

16. From Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (Book II, Ch. II, Sect. V), in Hick, *Existence of God*, pp. 137-143.

17. Ibid., pp. 144-152.

18. See Sorley, "The Moral Argument" in *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 201-211.

19. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, chs. 1 - 5.

20. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, p. 590.

21. This whole problem of evil and God will be treated fully in chapters 14 through 17.

22. See *Selections From Bayle's Dictionary*, pp. 157-183.

23. See Albert Camus, *The Plague*, pp. 115-123; 201-207.

24. See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*.

25. Ronald Puccetti, "The Loving God — Some Observations on John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 255ff.

26. The plausible theistic alternatives are offered in chapters 15 and 16.

27. See J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind*, reprinted in Nelson Pike, *God and Evil*.

28. H. J. McCoskey, "God and Evil," *The Philosophical Quarterly* (April, 1960), reprinted in Nelson Pike, *God and Evil*.

29. C. S. Lewis makes this point in *Mere Christianity*, pp. 45, 46.

7

Ontological Arguments

It has been suggested in the two previous chapters that no rationally inescapable proofs or disproofs of God have been presented from either moral or teleological experience. Indeed, some (following Kant) would argue that the only hope for a theistic proof is to leave the realm of experience and enter the sphere of pure reason. Such is precisely what the ontological argument purports to do. Its proponents have sometimes argued that the existence of God is more necessary than the conclusions of mathematics. Descartes wrote, "As for me, I dare well to boast of having found a proof of God's existence which I find entirely satisfactory, and by which I know God exists, more certainly than I know the truth of any geometric proposition."[1]

ONTOLOGICAL PROOFS AND DISPROOFS OF GOD

The ontological argument has had a fascinating history from Anselm to the present. Most of its proponents have held it to be rationally inescapable once one grants the very idea of an absolutely perfect or necessary Being. The Augustinian monk, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), is the author of the argument, though it was not labeled ontological by him but by Kant who thought it to have an ontological invalidity in it. For Anselm it was kind of "proof from prayer," for he came upon it by meditating on the concept of an absolutely perfect being, the Christian God.

Anselm's First Ontological Proof

It is now widely held that Anselm actually offered two forms of the ontological argument. The first one went like this:[2]

1. God is by definition that than which nothing greater can be conceived. (This definition is understood by both believers and unbelievers.)

2. It is one thing to exist in the understanding only and another thing to exist both in the understanding and outside the understanding (e.g., a painting existing only in the painter's mind as opposed to one both in his mind and existing on canvas too).

3. It is greater to exist both in the understanding and outside the understanding than in the understanding only.

4. Therefore, God must exist both in the understanding and outside the understanding (i.e., in reality), for if He did not, then we could conceive of One who did, which would be greater. But God by definition (agreed upon by both believer and unbeliever) is the greatest Being conceivable. Hence, God must exist.

The above form is that in which Anselm presents the argument. It conceals what later analysts feel is a hidden premise. If so, then in order to reveal this premise the argument should be stated this way:

1. Whatever *can* be affirmed (predicated) of the most perfect Being possible (conceivable) *must* be affirmed of it (otherwise, by definition, it would not be the most perfect Being possible).

2. It is possible to affirm a real existence (outside of our minds) of the most perfect Being possible.

3. Hence, a real existence of the most perfect Being possible must be affirmed.

The same argument can be put in a negative form:

1. Nothing possible can be denied of the most perfect Being possible (conceivable).

2. Real (extra mental) existence is possible for the most perfect Being possible.

3. Therefore, real existence cannot be denied of the most perfect Being possible.

In brief, when one begins to think or meditate on the concept of an absolutely perfect Being, it is literally inconceivable that such a Being could not exist.

Anselm's Second Form of the Ontological Proof

In repeating his argument, Anselm gave what some feel is a second form of the ontological argument. In summary,

1. It is logically necessary to affirm of a necessary Existent what is logically necessary to the concept of it.

2. Real existence is logically necessary to the concept of a necessary Existent.

3. Hence, it is logically necessary to affirm that a necessary Existent exists.

The same argument in negative form comes out like this:

1. It is logically impossible to deny what is necessary to the concept of a necessary Existent (for it would be contradictory to say that it is not necessary that it is necessary).

2. Real existence is logically necessary to the concept of a necessary Existent.

3. Therefore, it is logically impossible to deny real existence of a necessary Existent.

The difference between the arguments is that the first one is based on *predictability* of existence to an absolute perfect Being and the second is based on the *inconceivability* of the nonexistence of a necessary Being. The first form appears to be subject to some criticism to which the last is not, such as Kant's criticism that existence is not a predicate (see below).

Anselm's Debate With Gaunilo

A fellow monk, Gaunilo, was not convinced that Anselm's argument was undeniable. The ensuing debate will help clarify the Anselmian argument. We will give first Gaunilo's objection and then Anselm's answer:

Objection 1: The argument is built on the false premise that whatever exists in the mind must also exist in reality outside the mind.

Answer 1: The argument does not apply to just any being but to one only, viz., an absolutely perfect Being (which for Anselm would also have to be a necessary Being, since if it lacked necessity, it would not be absolutely perfect).

Objection 2: If God's nonexistence were really inconceivable, then no one could doubt His existence. But men do doubt and even deny it; there are atheists.

Answer 2: Men can doubt or deny God's nonexistence, but they cannot *conceive* of God's nonexistence. God's nonexistence is affirmable but not conceivable.

Objection 3: We cannot even form the concept of the most perfect being possible. It is only a series of words with no empirical reference or meaning.

Answer 3: We do understand what the word "God" means as is evidenced by the following facts: 1) it is such a common, familiar word; 2) our faith and conscience provide content for it; 3) conceptions do not have to be in terms of sensible images — abstract concepts are possible; 4) God can be understood indirectly, the way the sun is understood from its rays; 5) we can form the concept of the most perfect by working up from what is less than perfect to the perfect and from there to what is most perfectly possible; and 6) those who deny that they can conceive of God must have some conception of what they are denying.

Objection 4: The existence of God can no more be inferred from the idea of a perfect Being than the existence of a perfect island can be inferred from the mere idea of a perfect island.

Answer 4: The existence of an island cannot be inferred from its idea because it is not an absolutely perfect Being which cannot be lacking in anything. The idea of an island may lack existence, but an absolutely perfect Being cannot lack anything, especially being.

Objection 5: God's nonexistence is no more inconceivable than my own nonexistence. I can conceive of my own nonexistence, and I can conceive of God's, too.

Answer 5: This is not so. The nonexistence of everything except a necessary Being is conceivable. Granted that I do exist, I cannot *affirm* that I do not exist. But it is *conceivable* that I might never have existed. Not so with a necessary Being. If it is possible for a necessary Being to exist, then it is necessary that it exist. Its nonexistence is inconceivable.

Objection 6: God's existence must be proved before we can discuss His essence, otherwise there is no basis for saying He *is* the most perfect Being possible.

Answer 6: This is not so. We can compare ideal characteristics before we know if they are real.

Finally, Anselm charged that Gaunilo's objections and restatements of Anselm's argument reveal that Gaunilo misunderstood the argument as follows:

Gaunilo thought the argument was this:

1. God is the greatest of all beings.
2. It is greater to exist in reality than merely in the understanding.
3. Therefore, God must exist in reality (or else He would not be the greatest).

This, said Anselm, confuses the greatest *actual* Being with the greatest Being *possible*. The correct argument says only that the great *possible* or conceivable Being must exist. Gaunilo missed this fundamental distinction and, hence, he missed the central thrust of the argument, claimed Anselm. It appears that Anselm won the debate. Gaulino did misunderstand the argument and Anselm did satisfactorily answer his objections. This is not to say that the Anselmian argument is valid. There are other objections which have been leveled at Anselm's ontological proof since Gaunilo.

Aquinas' Objection to the Ontological Argument

There was another medieval monk who objected to Anselm's argument. St. Thomas Aquinas understood Anselm to be saying this: [3]

1. God is by definition that than which nothing greater can be conceived.

2. What exists actually and mentally is greater than what exists only mentally.

3. Therefore, God must exist actually (for once the sentence "God exists" is understood, it is seen to be a self-evident proposition).

Aquinas' objections to the argument are three. (1) First, not everyone understands the term "God" to mean "that than which nothing greater can be conceived." (2) Even if God is understood this way, it does not prove that God exists actually but only mentally. The only way to prove God's existence this way is to presuppose it. (3) The proposition "God exists" is self-evident *in itself* but is not self-evident *to us*. Because we cannot know God's essence (as a necessary Being) directly but only indirectly through His effects in creation. Hence, the only way we can arrive at God's existence is through the existence of creatures (a posteriori) and not by a direct intuition of that existence (a priori) via pure conception of it.

Aquinas' objection grows out of the difference of his epistemological starting point (in experience) with that of Anselm's (in thought). In this respect Aquinas was more Aristotelian and Anselm was more Platonic. Other than this, it would seem that Aquinas does not appreciate the full force of the Anselmian argument apart from the alleged Platonic implications. Aquinas, too, had the concept of a necessary Being and yet he did not seem to appreciate that Anselm argued that this very concept (however one arrives at it) logically demands that one affirm that such a Being really exists.

Descartes' Formulation of the Ontological Argument

Eleventh-century history repeats itself with some new advancement in the ontological argument in the seventeenth century. Descartes, too, has two forms of the ontological argument. And, like Anselm with Gaunilo, he held polemics with the priest Caterus.[4] The second form of Descartes' arguments run this way:

1. It is logically necessary to affirm of a concept whatever is essential to the nature (definition) of that concept (e.g., a triangle must have three sides).

2. Existence is a logically necessary part of the concept of a necessary Existent (otherwise it could not be defined as a necessary *Existent*).

3. Therefore, it is logically necessary to affirm that a necessary Existent does exist.

Briefly stated, if God by definition cannot *not* exist, then He must exist. For if it is impossible to conceive of a Being which cannot *not* exist as nonexistent, then it is necessary to conceive of such a Being as existing. Descartes' first form of the ontological argument is as follows:

1. Whatever we clearly and distinctly perceive of something is true. (Clarity and distinctness are the guarantee that there is no falsehood in them.)

2. We clearly and distinctly perceive that the conception of an absolutely perfect Being necessitates the existence of that Being.

 a. For it is impossible to conceive of an absolutely perfect Being as lacking anything.

 b. But if an absolutely perfect Being does not exist, then it would lack existence.

 c. Hence, it is clear that the concept of an absolutely perfect Being necessitates its existence.

3. Therefore, it is true that an absolutely perfect Being cannot lack existence (i.e., it must exist).

Descartes was careful to qualify his argument so as to avoid (hopefully) some of the misdirected criticism such as Anselm received from Gaunilo. Descartes insisted the following propositions: (1) This argument applies only to an absolutely perfect or necessary Being. Any other being, even triangles, can be conceived not to exist. Only a necessary Being cannot be conceived as not existing. (2) It is not necessary for anyone to think of God, but if and when he does begin to think of God, he must conceive of God as necessarily existing. Any conception of a necessary Existent as not existing is contradictory. (3) To conceive of God as a necessary Being is not imaginary but necessary, for (a) God alone is the Being whose essence necessitates His existence; (b) it is

impossible to conceive of two or more supremely perfect beings. There can be only one completely perfect being possible; and (c) there is an infinite number of other properties in God which I cannot change by imagination. The concept of a necessary Being must be what it is and it cannot be otherwise. Hence, the concept of a necessary Being cannot be the product of my imagination.

The Debate Between Caterus and Descartes

Caterus the priest agreed with Aquinas against Descartes that the ontological argument proves only a conceptual but not a real existence of God. Further, he contended, by way of illustration, that the complex of words "existent lion" is conceptually necessary if it is to remain a complex, but this does not prove that a lion must exist. One must look to experience for the existence of a lion and not to any necessary concept about a lion.

Descartes replied by insisting that Aquinas refuted an argument that Descartes did not hold, viz., that existence is concluded from the meaning of the word "God." Descartes then repeated the argument he did hold in several different forms. The following is Descartes' first restatement of the argument:

1. Whatever we clearly and distinctly perceive is true.

2. We clearly and distinctly perceive that the concept of a necessary Existent necessitates that it exists.

3. Therefore, it is true that a necessary Existent necessarily exists.

The second restatement for Caterus is as follows:

1. Whatever is of the essence of something must be affirmed of it.

2. It is of the essence of God that He exists (for by definition His essence is to exist).

3. Therefore, existence must be affirmed of God.

The third restatement in response to Caterus was this:

1. God's existence cannot be conceived of as only possible but not actual (for in such case we would not be thinking of Him as God, viz., as a necessary Existent).

2. But we can conceive of God's existence (it is not a contradictory concept).

3. Therefore, God's existence must be conceived of as more than possible (viz., as actual).

Other Reactions to Descartes' Proofs

Certain other seventeenth-century philosophers reacted to Descartes' ontological argument negatively. They restated his argument like this:

1. If it is not contradictory that God exists, then it is certain that He exists.

2. It is not contradictory that God exists.

3. So, it is certain that God exists.

In view of this new form of the argument, these philosophers offered two objections which (if true) would invalidate Descartes' conclusion. (1) The minor premise can be doubted or denied. Hence, the argument does not necessarily follow. (2) Descartes admitted that his idea of God was inadequate. But if it is inadequate, then it is unclear. And if it is unclear, then, on Descartes' own definition of truth, it is untrue.

Descartes replied to each point. (1) First, God's existence is noncontradictory in whichever of the two senses one takes it: (a) If noncontradictory means *whatever does not disagree with human thought,* it is clearly noncontradictory. For we have not attributed to Him anything but what human thought necessitates that we attribute to Him. (b) If noncontradictory means *what cannot be known by the human mind,* then no one can know anything, let alone God's existence. Such a definition would overthrow all human thought (which Descartes feels is impossible). (2) Even if our concept of God is inadequate, it does not follow that it is contradictory, since (a) all contradiction arises from a lack of clarity, and we clearly see that God must be a necessary Being. Descartes further implies that (b) what we do not clearly see does not destroy what we do clearly see. Since we do clearly see that there is no contradiction in the concept of a necessary Being, the argument follows. For that is all that is necessary to support the disputed minor premise of the argument.

The Debate Between Gassendi and Descartes

The skeptic, Pierre Gassendi, also took issue with Descartes' ontological argument, saying that it confuses existence with a property. Gassendi makes the following points: (1) God need not exist any more than a triangle must exist, since the essence of each can be thought of apart from its existence. (2) Existence is not a property either for God or for triangles. Rather, existence is that in the absence of which there are no properties or perfections. What does not exist has no perfections and what does exist has perfections, but existence is not one of them. (3) Descartes begs the whole question by not listing existence as part of the triangle's meaning as he does list existence as part of God's definition. (4) Essence and existence can be distinguished only in thought, not in reality, whether we are speaking of Plato or of God. Hence, we must conclude that either Plato exists necessarily (if essence and existence are identical) or else God does not necessarily exist (if essence and existence are not identical). (5) We are just as free to think of God as not existing as we are to think of Pegasus as nonexisting. (6) We know triangles have 180 degrees only by demonstration, not by assumption. We need the same kind of demonstration that existence must belong to God, not merely the assumption that it does. Otherwise we could prove that anything exists. (7) Descartes did not really prove that existence is incompatible with God the way a rhombus is incompatible with a circle. But unless Descartes can demonstrate that God's existence is not logically impossible, he cannot argue that God's existence is logically necessary.

In his reply to Gassendi, Descartes stressed the following. (1) First, existence is a property (like omnipotence) in the sense that it is attributable of something. And necessary existence is a necessary property of a necessary Being, because it belongs to God's essence alone. (2) We cannot compare triangles and God on the question of necessary existence, for existence has a different relation to triangles (viz., a contingent one) than it has to a necessary Existent. (3) In view of this, it is not begging the question to include existence among the attributes of a necessary Existent. (4) Finally, existence and essence cannot be separate in God as

they are in all other things, for He would not be God if His existence were not necessary.

One important qualification emerged from this discussion. It is this: the logical inescapability of the ontological argument depends on demonstrating the logical impossibility of there being a contradiction in affirming the existence of a necessary Being. For if it is possible that the concept of a necessary Being is logically contradictory, then the existence of God cannot be affirmed as logically necessary. This point was clearly perceived by Leibniz who offered a proof to remedy the situation.

Leibniz' Argumentation of the Ontological Argument

Sensing that the basic ontological argument was valid but that it was necessary to demonstrate that the concept of God was not contradictory, Leibniz restated the argument thus: [5]

1. If it is possible for an absolutely perfect Being to exist, then it is necessary that it exist, for —

   a. By definition an absolutely perfect Being cannot lack anything.
   b. But if it did not exist, it would be lacking in existence.
   c. Hence, an absolutely perfect Being cannot be lacking in existence.

2. It is possible (noncontradictory) for an absolutely perfect Being to exist.

3. Therefore, it is necessary that an absolutely perfect Being exist.

In support of the crucial minor premise Leibniz gave this argument:

1. A perfection is a simple and irreducible quality without any essential limits.

2. Whatever is simple cannot conflict with other irresolvably simple qualities (since they differ in kind).

3. And whatever differs in kind with another cannot conflict with it (since there is no area of similarity in which they can overlap or conflict).

4. Therefore, it is possible for one being (God) to possess all possible perfections.

Even defenders of the ontological arguments do not agree that Leibniz has really proven the compatibility of all possible attributes in God.[6] Malcolm saw two problems with the arguments: (1) It assumes that there are some qualities that are essentially "positive" and others "negative," whereas this may not be the case. Some qualities may be positive in one context and negative in another. (2) Further, Leibniz wrongly assumes that some qualities are intrinsically simple, contrary to Wittgenstein who showed that what is simple in one conceptual system may be complex in another. (3) A third objection may be added. Leibniz' argument depends on the validity of the principle of the *actual* identity of what is *conceptually* indiscernable. There is a move from the conceptual to the actual here which is open to challenge.

Spinoza's Ontological Proof

Like Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, his contemporary, held that the existence of God was mathematically demonstrable. He wrote, "We cannot be more certain of the existence of anything, than the existence of a being absolutely infinite or perfect — that is, of God." And, like Descartes, Spinoza felt that this certainty was derived from the ontological proof. Spinoza's statement of the argument is this:[7]

1. There must be a cause for everything, either for its existence or for its nonexistence.
2. A necessary Being (God) necessarily exists, unless there is a cause adequate to explain why He does not exist.
3. There is no cause adequate to explain why a necessary Being does not exist,
   a. For that cause would have to be either 1) inside God's nature or 2) outside of it.
   b. But no cause outside of a necessary Existent could possibly annul it.
   c. And nothing inside a necessary Existent could annul it (there cannot be anything inside a necessary Being denying it is not a necessary Being).
   d. Hence, there is no cause adequate to explain why a necessary Being does not exist.
4. Therefore, a necessary Being necessarily exists.

It would seem that the usual objection could be leveled at Spinoza's proof, plus at least one more objection. One may object to the first premise which affirms that "there must be a cause for *nothing*." Not only is this premise without proof but it would seem to be contradictory. The law of causality demands only that "there must be a cause for *something*." It seems quite unusual to insist on a cause for nothing. Spinoza's defense of the premise is in the statement "The potentiality of nonexistence is a negation of power. . . ." But nonexistence is already a negative and a negation of nonexistence would be an affirmation of existence, which would leave the traditional basis for the ontological argument and to begin with existence. This is precisely what Spinoza does in his second form of the argument, viz. —

1. Something necessarily exists (to deny this one would have to affirm that something exists, viz., himself).
2. This necessary Existence is either finite or infinite.
3. It is possible for this necessary Existence to be infinite.
4. There must be a cause as to why this is not an infinite existence.
5. No finite existence can hinder this being an infinite Existence (and to say that an infinite Existence hinders its own infinite existence is contradictory).
6. Therefore, this must be an infinite Existence (viz., God).

There are two important things to note about Spinoza's arguments here. (1) First, he borrows from the cosmological argument the assumption that something exists, thus leaving a strictly a priori proof, as he admits. (2) Second, the conclusion of Spinoza's argument is not the theistic God of Descartes and Leibniz but a *pantheistic God*. For the infinite Existence is absolutely one; there are not in addition to it many finite substances or creatures. What theists call creatures Spinoza views as merely modes or moments in this one infinite Substance — God.

The Objections of Hume and Kant

David Hume laid down what has become a standard objection to the ontological proof as well as to any alleged proof for God's existence. It has this basic logical form:

1. Nothing is rationally demonstrable unless the contrary implies a contradiction (for if it leaves open any other possibility, then this position is not necessarily true).

2. Nothing that is distinctly conceivable implies a contradiction (if it were contradictory, it would not be distinctly conceivable; if it is impossible, it cannot be possible).

3. Whatever we conceive to exist we can also conceive as nonexistent (the existence or nonexistence of things cannot be ruled out conceptually).

4. There is no being, therefore, whose nonexistence implies a contradiction.

5. Consequently, there is no being whose existence is rationally demonstrable.

In essence, Hume reasons that no argument for God is rationally inescapable, because it always contains premises the logical denial of which is possible. The conclusions always lack logical necessity, because the premises always admit of other logical possibilities. Both friend (Malcolm) and foe (Gassendi) have already admitted that there are other logical possibilities in the ontological argument. According to this, the ontological argument fails to be a rational demonstration in the strict sense.

Kant's Critique of the Ontological Proof

It was Kant who named the argument "ontological," since he thought it made an illicit transition from the sphere of pure thought to that of actual reality (from *eidos* to *ontos*). Kant had several objections to the argument which he felt were fatal to the whole theistic cause.[8] (1) First, he objected to the fact that we have no positive concept of a necessary Being. God is defined only as that which cannot *not* be. (2) Further, necessity does not apply to existence but only to propositions. Necessity is a logical, not an ontological, qualifier. There are no existentially necessary propositions. Whatever is known by experience (which is the only way existential matters are knowable) could be otherwise. (3) Next, what is logically possible is not necessarily ontologically possible. There may be no *logical* contradiction in the necessary existence but it still may be *actually* impossible. (4) There is no contra-

diction involved in rejecting *both* the idea and the existence of a necessary Being. Likewise, there is no contradiction in rejecting both the triangle and its three-sidedness. Contradiction results in rejecting only one without the other. (5) Existence is not a predicate, as though it were a perfection or property that could be affirmed of a subject or thing. Existence is not a *perfection* of an essence but a *positing* of that perfection. Kant implies the following argument to support this point:

1. Whatever adds nothing to the conception of an essence is not part of that essence.

2. Existence adds nothing to the conception of an essence (i.e., no characteristic is added to an essence by positing it as real rather than as imaginary; a real dollar does not have any characteristics which an imagined one lacks).

3. Therefore, existence is not part of an essence (i.e., it is not a perfection which can be predicated of something).

If Kant's last criticism is solid, it invalidates at least the first form of the ontological argument given by Anselm. In view of Kant, Anselm's argument would really amount to this:

1. All possible perfections must be predicted of an absolutely perfect Being.

2. Existence is a possible perfection which may be predicated of an absolutely perfect Being.

3. Therefore, existence must be predicated of an absolutely perfect Being.

According to Kant's criticism, the minor premise is wrong. Existence is not a perfection which may be predicated of anything. Existence is not a *predication* of a characteristic but an *instantation* of a characteristic or thing. Essence gives the *definition* and existence provides an *exemplification* of what was defined. The essence is given in the *conceptualization* of something; existence does not add to this conceptualization but merely provides a *concretization* of it. Hence, existence neither adds nor detracts from the concept of an absolutely perfect Being. This has been a standard objection to the ontological argument since Kant.

Supposed Causes of the Ontological "Mistake"

If the ontological argument is invalid, then many great minds have been greatly deceived into thinking they held a rationally inescapable argument which is really invalid. There must be some reason for this deception. Opponents of the ontological argument have laid the blame at various doorsteps. Let us examine some of them.

1. *Platonic philosophy.* Following Aquinas, it has been common to pinpoint the problem in a faulty Platonic epistemology which supposes that one can directly and intuitively know essences. Deny that one's direct and/or distinct insight into the essence of something can yield knowledge of reality and the ontological argument fails, they claim.

2. *Metaphysical thinking.* Others, since Kant, have preferred to place the blame on any kind of metaphysical thinking. They argue that "is" or "exists" has only a *logical* but not an *ontological* status. Theists are duped by the statement "God *is* a necessary Being" to suppose that the "is" really implies existence, whereas it is merely a copula or logical connective.

3. *Confuses cause and reason.* Arthur Schopenhauer found the confusion to lie in the failure to distinguish between a *cause,* which demands something beyond it, and a *reason,* which does not demand something beyond it.[9] The reason for something can be in itself. The definition of God as an absolutely perfect and necessary Being does not require anything beyond that definition to explain it. Thus the ontological argument is "a charming joke," a kind of ontological sleight of hand. For it assumes the existence of God in the definition of God and then pretends to arrive at it in the conclusion. The rabbit was in the hat all the while. Or, to use Schopenhauer's own illustration, the chicken was already in the egg the theist was brooding over.

4. *Use of a proper name.* Some thinkers,[10] following Bertrand Russell, feel that the source of the ontological mistake is in the use of a proper name such as, necessary Being. In the English language a proper noun signifies existence. We have been duped by the ontological implications of using a proper noun. If the

proponents of the argument had used phrases like "whatever gods there are" or "whatever necessary beings there are," they would not have been deceived into thinking that there really was an absolutely perfect Being (God).

5. *The use of the English conditional.* Alvin Plantinga traces the problem to the use of the English conditional.[11] For instance, "*If* Jones is a bachelor, then he is necessarily not married" does not necessarily imply "Jones is a bachelor." There may be no Jones at all. Hence, "If God exists, then He necessarily exists" does not necessarily imply that "God exists." There may be no God at all.

Findlay's Ontological Disproof of God

Whatever the cause of the error in the ontological argument, it has been widely rejected in modern times. Some have even turned the tables on it in a kind of ontological disproof of God. Such was the intention of J. N. Findlay who argued[12] —

1. God must be thought of as a necessary Being (i.e., as necessarily existing), for anything short of this kind of being would be unworthy of worship.

2. But existentially necessary propositions cannot be true (as Kant showed), for necessity is merely a logical characteristic of propositions, not of reality.

3. Therefore, God cannot exist.

Let us put Findlay's argument in this more simple form:

1. The only way God could exist is if He exists necessarily (any kind of existence less than necessary would make Him less than God).

2. But nothing can exist necessarily (for necessity does not apply to existence but only to propositions).

3. Therefore, God cannot exist (for the only way He could exist is the very way He cannot exist).

More properly, however, the argument should be stated this way:

1. The only way a necessary Being could exist is to exist necessarily.

2. The proposition "God exists necessarily" is an existentially necessary proposition.

3. No existentially necessary proposition can be true.

4. Therefore, the proposition "God exists necessarily" cannot be true.

Now, in the latter form, the fallacies of the argument become more apparent. We will pass by the objection to premise one from the vantage point of finite godism (that God does not have to be conceived as necessarily existing), since the subject here is whether or not the traditional theistic conception of an absolutely perfect Being is correct. The theist would challenge the next two premises (two and three). (1) First, granting for the moment that there are no existentially necessary propositions, a theist could change the proposition "God exists necessarily" to "God exists." The theist could then hold that the proposition "God exists" is a logically necessary proposition to hold. [18] In this way, necessity applies only to the proposition and not to existence, thus invalidating the criticism. (2) Second, the theist need not grant that there are no existentially necessary propositions. Indeed, some theists have offered examples of what they consider to be existentially necessary statements. (a) Ian Ramsey suggests that "I am I" is an example. (b) Malcolm offers "There are an infinite number of prime numbers" as an example. (c) Some feel that "Square circles do not exist" would be existentially necessary, even though it is negative in form. (If there can be negative examples, then why not positive examples? Negatives presuppose positives.) (3) Third, still other theists, taking Anselm and Descartes literally, insist that "God necessarily exists" is a special case. It is the only existentially necessary proposition and it is not only unnecessary but impossible to give any other examples of existentially necessary propositions. (4) It seems to me, however, that the most effective way to eliminate Findlay's ontological disproof is to show that if his premise is true, then it is false, i.e., Findlay's premise is self-defeating. For the statement "There are no existentially necessary propositions" is itself an existentially necessary proposition. And if it is such, then there are existentially necessary propositions (at least there is this one, and why not others?). If it is not a necessary statement about existence, then it does not really eliminate the

possibility that there could be an existentially necessary Existent. So either it does not accomplish its intended task of eliminating the possibility of existentially necessary propositions or else it defeats itself by offering an existentially necessary proposition in order to prove that there are no existentially necessary propositions.

Hartshorne's Restatement of the Ontological Proof

In its long and checkered history this venerable argument for theism has lived to see a new day. One of the most ardent defenders of the ontological argument is Charles Hartshorne. His statement and defense of the argument in full view of all the traditional criticisms is most instructive. Hartshorne states the argument like this: [14]

1. The existence of a necessary being is either —
   a. Impossible, and there is no example of it.
   b. Possible, but there is no example of it.
   c. Possible, and there is an example of it.

2. But premise "b" is meaningless (like saying there is a round square), for a necessary Being cannot be merely a possible being.

3. And premise "a" is not eliminated by the ontological argument as such but the meaningfulness of the term "necessary Being" is a justifiable assumption which may be defended on other grounds (see 2 below).

After pinpointing what he felt to be the basic logic of the ontological argument, Hartshorne proceeded to give the fuller elaboration of it. It may be summarized as follows:

1. All thought must refer to something beyond itself which is at least possible, since —
   a. Wherever there is meaning, there must be something meant.
   b. The only thoughts that are less than possible are contradictory ones.
   c. Meaning must refer to something more than its own contents or inner consistency or else it is meaningless.

d. The move from thought to reality is based on a prior reverse move from reality to thought.

e. Total illusion is impossible; illusion presupposes a backdrop of reality.

f. Confusion is possible about specific reality but not about reality in general.

g. See also the answers to objections three and six below.

2. The necessary existence of a necessary Being is "at least possible."

a. There is nothing contradictory in the concept of a being that cannot *not* be.

b. The only way to reject this is to plead a special meaning to the word "possible." (In the usual logical sense of the word "possible" there is no contradiction in the concept of a necessary Being).

3. With a necessary Being an "at-least-possible" existence is indistinguishable from a "possible and actual" existence. A necessary Being cannot have a "merely possible" existence (if a necessary Being *can* be, then it *must* be), for —

a. God by definition is an independent Existence and, hence, cannot be produced by another as "merely possible" beings can be.

b. God is everlasting and, so, He could not have come into being as "merely possible" beings can come into existence.

4. Therefore, a necessary Being necessarily has both a possible and an actual existence.

Hartshorne answers at least seven different objections to his ontological argument. The objection will be stated in the answer that he gives. Here are his replies:

Reply 1: It is not possible that God's nonexistence was always *logically* possible even though He *actually* always existed. (1) First, this is a special pleading on the meaning of the word "possible." In all other cases, "possible" refers to beings which it is both logically and actually impossible for them to exist. Why should God be made an exception by saying that He actually cannot

exist but that it is logically possible that He could. (2) Further, it is not even logically possible for God to be conceived as having come into being. Indeed, by the very conception of His nature He cannot be even logically conceived as having come into existence. For it is contradictory to even *think* of God as being producible. By very definition God is a necessary Being and a being so defined cannot be merely possible.

Reply 2: One cannot prove a perfect island or a perfect devil on the same premises of the ontological argument. (1) the perfect island is not indestructible as God is. If it is made indestructible, then it becomes identical with the cosmos as the body of God [Hartshorne's view of God is not theistic nor pantheistic. It is *pan-entheistic* in which the material universe is viewed as the "body" of God. But there is a transcendent pole to God which is more than his cosmic "body."] (2) A perfect demon is unequivocal nonsense, for it would be both infinitely responsible and infinitely adverse to all that exists; both infinitely loving and infinitely hateful toward all that is; it would be both intimately united and savagely opposed to all that exists.

Reply 3: The ontological argument proves more than the mere self consistency of the idea of a necessary Being. For all meaning has an external referent which is either possible or actual. And God by definition cannot be merely a possible being. Therefore,

1. All meaning implicitly affirms God in reference to either —
   a. what He *has done* (called His "consequent nature" — God's immanence) or
   b. what He *can do* (called His "primordial nature" — God's transcendence).

2. Without God as the universal ground of meaning there would be no meaning for universals (i.e., nothing can have objective meaning unless there is a realm which is objectively meaningful).

3. We can be confused as to whether specific things exist but not as to whether God — who is the content of existence itself — exists.

4. The only way to oppose the ontological argument is to make an absolute disjunction between meaning and reality. But

this kind of disjunction is meaningless (meaning and reality must meet at some point; that point we call "God").

Reply 4: If existence is not a predicate, then at least the *mode* of existence is implied in every predicate. That is, when a quality is predicated of something, it is implied that that something exists either contingently or necessarily. And a necessary Being (God) cannot exist contingently.

Reply 5: The ontological argument does not make God an exception to general philosophical principles. That essence implies existence in God is not an *exception* to philosophical principles but a *result* of a consistent application of philosophical principles to different kinds of beings. God's nature implies existence and no other nature does, because in God alone there is no distinction between the possible and the actual (God is the actualization of all that is possible for Him to actualize). "To say a thing might not exist is not to say there might be a thing without existence. It is rather to say that there might be existence without the thing." Existence must necessarily be; this or that existence need not be.

Reply 6: Mere thought does not produce reality, but necessary thought does. There can be no absolute disjunction between thought and reality. Thinking is a real experience, and we do think of God as possible. Hartshorne concludes, therefore, that —

1. All thoughts are experiences of what is at least possible.
2. We do have thoughts about a Being which must be (i.e., a necessary Being).
3. But a necessary Being cannot be merely a possible being.
4. Therefore, a necessary Being must be more than merely possible (i.e., it must be actual).

As Hartshorne put it, "We have only to exclude impossibility or meaninglessness to establish actuality." That is, "Either God is a meaningless term or there exists a divine being." Or, to restate the argument:

1. Either the existence of a necessary Being is —
   a. less than an idea (i.e., contradictory and impossible),
   b. merely an idea but not a reality, or
   c. more than a mere idea, viz., a reality.

2. It is not (a) less than an idea, for it is a noncontradictory concept.
3. It is not (b) merely an idea, for it is contradictory to speak of a necessary Being as merely possible (if a necessary Being exists at all, it must exist necessarily; there is no other way it can exist).
4. Therefore, the existence of a necessary Being is more than a mere idea; it is a reality.

Reply 7: The ontological argument is not merely hypothetical; it does not assume existence. The ontological argument is *not* saying this:

1. *If* there is a necessary Being, then it exists necessarily.
2. There is a necessary Being (thus begging the whole question).
3. Therefore, a necessary Being exists necessarily.

This criticism contains the self-contradictory assumption "If a necessary Being happens to exist as a mere contingent fact, then it exists not as contingent fact but as necessary truth." This is not the meaning of the major premise. The argument, on the contrary, is not contradictory and should be stated like this:

1. If the phrase "necessary Being" has any meaning, then what it means must actually exist (outside of the mind).
2. The phrase "necessary Being" does have a meaning (it is not contradictory).
3. Therefore, a necessary Being actually exists (outside of the mind).

In brief, the "if" does not imply the possibility of nonexistence (for a necessary existence cannot possibly *not* exist). The "if" means rather the possibility of meaninglessness. And even the possibility of meaninglessness vanishes, for unless there is a basis for meaning (viz., God) there can be no meaning at all.

Some observations are called for at this point. (1) First, Hartshorne rests his case heavily on the ultimate identification of the logical and the ontological, a premise disputed by others. (2) Second, he does not really exclude the possibility that others could show the term "God" to be meaningless. It yet may be that some-

one will demonstrate a contradiction in the very concept of a necessary Being. If they do, the ontological arguments fail. (3) Further, the argument rests on the assumption that there must be an *objective* basis for meaning in order for there to be *any* meaning. This is precisely what existentialists like Sartre and Camus deny. They hold to a subjective basis for meaning but do not deny all meaning. Their argument is that there is no meaning "out there" in the universe except the subjective meaning one puts there. Objective absurdity would still be an option unless one considers Hartshorne has given a disproof of objective absurdity.

This leads to our final observation. (4) There is an implied premise in all of the ontological arguments which, if true, would seem to vindicate the argument in the face of its standard criticism (that it makes an illicit transition from the logical to the ontological, from thought to reality). The premise is this: *The rationally inescapable is the real.* If defensible, as it seems to be, [15] this would prove objective absurdity to be wrong. Indeed, if the rationally inescapable is the real and it is rationally inescapable to *think* of God as necessarily existing, then it would follow that it is *really so* that God necessarily exists. But before we assume that the ontological argument has won the day we must examine another statement of it and one final criticism.

Malcolm's Restatement of the Ontological Proof

Malcolm is credited with reviving the ontological argument in a more viable form, although Hartshorne's work on it said the same thing some twenty years earlier. Malcolm did occasion a popular revival of interest in the argument, at least in the area of analytic philosophy. The first form of Anselm's argument Malcolm considers invalidated by Kant's criticism (that existence is not a predicate); the second form Malcolm believes is immune from this (or any other) criticism of which he knows. Malcolm's restatement of Anselm "A" may be put in this manner: [16]

1. God by definition is an absolutely perfect Being possessing all possible perfections.
2. Existence is a perfection (i.e., a possible predicate for God).
3. Therefore God must possess existence (i.e., existence must be predicated of God).

The minor premise was vividly argued by Kant to be invalid and, accordingly, Malcolm rejects this form of the ontological argument as being invalid. Anselm "B" is a different argument and is not subject to Kant's criticism. Its basic logic is this:

1. The existence of a necessary Being must be either —
   a. A necessary existence (a "must-be" existence),
   b. An impossible existence (a "cannot-be" existence), or
   c. A possible existence (a "may-or-may-not-be" existence).
2. But the existence of a necessary Being is not an impossible existence.
   a. No one has ever shown the concept of a necessary Being to be contradictory.
   b. There is a basis in human experience for "a greater than which cannot be thought" (e.g., the feeling of guilt or the experience of grace "a greater than which cannot be felt").
   c. Leibniz' attempt to prove that there is no contradiction fails (there may be one). We cannot show that there cannot be one. We merely know that no one has shown that there is a contradiction. And the proof stands unless or until someone shows that there is a contradiction in the very concept of a necessary Being.
3. And the existence of a necessary Being cannot be merely a possible existence, for a merely possible but not necessary existence of a necessary Being —
   a. Is contrary to the very nature of a necessary Being (A "must-be" Being cannot be a "may-or-may-not-be" kind of being).
   b. A possible being would be a dependent being, and this is contrary to a necessary Being which is an independent Being by nature.
3. Therefore, a necessary Being necessarily exists.

Malcolm's argument may be put in hypothetical form:

1. If it is possible for a necessary Being to exist, then it is necessary for it to exist (for the only way a necessary Being can exist is to exist necessarily).

2. It is possible that a necessary Being can exist (there is nothing contradictory about affirming the existence of a necessary Being).

3. Therefore, a necessary Being necessarily exists.

Or, to restate the heart of the argument in categorical form:

1. A necessary Being by definition is one which cannot *not* be.

2. That which cannot *not* be, must be (for this is the logical obverse).

3. Therefore, a necessary Being necessarily must be.

It would appear that the critical premise in the argument is the one affirming the impossibility of the mere possibility of a necessary Being. Let us state again the argument with Malcolm's fuller defense of this premise.

1. The existence of a necessary Being must be either —

    a. a necessary existence,

    b. a mere possible existence, or

    c. an impossible existence.

2. But it cannot be an impossible existence (there is no contradiction).

3. Nor can it be a mere possible existence, for such an existence would be —

    a. a *dependent* existence (and a dependent existence cannot at the same time be an independent existence such as a necessary existence is),

    b. a *fortuitous* existence (for if God just *happened to be,* then He could not be a necessary Being), and

    c. a *temporal* existence (for if God came to be, then He would be dependent, which is contrary to His independent or necessary Being).

4. Therefore, the existence of a necessary Being is a necessary existence (i.e., a necessary Being necessarily exists).

Several observations are called for at this point. (1) Malcolm admits that there might be a contradiction in the concept of a necessary Being and that he knows of no way to prove that there

is not a contradiction there. This admission means that his "proof" is not foolproof. It is logically possible that it is wrong. Hence, the conclusion is not rationally inescapable. Even granting the validity of the rest of the argument, it is not a proof in the strongest sense of the word. (2) Furthermore, there is reason to question the validity of the rest of the argument (in premise three). This will emerge from Plantinga's evaluation of the argument.

Plantinga's Critique of the Ontological Argument

Plantinga assesses Malcolm's ontological argument in terms of the following logical schema: [17]

1. If God does not exist, His existence is logically impossible.

2. If God does exist, His existence is logically necessary.

3. Hence, either God's existence is logically impossible or else it is logically necessary.

4. If God's existence is logically impossible, the concept of God is contradictory.

5. The concept of God is not contradictory.

6. Therefore, God's existence is logically necessary.

Plantinga takes issue with premise two. God could exist without His existence being logically necessary. God's existence could be logically contingent without being ontologically contingent. Or, to put it another way, Malcolm equivocates on the word "possible." Malcolm assumes that because it is not "possible" *ontologically* for God to be contingent is it not "possible" *logically* for God to be contingent. In fact, there are two possible meanings to the word "possible" which Malcolm overlooks. (1) It is logically "possible" that God is a necessary Being. But it is only logically *possible* that this is so and not logically *necessary* that this is so. (My own observation here is that Plantinga is right, if the implied premise in the ontological argument is wrong, viz., "The rationally inescapable is the real." For if what is rationally inescapable must be ontologically so, then Hartshorne and Malcolm seem to make a very good case against this criticism. They argue that it is logically necessary to *think* of God as real, since it is logically contradictory not to conceive of a necessary Being as not necessarily

having being.) This does not mean that the ontological argument is valid. There is one final and, I think, fatal criticism of it.

(2) It is also logically "possible" that God never existed at all. In fact, it is logically possible that nothing ever existed, including God. Perhaps the reason that this logical possibility does not present itself as evident to the proponents of the ontological argument is that they are assuming a cosmological premise. For it seems most readily apparent to anyone existing that something does exist (viz., himself). And if something exists, it is not true that nothing exists. And if something exists, that makes false the statement that nothing exists. But if something does exist, it is not true to *affirm* that nothing exists. Hence, Plantinga's criticism, that the ontological argument fails simply because it overlooks the obvious truth that nothing exists, fails. All the proponents of the ontological argument have to do to invalidate Plantinga's criticism is to show that something exists. This is easily accomplished by insisting that no one can deny existence without existing to make the denial. For it is actually impossible to affirm that nothing exists, since there must be someone in existence to make that affirmation. In brief, the ontological arguments based on *predictability* and *inconceivability* are invalid, but a third argument based on *undeniability* appears to evade *these* invalidities. This seems so for the simple reason that the only apparent way to invalidate the second form of the ontological argument is on the conceivability (i.e., logical possibility) of the truth that nothing exists, but this truth is not affirmable because something does exist. Hence, it is *undeniable* that something exists and, therefore, God must necessarily exist. Therefore, it would seem that a third form of the ontological argument has successfully defended itself against Plantinga's criticism.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. For there is a difference, as even Anselm recognized in his reply to Gaunilo, between the *logical possibility* that nothing ever existed including God and the *actual affirmability* of the statement "Nothing ever existed including God" by someone who does exist. Of course, it is undeniably true that something exists, but not because it is inconceivable or logically impossible that nothing exists. It is not logically contradictory to assume that there might never have been anything in existence.

Nonbeing is a logical possibility. The only way one can invalidate the logical possibility that "nothing ever was, including God" is to affirm, "Something was or is." But once one affirms the premise "Something is" and argues from that to "God is," he has left the ontological argument for the cosmological argument. He has left the a priori realm of pure reason and entered into the a posteriori domain of existence. The so-called third argument from *undeniability* of existence is not an ontological argument but a cosmological argument. And it needs more elaboration and defense.

(3) Our conclusion, then, is this: the ontological argument as such is invalid. The only possible way to make it valid (if it can be made valid at all) is to assume or affirm that something exists. And once one argues, "something exists, therefore God exists," he has really argued cosmologically. The point here is that the ontological argument by itself, without borrowing the premise "Something exists" cannot possibly prove the existence of God. For it is always logically possible that nothing ever existed and, hence, it is not logically necessary to affirm that God exists.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Several very important conclusions emerge from this analysis of the ontological argument. (1) No valid ontological proof has been given that makes it rationally inescapable to conclude that there is a necessary Being. (2) On the other hand, neither has anyone made a successful ontological disproof of God, making it logically impossible that there is a God. (3) The only way one could possibly validate a theistic argument is to assume or affirm that "something exists or existed." (4) If one argues that "something exists, therefore God exists," he has left the purely a priori ontological approach and has moved into an a posteriori cosmological approach. (5) If one could somehow validate a theistic argument by importing the undeniable premise that "something exists" and arguing from this that "something necessarily exists," it is still a long way from this to the one simple and absolutely perfect Being of Christian theism. It is interesting to note in this regard that three different kinds of Gods have been concluded from the same kind of ontological argument, and others feel there is a fourth kind which may be inferred. (a) Descartes and Leibniz concluded

a *theistic* God. (b) Spinoza argued to a *pantheistic* God. (c) Hartshorne ended with a *panentheistic* God. (d) Henle insisted that at best, apart from importing some kind of Platonic premise, the ontological argument yields *polytheistic* gods. Since the positions are mutually exclusive, it follows that they cannot all be true. In order to defend, say, theism as opposed to the others, one must apparently go beyond the ontological argument. For the ontological argument alone apparently does not designate which kind of God (or gods) is found at the conclusion.

NOTES CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Descartes, in a letter to Mersenne, Nov. 25, 1630. See R. M. Eaton, *Descartes Selections*, p. 33.

2. The whole discussion between Anselm and Gaunilo is found in *The Ontological Argument*, Alvin Plantinga, ed., pp. 3-27.

3. Ibid., pp. 28-30.

4. Ibid., pp. 31-49.

5. Ibid., pp. 54-56.

6. Ibid., pp. 156ff.

7. Ibid., pp. 50-53.

8. Ibid., pp. 57-64.

9. Ibid., pp. 65-67.

10. See Henle in Plantinga, *Ontological Argument*, pp. 177-178.

11. Plantinga, *Ontological Argument*, pp. 165-166.

12. Ibid., pp. 111-122.

13. See G. E. Hughes, "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A. Flew, p. 59.

14. See Hartshorne in Plantinga, *Ontological Argument*, pp. 123-135.

15. See end of chapter 4 above for a defense of this point and my article, "The Missing Premise in the Ontological Argument," in *Religious Studies*, 9: 1973, pp. 289-296.

16. Malcolm in Plantinga, *Ontological Argument*, pp. 137-159.

17. Plantinga, *Ontological Argument*, pp. 160-171.

8

Cosmological Arguments

The hope for a theistic proof has been narrowed down to the cosmological argument. For it was seen (in chapter 6) that both the teleological and the moral arguments depend for what validity they have on the principle of causality which is borrowed from the cosmological argument. Further, it has been shown (in chapter 7) that the only hope for defending an ontological argument is derived from transforming it into a cosmological type of argument starting with the fact that something exists. Hence, if the cosmological argument proves invalid, the theistic proofs fail. Of course, even without rational demonstrations, belief in the God of theism may be credible and plausible. But without proofs, the object of this belief is not philosophically demonstrable.

COSMOLOGICAL-TYPE PROOFS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

There are probably as many cosmological-type arguments for the existence of God as there are starting points in the cosmos. Whatever seemed most obvious or basic to the viewer was taken as the beginning of a demonstration that concluded with some kind of God. Plato is credited with being the first thinker to have offered cosmological-type arguments (also called aetiological arguments from *aetios*, cause).

Plato's Argument for a World Soul

In the *Laws* and in the *Phaedrus*[1] Plato reasons to a first mover of the world. His reasoning takes the following shape:

1. Things move (this can be established by observation).

2. Whatever moves is either moved by another (i.e., is inert) or is self-moved (spontaneous).

3. Now self-movers (called souls) are prior to non-self-movers (things that do not move themselves but must be moved by another), for the antecedent is logically prior to the consequent.

4. Self-movers must be eternal or else there would be no motion, but —

   a. there is motion, and

   b. even if motion were not eternal, only a self-mover could arise from a state of rest and begin motion;

   c. so, in either case motion must originate with self-movers.

5. There must be at least two self-movers in the universe:

   a. one mover to account for the regular motion (called "good"), and

   b. another mover(s) to account for the irregular motion (called "evil").

6. The movers that account for the regular motion are ten in number (one for each sphere of regular motion in the cosmos).

7. Since one of these accounts for the motion of the other nine spheres of stars (which are inert in themselves), it deserves to be called God.

Thus Plato offered a proof for what he called the World Soul, the First Mover of all regular (good) motion in the cosmos.

Plato also arrives at a Demiurgos or world Former (in the *Timaeus*) and the Good (in the *Republic*) by a cosmological type of reasoning process. Plato's thinking can be elaborated into the following arguments for God.[2]

1. The cosmos would be a chaos without forms. (pure stuff without any structure is shapeless).

2. Chaos (formless) is evil and cosmos (form) is good (by definition).

3. All forms of good in the world come from a good Former beyond the world (chaos cannot form itself into a cosmos).

4. No Former can make good forms without a Form of Good after which to pattern them.

5. The Form after which the changing sensible world is formed must be an unchanging intelligible pattern.

   a. It must be unchanging or else it could not be the pattern for the changing.

   b. It must be intelligible or else it could not be the Ideal after which the world is shaped (Ideal or Ideas are intelligible things).

6. Therefore, there is both a Former of all good (*Demiurgos*) and the Form of good (the Good) after which all goods are formed.

For Plato, the ultimate Good was *one,* because there cannot be many bests; only one can be the Best or the absolute Good by which all other goods are measured and shaped. The essence of this argument will be more influential on later theism than Plato's argument for the World Soul. Several things should be noted here. (1) First, the Demiurgos creates by efficient causality. He is a producing cause, not merely a purposing cause. (2) Second, His creative activity is eternal. The Former is forming from eternity; the chaos (matter) was always there. He did not, as the Hebrew-Christian God, first bring the matter into existence and then begin to form it.[3] (3) The Good does have a quasi-religious function in Plato. It is the ultimate object of truth and meditation (cf. *Republic,* Book VII). (4) Properly speaking, however, the Good is not the creating God, nor is it the personal God of Hebrew-Christian derivation.

Aristotle's Unmoved Mover(s)

Plato's most famous student, Aristotle, gave further sophistication to his teacher's argument for God. In its strongest form Aristotle's cosmological argument unfolds like this:[4]

1. Things do change (established by observing movement, which is the most obvious form of change).

2. All change is a passing from potentiality to actuality (i.e., when a capacity is actualized, change has occurred).

3. No potentiality can actualize itself (e.g., wood cannot make itself into a chair, although it has the capacity to be made into a chair).

4. Therefore, there must be an actuality that actualizes everything that passes from potentiality to actuality (otherwise nothing would ever be actualized).

5. An infinite regress of actualizers is impossible (for the whole series would not be actualized unless there is a first actualizer).

6. This first actuality actualizes things by final causality (by drawing things to it the way a lover is drawn by his loved one).

7. There are either forty-seven (according to the astronomer Eudoxus) or fifty-five (according to Callipus) of these pure actualities (unmoved movers).

8. Ultimately, there is only one heaven and one God (for only material things can be numerically different, since matter is the principle of individuation).[5]

Several things are noteworthy about Aristotle's argument. (1) It introduces the question of an infinite regress of causes. (2) It is still struggling with a plurality of first causes. (3) Unlike Plato's Demiurgos, Aristotle's First Cause is a final (purposing) cause. Neither is it the same as the efficient or producing cause (of later Christian thinkers) that brought the very cosmos into existence. (4) The Unmoved Mover of Aristotle was not a personal God and had no religious significance, i.e., it was not worshiped. (5) Aristotle's First Cause was not infinite. Only what is formless or indefinite was considered infinite to the Greeks. Aristotle's First Cause was Pure Form or Actuality. To be formless or infinite was a metaphysical insult in the context of Greek philosophy.

Neither Plato's World Soul, Demiurgos, nor Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is identical with the absolutely perfect Being of Christian theism. It will take further combination and development of these cosmological arguments of the Greeks before we arrive at the God of Christian theism.

Some of this development was accomplished by the non-Chris-

tian fountainhead of neoplatonism, Plotinus (third century A.D.). God for Plotinus was an ineffable One who could be arrived at ultimately only by mystical meditation and not by rational demonstration. However, Plotinus' view of God did have several important influences on later theism. (1) Plotinus identified Plato's Good as the one supreme God. (2) This one absolutely perfect God is the source or efficient cause of all being. (3) And this God is the object of religious worship and meditation; He does have clear religious significance. We may summarize Plotinus' thinking as follows: [6]

1. Many beings exist (this is known through both sensible and intellectual knowledge).

2. All multiplicity is based on prior unity (because multiplicity is made up of little unities), III, 8, 9.

3. Ultimately, there must be an absolute unity which is the basis of all multiplicity (this follows logically from 2), V, 4, 1.

4. This absolute unity cannot be a being, because —

   a. It is the source of all being, and the source of being does not need being (VI, 8, 19).

   b. It produces being in others, and it cannot possess what it produces (VI, 7, 15).

   c. All being involves multiplicity, and it has no multiplicity (VI, 2, 2).

5. Therefore, there is an absolute unity (the One) beyond being which is the source of all being and multiplicity (VI, 8, 18).

The God of Plotinus was not the God of Christian theism in several respects: (1) First, Plotinus' God created the world *ex deo* (out of Himself) by a necessary and emanational unfolding and not *ex nihilo* (out of nothing); (2) Second, the Plotinian God was beyond all being and positive description; (3) Finally, it possessed no perfections or characteristics in itself but had to unfold like a seed in order even to become conscious or knowing and to achieve all possible perfections which is lacked in its absolute simplicity.

Augustine's Argument From Truth

In view of the way various Greek approaches to God culminated in Plotinus, it is not difficult to see why the platonic tradition was much more influential on Christian theism than was Aristotle. With some minor changes Augustine could use the essential elements of Platonism and expound his own Christian theism. In the exposition of his own view of God, St. Augustine (354-430) offered an argument for God which can be put in an a posteriori form: [7]

1. There are timeless and immutable truths.
   a. Absolute doubt is impossible (we *know* we are doubting).
   b. We know we exist, that we think, and that $7+3=10$.

2. Immutable truth cannot be caused —
   a. by sensible things (for the unchanging and independent cannot be caused by the changing and dependent).
   b. by finite minds (for it is independent of our minds and our minds are ruled by it).

3. Therefore, there must be a timeless and immutable Mind causing these immutable truths.

Or, to put Augustine's argument another way:

1. There are immutable truths common to all men (such as math, existence, and thought).

2. There must be a cause for these truths.

3. This cause must be either equal to, inferior to, or superior to our minds.

4. This cause cannot be *equal* to our minds, since these truths are independent of our minds and our minds are subject to them (truth does not advance with our minds but remains stable).

5. These truths cannot be *inferior* to our minds, since our minds are subject to them.

6. Therefore, these truths must be *superior* to our mutable minds.

7. Whatever is superior to the mutable is immutable.

8. Therefore, there is an immutable Mind, which is the source of these immutable truths.

The objectivity of truth is confirmed for Augustine by the fact that different men see the same truth, even though they cannot cause this truth either in their own minds or in other minds. God is the inner Master who causes truth in every man's mind. Hence, whenever any man affirms truth, he is thereby (implicitly) affirming the Truth (God).

Anselm's Three Cosmological-Type Arguments

The next great Christian philosopher after Augustine was Anselm (1033-1119). Although he is most famous for his ontological argument (in the *Proslogion*), Anselm did offer earlier (in the *Monologion*) three a posteriori proofs for God's existence. Anselm's first argument is from goodness: [8]

1. Good things exist.

2. Their goodness is derived either from many different goodnesses or from one goodness.

3. It cannot be derived from many different goodnesses, for then there would be no way to compare goodnesses and (a) all things would be equally and unequally good (which is absurd) but (b) as a matter of fact some things are better than others.

4. Therefore, all things derive their goodness through one good.

5. This one good is the Supreme Good, since —
   a. It is the good through which all other goods derive their goodness.
   b. It is good through itself alone.

The second argument is from perfection:

1. Some beings are more nearly perfect than others.

2. Things cannot be more nearly perfect unless there is a wholly perfect (by which they can be compared and judged to be more or less nearly perfect than it).

3. Therefore, there must be a most perfect Being.

The third argument, an argument from being, is the most obviously cosmological in type:

1. Something exists (the denial of this is contradictory).
2. Whatever exists, exists either through something or through nothing.
3. Something cannot exist through nothing (only nothing exists through nothing).
4. This something through which something exists is either one or many.
5. If many, then they are either (a) mutually dependent or (b) all dependent on one for their existence.
6. They cannot be mutually dependent for their existence, for something cannot exist through a being on which it confers existence.
7. Therefore, there must be one being through which all other beings exist.
8. This one being must exist through itself (since everything else exists through it).
9. Whatever exists through itself, exists in the highest degree of all.
10. Therefore, there exists a supremely perfect Being which exists in the highest degree of all.

Several observations are pertinent here. (1) These arguments show clearly how Christian theists transform premises from Greek philosophy. (2) Although the arguments, unlike Plato's but like Plotinus', identify the Creator with the Supreme Good, yet (3) unlike Aristotle's, the arguments view God as the efficient (not final) Cause of the world. (4) And unlike the arguments of both Plato and Aristotle, Anselm's arguments hold that this efficient Cause does not merely operate on the world of matter which is eternally there, but it is the cause for the very being of everything, including matter. In brief, these Christian theistic arguments combined at least three elements: (a) The efficient causality from Plato's *Timaeus* argument; (b) the identification of this God with the Good of Plato's *Republic* as the supremely perfect Being; and (c)

The Hebrew Christian concept of God as the cause of the very being (not merely the forms of being) of everything that exists.

Alfarabi's Necessary Existence Argument

The Arabian and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages were highly influential on later Christian forms of the cosmological argument. The Muslim thinker Alfarabi provided the heart of later scholastic arguments by his distinction between essence and existence. Aristotle had made a logical distinction between *what* a thing is and *that* it is. But Alfarabi took this as a sign of the real distinction between a creature's essence and its existence. Implied in this real distinction is an argument for God's existence which takes this form: [9]

1. There exist things whose essence is distinct from their existence (called possible beings, i.e., they can be conceived as not existing even though they do exist).
2. These beings have existence only accidentally (i.e., it is not part of their very essence to exist. It is logically possible that they might not have existed).
3. Anything that has existence accidentally (and not essentially) must have received its existence from another (since existence is not essential to it, there must be some explanation as to why it has existence).
4. There cannot be an infinite regress of causes of existence (for since the existence of all possible beings is received from another, there must ultimately be a cause from which existence is received).
5. Therefore, there must be a First Cause of existence whose essence and existence are identical (i.e., who is a necessary Being and not a mere possible being), for the First Cause cannot be a mere possible being (whose essence is not to exist), since all possible beings do not explain their own existence.

In summary, if there are beings whose essence is not to exist, then there must be a Being whose essence is to exist, for the possible beings are not possible unless there is a necessary Being. There cannot be beings whose existence is received unless there is some

Being from whom this existence is received. And since a being cannot give existence to another when it is dependent for its own existence on another, there must be a first Being whose existence was not given to it by another but who gives existence to all others.

Avicenna's First Cause Argument

Following Alfarabi, Avicenna formulated a similar cosmological argument which was emulated in many forms by later scholastics. Avicenna's proof goes like this:

1. There are possible beings (i.e., things which come into existence because they are caused to exist but would not otherwise exist on their own).

2. Whatever possible beings there are have a cause for their being (since they do not explain their own existence).

3. But there cannot be an infinite series of causes of being.
   a. There can be an infinite series of causes of *becoming* (like father begets son, who begets son, etc.).
   b. But there cannot be an infinite series of causes of *being*, since the cause of being must be simultaneous with its effect (unless there was a causal basis for the series, there would be no beings there to be caused).

4. Therefore, there must be a first Cause for all possible beings (i.e., for all beings that come into existence).

5. This first Cause must be a necessary Being, for what is the cause of all possible beings cannot itself be a possible being. It must be a necessary Being.

By borrowing some neoplatonic premises and a ten-sphere cosmology, Avicenna furthers his argument to prove that this necessary first Cause created a whole series of Intelligences and ten cosmic spheres controlled by them.

6. Whatever is essentially One can create immediately only one effect (called Intelligence).

7. Thinking is creating and God necessarily thinks, since He is a necessary Being.

8. Therefore, there is a necessary emanation from God of ten Intelligences (Angels) which control the various spheres of

the universe and the last of which (called Agent Intellect) forms the four elements of the cosmos and by which the human mind (possible intellect) is informed of all truth.

Avicenna's God, then, was a necessary Being from whom a serial creative force of ten gods followed with absolute necessity. Unlike the Christian God who freely created and who is directly responsible for the existence of everything else that exists, Avicenna's chain of Gods is necessary and these Gods create all below them.

The famed Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) anticipated several later Christian formulations of cosmological-type arguments. He argued for a First Mover, a First Cause and a necessary Being (like Aquinas' first three arguments) with which these arguments conclude. He insisted that the "I Am" of the Old Testament (Exod. 3:14) meant "absolute existence" and that God alone has existence absolutely and necessarily. All creatures have existence only as an "accident" superadded to their essence by their Cause.

Thomas Aquinas: Five Ways to Prove God's Existence

It can be seen that when Aquinas (13th century) formulated his famous "Five Ways," he was not creating arguments that were substantially new in form. Maimonides before him had the first three arguments. Alfarabi and Avicenna had the first two proofs. Anselm had an argument for perfection similar to the fourth argument. And Aquinas' fifth proof was more of a teleological argument which men like Thierry of Chartes and William of Conches (12th century) had adapted from Plato's *Timaeus* argument. Aquinas does, of course, state the arguments out of the context of his own philosophy, which is more Aristotelian than that of most of his Christian predecessors. The first four arguments of Aquinas may be summarized as follows:

1. The argument from *motion:*[10]
   a. Things do move (motion is the most obvious form of change).
   b. Change is a passing from potency to act (i.e., from potentiality to actuality).
   c. Nothing passes from potency to act except by something

that is in act (for it is impossible for a potentiality to actualize itself).

d. There cannot be an infinite regress of actualizers or movers (if there is no first mover, there can be no subsequent motion, since all subsequent motion depends on prior movers for its motion).

e. Therefore, there must be a first unmoved mover (a pure act or actualizer with no potentiality in it which is unactualized).

f. Everyone understands this to be God.

2. The argument from *efficient causality:*

a. There are efficient causes in the world (i.e., producing causes).

b. Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself (for it would have to be prior to itself in order to cause itself).

c. There cannot be an infinite regress of (essentially related) efficient causes, for unless there is a first cause of the series there would be no causality in the series.

d. Therefore, there must be a first uncaused efficient Cause of all efficient causality in the world.

e. Everyone gives to this the name of God.

3. The argument from *possibility and necesssity:*

a. There are beings that begin to exist and cease to exist (i.e., possible beings).

b. But not all beings can be possible beings, because what comes to exist does so only through what already exists (nothing cannot cause something).   .

c. Therefore, there must be a Being whose existence is necessary (i.e., one that never came into being and will never cease to be).

d. There cannot be an infinite regress of necessary beings each of which has its necessity dependent on another because:

1) An infinite regress of dependent causes is impossible (see argument no. 2).

2) A necessary Being cannot be a dependent being.

e. Therefore, there must be a first Being which is necessary in itself (and not dependent on another for its existence).

4. The argument from *gradation* (perfection) in things:

a. There are different degrees to perfections among beings (some are more nearly perfect than others).

b. But things cannot be more or less nearly perfect unless there is a wholly perfect.

c. Whatever is perfect is the cause of the less-than-perfect (the higher is the cause of the lower).

d. Therefore, there must be a perfect Being which is causing the perfections of the less-than-perfect beings.

e. This we call God.

There seems to be a basic form behind all of these arguments with only a different starting point. Each argument begins in some characteristic of being (change, causality, contingency, and perfection) and then argues to a first Cause like this:

1. Some dependent being exist.

2. All dependent beings must have a cause for their dependent existence.

3. An infinite regress of existentially dependent causes is impossible.

4. Therefore, there must be a first uncaused Cause of the existence of every dependent being. ·

5. This independent Being is identical with the I AM of Holy Scripture (the implication being that it is impossible to have more than one absolutely necessary and independent being upon which everything else exists for its being).

Duns Scotus: Argument From Producibility

Duns Scotus modified the cosmological argument of Aquinas in two important ways. First, he began with the *producibility* of being, not merely from produced beings. Second, he amplified the argument against an infinite regress of dependent causes. The full form of Scotus' proof is as follows: [11]

1. Some being is produced (i.e., some beings come into being).

a. This is learned through experience (viz., by observing beings produced), but —

b. This is true independent of experience (i.e., it would be true of beings that do not exist).

c. It would be true even if God had not willed to create anything.

2. What is produced is producible either (a) by itself, (b) by nothing, or (c) by something else.

3. But no being can produce itself (to cause its own existence, it would have to exist prior to its own existence, and that is impossible).

4. Neither can something be caused by nothing (this is contradictory, too).

5. Therefore, being is producible only by some being that is productive (only beings can produce beings).

6. There cannot be an infinite regress of productive beings, each producing the being of the one following it, because —

  a. This is an *essentially* related series of causes, not an *accidentally* related one,

    1) where the primary cause is more nearly perfect than the secondary one,

    2) where the secondary cause depends on the primary one for its very causality, and

    3) where the cause must be simultaneously present to the effect.

  b. An infinite series of essentially related causes is impossible, because —

    1) If the whole series is dependent for its causality (every cause depending on a prior cause), then there must be something beyond the series that accounts for the causality in the series.

    2) If the infinite series were causing the effect, then there would have to be an infinite number of causes simultaneously causing a single effect and this is impossible (there cannot be an actual infinite number in a

series, for it is always possible to add one more to any number).

    3) Wherever there are prior causes there must be a prime (first) cause (one cause would not be nearer the beginning unless there is a beginning to which it is nearer).

    4) Higher causes are more nearly perfect than lower causes, and this implies a perfect Cause at the head of all of the other less-than-perfect causes.

    5) An infinite regress of causes implies imperfection (since each cause lacks the ability to explain the succeeding causes). But an imperfect series implies something perfect beyond the series as a ground for the imperfect.

7. Therefore, there must be a first productive Cause of all producible beings.

8. This first Cause of all producible being must be one, because:

  a. It is perfect in knowledge and there cannot be two beings that know everything perfectly (e.g., one would know itself more completely than the other knew it).

  b. It is perfect in will; hence, it loves itself more completely than anything else (which means that the other infinite would be loved less than perfectly).

  c. It is infinitely good and there cannot be two such, for then there would be more than an infinite good, and this is impossible since there cannot be more than the most.

  d. It is infinite in power. If there were two with infinite power, this would mean that there would be two *total* primary causes of the same effect, and this is impossible, since there cannot be two causes each doing *all* the causing.

  e. Absolutely infinite cannot be excelled in perfection, since there cannot be a more perfect than the wholly Perfect.

  f. There cannot be two necessary beings, for to differ, one would have to have some perfection the other lacked (if there is no real difference, they do not really differ). But whatever a necessary Being has, it must have neces-

sarily. Hence, the one lacking what the other had necessarily would not be a necessary Being.

g. Omnipotent will cannot be in two beings, for then (1) one could render impotent what the other wills omnipotently; (2) even if they agreed not to hinder each other, they would still be incompatible, for each would be the *total* primary (and direct) cause of any given thing which they agreed should exist. But an omnipotent Cause must be total primary (and direct) Cause of what it wills (the cause agreeing to but not directly willing the effect would be only the indirect cause and hence not the direct [omnipotent] Cause of the effect).

Ockham's Reservations About the Cosmological Argument

Objections to the cosmological argument did not await the skepticism of Hume and Kant. William of Ockham (1290-1350) raised at least three questions which are crucial to the cosmological argument. [12] (1) First, he denied that an essentially related infinite series of causes was impossible. He argued that it is possible that essentially related causes (such as father begetting son) need to be simultaneous causes. They could be *originating* causes and not *conserving* causes. The father is not the continued cause of the son's existence. Only if this simultaneity of the here-and-now conserving cause is added to the concept of an essentially related series of causes, argued Ockham, does it make an infinite regress impossible. For it is contradictory to affirm that there is no first Cause right now for what is right now being conserved in existence. Hence, the cosmological argument is valid only if referred to what presently exists, not for any original creation. (2) Further, Ockham based his knowledge of efficient causes on experience. Causality is defined as "that whose existence or presence is followed by something." [13] The distinction anticipates Hume's criticism that there is no basis in experience for making a necessary connection between cause and effect. But the inescapability of the conclusion of the cosmological argument depends on the necessity of the connection between cause and effect. Hence, Ockham has already placed his razor on the central cord of the cosmological argument. Further, he held that one could not prove that there was only *one* God in the absolute sense of the word. Only if the unity of God

is taken to mean the "most perfect" Being which *actually* exists can it be said that the unity of God has been proven. If, however, as the Christian theists insist, the unity of God refers to the "most perfect" Being *possible,* then the unity of God cannot be proven in this sense, because (a) the proposition "God exists" is not a self-evident proposition (since many doubt it and a self-evident proposition cannot be doubted), nor (b) is the absolute unity of God known through other propositions that can also be doubted, nor (c) is it known by experience, for experience can provide one only with the actual, not with the possible. Therefore, there is no way to demonstrate that God is absolutely one.

Descartes' A Posteriori Proof for God

Like Anselm before him and Leibniz after him, Descartes had an a posteriori theistic argument. It did not begin, however, in the certainty of sensations about the external world. It began rather with one's own mental uncertainty and doubt. Briefly stated, Descartes' proof runs as follows: [14]

1. I am doubting (and the more I doubt, the more I am sure I am doubting).

2. If I am doubting, I am thinking (for doubting is a form of thinking).

3. But doubt is an imperfect form of thinking (it lacks certitude).

4. But if I know the imperfect, then I must be aware of the perfect (since one cannot judge something as *im*-perfect (i.e., *not* perfect) unless he knows the perfect which it is not.

5. But my imperfect mind cannot be the cause of the idea of perfection that I have (and by which I judge things to be imperfect).

6. Only a perfect Mind is an adequate cause for the idea of perfection.

7. Therefore, a perfect Mind must exist as the cause of this perfect idea.

Descartes' argument is akin to Augustine's in that both are based in what they consider to be an unquestionable truth and then move

from there to the ultimate Truth which is the cause of this truth.
The movement is a posteriori (from effect to cause) but the argu-
ment is not based in finite *existence,* as is the usual form of the
cosmological argument, but in finite *thought.* In this respect the
arguments of Augustine and Descartes fall more in the Platonic
tradition with distinct affinities to the ontological argument.

Leibniz: The Argument From Sufficient Reason

The most influential form of the cosmological argument in
modern times arose from Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), the
German rationalist. The proof is stated this way by its author:[15]

1. The entire (observed) world is changing.

2. Whatever is changing lacks within itself the reason for its
   own existence.

3. There is a sufficient reason for everything either in itself or
   else beyond itself.

4. Therefore, there must be a cause beyond this world for its
   existence.

5. This cause is either its own sufficient reason or else it has
   a cause beyond it.

6. There cannot be an infinite regress of sufficient reasons (for
   the failure to reach an explanation is not an explanation;
   but there must be an explanation).

7. Therefore, there must be a first Cause of the world which
   has no reason beyond it but which is its own sufficient reason
   (i.e., the sufficient reason is in itself and not beyond itself).

Under the influence of Leibniz' disciple, Christian Wolff (1679-
1754) this proof became the pattern for cosmological argument
in the modern world. Wolff stated the argument in a slightly dif-
ferent manner:[16]

1. The human soul exists (i.e., we exist).

2. Nothing exists without a sufficient reason why it exists rather
   than does not exist.

3. The reason for our existence must be contained either in our-
   selves or else in another diverse from ourselves.

4. The reason for our existence is not in ourselves (our non-
   existence is possible or conceivable).

5. So the reason for our existence must be outside of ourselves.

6. One does not arrive at a sufficient reason for our existence
   until he reaches a being which has within itself the reason
   for its own existence (if it did not, then there must be a
   sufficient reason for its existence beyond itself).

7. A being which has within itself the reason for its own exis-
   tence is a necessary being.

8. Therefore, there must be a necessary Being beyond us which
   is the sufficient reason for our existence (if there is not a
   necessary Being beyond us, we would be necessary beings,
   having the reason for our own existence in ourselves).

9. It is logically impossible for a necessary Being not to exist
   (self-existence or aseity flows necessarily from the nature of
   a necessary Being).

10. Hence, this necessary Being is identical with the self-existent
    God of Scripture.

Before we turn to the criticism and reformulations of the cosmo-
logical argument, a few remarks are pertinent to the Leibniz-
Wolffian formulation of the cosmological argument. (1) It rests
heavily on the principle of sufficient reason which is usually de-
fended as a self-evidently true analytic principle. (2) The argu-
ment is a posteriori in form but not existential. It begins with the
existence of something but then proceeds toward its conclusion
with *logical* certainty drawn from the very nature of the concept
of the necessary Being. In brief, the alleged necessity of the con-
clusion is based on a conceptual certainty, not an actual (exis-
tential) certainty. This is precisely the point at which the modern
criticism of the cosmological argument begins. Even scholastic
philosophers were highly influenced by this kind of reasoning.[17]
And their reformulation of Aquinas' cosmological argument is sub-
ject to this same criticism.

Hume's Skeptical Criticisms of the Cosmological Argument

The Scottish skeptic, David Hume (1711-1776), laid down
most of the fundamental criticisms of the cosmological argument

to be repeated and elaborated by others. There are at least eight such objections offered by Hume.[18]

1. *Only a finite cause need be inferred from finite effects.* The cause need only be adequate to the effect. And since the effect (the world) is finite, one need only posit a cause adequate enough to explain that effect. Hence, the best one could conclude from the cosmological argument is a finite God.

2. *No propositions about existence can be logically necessary.* The opposite of any proposition about experience is always logically possible. But if it is logically possible that anything known by experience could have been otherwise, then it is not rationally inescapable that it be the way it is. It follows that nothing based in experience is logically demonstrable.

3. *The words "necessary Being" have no consistent meaning.* It is always possible to conceive of anything, including God, as not existing. And whatever might not exist does not need to exist. That is, if its nonexistence is possible, its existence is not necessary. Hence, it makes no sense to speak of something as a logically necessary Being.

4. *If "necessary Being" means only "imperishable," then the universe may be the necessary Being.* If the universe cannot be a necessary being in the sense of being imperishable, then neither can God be imperishable. Hence, either the universe is a necessary being or else God is not imperishable.

5. *An infinite series is possible.* An eternal series cannot have a cause because cause implies priority in time. But nothing can be prior in time to an eternal series. Therefore, an eternal series is possible.

6. *There is no way to establish the principle of causality.* Experience does not provide us with the necessary connections needed to establish the cause/effect relationship. Events are conjoined but never connected. Only after constant (habitual) conjoining does the mind assume that there is a cause/effect relationship. Hence, causality is built on custom. We know B occurs *after* A but not *because* of A. The sun rises after the rooster crows but

not because the rooster crows. The cosmological argument is built on a post hoc fallacy.

7. *The universe as a whole does not need a cause, only the parts do.* The world as a whole does not call for a cause; only parts need causes. The whole is the explanation of the parts. The principle of sufficient reason applies only to parts within the universe but not to the universe as a whole. The parts are contingent and the whole is necessary. And the whole universe may be necessary in only a mathematically accidental sense, such as the products of 9 always use 9 (e.g., $9 \times 41 = 369$ and $3+6+9 = 18$ or 2×9).

8. *Theistic arguments convince only those who like abstract reasoning.* Only those with a "metaphysical head" are convinced by theistic arguments. Most men are too practical to be swept away with such abstract reasoning. Even the arguments that begin in experience soon fly into the thin air of pure and unconvincing speculation.

Kant's Agnosticism on Theistic Argumentation

The skeptical artillery of Hume was followed by the agnostic canons of Kant. Their combined attack on theistic proofs is considered definitive by much of modern thought since their time. There are at least seven criticisms of the cosmological argument in Kant's writings (some of which parallel and overlap Hume's).[19]

1. *The cosmological argument depends on the invalid ontological argument.* In order to arrive at a logically necessary conclusion, the cosmological argument leaves the realm of *experience* with which it begins and borrows the *concept* of a necessary Being. Without this ontological leap from the a posteriori to the a priori, the cosmological argument cannot complete its task. The leap is necessary but invalid. There is no way to show that it is logically necessary to conclude a necessary Being (one which *logically* cannot *not* be) unless one leaves experience and enters the purely *conceptual* realm.

2. *Existential statements are not necessary.* The conclusion of the cosmological argument purports to be an existentially necessary

statement. But necessity is a characteristic of thought, not of being. Only statements are necessary, not things or beings. The only necessity that there is resides in the logical but not in the ontological realm.

3. *A noumenal cause cannot be derived from a phenomenal effect.* The cosmological argument illicitly assumes that one can move from an effect in the realm of *appearance* (the phenomenal) to a cause in the realm of *reality* (the noumenal). The thing-to-me is not the thing-in-itself. One does not know *what* reality is (only *that* it is). Causality is merely a category of the mind that is superimposed on reality but is not constitutive of reality. Whatever necessity the causal connection has is made by the mind but is not found in reality.

4. *What is logically necessary is not ontologically necessary.* Flowing from the former criticism is the implied objection that the rationally inescapable is not necessarily the real. It might be necessary to *think* of something as being so when in *actuality* it is not so. Hence, even a logically necessary Being would not necessarily exist.

5. *The cosmological argument leads to metaphysical contradictions.* If one assumes that categories of thought do apply to reality and proceeds with cosmological argumentation, then he eventuates in contradictions such as this: there is both a first cause and there cannot be a first cause (both of which are logically demanded by the principle of sufficient reason).

6. *The concept of a "necessary Being" is not self-clarifying.* It is not clear what the meaning of "necessary Being" actually is. The concept does not clarify itself. Without conditions no concept of necessity is possible. But necessary Being is conceived of as having no conditions for its existence whatsoever. Hence, the only way it could be meaningful is eliminated by its very definition in the theistic argument.

7. *An infinite regress is logically possible.* There is no contradiction in the concept of an infinite regress of causes. Indeed the principle of sufficient reason demands it. For it says that *everything* must have a reason. If this is so, there is no reason to stop asking

for a reason when we arrive at any given cause in the series. In fact, reason demands that we keep on asking for a reason, ad infinitum. (Of course, reason also demands that we find a first reason which grounds all the other reasons. But this is precisely the contradiction one gets into when he applies reason beyond the senses to reality.) So far as logical possibility is concerned, an infinite regress is possible.

There are other objections to cosmological arguments. Some apply to some forms and some to other forms. The objections that are applicable to the final form suggested in the next chapters will be taken up at that time.

Taylor's Restatement of the Cosmological Argument

Richard Taylor has occasioned renewed interest in the cosmological argument by a clever restatement of it which evades many of the traditional objections leveled at the cosmological argument. In summary form, Taylor's restatement takes this shape: [20]

1. The universe as a whole does not explain its own existence.
   a. No observable part explains its own existence.
   b. Nor does the whole explain its existence (its nonexistence is conceivable).
   c. Answering *where, how long, what,* or *how large* does not answer *why* the whole world exists when it need not exist (e.g., a large ball found in the forest needs an explanation as to *why* it exists; and expanding the ball to the size of the whole universe does not eliminate the need for an explanation).

2. Whatever does not explain its own existence calls for an explanation beyond itself.
   a. It is logically possible that the principle of sufficient reason is not true (it is not analytically true; it can be denied without contradiction).
   b. But it is implausible and unreasonable to deny its truth as applied to the world, because
      1) the nonexistence of the world is conceivable (whether it includes only one grain of sand or all the stars) and

2) we assume the principle of sufficient reason in all our thought.

3. An infinite regress of reasons is impossible (for it is a failure to give a sufficient reason; it just indefinitely begs off giving the reason which is demanded by the world's existence).

4. Therefore, there must be a first self-sufficient (independent) cause of the whole universe.

Taylor adds that it is no less meaningful to speak of God as an independent or necessary Being than it is to speak of square circles as not existing. If it is meaningful to speak of beings that are impossible, then it is also meaningful to speak of a Being that is necessary. A concept of a Being that cannot *not* exist is just as meaningful as a concept of one that *can not* exist (i.e., one that can be nonexistent).

A few comments are in order on the state of the cosmological argument in the light of Taylor's revision. (1) First, it does not provide a rationally inescapable conclusion. Taylor admits that it is logically possible that the principle of sufficient reason is not true. (2) Taylor's argument does appear to lend plausibility to a cosmological type of argument which is expounded in terms of the principle of sufficient reason, since: (a) it shows how it is meaningful to ask for a cause of the whole world; (b) it shows how the concept of a necessary Being is meaningful; (c) it argues forcefully against an infinite regress; (d) the argument is grounded in the need for an existence-explanation for the world, not in some alleged conceptual or logical necessity arising out of thought (as in the ontological argument). (3) Despite these plus factors for theism, Taylor's argument falls prey to the rationalistic snare of the Liebniz-Wolffian tradition of placing the success of the cosmological argument in the hands of the principle of sufficient reason. Rather than basing it squarely on the principle of existential causality, the only hope to evade the most significant criticisms of the cosmological argument is to show that the world demands a real *cause* and not merely an explanation or *reason*. This cannot be accomplished by confusion and/or equating a *ground* for the actual here-and-now "be-ing" of the world with an *explanation* of the inconceivability of its nonexistence. Conceptual problems call for only conceptual solutions. Real dependent beings call for an in-

dependent Being on which they are depending for their present existence.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the teleological and moral arguments was that they depend on the principle of sufficient reason and/or causality. If everything is not absurd — if there is a reason and/or cause — then it would seem to follow that some kind of intelligent and moral Mind is behind the world. The conclusion of the ontological argument was that it is not rationally inescapable to conclude that there is a necessary Being. God's nonexistence is conceivable, for it is always possible that nothing ever existed, including God. But while total nonexistence is conceivable it is not affirmable, since it implies that someone exists to affirm it. Hence, the only hope for validating the ontological argument is to begin with something that exists. Now on the surface it seems that this is precisely what the cosmological argument (in the Leibniz-Wolff-Taylor tradition) does. It begins with the existence of the individual of the world and argues that there must be a sufficient reason for it. However, it is at this point that the cosmological argument runs into several problems: (1) First, it is not a rationally inescapable argument unless the principle of sufficient reason is rationally inescapable. But the principle seems not to be analytic. It can be denied without contradiction. One can say, "Some things do not have sufficient reasons" without contradiction. And it might just be that the existence of the world is one of these things. (2) Further, the very attempt by this type of cosmological argumentation, at two important points, to import conceptual premises leaves it unprotected from the Kantian criticism that in order to prove its case the argument always makes an illicit move into the purely conceptual realm. For example, (a) the defense of the world as contingent or dependent is based on the fact that its nonexistence is *conceivable*. Just because it is *logically* possible for the world not to exist does not prove that it is *ontologically* necessary to conclude that it is contingent. It is logically possible, as Sartre held,[21] that the world is just "there," that is a gratuitous "given" with no ontological explanation, even though its nonexistence is possible. Unless there is some appeal made to the real conditions of its existence beyond the mere logical possibility that it might not have existed, the

theistic conclusion is not necessitated. (b) Likewise, the God of the conclusion of the Leibniz type of cosmological argument is usually invalidly defined in logical terms as one whose nonexistence is *inconceivable*. God is characterized as one who, *granting that something exists* (which is a necessary improvement on the ontological argument right there), logically cannot *not* exist. Nevertheless, a necessary Being is then (fallaciously) defined as one whose nonexistence is *logically* impossible, rather than one whose nonexistence is *actually* impossible because it is the necessary ground for what undeniably exists. We conclude, then, that at three essential points the Leibnizian type of cosmological argument leaves the actual for the conceptual and is open to Kant's criticisms, viz., (a) by confusing (if not replacing) the principle of existential causality with the law of sufficient reason, (b) by importing logical possibility to defend actual contingency, and (c) by forsaking real necessity for conceptual necessity in the nature of a necessary Being. Unless these pitfalls can be avoided, there is no hope of defending the cosmological argument, which argument is, as we have already concluded, the only hope for saving theistic argumentation.

NOTES CHAPTER EIGHT

1. References to Plato are taken from *Plato: The Collected Dialogues.*

2. Plato, *Timaeus*, 27ff.

3. See A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Works*, pp. 443-444.

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book XII, ch. 8.

5. Werner Yaeger believes that this passage is a later alteration by Aristotle of his own earlier plurality of gods, *Aristotle*, p. 353. Plotinus later criticized Aristotle's many unmoved movers, *Enneads*, VI, 5, 9; V, 1, 9.

6. See Plotinus, *Enneads* for references cited.

7. Augustine, *On Free Will*, II, 1-15.

8. Anselm, *Monologion*, chs. 1-3.

9. See Armand Maurer, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 95-97.

10. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 2, 3.

11. Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, pp. 39-56.

12. William Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, pp. 129ff.

13. Quoted by Armand Mauer, *Medieval Philosophy*, p. 270.

14. Descartes, *Meditations*, III.

15. Gottfried Leibniz, *Monadology*, pp. 32-39.

16. See James Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy*, pp. 137-138.

17. See J. Gurr, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason in Some Scholastic Systems 1750-1900*.

18. See David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

19. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 507ff.

20. See A. E. Taylor, "Metaphysics and God" in *"The Cosmological Argument, pp. 279-295.

21. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 758.

9

The Cosmological Argument Reevaluated

Most attempts to defend the cosmological argument in a non-Leibnizian way emanate from Thomas Aquinas.[1] This is understandable in view of the fact that Thomas did not base his argument on the principle of sufficient reason but on the principle of existential causality. The former calls only for an explanation in the realm of reason; the latter demands a ground in reality. The Leibnizian type of argument is built on logical necessity, whereas Aquinas' argument is based on existential undeniability. These and other differences will become apparent as the argument is elaborated.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT RESTATED

The following is a summary of the cosmological argument which we will attempt to elaborate and defend in the rest of the chapter.

1. Some limited, changing being(s) exist.

2. The present existence of every limited, changing being is caused by another.

3. There cannot be an infinite regress of causes of being.

4. Therefore, there is a first Cause of the present existence of these beings.

5. The first Cause must be infinite, necessary, eternal, simple, unchangable and one.

6. This first uncaused Cause is identical with the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Now let us explicate each premise more fully.

1. *Some limited, changing being(s) exist.* The truth of this premise is an undeniable fact of experience. While it is logically possible that nothing ever existed, it is actually undeniable that something exists. For example, I am and the world is. Likewise, the fact that I am limited in a spatio-temporal continuum is an unquestionable datum of my experience. And that the world of which I am a part is limited and changing is also an evident fact of experience. Stated more formally, the argument takes this shape:

a. It is actually undeniable that something exists (e.g., I exist). Any attempt to deny one's own existence is self-defeating, for one always (implicitly) affirms his own existence in the very attempt to deny it. One must exist in order to make the denial, and if he exists, the denial is not true. Hence, all attempts to deny the existence of everything self-destruct. Universal negative statements about existence are self-stultifying. It is necessary to affirm that something exists.

The necessity of this affirmation is not logical but existential. That is, the nonexistence of everything is not *inconceivable*. It is logically possible that nothing ever existed, including myself. This is logically possible but it is false. And it is false because it is actually *undeniable* that something exists, not because it is logically inconceivable that nothing exists. The importance of this distinction marks the difference between the forms of the cosmological argument, which operate in the realm of pure logical possibility and necessity, and the form of the argument here espoused, which is not based in mere logical necessity but in existential undeniability. Mere logic demonstrates no more than the mere possibility of the existence of something at best. We must consult experience to discover what actually exists. No doubt the reason this point is so often missed is that the logician is assuming his own existence, which is indeed undeniable. But one's own existence is not logically necessary. And once we leave the ground of logical possibility and necessity for what actually and undeniably exists, then we have a radically different basis for the cosmological argument. It is a beginning in the realm of reality and not in the realm of pure reason.

It may be further argued that if I undeniably exist, then so does something else that I call the "world." For I understand myself as a distinguishable entity only because I can make some meaningful differentiation between myself and the otherness that surrounds

me. Without the "other" I could never know "myself." But I do know myself and, so, there must be some otherness in distinction from which I can identify myself. Furthermore, this otherness must really exist, since I can be deceived about part of the world but not about the whole of it. Total illusion is impossible, for illusion presupposes a backdrop of reality by which in contrast particular things can be seen to be not real. One cannot know that he was dreaming unless there is a state of wakedness with which he can compare it. The fact of illusion *in* the world demonstrates that we have no total illusion *of* the world. We conclude, therefore, that it is undeniable that we exist and that the world must exist also.

b. Again, it is experientially demonstrable that changing things exist. I am a changing thing and I experience other changing things in the world. Indeed, the whole world of my experience is a space-time continuum of change. It seems unnecessary to argue this point but since some do, we will examine their contention.

First, the argument that all change is illusory is indefensible for the simple reason (just given) that total illusion about ourselves and the world is impossible. And if only some change is real, on the possibility that we may be deceived about most of the rest of our experience, then it follows that there is at least some real change in real things.

Secondly, the very denial of all change is self-defeating. The person who comes to believe and affirm a proposition is different after that experience from what he was before it. He has undergone a change in both knowledge and position. Likewise, the groom who affirms the proposition "I do" is a changed man. He has changed from an unmarried mode of existence to a married one. That is a real change! Furthermore, our affirmations themselves are only limited perspectives on reality. The only way to deny this would be to claim the obviously false, viz., to have an unlimited understanding of reality. This is clearly false because it is contrary to both the content and character of our consciousness. The content of our consciousness is limited because we know about things perspectively, and successively. We do not know completely and simultaneously. In fact, the very character of our knowing is always a consciousness of some truth. There is always the limitation of the knower (subject) and the known (the object).

We are conscious *of* truth but we are not conscious truth itself. We conclude, then, that change and limitation cannot be accounted for as a total illusion. At least some changing limited thing exists.

Neither can change be accounted for as continuous annihilation and recreation. At least if it can, it is of no help in avoiding a theistic conclusion. For if what appears to us to change is really going out of existence and coming back into existence an instant later as a brand new thing, there must be a God to account for the brand new creation from nothing at every instant in the process of every "changing" thing. Something does not come from nothing spontaneously; being does not arise from nonbeing without a cause. So if "change" is really annihilation and recreation, then the theistic conclusion is already reached, viz., there is a Cause of the existence of everything that comes into existence. Since this explanation is both unhelpful to the nontheist and contrary to the continuity of our experience of ourselves and of other changing things, we will proceed to argue that there is real change in finite things.

No matter which view of change is taken, it is necessary to conclude that whatever changes is a finite and contingent being. For whatever changes *in* its being is obviously limited. Only an unchangable being could be unlimited in its existence, since it would not be subject to any limiting process as change is. Further, whatever undergoes a change *of* its being must be a contingent being. For a necessary Being cannot come into or go out of existence. If there is a necessary Being it must have being necessarily. Any being that undergoes a change of its being (i.e., either gains or loses it) cannot be a necessary Being. It must be a contingent being. And since, on either view of change, the beings of our experience are not unlimited or necessary, it follows that they must be limited and/or contingent in their existence.

In brief, either experienced change is totally illusory or it is real. Since total illusion is impossible, it must be real. And if change is real, it is either a real change *of* being (by annihilation and recreation) or else a change *in* the very being of the thing changing. But the first alternative immediately demands a God to bring the new being into existence once the other one passes out of being. And the latter alternative admits that there are real changes in the

very being of the beings we do experience. It is from this last premise that we may continue the cosmological argument.

Perhaps the strongest indication that all men do indeed experience the reality of their own finite mode of existence is that whether they are theist, pantheist, or atheist they are engaged in a life-long struggle to overcome the limitations of their finite existence. If finitude is illusory, then even the pantheist must admit that it is the most universal, persistent, difficult, and seemingly real obstacle in life to overcome. Likewise, the atheist admits that all men desire to transcend their finite conditions. Sartre said man's very project is to become God. Stated less radically, man has the basic desire to transcend himself. There are many ways to transcend (cf. chapter 3), but the fact that all men seek to transcend in one way or another, adequate or inadequate, is ample proof that they recognize the reality of their own finitude. Schleiermacher said that all men have a "feeling of absolute dependence." Even Freud admitted that this was true. Augustine said all men need God. Even Sartre admitted that this is indeed the case. Heidegger described man as *Dasein,* the being-there or thrust-one. An honest evaluation of man's mode of being by both theist and nontheist reveals an unmistakable sense of finitude. It is with this finite mode of existence that the cosmological argument begins.

2. *The present existence of every limited, changing being is caused by another.* Whatever changes in its very being must be composed of both a potentiality for that change and an actuality that actualizes or effects the change, since the resultant being is an *actually* changed being. But no being can actualize its own potential for existence. The sheer possibility of existence does not account for the actual existence of something. Many possible beings are not actual (pegasus, centaur, etc.). Therefore, every changing (or, changeable) being must be caused to exist by another being. Let us spell out the argument more completely.

A. Whatever changes in its existence must be composed of both an actuality and a potentiality. This follows from the following argument:

1) An uncomposed existence (of pure actuality) would be an unlimited existence, since there is no limit placed upon it by

virtue of its having certain kinds of potentialities or limitations.

a) The only way something can be limited is by its possibilities for actualization,

b) But pure actuality has no possibilities for actualization; it is pure actuality, full and complete actuality in and of itself.

c) Hence, an uncomposed existence of pure actuality is unlimited in its existence.

In support of the first premise it may be argued that:

(1) Pure actuality is not limited by itself; it is what it is and that is not a limitation on what it is.

(2) Neither can it be limited by nothing, for nonexistence is absolutely nothing and absolutely nothing limits absolutely nothing.

(3) Nor could it be limited by another pure actuality, since it is impossible to have another pure actuality as such. Only one thing could be actuality *as such;* everything else must be actually *as limited* in this or that way.

(4) And no limited existence could limit existence as such, for what is limited in a given order places no limits on that order (limited good does not limit goodness as such; a dim light does not limit light as such).

(5) Finally, no potential for existence can limit pure existence, since it is already pure actuality and, hence, has no potentiality to limit what it can be.

(6) Therefore, since there are no other ways something could be limited in its existence, it follows that pure actuality as such is unlimited.

2) But changing things are not uncomposed beings; they are composed beings. Things that change and/or are changeable must have within them both a potentiality for that change and an actuality that shows that the change has been actualized in them. Without the potentiality or possibility for change, change would be impossible. And without the actualization of that potential, the being would remain un-

changed. The fact that change occurs indicates that there is both an actuality and a potentiality within changing beings. Formally stated,

a) Nonexistence is not a limitation to existence (nothing limits nothing).

b) Existence does not limit itself (the fact *that* a thing *is* does not limit its "isness").

c) Only a thing's potential for existence can limit its existence (i.e., only *what* it *can be* limits what is it).

d) Therefore, every changing being has within it both an actuality (existence) and a potentiality (essence). Its existence accounts for the fact *that* it is, and its essence explains why it is *what* it is, viz., a certain limited kind of existence.

B. Further, no potentiality can actualize itself. A potential is the mere capacity to have a certain kind of existence. And no potential can actualize itself any more than the potential for steel to be a skyscraper is in itself sufficient to make it into a skyscraper. An empty bucket does not fill itself, even though its emptiness is the real potential to be filled (in contrast, say, to a desk top which does not have this potential). The argument may be stated thus:

1) Essence as such is merely the potential for existence.

2) But no potentiality for existence can actualize itself (the potential is not the cause of the actual; what something *can be* does not in itself account for what it *is*).

3) Therefore, a thing's potentiality for existence (essence) cannot explain its actual existence.

C. Therefore, there must be some actuality outside of composed beings to explain why they actually do exist. Since changing beings are composed of an actuality and a potentiality and since no potentiality can actualize itself, it follows that there must be some actuality outside of changing beings to explain why they actually exist rather than just possibly exist. This conclusion follows in this way:

1) The potential cannot cause the existence of the actual (as was just shown) [2]

2) Only the actual can cause the existence of the actual (actuality follows only from actuality; nothing cannot be the cause of something; nonexistence cannot produce existence). [3]

3) So it follows that some actual existence is the cause of every composed being which exists.

To summarize the whole second premise in the overall cosmological argument: (1) Every limited changing being is composed of both an actuality (its existence) and a potentiality (is essence). (2) But no potentiality can actualize itself. (3) Therefore, there must be some actuality outside of every composed being to account for the fact that it actually exists, as opposed to its not existing but merely having the potential for existence. In brief, the question as to why there is something rather than nothing at all must be answered thus: because there is something beyond it that is causing it to exist. Why is it that what can exist but need not exist actually does exist? It is because its potential for existence was actualized or caused by some existence beyond it.

3. *There cannot be an infinite regress of causes of being.* The next step in the cosmological argument is to show that an infinite regress of existent-dependent causes is impossible. But first we must carefully define what is meant by the terms with which we are working.

By "cause" is meant an efficient or producing cause, as opposed to a final or purposing cause. An efficient cause is a necessary and sufficient condition to account for the actualization of a potential.

By "existence" we mean the present, here-and-now "*be*-ing" or existing in the world. Existence is that which *is* as opposed to that which is not. It is the "isness" of a thing as opposed to its "was-ness" or "will-be-ness." Existence denotes not the origination of a being but its *continuation* in being. Hence, when we speak about a cause of existence, reference is not made to what caused things to come into being but, rather, to what causes things to *continue to be.* That is, we are asking about the *conservation,* and not the origination, of things in being. Existential causality, then, refers as such to the cause of the *being* of things and not the cause of their becoming. [4]

By an "infinite regress" is meant a series that has no first or beginning cause. It is a series where *every* cause is being caused

by another cause and, hence, a series in which there is no originating cause of all other causes. No cause in an infinite series is uncaused, for if it were, the series would stop there. That cause would be a first, uncaused Cause of the rest. It is such a first Cause that the infinite series hopes to evade.

With these distinctions in mind the question before us is whether there can be an infinite series of existent-dependent causes of the here-and-now "be-ing" of the limited, changing, composed beings that have already been shown to be in need of a cause of their being. The clear indication is that a definitively negative answer is called for. The argument against the infinite regress arises from the very nature of an existent-dependent cause. In an infinite series of this kind:

a. *There must be causality within the series* to cause the present existence of things.

b. *Every* cause in the series demands a cause for its present existence.

c. Hence, the existential *causality in the series is simultaneous;* i.e., every cause is having its existence caused at the very same instant.

d. But there cannot be causality within the series unless *at least one cause is doing some causing* of the existence of another (causality comes only from causes).

e. It follows that this one cause must be causing its own existence, since it accounts for all the causality in the series. For, it must be remembered, *every* cause in an infinite series of this kind is having its own existence caused. (Where there is one cause not being caused, it would be an uncaused Cause of the other causes, which is what the infinite series hopes to evade.)

f. But a self-caused existence is impossible, since to cause oneself one would have to be existentially prior to himself. Formally stated,

1) A self-caused being is one that *does not have existence,* for if it had existence, it would not need a cause to give it the existence it already has.

2) But a self-caused being is one that *has existence,* since

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it must exist in order to cause existence (nothing cannot cause something).

3) But to have and not have existence simultaneously is impossible.

4) Therefore, self-caused beings are impossible.

5) But a simultaneously existent-dependent infinite regress necessarily contains at least one self-caused being.

6) Therefore, such an infinite regress is necessarily impossible.

One way out of this dilemma for the nontheist is to affirm that the series is circular and mutually dependent. In a circle of dominoes each domino might be lying on another and, in that sense, each in turn is causing another to be where it is. But a circle of existent-dependent simultaneous causes is even more obviously impossible than the alleged infinite regress. For it is clearly obvious in such a circle that the reasoning is circular. The same argument applies here, viz., at least one of these causes must be causing existence at the same time its existence is being caused (by itself), which is an impossible self-caused existence. The illustration of the dominoes is deceiving because the dominoes are not really holding each other in place. Take away the table, the laws of friction, gravity, etc., and the dominoes would fall apart. Likewise, take away a cause from beyond the infinite series (or circle) and the whole series crumbles.

This points up the real dilemma the nontheist is in, viz., either the infinite series has a cause within it to account for the causality in it or else the nontheist must posit a cause beyond it to give causality to the whole series (or circle). But it has already been shown that any cause in the series would have to be a self-caused existence, and this is impossible. And to posit a cause beyond the series to account for the causality in the series is precisely what the theist argues, viz., in any supposed series where *every* cause is existent-dependent there must be beyond that series a cause that is not existent-dependent but which is giving the existential causality to the whole series.

Another ill-fated move by infinite regress proponents would be to deny outright or by implication that there is causality in an infinite series and, hence, nothing is causing anything. This move is

doomed, since the very purpose of the series was to explain the caused beings of this world. It was established above (premise 2) that there must be a cause beyond every limited changing being, since they are being caused to exist by something beyond themselves. This directly entails the necessity of at least one cause of existence in (or beyond) the supposed infinite series to account for the beings that are being caused. Therefore, to say that there is no causality in the infinite series is to forget that it has already been established that there must be some causality either in or beyond the series. In short, this attempted move by nontheists would be an elimination of the needed existence-explanation or ground for limited beings. Finite beings call for an explanation as to why they exist when they need not exist. And to posit an infinite regress, which does not really provide any causality to cause finite existence, is no more than an attempt to explain away the need for a real explanation or ground.

There is one more argument against an infinite regress of causes, viz., that no composed being can be the cause of existence. All composed beings are caused beings by nature and not causing beings. Their own existence is caused or received and, hence, they have no existence to give to anything else. If a being is not able to hold itself in existence, it surely cannot ground the existence of another. A man falling off a cliff certainly cannot catch another man and keep him from falling. In like manner, a being that needs a ground for its own existence cannot be the ground for the existence of another being. Everything that *has* its existence from another depends immediately on what *is* existence in itself. That is, what has only a *possible* existence (i.e., what by nature may or may not be) must depend for its existence on a *necessary* existence (i.e., what by nature must be). One contingent being cannot ground another contingent being. What has being contingently has it from what is Being necessarily. If, then, no caused, composed, or contingent being can cause the existence of another being, it follows that the very first cause outside of a caused being must be an uncaused Being. The very first being outside of a contingent being must be a necessary Being. There can be no chain of intermediaries between a received existence and the giver of existence. And it goes without saying that if there can be no links at all between caused existence and the cause of existence, there

certainly cannot be an infinite regress of causal links. Everything that has actuality must be grounded in actuality as such, for nothing else can actualize anything. Potentialities cannot actualize themselves and other actualized potentialities cannot actualize pure potentials, since they needed something to actualize their own potential. Therefore, no composed being can be an intermediary in a chain of existential causality. The first "link" is the first Cause of all composed being. If this is so, then a regress of existent causes cannot even get started, let alone be infinite in extention.

4. *Therefore, there is a first Cause of the present existence of these beings.* This conclusion follows logically from the first three premises. If some limited, changing beings exist and if their present existence is caused by another being and if an infinite regress of causes of being is impossible, then it follows necessarily that there must be a *first* Cause of the existence of these changing beings. Indeed, if the last argument against an infinite regress is correct, then this first Cause must be the very first Cause beyond the changing beings, with no intermediary causes in between. But be that as it may, even if there is a series of existent-dependent causes, it is clearly impossible for such a series to go on into infinity. And if the series cannot be without beginning, there must be at its head a first Cause of all the existential causality in the series. No matter which way it is approached, there is a first Cause of the existence of every finite thing that exists. If there is no series at all, then the first Cause is the immediate cause of finite existence. If there is a series with all but one cause being caused, then that cause must stand first in the series. For if it is not causing the rest of the series, there must be an impossible self-caused cause somewhere in the middle of the series. And if there is a Cause beyond the series, giving causality to the series, then it is still first in the sense that there can be no cause (or series) beyond it. It must give existence to the series without receiving its existence from another (as was demonstrated in premise 3). So in this manner the Cause beyond the series would be first because there is no cause of its existence.

5. *This first Cause must be infinite, necessary, eternal, simple, unchangeable, and one.* Now that we have concluded a first Cause of every limited thing that exists, it remains to be asked what kind

of a cause it is. The first question is this: Is this first Cause of existence a) self-caused, b) caused by another or c) uncaused? The answer is already implied in what has gone before.

a. To be self-caused is as impossible for a first cause as it is for any other cause. Even the Cause of all finite existence cannot cause its own existence. Self-caused beings are impossible because causality of existence demands existential priority (though not necessarily temporal priority) and it is impossible for a being to be prior to itself.[5] It cannot give existence to itself, for that implies both that it has existence to give and that it did not have existence so that it needed to give it to itself. And a being, first Cause or not, simply cannot both have and not have existence simultaneously.

b. Neither can a first Cause be caused by another. For a first Cause is by its very function as first in the series not caused by another. The reason the series stopped at this Cause is that there were no causes beyond it. It is this first Cause that gives the causality to the whole series. And as head of the series it has no cause. If it did have a cause, then we must go beyond it to find another to explain the causality in the series (as was shown in premise 3). But since the whole series and existence of limited beings is dependent on this Cause (per premise 4), then it is necessarily that beyond which no other cause is actually effecting the series. Hence, it is the first efficient Cause in the series. And because it is first, it is not receiving its causality from another.

c. This leaves only the alternative that this first Cause must itself be an *un*caused Cause. For if it is neither self-caused nor caused by another, then it must be uncaused in its existence. This is a very important conclusion for our cosmological argument and one that not all theists see clearly, especially those who operate with a principle of sufficient reason as opposed to a principle of existential causality. Some nontheists object to theism on the supposed basis that God is an impossible self-caused Being. It seems to me that this is a legitimate objection, but it does not apply to the God of the above argument. A *self*-caused being is impossible, but an *un*caused Being is not.

Further, it is as an uncaused Cause that the essential metaphysical attributes of this Cause can be unpacked to identify it

with the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Let us move directly to unpack what is implied in an uncaused Cause of the existence of finite, limited, changing beings.

1) First of all, an uncaused Cause must be an *unlimited being*. Very simply put, if all caused things are limited beings, then it follows (by contraposition) that an uncaused Being is an unlimited Being. It is the unlimited limiter of every limited being. That is, it places the causal limits on all other beings by virtue of the fact that it not only causes them to be but because it causes them to be the specific kinds of beings they are. But since an unlimited Being means a being that is not limited in its existence and since "not limited" is what is meant by infinite (i.e., not finite), then it follows that the first Cause of all finite being must itself be an infinite Being.

2) Secondly, this uncaused, unlimited Being must also be a *necessary Being*. This also follows (by contraposition) from the fact that all finite beings are contingent beings. For if all limited beings depend for their existence on an unlimited Being and if this unlimited Being does not depend on anything for its existence, then it is an independent Being. Or, to say it another way, if all limited or caused beings are contingent or possible beings (i.e., beings which may be), then the unlimited or uncaused Being must be a noncontingent or necessary Being (i.e., one which must be). That is, all beings whose essence is not to exist depend on one whose essence is to exist.

It is important to note that the "necessity" here is not logical but ontological. God is not a logically necessary Being. Because it is logically possible that nothing ever existed, including God. But it is actually false that nothing ever existed. In fact, it is undeniably true that something exists that needs not exist (e.g., myself). Therefore, since something exists, it is ontologically necessary that something exists as a ground for all contingent existence. The existence of contingent beings demands a necessary Being on which they can be contingent. For if the contingent beings are caused beings, then the uncaused Cause of these beings must be a noncontingent Being, i.e., a necessary Being.

3) Thirdly, this uncaused Being must be an *eternal Being*. Since nonexistence cannot give rise to existence and since this uncaused

Existence is the cause of all existence, then its existence must be eternal. For if there were ever a time that the Cause of all existence did not exist, then it would follow that nothing would ever have existed. The only way the move can be made from nonexistence to existence is by an existing Cause of existence. And since that Cause cannot cause its own existence, then it must have always existed. For if the Cause of all existence was ever itself nonexistent, then nothing would ever have existed. But something does exist (as does its uncaused Cause). Hence, it is necessary that this uncaused Cause has always existed, eternally.

4) Fourthly, the uncaused Cause must be a *simple, undivided Being*. Since this uncaused Cause is pure actuality with no potentiality, it has no composition. And what is not composed is not divisible; it is pure indivisible existence. Pure existence is existence purely and simply. And what is existence purely and simply, is pure and simple (i.e., undivided) in its existence. Only potentialities make things divisible because they can divide things according to various limitations or kinds of existence they receive. But pure actuality has no potentiality or limitations. Hence, uncaused existence is undivided existence; it is simple existence as such. Another way to state the argument is this: what is divisible is composed existence. But composed existence is composed of actuality and potentiality. And what is composed is not pure actuality as such. And since an uncaused Cause is pure actuality, it follows that it cannot be divisible. Uncaused Being is simple Being.

5) Fifthly, the uncaused Cause of existence must be an *unchangeable Being*. For anything that changes in its existence must possess both an actuality (since it exists) and a potentiality for change. Now change is a passing from a potentiality to actuality; from what it could be to what it actually becomes. But an unlimited existence has no potentiality; it is pure existence as such. It follows, then, that there can be no change in what is existence as such. It must be what it is and it cannot be otherwise. Were it to change, it would demonstrate that it was not really pure actuality. For change is the actualization of some potentiality, and pure actuality has no unactualized potentialities. Hence, a pure and unlimited existence as such cannot change.

Whatever changes must change either accidentally or substantially. But a necessary Being has no accidents for whatever it is, it is necessarily and not accidentally. There are no characteristics that it may or may not have; whatever it may have, it must have. Otherwise it would not be a necessary Being. But neither can a necessary Being change substantially. For a substantial change in one's being would mean it would either have to come into or go out of being. Both are impossible for a necessary Being. For if a necessary Being exists at all, it must exist necessarily; this is the only way a necessary Being can exist. And since it has already been shown that a necessary Being exists, it follows that it must exist necessarily. In other words, a substantial change in being means that there is a passage from nonbeing to being or vice versa. But since nothing does not give rise to something on its own, it follows that the only possible way a substantial change could occur is if there were some ground of being beneath the change, making it possible for something to appear where before there was nothing. Hence, whatever undergoes a substantial change demands a necessary Being as its ground which does not change but which is the unchanging ground of all that changes.

6) Finally, an uncaused Being must be *one Being* (i.e., there cannot be many). That there can be only one uncaused Being can be seen in several ways. First, from the fact that an uncaused Being is pure actuality it follows that there cannot be two such beings. For pure actuality is being as such and there can only be one Being which is existence *as such*. Every other existence has to be existence *as limited* or distinguished in some way from existence as such. Many things may *have* existence, but only one thing can *be* existence.

Further, pure actuality cannot be divided or multiplied in any way because it has no potentiality. Only what has some potentiality can be differentiated from another by virtue of the fact that they have differing potentialities or essences. But pure actuality has no potentialities whatsoever. Therefore, what is pure actuality (viz., the uncaused existence) must be one, since there is no way to make it many without adding to it what it by nature cannot have, viz., some potentiality.

Also, pure actuality possesses all the perfections or character-

istics of being in the highest and most eminent way possible (viz., infinitely). Whatever perfections actually exist were actualized by this pure actuality. And since in communicating actuality to things it is sharing of its own actuality, we must conclude that perfections produced in the effect are perfections possessed by the Cause according to its own mode of being. This would mean that the uncaused Cause as the source of all perfections must be the most perfect of all beings. Now it seems obvious that there cannot be two *most* perfect beings. Only one Being can *be* perfection; all other beings must only *share* in that perfection in varying ways. But every other being must be less than perfect.

A similar argument may be constructed from the fact that an infinite Cause has infinite causal power. But two such beings could cancel the causal power of each other. And causal power that can be cancelled is not really infinite. If, for instance, one infinite power desired to destroy what the other wanted to preserve, then one power must prevail over the other. In this case the other would not be infinite in power. And it is highly problematic to argue that there would or even could be a complete cooperation between them, since (per the previous argument) one is "less perfect" than the other. Furthermore, whatever agreement could be worked out between them would have to be based ultimately on the one that is absolutely perfect, since for Him to assent to what is less than perfect would be an evil contrary to His nature.[6] In view of the fact that the one would have to yield to the standard of the other, it is difficult to see in what sense the one yielding could be considered infinite in power. At least on the practical level of operation, as well as on the level of absolute perfection, there would be only one all-powerful Being. At least by nature and power the one all-powerful and absolutely perfect Being could never allow anything to occur contrary to His will.

Another argument for there being only one uncaused Cause can be derived from its absolute perfection of being which is absolutely perfect. For to be really different, one would have to really differ from the other in its very being, since to differ by non-being is to differ by nothing. And to differ by absolutely nothing is to have absolutely no difference whatsoever. But neither can they differ in being, for in being they are absolutely the same. Both are infinite, necessary, all-powerful, etc. So when there is absolutely no

difference in being between two beings univocally conceived, then they must be really identical. Two infinite beings must be conceived univocally. A finite and an infinite being may be conceived of non-univocally (because they differ in being) but two infinite beings, which are said to be the same in every respect, cannot be so conceived. Whatever univocally conceived beings have no real difference must be really identical. And two infinite beings with all perfections are surely not to be conceived of equivocally, for then they would be totally different. And if the one had being, then the other would be nonbeing, since that is what is totally different from being. Nor will an analogous conception be permitted (where they are only similar), for it has already been agreed that they are identical in attributes of being. If they are not identical, then it follows easily that there cannot be two infinitely perfect beings. For if they are not identical, one has what the other does not have. And if the one is absolutely perfect with that characteristic and the other lacks it, then the one lacking it is not absolutely perfect. Thus we would be left with only one absolutely perfect Being, which is what we set out to show.[7]

6. *This first uncaused Cause is identical with the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition.* In order properly to compare the God whose existence is supported by the above cosmological argument, we must briefly inquire into the characteristics of the God of the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures. According to the Bible, God is both the creator (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3) and sustainer of all things (Ps. 36:6; Col. 1:17). He is both one and supreme (Deut. 6:4; Exod. 20:3), as well as infinite and eternal (Ps. 147:5; 41:13). He is changeless in nature (Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17) and absolutely perfect and loving (Matt. 5:48; 1 John 4:16). The God of Scripture has many other compatible attributes but these will suffice to show that He is identical with the God of the above cosmological argument. For in both He is an absolutely infinite and perfect Being and, as was just demonstrated (in premise 5), there cannot be two such beings. In order to really differ, two infinitely perfect beings would have to have some real difference. But if there were a real difference, then one would lack some perfection the other had and, hence, one would not be the absolutely perfect being of both the cosmological argument and the Bible. Since the God of both the Bible and theism has changeless, eternal

existence, which causes the very present existence of everything that exists, it follows in like manner that there cannot be two of them. For, as was argued above, there cannot be two beings that are pure existence as such. Pure actuality cannot be differentiated from pure actuality. Only potentiality makes limitation and differentiation possible, and pure actuality has no potentiality in its being. Hence, the God of revelation and the God of cosmological theism are identical. There are not different Gods but only two different approaches to one and the same God: divine declaration and philosophical inference. It should not seem strange to those who believe (via divine revelation) in God's manifestation in His creation (Romans 1:19, 20; Ps. 19:1) that it is possible to arrive at a knowledge of God by inference through these manifestations.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT REEVALUATED

Many objections that apply to the Leibnizian type of cosmological argument do not apply to the type just given. Let us note the major objections and how they would be answered in view of the foregoing restatement of the cosmological argument. Of the criticisms offered by Hume, Kant, and others, the following are noteworthy: [8]

1. *Only a finite cause need be inferred from finite effects*. This objection fails in view of premise 5. For a finite being or effect is limited, and *every* limited being is being caused by some Being which ultimately (because of the impossibility of an infinite regress) brings us to a Cause which is not-limited but which is the unlimited limiter of every limited thing that exists. The first Cause cannot be finite or limited because if it were limited (i.e., caused), then it would need a cause beyond it to ground its limited existence. For *every* limited being is caused. But existence as such is unlimited, and if there is a limited existence, then something must be limiting it. And ultimately, that something which provides the limits for everything else that exists must itself be unlimited in its existence. The first Cause must be uncaused, and an uncaused cause cannot be a limited cause. It must be the unlimited or infinite cause of every thing else.

2. *The words "necessary Being" have no consistent meaning*. The same criticism would be alleged about the words "uncaused

Cause" that we have used. The answer is basically this: The meaning of these terms is derived from their relationship to what is dependent upon them. And this meaning is two-fold: first, terms like "uncaused" and "independent" have a *negative* meaning. God is *not* limited, *not* dependent, *not* temporal, *not* caused, and *not* composed. We know what these limitations mean from experience and so, by contrast, we know that God does not have any of these limitations. However, it should be remembered that a negative term does not denote a negative attribute. It is not the affirmation of nothing, rather, it is the negation of all limitation in the first cause that is being affirmed.

Second, there is a *positive* meaning to the word "cause" in the description "uncaused Cause." A cause is a necessary and sufficient condition for something else. An existential cause is a ground of the very existence of something else. And an existential cause of present existence is the here-and-now reality condition for all dependent existence. This provides the positive content to the existing cause from which the negations remove all limitations. In brief, the fact that the first Cause is "*un*-caused" (negative aspect) defines it as an unlimited kind of cause. And the fact that it is a "cause" designates it as the creative condition for all finite beings (positive meaning of first Cause). So we know that it has the *power* to bring and maintain things in existence (from the fact that it is a "cause") and that this power is *unlimited* (from the fact that it is an "uncaused" kind of cause). Thus the term "uncaused Cause" has distinct meaning in relation to the effects it produces, both positively and negatively. The same applies to all the other qualities that are implied in "uncaused," such as eternal, necessary, infinite, and simple.

3. *There is no way to establish the principle of causality*. Granting Hume's epistemological atomism — that all empirical impressions are "entirely loose and separate" — there is no empirical way to establish a necessary causal connection for sensible experience. But the cosmological argument given above is not based on empirical causation but on existential causality. Hume himself never denied that things have a cause for their existence. He wrote. "I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause." Indeed, it would be ontologically absurd to suppose that something could arise from nothing. The principle

of existential causality is that "every limited being has a cause for its existence." This principle is not based in any mere conceptional or definitional necessity but in the fundamental reality that non-existence does not cause existence. Our knowledge of the fact of existential causality arises out of an analysis of finite being (premise 2). The analysis may be summarized thus: (1) Existence as such is unlimited; (2) all limited existence is being limited by something distinct from existence itself (this limiting factor will be called essence); (3) whatever is being limited is being caused (for to be limited in being is to be caused to be in a certain finite way; a limited existence is a caused existence); (4) therefore, all limited beings are caused beings.

We might also note that all limited beings are composed beings; they are composed of existence and essence — an essence that limits the kind of existence they can have. Likewise, an unlimited Being is an uncomposed Being (i.e., a simple Being). Such a Being has no limiting essence as such. Its essence is identical with its unlimited existence. The principle of causality, then, is established by an analysis of what finite being is. Upon examination, finite being is seen to be caused being, and caused being must have a cause of its being.

4. *Theistic arguments convince few, usually only those who like abstract reasoning.* It is not abstract reasoning that is involved in the above theistic argument. It is not a purely rational process but an ontological insight, analysis, and inference based on the concrete realities of the experience of being as limited or finite. There is no dependence in the above argument on purely abstract principles such as the principle of sufficient reason. There is no conceptual necessities such as a Being who logically cannot not exist. Everything flows from the nature of experienced and undeniable (not inconceivable) reality. Something exists (this is undeniable, though not inconceivable); and since this something is experienced as limited existence, it must be limited or caused ultimately by some existence that is unlimited in its existence. This is not an abstract reasoning process. It is a search for the real ground of real beings.

Whether anyone is convinced by this argument will depend on several factors. First, granting the argument's validity, it will depend in part on one's understanding of this argument as to whether he will be convinced or not. Second, once the mind understands

the argument, it will depend on whether one wills to assent to it. One is never forced to believe what his mind understands as true. There may be other personal factors beyond the analysis here that lead a man to remain unconvinced, i.e., uncommitted to the truth of the argument. Theistic arguments do not automatically convert. On the other hand, men of good will who understand the argument ought to accept it as true. And many men do. [9]

5. *An infinite series is possible.* An infinite series of simultaneous and existentially dependent causes is *not* possible, as was demonstrated above (premise 3). There must be a here-and-now ground for a simultaneous series of causes none of which would otherwise have a ground for its existence. An ungrounded infinite regress is tantamount to affirming that the existence in the series arises from nonexistence, since no cause in the series has a real ground for its existence. Or, if one cause in the series grounds the existence of the others, then it must be a *first* Cause (and hence the series is not infinite). Otherwise it turns out to be a cause which causes its own existence (which is impossible), while it is causing the existence of everything else in the series.

6. *The cosmological argument depends on the invalid ontological argument.* This is not true of the argument given here. It begins with existence, not thought (e.g., it begins with "Something exists" not with "that than which nothing greater can be conceived"). It proceeds with ontologically grounded principles and not with mere rationally undeniable thought (i.e., it proceeds with "Nothing cannot cause something" rather than "Everything must have a sufficient reason"). Our restated cosmological argument concludes with a real Ground of all finite being as opposed to a logically necessary being (i.e., with "unlimited Cause of existence for all limited existence," as opposed to "a Being which logically cannot not be"). The restated cosmological argument does not begin with the a priori and at no point does it borrow from the purely conceptual to complete its task. It is not based on the invalid ontological argument.

7. *Existential statements are not logically necessary.* This objection is really self-destroying. For either the statement "No existential statements are necessary" is itself a statement about existence or reality, or else it is not. If it is a statement about reality,

it is self-defeating, for it claims to be both necessary and about reality, while it is saying no necessary statements can be made about reality.) On the other hand, if it is merely a meta-statement about statements (and not really a statement about reality), then it is uninformative about what kind of statements may or may not be made about reality. In brief, the only way to deny existentially necessary statements as possible is to make (or imply) one in the very denial, which is self-falsifying.

Theists have attempted to offer examples of existentially necessary statements. "Square circles do not exist," "There are an infinite number of prime numbers," and "I exist" are samples of allegedly existentially necessary statements that theists give. The problem with the first one is that it is negative and does not assert anything that does exist. The problem with the second one is that numbers do not exist (in non-Platonic philosophy) in the same sense in which, say, material objects or persons exist (and, hence, cannot be used as a premise in a cosmological argument). Only the third example is theistically usable, and it is not a *logically* necessary statement. The basis for the truth of "I exist" is not logic but fact. For my nonexistence is not logically inconceivable. It is not logically impossible that I do not exist. I am not a logically necessary being. True, the statement "I exist" is undeniable (though not logically inconceivable). But it is undeniable only because, as a matter of *fact,* I do indeed exist. If I did not exist (which is logically conceivable), then a true statement could not be made of me; e.g., "He does not exist." Hence, the actual basis for the truth of the statement "I exist" or "Something exists," used as a premise in the cosmological argument, is not logical but ontological. I do exist and therefore I cannot consistently deny that I do exist.

Granted that I do exist, it is "logically necessary"[10] for me not to deny that I do exist. But this "logical necessity" is based on the *actuality* of my existence and not on the inconceivability of my nonexistence. That is, this "logical necessity" is dictated only by reality; reality is not dictated by logical necessity.[11] Logic is built on reality and not reality on logic.[12] In summation, the reason that the statement "I exist" is true is not the *logical impossibility* of its opposite ("I do not exist") but the *actual undeniability* of its truth. I do exist and therefore it is undeniable that "I do exist"

(though not logically impossible that I do not exist). The pure rationalist confuses actual undeniability with logical inconceivability. The statements in the cosmological argument (such as "Something exists" and "God exists") are, we suggest, actually undeniable but their opposite is not logically inconceivable. This leads to the answer to the next objection.

8. *What is rationally necessary is not ontologically necessary.* We argued earlier that the rationally inescapable is undeniably real (chapter 5). Simply put, the argument is this: What is undeniably true, is true of reality. If a given statement is the only affirmable statement about reality, then it must be true. For instance, it is undeniable that the law of noncontradiction is applicable to reality, since it is derived from reality. Every denial that noncontradiction does apply to reality turns out to be either false or self-defeating, such as (a) "It is a noncontradictory affirmation about reality to say that reality is not noncontradictory" or (b) "It is logically possible with regard to reality that logical possibility does not apply to reality." Neither of these statements can maintain itself. Assuming there is some reality (which can't be denied), then the only affirmably true statement is that what is undeniably true, is true of reality. That is, the only statements that can be successfully made about reality are actually descriptive of reality. What is actually necessary to affirm about reality is undeniably true of reality.

Cosmological theism, such as defended here, is not interested in *rational inescapability* as such. It is interested in *existential undeniability.* If something exists, and it is undeniably true that something does exist, then there must be a necessary and sufficient ground for that existence. The necessity which primarily interests us is real necessity, not mere rational necessity. True, logical necessity follows from ontological necessity, and the theist ought to put his argument in logically valid form. But the fact of God's existence does not rest on the *logical* validity of theistic arguments. Of course, the theistic argument ought, if possible, to be put in logically valid form, but if it is not, the theist need not despair. Ontological necessity does not rest on formal logic, and the theistic case is still built on an ontologically necessary inference. (One thing, however, must be maintained by cosmological theism, viz., that the theistic argument is derived from and based on actual

existence. It begins with the fact that something exists and proceeds by means of existential causality to conclude that there is an existing Ground of all dependent existence.

9. *The cosmological argument leads to metaphysical contradictions.* Kant offered several alleged contradictions which he thought resulted from applying cosmological argumentation to reality. Three of these antinomies apply to our cosmological argument.

(1) The first antinomy concerns *time.* If we assume that time applies to reality, then the contradiction results that the world is *both* temporal and eternal. (a) Thesis: The world must have begun in time or else an infinity of moments have elapsed before it began, and this is impossible (since an infinity of moments can never be completed). (b) Antithesis: The world could not have begun in time, for that implies that there was a time before time began, and this is contradictory. The answer to Kant's first antinomy is that his view of time is incorrect. Time is not a continuum of successive moments that exist without beginning or end. Creation did not begin *in* time which was already there; creation is the beginning *of* time. The only thing "prior" to time is eternity, and eternity is prior in a causal but not a temporal way. In fact, Kant's objection overlooks the *possibility* of an eternal creation, which many theists accept (a la Aquinas).[13] In any event, Kant's objection does not affect the argument based on a here-and-now existential causality. For this type of cosmological argument is not dependent on a specific view about the *origin* of creation but only its present *conservation* in existence. The finite world demands a cause right now, regardless of whether it began in time or is eternal.

(2) The next antinomy is about *causality.* It argues that it must be true that the world both has a first Cause and does not have a first Cause. (a) Thesis: Not every cause has a cause or else a series of causes would not begin to cause as they in fact do. (b) Antithesis: A series of causes cannot have a beginning, since everything demands a cause. Hence, the series must go on infinitely. This antinomy has already been answered above. The antithesis is wrong: not every cause does need a cause; only finite things need causes. Thus there can be a beginning, providing we arrive at a Cause that is not finite. Only finite causes need a cause; the first uncaused Cause needs no cause, because it is not finite.

(3) The last antinomy concerns *contingency.* Kant insists that everything both must be contingent and cannot be contingent, if we assume that these concepts apply to reality. (a) Thesis: Not everything is contingent or else there would be no condition for contingency (i.e., the dependent must be depending on something that is not dependent). (b) Antithesis: Everything must be contingent, for necessity applies only to concepts and not to things. Theists reject Kant's antithesis. There is no way to deny that necessity can apply to reality without making a necessary statement about reality. Only an ontological disproof could possibly establish Kant's point. And it has already been shown (in chapter 7) that attempted ontological disproofs are self-defeating. Further, the cosmological argument has already concluded that something necessarily exists. The validity of this argument is the refutation of Kant's contention that necessity does not apply to existence.

10. *The conclusion of the argument does not prove a theistic God.* How can the conclusion of the cosmological argument be identified with a theistic God any more than with polytheistic gods, a panentheistic God, a pantheistic God, or even the material universe? Any of these could be the "uncaused Cause" of the cosmological argument. The answer to this question will relate to each of these other alternatives in turn.

First, *the uncaused Cause is not many polytheistic gods,* as was shown earlier (in premise 10). There cannot be more than one unlimited existence as such; more than the Most is not possible. Further, in order to differ, one being would have to lack some characteristic that the other one had. But any being that lacked some characteristic of existence would not be an unlimitedly perfect existence. In other words, two infinite beings cannot differ in their potentiality, since they have no potentiality; they are pure actuality. And they cannot differ in their actuality, since actuality as such does not differ from actuality as such. Hence, they must be identical. There is only one unlimited Cause of all limited existence.

Secondly, *the uncaused Cause is not identical with the material universe.* The ordinary conception of the material universe is of a spatio-temporal limited system. Now it has already been shown that an uncaused Cause is unlimited (in premise 5). Further, since space and time imply limitations to a here-and-now kind of exis-

tence, it follows that God cannot be a being whose existence is limited by space and time. God's existence is unlimited in any way, for He is unlimited existence. Hence, God's existence is not identical with the spatio-temporal existence of the material universe. God is *in* the temporal world as its very ground of continuing existence, but He is not *of* the world in that it is limited and He is not. And any move to claim that the *whole* of the material universe is not temporal and limited, as are the parts, only proves what theism claims, viz., that there is beyond the contingent world of the limited spatio-temporality a "whole" reality that is the eternal, unlimited, and necessary ground of its existence. That is, it is an admission to theism that there is a God beyond the limited, changing world of experience. It is an attempt to disguise God by simply admitting that there is a "whole" reality that is "more" than the experienced part of reality and that has all the attributes of the theistic God.

Thirdly, *the uncaused Cause is not identical with the God of panentheism.* Dipolar theism or process theology affirms that God has two poles: an actual pole (which is identified with the changing temporal world) and a potential pole (which is eternal and unchanging). Such a conception of God must be rejected for the following reasons: (1) The conclusion of the cosmological argument demonstrates the need for a God of pure actuality with no potentiality (pole) at all. (2) Further, God cannot be subject to limitations, composition, or spatio-temporality (as was shown in premise 5). (3) God cannot have poles or aspects, since He is absolutely simple (i.e., uncomposed) with no duality at all. He is a simple and unlimited Existence as such, with no limited pole. A partly limited unlimited existence is a contradiction. (4) Further, God cannot be subject to change. For anything that changes must be composed of actuality and potentiality for change. Change is a passing from potentiality to actuality: from what can be to what actually becomes. But since existence as such has no potentiality, it follows that it cannot change. If something changes, it proves thereby that it was not pure actuality but possessed some potentiality for the change it underwent. A pure and unlimited actuality cannot change. (5) The God of panentheism or process theology is a confusion of the world process with the God who grounds that process. God is *in* the process as the unchanging basis for

change, but God is not *of* the process. God is the cause of all finite, changing existence, but He is beyond all finitude and change.

Fourthly, *the uncaused Cause is not the God of pantheism.* Pantheism affirms that an unlimited and necessary Being exists but denies the reality of limited and finite beings. Everything other than God is illusory; there is really only one Being in the universe. This position must be rejected for several reasons: (1) Pantheism is contrary to our experience of ourselves as real but finite persons. (2) It is contrary to our experience of other persons as real but different centers of consciousness. (3) It is contrary to the experienced reality of interpersonal relationship with other selves, since if there are not two really different selves, then they cannot really fellowship with or love each other. (4) It is contrary to our experience of God. Indeed, it makes religious experience impossible. All I-Thou experience reduces to an I-I dialog within God Himself. For there is only one Being or Person in a pantheistic universe; all other "persons" turn out to be totally illusory at worst or merely modal, emanational or aspectival at best. But in any event, in no pantheism are there really beings different from God. (5) Also, pantheism is contrary to our experience of evil, suffering and death. It has no satisfactory explanation for the origin, persistence and apparent reality of evil. Poetically put, why is it that when I sit on a pin and it punctures my skin that I dislike what I fancy I feel? (6) Pantheism is contrary to our experience of change in the world. It affirms that all change, including that in our own minds and consciousness, is unreal. No river moves, no tree grows, and no man ages. For if there is any real change, there must really be changing beings other than God, for God is an unchanging Being. The existence of finite, limited, changing beings is not rationally inescapable, but it is existentially undeniable. We do experience finite existence. To deny this is to affirm the obvious absurdity that we are God. That is, pantheism, if true, reduces to self-deification. (7) Finally, pantheism is self-defeating. It assumes there are finite beings in order to deny that there are finite beings. For the pantheist who is affirming the position of pantheism acknowledges that he speaks from a finite perspective, and yet he is unwilling to deny the validity of his affirmation. But how can there be real finite perspectives without real finite perspectors? Affirmations come only from affirmers and thoughts

from thinkers. Hence, the pantheist assumes the reality of what he attempts to deny, viz., that there are finite beings.

11. *There is an equivocation on the word "cause" in the argument.* It is sometimes objected that the word "cause" in the premise means finite cause but in the conclusion it means infinite cause and that this is an equivocation. Hence, the argument commits a four-term fallacy. In answering this charge, it should be pointed out that the word "cause" as such means neither finite cause nor infinite cause. It means a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of something else, i.e., a ground of being. Now it turns out by way of conclusion that the ground of being is itself ungrounded by anything else; that the cause is not caused by another; that the limiter is unlimited (i.e., not finite or infinite). Hence, the qualification of the cause of being as an *un*-caused kind of cause specifies that it is a *not*-finite kind of cause. It is an unconditioned conditioner, an ungrounded Ground of all being. This is not an equivocation but a necessary implication of the negation "not" or "un-"; it is a not-caused kind of cause. And a not-caused or not-limited kind of cause is an in-finite kind of cause. Hence, what was an open possibility in the premise (that it could be either finite or infinite) became definitely determined by way of negation in the conclusion. The first Cause of all that exists is not caused by another and, hence, it must be a (not limited) kind of cause. The first Cause is not caused, because it is *first* (no infinite regress being possible). And an uncaused Cause is unlimited (see premise 5). Hence, it follows that the first Cause is an unlimited kind of limiter or cause. The Ground of all limited existence is itself unlimited. No equivocation is involved. Rather, the infinite Cause is a necessary inference from the premises of the argument that demands that there be an uncaused Cause of all dependent being.

12. *The universe as a whole does not need a cause, only the parts do.* The cosmological argument argues that the universe as a whole is contingent or dependent because the parts are contingent or dependent. But this is usually called a fallacy of composition. The whole world is not small because the parts of the world are all small. The All-Star team is not better than the first place team because each player on it is the best in his position in the league.

This is clearly fallacious reasoning. It is formally invalid. However, what is formally invalid is sometimes actually true. For instance, the whole desk is wooden because each part is made of wood. This whole mosaic is extended because each part is extended. Since it is sometimes clearly true that the whole has what the parts have, precisely *because* the parts have it, then we must ask: What are the necessary conditions under which what is formally invalid in one type of logic is actually true? The answer is this: Whenever the parts *cause* the whole to have the given characteristic, then it is true (though formally invalid) that the whole must have what the parts have.[14] For example, extended parts added together *cause* the total of these parts to be extended. Likewise, pieces of blue tile combined *cause* the whole floor to be blue. This can be known only by an analysis of the properties involved. On the other hand, combining triangles does not necessarily form a triangular whole (two triangles can make a square). A collection of round objects does not cause the whole group to be round. Here again, only an analysis of the properties involved will determine the characteristic of the whole. The nature of a circle is such that many circles obviously do not make a circle. However, the nature of solid parts combined is that they make a solid whole, as a chair is evidence.

Now the nature of dependent beings is such that many dependent beings added together do not make an independent being. The sum total of all grounded beings does not equal a ground for their being. If one brick cannot hold itself in midair, placing a whole wall in midair is not going to solve the problem. If one sky diver's chute does not open, holding on to another diver whose chute didn't open will not help. Hence, a large number of caused beings cannot in themselves constitute the cause of their being. Indeed, if an infinite regress of dependent beings does not make these dependent beings any less dependent on a Cause beyond the series, then certainly no finite number constituting the material universe can do so. Adding up a number (finite or not) of things that do not explain their own existence does not produce an explanation (or ground) of their existence. An endless number of nonexplanations added together do not equal an explanation; they merely equal one monumental nonexplanation.

The apparent plausibility in the-world-as-a-whole-explains-itself

argument is derived from the fact that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Wholeness is something more than parts as is readily apparent from the difference between *all* of the parts of one's car scattered on the garage floor and the *whole* car that he drives. Three sides ($\triangle$) do not necessarily make a triangle ($\triangle$). Wholeness is something more than all the parts. A musical composition is more than mere notes, and an artistic composition is more than pigments on a canvas. Now the nontheist's argument gains plausibility in the light of this distinction. For what applies to the parts (viz., causality) does not necessarily apply to the whole, which is something more. However, even with this distinction, the nontheist's view is not forwarded. For, as is suggested from all these illustrations, the whole needs a cause to account for it. Notes do not put themselves together into songs, nor do pigments transform themselves into paintings. Every composition needs a composer; every painting, an artist. And on a more fundamental metaphysical level, if the universe is finite or limited in its being, then it is composed of essence (potentiality) and existence (actuality). But no potentiality as such can actualize itself. Hence, there must be some pure actuality (God) to actualize it. If, on the other hand, one wishes to argue that the material universe is unlimited or infinite, then we have moved back to pantheism and the above objections to pantheism must be repeated. Or else, if the "whole" is not a limited and dependent group of beings, then it is merely a covert way of admitting the theist's position that there is a "moreness" to reality which is itself infinite, unchanging, etc. (viz., God).

13. *The Universe is mutually dependent and does not need a cause beyond it.* Another objection similar to the former is that the universe is a mutually dependent whole. It needs no cause beyond it, because one part causes another in a mutually dependent whole. But mutual interdependence is clearly an impossibility when it is a question of here-and-now-existence dependence. If *every* part is dependent on a cause for its present existence, then at least one of the causes must be causing existence, otherwise nothing would be caused to exist (which is contrary to the granted fact that everything is depending for its existence on another). But if everything is being caused to exist at the very instant at

least one thing is causing existence, then this one thing must be causing its own existence, and this is impossible. Mutually dependent beings are a vicious circle of beings, with at least one impossible self-caused being somewhere among them.

If an attempt is made to deny that at least one being is causing being in the group, it must be acknowledged that either the dependent or caused beings are not really being caused (and this is contradictory) or else there is beyond the circle of dependence a Being that is causing their being, and this is what the theist contends. In brief, either mutually dependent beings (a) have no cause for their being, (b) have within their midst at least one self-caused being, or (c) appeal to a Cause beyond them to explain why they are existing rather than not existing. Now the first two alternatives are impossible and the last demands a first Cause beyond the mutually dependent circle to ground it. The first alternative says a self-caused being is possible; the second says uncaused finite being is possible; and the third admits that the circle is not really mutually dependent but is dependent on something outside it for the present existence in the world.

14. *There is no need for a here-and-now cause of existence.* There are two aspects to objections of this kind. Some contend that it is not meaningful to speak of simultaneous cause-effect relations; effects always follow causes temporally, or at least they may. Others simply say that there is no need to insist that the world needs a conserving cause; an originating cause, if anything, would be sufficient.

First of all, simultaneous causality does make sense. There is no contradiction in saying that an effect is being effected at the very instant it is being caused. This is clearly the cause with the relation between the premises (cause) and the conclusion (effect) of a syllogism. Cause and effect are simultaneous, for the instant you take away the premise(s), at that very instant the conclusion does not follow. What clouds the understanding of the simultaneity of causality is the confusion of an "effect" with an "after-effect." For example, when I throw the ball, it continues to move after I am no longer throwing (effecting) it. The clock continues to run after I wind it, and so on. However, in each of these and like examples the "after-effect" is being directly and simultaneously effected by

some other cause, after I take my hand off them. Inertia keeps the ball moving, the laws of tension and reaction keep the spring moving the clock, etc. If any of these laws would go out of existence, at that very instant the "after-effect" of my originating causality would stop dead. If inertia ceased the very instant after the ball left my hand, the ball would instantly stop in mid air. Likewise, the clock would stop ticking the instant the physical laws effecting it were nonoperative. Every so-called "after-effect" is only an effect of other simultaneous causes. In like manner, there are no existential after-effects.

It is clearly the case with finite beings that they need present here-and-now causes of their being. A basic distinction will help us see this point. The artist is not the cause of the *being* of a painting; he is only the cause of the *becoming* (or coming to be) of the painting. The painting continues to be after the artist takes his hands off it. In like manner, the father does not cause the being of the son but only his becoming, for when the father dies the son continues to live. Now it is clearly necessary that finite beings have a cause not only of their becoming but also of their here-and-now being. For at every moment of their existence they are dependent for their existence on another. They never cease to be limited, finite, contingent beings. And as such they demand a cause for their existence. For every finite being is caused. Hence it does not matter whether we are referring to John Doe at Moment[1] of his existence or M[2] or M[3], he is still existing and he still has a received existence and, therefore, he is still receiving his existence from something beyond him. Changing the moment of his dependent existence does not make him a nondependent existent. Perhaps some of the problem would be removed if we did not talk of exist*ence* (as though it were a whole package received at once) but of exist*ing* (which is a moment-by-moment process). Maybe the word "being" is even more misleading in this regard. No one receives his whole being at once, nor even the next instant of it. Each creature has a present "*be*-ing." Existence comes only a moment at a time. But at each moment of a dependent be-ing there must be some independent Be-ing on which he is depending for that moment of his be-ing. In this respect, the Latin *esse* as opposed to *ens* is very helpful. God is pure *Esse* and our present *esse* is dependent on Him. Pure Existence must existentialize our

potentiality for existence, otherwise we would not exist. God as pure Actuality is actualizing everything that is actual and not merely potential. Hence, it is the present actuality of all that is actual that demands a causal ground.

15. *The act-potency or contingent-necessity models are arbitrarily imposed on experience.*[15] This objection states that it is only because we have modeled reality as "contingent" or "dependent" that we are forced to conclude that there is a "necessary" or "independent" being. The reality of our experience is capable of being modeled in other ways that do not demand this conclusion. The world of experience does not carry with it its own models. Models come from elsewhere (the Christian model from the Bible) and they are imposed on experience. The facts of experience are not self-interpreting; there are no self-interpreting facts. We bring interpretative models to the data of experience from elsewhere.

A detailed answer to this question would be a whole treatise on epistemology. It will suffice here to note several things. First, the whole epistemology we have used in the cosmological argument has been defended premise-by-premise in the cosmological argument. Secondly, the model of dependency is derived from our undeniable experience. We do not merely *feel* dependent; we *are* dependent beings. It would be existentially absurd and contrary to our experience of reality to claim that we are not dependent beings. This would mean that we are independent or necessary beings. Even nontheists, as Heidegger, have shown that our whole phenomenology of being in this world evidences a thrustness or contingency which must be formulated into the basic metaphysical question: "Why is there something rather than nothing at all?"[16] The existentially undeniable experience of contingency is not an arbitrary model superimposed on experience. It is an essential model that arises necessarily out of an analysis of the modality of our be-ing in the world. Thirdly, regardless of where the contingency model comes from, it *fits*. Whatever its origin, it fits the world and our experience. It is comprehensive, consistent, empirically adequate and existentially relevant.[17] Finally, unless one denies the reality of change, the dependency model is necessitated by an analysis of the very nature of changing beings (as was shown in premise 2). In brief, the contingency model is no more arbitrary than the laws

of thought (which must also apply to reality, as was argued earlier). For what I experience, including myself, is either contingent or else it is necessary. If it is necessary, then we have already arrived at the necessary Being. If it is contingent, then it must be grounded in a necessary Being. In either case, we have the conclusion of the cosmological argument. In the final analysis what is at stake is not whether there is a necessary and unlimited Being but whether there are really any contingent and limited beings. As absurd as it may seem to our experience of be-ing in this world, the only successful way to challenge the theistic model is to deny there is any such thing as a limited, dependent or contingent being. This has already been answered in premise 1 and in answer to objection 10. It will suffice to repeat here only that it is logically possible that there are no contingent beings, but it is experientially and existentially undeniable. So in the last analysis the metaphysical model used in the cosmological argument is based in our undeniably limited existence in this world. Other contrary models are logically possible, but they are neither based on experience nor do they fit the facts of the world. Only the theistic model tells it like it really is.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The mistake of many theists, especially since Leibniz, is to cast the cosmological argument in a context of logical necessity based on the principle of sufficient reason. This ultimately leads to contradictions and an invalidating of the argument. In contrast to this procedure, we have tried to restate the argument beginning with limited existence and by use of the principle of existential causality proceed finally to an unlimited cause of all existence.[18] In this way the conclusion is not rationally inescapable. But it is, we have argued, existentially undeniable. In brief, if any finite being exists, then an infinite Being exists as an actual and necessary ground for finite being.

One final word of perspective. The existence of God does not result from the cosmological argument. What results from the argument is a *truth* (i.e., a statement about God's existence). Theistic arguments are not a ground for God's existence; God's existence needs no ground (He is the ungrounded Ground of all

other existence). At best the cosmological argument is a logical schema, based on reality, which rationally explains why limited being must be caused.

NOTES ON CHAPTER NINE

1. See Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, ch. 7; *Summa Theologica* I, 2, 3; I, 3, 4; I, 44, 1; *Summa contra Gentiles* I, 13.

2. It should be stressed that even though potentialities are real aspects of finite beings, nonetheless they are not real things in themselves. That is, potentialities do not exist independently, apart from the actuality which can and does actualize them. Both potentiality and actuality with regard to finite beings are concreated. There is no realm of essences (like platonic Forms) waiting for actualization in the world.

3. The Cause of existence must exist in order to cause existence. What does not exist has no causal power. In fact, it has nothing, for it is nothing. Hence, what is being caused arises only from a causal Being. Nothing cannot be the cause of something. Nonbeing cannot be the cause of being.

4. The failure to appreciate this difference between the cause of being and the cause of becoming has led even some theists to fail to see the full force of the cosmological argument. See Keith Yandell, *Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971, pp. 81-105. Also see answer to objection 14 below for more on the cause of here-and-now be-ing.

5. Sartre was correct in arguing that a self-caused being is impossible. See *Being and Nothingness*, N.Y.: Washington Square Press, 1966, pp. 758, 762. Theists themselves are to blame for the confusion (following Descartes and Leibniz) by designating God as a "self-caused" Being rather than an "uncaused" Being. Schopenhauer correctly saw that the problem rested in the principle of sufficient reason (see Plantinga, *The Ontological Argument*, pp. 65-66). For if, according to that principle, "*everything* needs a reason," then so does God. That is, God must be His own reason or cause. But if God causes Himself, then God is really self-caused which, as Sartre correctly saw, is impossible. On the other hand, if in accord with the principle of existential causality, "*only finite things* need causes," then the first Cause (God) does not need a cause. And hence God does not need to cause Himself; indeed, He is Himself uncaused.

6. See chapter 16 for further discussion on why it would be evil for a perfect Being to do less than its best.

7. Note three differences here between this argument and another one based on the principle of "the identity of indiscernibles." First, we are speaking here of actual identity of what is in fact indistinguishable and not merely *logical* identity of what is in thought indiscernable. Secondly, the argument is applied here only to an infinite or absolutely perfect Being, leaving open the question of whether indistinguishable finite beings are identical. Thirdly, the argument applies only to beings that have being in a univocal sense. Beings analogous in their being are not identical, even if they possess all the same characteristics.

8. See chapter 8 above for the full statement of Hume and Kant's objections.

9. There are two other reasons many philosophers never arrive at this theistic conclusion. One is that they never ask metaphysical questions about the nature

of reality or being as such. Perhaps they are methodologically preoccupied with procedural questions (How?) or with descriptive questions (What?) or with the existential question (So what?) and never ask the metaphysical question (Why?). Secondly, those who, like Heidegger, do ask basic metaphysical questions do not give any metaphysical answers. Heidegger, e.g., asked the basic metaphysical question, viz., Why is there something rather than nothing at all? But he did not give a satisfactory answer. *Dàsein* (man) is simply the being-there, the thrust one who is gratuitously hanging without any grounding. He is dependent but not dependent on anything. He is thrust there but no one thrust him there. His existence is given but not given by anyone.

10. Logic is not the basis for reality; reality is the basis for logic. The impossibility of square circles existing is not because mere formal logic dictates this is impossible. Formally incompatible concepts of squareness and circleness do not make the actuality of square circles impossible. Rather, what makes square circles actually incompatible is that no state of affairs can be actualized in which one and the same thing is simultaneously square and round in the same way.

11. The rational principle of noncontradiction, e.g., grows out of the ontological fact that being is not nonbeing. For it is ontologically so that being is and that nonbeing is not. Hence, it follows that being is not nonbeing, which is the ontological basis of the principle of noncontradiction.

12. Some theists are willing to grant that the cosmological argument cannot be put in a logically "air-tight" form (see Eric Mascall, *He Who Is*, p. 80). Rather than a logical argument it is a metaphysical insight into the cosmological relationship of contingent and necessary being which is beneath the cosmological argument, they contend. Nevertheless, the lack of logical necessity notwithstanding, it is ontologically necessary to have a ground for the existence of all finite beings.

13. Along with Aquinas, many theists including myself reject eternal creation, not because it is philosophically impossible but because it is doctrinally incorrect (Cf. Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:16, 17).

14. See Bruce Reichenbach, *The Cosmological Argument*, Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1972, pp. 97-102.

15. See Milton Munitz, *The Mystery of Existence*, N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965 and Thomas McPherson, "Finite and Infinite," *Mind* LXVI.

16. See Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961, ch. 1.

17. By "consistent" we mean there are no internal contradictions in theism. By "comprehensive" is meant that the theistic model is applicable to all of reality. "Empirical fit" indicates that the model adequately accounts for all of our experiences in the world. And existential relevance means that this model has real significance for, and applicability to, life.

18. The cosmological argument in existential form is not new. Anselm (in *Monologium*), Aquinas, and Scotus all had strong forms of it (see chapter 8). Due to the influence of rationalism, modern philosophy has obscured the full force of this form of the cosmological argument by importing the principle of sufficient reason. See Edwin Gurr, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason in Some Scholastic Systems*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1959, p. 130.

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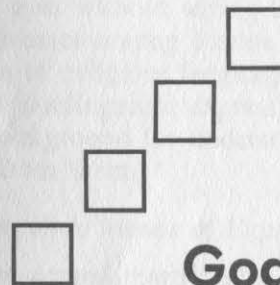
God and Language

10

The Problem of
Religious Language

Men have expressed their religious experience in different ways. Among these the most common are ritual, symbol, myth, and dogma.[1] It goes without saying that linguistic expressions are of special importance among literate peoples. But before the nature and problem of religious language is explored, a brief treatment of the major nonlinguistic expressions of religious experience will be helpful background for understanding the linguistic expressions that follow from them.

Some Nonlinguistic Means of Expressing Religious Transcendence

Some have argued that ritual is the earliest formal religious expression, even before myth, because ritualism can be observed in animals, which are destitute of a mythology.[2] Others argue that ritual comes before mythology, since it is more likely that preliterates danced out their religious values before they thought them out.[3] On the other hand, it seems more likely that the "revelation" must have come before the reenactment of it in ritual.[4] At any rate, it is certainly reasonable to conclude that somewhere behind the plethora of religious expressions there were experiences that gave rise to these mythological and ritualistic religious expressions.[5]

Religious expression in ritual. Ritual may be defined as that formalized symbolic way in which a social group periodically expresses and strengthens its beliefs and values.[6] Whitehead described it as "the habitual performance of definite actions which have no direct relevance to the preservation of the physical organisms of

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the actor."[7] The present concern is not with precise rituals or their significance.[8] What is of significance is that religion invariably engenders ritualistic expressions.[9] Religion will be expressed in whatever way is most appropriate to the believer having the experience.

Religious expression in symbol. "Symbol" is a broad term for religious expression including both myth and ritual.[10] Without pausing here to pass judgment on the validity of the distinction Paul Tillich draws between a "sign" (which, he says, does not participate in the reality to which it points) and a "symbol" (which does),[11] it is sufficient to note that "symbols have one characteristic in common with signs: they point beyond themselves to something else."[12] Symbols, to summarize W. L. King, are nonliteral figures that point beyond themselves.[13] And religious symbols are directional but not contentful pointers toward the Transcendent. Michael Novak likens religious symbols to arrows shot in the direction of God but which fall back to earth before they touch Him.[14] In other words, since religious symbols point beyond themselves, they are a fitting way of getting at the Transcendent, which goes beyond man. And because religious experience involves something that transcends this empirical world, there is a need for some sort of symbolical or nonliteral means of expressing it.[15] This is why Tillich once wrote, "Nothing less than symbols and myths can express our ultimate concern."[16] That is, religious symbols are an attempt to express the Object of one's ultimate concern, and no words in their ordinary meaning express this extraordinary Object. Religious symbols are an attempt to express what cannot be literally and empirically stated. They point to something beyond the ordinary experience, to something transcendent.

Religious expression in myth. Religious experience also engenders myths.[17] That is, to quote Tillich, "the symbols of faith do not appear in isolation. They are united in 'stories of the gods,' which is the meaning of the Greek word 'mythos' — myth. . . . Myths are symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters."[18] Religious man is a myth-maker, for he has the irrepressible tendency to express what he experiences, and myths are a verbal expression of his religious experience(s).

Perhaps the most important thing that can be said about myth to the modern reader is that for the religious man a myth is a true story.[19] The myth is regarded by the primitive as a true story because it always deals with what he considers to be realities.[20]

Since we are not concerned here with the origin of myths,[21] it will suffice to say that the myth-making ability seems to be coterminous with rational man.[22] What is important, however, is to note that myths are the symbolic forms by which the religious man expresses his awareness of transcendence.[23] A myth, according to Karl Jaspers, is a "cipher" of the Transcendent, a "code" pointing to God.[24] "If a myth is understood literally," wrote Tillich, "philosophy must reject it as absurd."[25] On the other hand, the myth understood symbolically "is the fundamental creation of every religious community."[26] It is because a myth is not to be understood literally that it cannot be empirically verified. "For the reality of the myth," said Jaspers, "is not empirical, i.e., it cannot be investigated in the world."[27]

Mircea Eliade lists five characteristics of myths,[28] but some of them are limited in applicability to myth of origin within primitive religions and are, therefore, too narrow to cover religion in general. Jaspers' characterization of myths is more widely applicable: "(1) The myth tells a story and expresses intuitive insights, rather than universal concepts. . . . (2) The myth deals with sacred stories and visions, with stories about gods rather than with empirical realities. (3) The myth is a carrier of meanings which can be expressed only in the language of myth."[29] Briefly put, a myth is a story or series of images through which the transcendent world is symbolized.[30] It is a symbolical way of expressing one's religious ultimate; it is an empirical way of expressing the nonempirical Transcendent.

Linguistic Means of Expressing the Transcendent

The primary means of religious linguistic expression are in written revelation, creed, and dogma. But as Smart observed, it is often not easy to draw a clear line of distinction between the mythological and the linguistic or doctrinal dimensions of religion, but the former is typically more colorful, symbolic, picturesque, and storylike. "Doctrines," he said, "are an attempt to give system, clarity, and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith. . . ."[31]

The origin of God-talk. As F. M. Cornford noted, doctrinal representations of one's faith are an attempt to give a *logos* for the *mythos*. "To the mysticism of all ages," he wrote, "the visible world is a myth, a tale half true and half false, embodying a *logos*, the truth which is one." [32] That is, dogma grows out of a more sophisticated attempt to generalize and universalize the earlier mythological expressions of a religion. Whitehead agreed, writing, "A dogma is the precise enunciation of a general truth, divested so far as possible from particular exemplification." [33]

As a result of this close connection between *mythos* and *logos*, one can see why many philosophical concepts have mythological ancestors and that most mythological symbols have conceptual elements. [34] And because literate cultures tend to prize intellectual knowledge, the historical religious generally have a more developed doctrinal dimension than there is in tribal and preliterate religions. [35] This has proven to be both a great advantage and a grave danger for religion.

The advantages of language expressions of God. The great advantage of conceptualizing and rationalizing about one's religious experience is that by so doing he can better understand, propagate, and preserve his faith. As Whitehead said, precise expression is in the long run a condition for the vivid realization, for effectiveness, for apprehension, and for survival. For conceptual progress — whether the truth of science or the truth of religion — is mainly a progress in the framing of concepts, is discarding artificial abstractions or partial metaphors, and in evolving notions which strike more deeply into the root of reality. [36] Also, as Rudolf Otto correctly observed, the process of conceptualization of religious transcendence guards a religion from sinking into fanaticism and pure mysticality and qualifies it as a religion for all of civilized humanity. [37] In fact, Otto goes so far as to say that this process of rationalization and moralizing of the *numinous* is the most important part of the history of religion. [38]

Further, it may be argued that conceptualization of religious experience is not only helpful but it is in some sense necessary. Man has an incessant propensity to give symbolic and linguistic expression to his deepest feelings about reality. Conceptualization, it would appear, is a mental "grasping together" of experience. [39]

And even though experience is foundational to expressions about it, nevertheless experience is not meaningful unless it is conceptualized. Experience without expression is meaningless, and expressions without experience are empty.

The dangers of religious language. Of course, as W. C. Smith rightly remarks, any attempt to completely conceptualize a religion is a contradiction in terms, for there is always more in principle in the Transcendent than a man can *see* and even more than he himself can *say*. [40] Nonetheless, he admits that we must somehow conceptualize and intellectualize "in such a way as to do justice to the diversity of the phenomena and at the same time not to do violence to a conviction of those involved that through it all there is a common element of transcendence." [41]

The real dangers in doctrine and dogma, in creed and conceptualization are overextension and disassociation from experience. Overextension involves the distortion and stretching of dogma beyond its own sphere of applicability. [42] Disassociation involves the attempt to understand the Transcendent or God apart from any experiential basis for the term. If we have no concrete understanding of the meaning of "God," then, as Josiah Royce observed, "we forget the experience from which the words have been abstracted. To these experiences we must return when we want really to comprehend the world." [43] Whitehead was right: "The importance of rational religion in the history of modern culture is that it stands or falls with its fundamental position, that we know more than can be formulated in one finite systematized scheme of abstractions. . . . " [44] In brief, if one is not careful, he may be guilty of clinging to words and neglecting the reality they represent.

William James was too severe in saying that when a genuine experience becomes orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over. [45] Walter Kaufmann was also extreme when he wrote, "The original sin of religion is to objectify the divine and to accept as final some dogma, sacrament, or ritual. [46] Tillich was more to the point in saying that creeds are not ultimate, rather, their function is to point to the Ultimate. [47] But the danger of verbal idolatry is present wherever there are conceptualizations of the Ultimate. "It has led," said Fromm, "to a new form of idolatry. An image of God, not in wood and stone but in words, is erected so that people worship

at this shrine." [48] That is, to consider an image of the Ultimate as ultimate is idolatry whether the image is mental or metal. [49] Perhaps this is why the God of the Old Testament jealously guarded His own name, saying to Moses who enquired about its meaning: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14). [50] It seems unwarranted to conclude that all doctrinal expressions are insufficient. On the contrary, language can be *adequate* without being final. Its adequacy will depend on how well it expresses and communicates the meaning of God. [51] As Whitehead correctly noted, "The dogma, therefore, is not something merely lamentable or evil. It was the necessary form by which the church kept its very identity." For "the Dogmas of religion are the attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths disclosed in the religious experience of mankind." [52] It is his attempt to render the credible intelligible, to apprehend the incomprehensible, to find a logos for the mythos of his faith.

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Religious language has many hazards. It must avoid verbal idolatry on the one hand and experiential emptiness on the other hand. If it is overly transcendent, it departs from an experiential basis for meaning. If it is completely immanentistic, it commits semantical atheism. The shape of the problem has caused some to despair of any answer between these alternatives. Before we examine specific alternatives, perhaps a brief discussion of the nature and adequacy of language in general will clear some of the ground.

The Adequacy of Language as a Means of Expressing God

The adequacy of a theistic language will be measured by its ability to avoid these two extremes. For, since the God of theism is infinite, only the language that cannot avoid applying limiting concepts to God will be sufficiently descriptive of God. On the other hand, any God-talk so transcendent as to have no anchorage in human experience will be devoid of any human meaning. Hence, in order to be adequate, theistic God-talk must be both based in finite experience and applicable to the infinite nature of God.

Does language necessarily imply limitations? If it could be demonstrated in advance that language cannot avoid placing conceptual limits on God, then the quest for an adequate descriptive God-talk

is futile. Fortunately for theism, there appears to be no way to disprove that language can express the Transcendent without implying that one does have some understanding of the Transcendent. How can one affirm that understanding of X is impossible unless he already has some understanding of X? The earlier attempts by A. J. Ayer and others to demonstrate that all God-talk was empirically unverifiable turned out to be self-defeating. Everything not purely definitional cannot be empirically verifiable, as Ayer learned. For his very principle of empirical verifiability was neither purely definitional nor empirically verifiable. [53] And once the door was reopened for other kinds of meaningful statements, there was nothing in principle to eliminate the meaningfulness of statements about God. The advice of Wittgenstein seems best in this regard: meaning cannot be legislated but should be listened to. [54] There is no way to eliminate a priori the possibility of meaningful God-talk. One must take a look at the various kinds of God-talk to see if they do indeed make sense.

What is language? An analysis of language supports the contention that speaking does not necessarily involve a conceptual limitation of the object of one's statements. Language *is* used to speak of the nonobjective, of other persons and of what is not essentially limited.

Martin Heidegger speaks of a nonobjectifying language. He admits that language often involves objectification but not necessarily so. In the scientific sense, "thinking and speaking are objectifying, i.e., considering something as an object of our study." But "outside of this field thinking and speaking are by no means objectifying." [55] Ian Ramsey agreed, saying that the language of pure objectivity is empirically limited, but the language of subjectivity is not, for the former tries to picture but the latter points. Objective language is "scale-model" language, but subjective language is "disclosure-model" language. And if language is capable of pointing beyond the purely empirical and objective, then it is not essentially limited. [56]

Michael Novak developed the notion of a nonobjectifying language in what he called a language of "intelligent subjectivity." His view is based on two interpretative principles: "Our first assertion is that the experience on which religious language is best

grounded is the experience a man has of himself as a subject." And "our second assertion is that of all the experiences of intelligent subjectivity, the one most suitable as a guide to our thinking about God seems to be that of intelligent consciousness, including insight and critical reflection."

In developing this language, he offers two guiding principles: "Thus, first, we will not use any predicate about God that does not *at least* apply to ourselves as subjects. Secondly, we will heed the warning that language borrowed from the object world can mislead us into thinking that awareness is like sense perception, or that the 'world' of subjects is an imitation of the world of objects." Therefore, for a man to state fully what he means by "God" he would have to "1) narrate many of his experiences (at prayer, in worship, even in secular action), 2) describe the contexts in which he believes he uses the word 'God' well, and, above all, 3) enunciate his understanding of human understanding. For what we mean by 'understanding' determines what we mean by 'man,' and what we mean by 'man' guides what we mean by 'God.'" However, Novak admits that by the language of "intelligent subjectivity," "we cannot answer directly what God's mode of life is like; at best, we can single out which things in the world he is not like, and which things he may be more like. The chief virtue in taking intelligent consciousness as a model for conceiving of God is that it does not require a corporeal body for its referent." For example, "in moments of intellectual concentration, or again in moments of artistic contemplation or communion, we find ourselves 'rapt,' forgetful of the demands of our bodies, of the passage of time, of fatigue, or the need to eat." It is such experiences as these, he continues, that "furnish us the direction in which total, unlimited, unconditioned consciousness is the upper limit." [57]

Greek philosophy is responsible for the conclusion that language is essentially an objectifying procedure. As Cornford noted, the Greeks transformed the original expressions of the symbolic *mythos* into a scientific *logos*. And when it was decided that the logos was an objective expression of the *ontos,* language was viewed as the objectifying essense of reality. Wittgenstein is credited with reemphasizing that language does not have an essence. [58] If we take this to mean that language is not an objectification of reality, the theist need not object. If, however, it is taken to mean that

language is not truly expressive of reality, then theists must object. For how could one possibly know that language is not expressive of reality unless he knows what reality is like? And how can one know (i.e., have a cognitive understanding of) reality apart from language which is the means of cognitive expression? The point at which the Greek ontologizing of language misled subsequent thought was in the platonic identification of Forms (essences) and verbal expressions *(logos)*. Platonic essences are entities, and if language is viewed as having an essence in this sense, then of course thought has been thereby ontologized.

But language need not be thought of as essentializing Forms. It can express objective reality without objectifying the reality it expresses. In one sense language is a *logos;* it is a word about reality. But in this sense of the word *logos* language does not define reality but declares it. Language can convey reality without conceptualizing it; it can point without picturing. Language can reveal without reifying. It can express God without attempting to explain His essence. Religious language can reveal God without rationalizing Him. In order to avoid the misleading objectifying connotations of the word *logos* some prefer to think of language as a "macromyth" or "supermyth." [59] This designation is not entirely inappropriate. Like a myth, language points beyond itself to a transcendent reality. And if a myth is a kind of "cipher" of transcendent reality, one can expect to arrive at reality by "deciphering" revelatory language. The problem with designating language as a "macromyth" is the misleading implication that language is not rooted in human history and experience, but is nonhistorically based as myths are. For, as has already been noted, unless language has meaning rooted in human experience, it has no meaning for humans.

In this sense Ramsey's empirically grounded models are a better designation for religious language. Language is a kind of "master disclosure model." That is, language is a way of modeling reality as one sees it. It is a "fitting" of linguistic terms into one's experiences. The only reservation here is Ramsey's distinction between picturing and pointing models. For if religious language is not descriptive of reality but merely points to it, then one does not know the object to which language is pointing. How would one know there was even an object there at which the disclosure model

was pointing or what it was unless he had some descriptive understanding of it? If, on the other hand, language in general is viewed as a "master disclosure model" that discloses something, then this would seem to be an apt designation of the function of language. Religious language in particular must disclose something meaningful about God or else the theist must be a semantical atheist. Van Buren would be right: the term "God" and all of its equivalents is dead.[60] Whatever models are used to disclose God cannot be so qualified as to eliminate all of their cognitive meaning or else the theist is left with cognitive meaninglessness. Hence, if religious language is a macro-disclosure model, then it must affirm something meaningful of God. Otherwise, religious language is cognitively inadequate.

Some Attempts at Building an Adequate Religious Language

A brief survey of several attempts at establishing a meaningful religious language will serve several purposes here. First, it will serve as an introduction to the various alternatives taken within the religious language field. Second, it will lay the groundwork for mapping out a general typology of possible solutions to the problem and a synthesis of them in the succeeding chapters.

Negative language of God. The improbability of gaining any positive content knowledge of an infinitely transcending Being seems so slim to some that they have seemingly despaired of speaking meaningfully of God in anything more than negative terms. It is for this reason that Hegel identified religion with a philosophical dialectic, insofar as both must negate the given. "For religion equally with philosophy refuses to recognize in finitude a veritable being, or something ultimate and absolute, or non-posted, uncreated and eternal."[61] Even Kant admitted that "the concept of a *noumenon* is thus a merely *limiting* concept . . . and it is therefore only of negative employment."[62] Tillich, likewise, admits the need of negations to express the Ultimate, saying that it "cannot be defined beyond these negative terms."[63] Spinoza's famous dictum "All determination is by negation"[64] is typical of a philosophy of definition by negation that is traceable as far back as Plato's "nonbeing"[65] and can be seen as recently as Whitehead's "negative prehensions."[66]

However, the classic example of negative theology in the West

is that of Plotinus. The transcendent source of all things (which he often called the "One") is so far beyond all sensible and even intellectual awareness that he says the One is even beyond all being. Agreeing with Plato, Plotinus wrote, "It can neither be spoken nor written of." When he does, nevertheless, speak of the One in any other terms than absolute simplicity or oneness, he readily admits that these "assertions can be no more than negations." In fact, "if we are led to think positively of the One there would be more truth in silence." Although Plotinus says many apparently positive things about the transcendent One, such as calling it Good, Supreme, Beauty, etc., nevertheless he carefully qualifies all these with warnings like the following: "When therefore you seek to state or to conceive Him, put all else aside; abstracting all . . . ; see that you add nothing; be sure that there is not something which you have failed to abstract from Him in your thought."[67]

Now the merit of negative religious assertions cannot be denied, for it avoids the ever-present danger of verbal idolatry. Idolatry is idolatry whether the images are mental or metal. Finite concepts cannot be literally applied to an infinite God. But this is avoided by negative assertions, for it is precisely all limitations and finitude that are being negated so that the negative words may express the unlimited and transcendent. However, there is a serious difficulty with purely negative religious assertions. Plotinus himself touched on it when he admitted, "It is impossible to say 'not that' if one is utterly without experience or conception of the 'that.'"[68] That is, all negative predications presuppose some positive understanding of that about which the predications are being made. As Tillich recognized, "There would be no negation if there were no preceding affirmation to be negated. . . ."[69] Ludwig Feuerbach's remark is instructive in this regard: "The truly religious man can't worship a purely negative being. . . . Only when a man loses his taste for religion does the existence of God become one without qualities, an unknowable God."[70] Every negative presupposes a positive. Without some positive knowledge of God, how can negative assertions be made?

Univocal language of God. Within the Scotistic stream of scholastic philosophy there has been an insistence that the only alternative to skepticism is a positive and univocal understanding of terms appropriate to God. Scotus' basic argument is this: Either

a characteristic has a common meaning as applied to God and creatures or it does not. [71] If it does not, it is either because its meaning does not apply formally to God (which is skepticism) or else it has meaning that is proper to God and not to creatures. The latter alternative is contrary to fact; creatures do have some of the same characteristics attributed to God (e.g., will, intellect, being). Consequently, every characteristic found in creatures and in God is predicated univocally about both. If notions derived from creatures may not be applied to God univocally, then the disconcerting consequence ensues that from the proper notions of characteristics found in creatures nothing whatsoever can be inferred about God. God is wholly other than our concepts. [72]

The central point of the Scotistic contention is that unless there is univocity in our concepts about God, then there can be no certainty in our knowledge of God. For "one and the same concept cannot be both certain and dubious. Therefore, either there is another concept [which is certain], or there is no concept at all, and consequently no certitude about any concept." Lest univocal concepts be misunderstood, Scotus explained that they mean: (1) that which has sufficient unity to be used as the middle term in a syllogism, and (2) that which if affirmed and denied of the same thing would be a contradiction. Univocal cannot be either equivocal or analogical, for were it totally different, there would be no common meaning. And were it partly different, there must be some univocal concept by which one distinguishes which part is the same and which is different. And infinite regress of ambiguous nonunivocal concepts will never extricate one from skepticism. There must be a univocal notion at the base of all meaningful predication of God.

Analogous language about God. The problem with the univocal God-talk was pinpointed by Thomas Aquinas and his followers. No finite concepts are adequate for expressing the infinite essence of God. Indeed, claimed Thomas, far from being univocal, our language about God is "almost equivocal." "It is impossible for anything to be predicated univocally of God and a creature: this is made plain as follows. Every effect of an univocal agent is adequate to the agent's power: and no creature being finite, can be adequate to the power of the first agent which is infinite." [73] How can a created concept univocally express the infinitude of the

Creator? Univocal prediction of creature and God would lead to an equation of the two. Either the Creator must be thought of via finite conceptualizations (i.e., purely anthropomorphically) or else the creature will be viewed via infinite concepts. The former is skepticism and the latter is conceptual deification.

But how can one maintain any positive knowledge of God without univocal predication? Aquinas' answer is in analogy. Analogy for Thomists is the only alternative to total skepticism or complete dogmatics. [74] For if language has a totally different meaning (i.e., equivocal) as applied to creatures and God, then we have no true knowledge of God. If, on the other hand, our concepts have totally identical meaning (i.e., univocal), then our knowledge of the infinite must be infinite. But since no concepts from the finite world are adequately expressive of the infinite essence of God, it follows that we do not understand God via univocal concepts.

Since all our concepts have a limited basis, none is adequate to express an infinite essence. Hence, only those concepts that can be removed from their finite conditions and applied to God in an unlimited way may be predicated of God properly. This predication is possible only because of a similarity between Creator and creatures based on the causal relation between them. That is, God, in causing the very existence of the creature, communicates to it perfections that He possesses more eminently in Himself. God is not merely *said* to be like goodness because He causes goodness in creation; God actually *is* goodness. This is called an analogy of intrinsic attribution because both cause and effect possess the same perfection, only the cause in this case has the perfection infinitely. [75] This is in contrast to an analogy of extrinsic relation where the attribute would merely be attributed to a cause, not because the cause really has that attribute, but because it causes something else to have it. For example, food is called healthy because it causes health in the body, even though, properly speaking, only the organism (the body) is healthy and not the food. God is not related to creation by way of extrinsic attribution. God produces in creation perfections that He posesses Himself, albeit, more eminently.

Model language about God. Thomistic analogy of intrinsic attribution has not enjoyed a wide acceptance outside of Thomistic circles. Frederick Ferré's criticisms of it reveal the reasons. Ferré

offers six objections that apply to Thomistic analogy of intrinsic attributions.[76] (1) A wholly extrinsic analogy says nothing about the intrinsic or proper attributes of God. "We are left with no more idea of God's own characteristics than that he is responsible for the various characteristics of creation. . . . " (2) If there is an extrinsic causal relation between God and the world, why are not all qualities drawn from the world applied to God? Why select some and reject others, if God is the cause of all of them? Knowledge of which attributes are appropriate presupposes some univocal knowledge of God. (3) When words are disengaged from their finite mode of signification and applied to an infinite Being, they become entirely vacuous and without meaning. (4) Analogy of intrinsic attribution rests on the [challengeable] assumption that the causal relation between God and the world provides a basis for their similarity, i.e., that the effects resemble their cause. (5) Even if analogy could be based on some (Platonic) ontological similarity between cause and effect, properties drawn from *finite* (conditioned) creatures could not be attributed to an *infinite* (unconditioned) first Cause in any univocal sense. And to attribute them to the first Cause in a nonunivocal sense would embark one on an infinite regress of equivocation on the meaning of the word "cause." (6) Even assuming the [challengeable] metaphysical assumption that there is an ontological structural similarity among all beings, this ontology is not univocally expressible. But if it is not univocally expressible, we embark again on an infinite regress of equivocation. And if there is a univocal understanding of this ontology, there is no need for analogy.

What is offered in place of analogy? Ferré and others offer model language as the most adequate form of religious language. Ian Ramsey develops a similar approach to the question in what he calls qualified disclosure models. We will examine Ramsey's presentation.

According to Ramsey, God is revealed via disclosure models. In contrast to "picturing models" or "scale models," a "disclosure model" does not attempt to describe anything; rather, it becomes currency for a moment of insight. "The great value of a model," said Ramsey, "is that it enables us to be articulate when before we were tongue-tied." Disclosure models are the means by which the universe reveals itself to man. They are to be judged primarily

on their ability to *point to* mystery, not on their ability to *picture* it. Indeed, it is part of the purpose of a model and its qualifiers to leave a mystery intact (e.g., God may be modeled as "love" and qualified by the word "infinite"). The intention is to produce, from a single model, and by means of some qualifier, an endless series of variants, . . . in this way witnessing to the fact that the heart of theology is permanent mystery."[77]

Language about God is not primarily declarative; it is evocative. Ramsey holds that by the use of nondescriptive, evocative language one can avoid being literalistic or purely anthropomorphic about God, for no one model has a single, all-exclusive track to mystery any more than one metaphor can do full justice to a sunset or to human love and affection. That is to say, disclosure models "are not descriptive miniatures, they are not picture enlargements; in each case they point to mystery, to the need for us to live as best we can with theological and scientific uncertainties."[78]

Ramsey's "models" do seem to answer Wittgenstein's challenge to keep silent unless one can speak meaningfully. Even if disclosure models do not allow one to speak descriptively about God, nevertheless they do permit one to speak. Indeed, by virtue of the fact that Ramsey's disclosure models are indefinitely qualifiable, one cannot only speak about God but speak endlessly. And in so speaking, Ramsey contends, one's language does not suffer "death by a thousand qualifications" but rather gives "life by a thousand enrichments."[79]

The question, says Ramsey, is not whether we can speak descriptively about the divine nature; "the real question is: How can one be reliably articulate?" Models help one to be reliably articulate in theology when two conditions hold: (1) "In all cases the models must chime in with the phenomena; they must arise in a moment of insight or disclosure," and (2) "A model in theology does not stand or fall with . . . the possibility of verifiable deductions. It is rather judged by its stability over the widest possible range of phenomena, by its ability to incorporate the most diverse phenomena not inconsistently." This is what Ramsey calls the method of "empirical fit," which has no scientific deductions emerging to confirm or falsify the stated theories. "The theological model," he wrote, "works more like the fitting of a boot or a shoe. . . . " In brief, religious language is empirically anchored

(in disclosure situations) [80] and pragmatically tested by the way it enables man to piece together the empirical data.

Further, even though disclosure models are not ontologically descriptive, [81] nevertheless they do help to build "family resemblances." "Let us always be cautious," Ramsey warns, "of talking about God in straightforward language. Let us never talk as if we had privileged access to the diaries of God's private life. . . ." When we speak of God as "supreme love," e.g., "we are not making an assertion in descriptive psychology. . . ." Rather, we are using a *qualified* model ("love" is qualified by "supreme") whose logical structure can only be understood in terms of the disclosure-commitment situation in which it arose. [82] "Qualifiers" are "words which multiply models without end and with subtle changes." They create what Wittgenstein called "family resemblances" or a family of models. By means of qualification of one model or metaphor, many of them can be related in an overall meeting place between contexts. And it is in this meeting place or connection where the mystery resides. That is, by mapping out the similarities engendered by the meeting of the many metaphors, one may gain increased insight into the mystery. The master-model for theism is found in the term "God." [83] God-talk, then, is the result of family resemblances built out of qualified disclosure models integrated into the term "God."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The basic problem in theistic language is how one can speak meaningfully about the Infinite in language drawn from the finite world. Mystics have answered by the *via negativa*. No positive affirmations of God are possible. Others, like Scotus, have insisted that unless there is a positive and univocal conceptualization of God, we are left in skepticism. Thomists, on the other hand, deny that any terms drawn from the finite world could possibly have any more than an analogous application to God. Many contemporary analysts, however, fail to see how analogy can be saved from equivocation without univocity. Instead of a descriptive language about God built on questionable metaphysical assumptions, they offer a nondescriptive but evocative language of religious disclosure. By the use of qualified models rooted in the empirical world, but evocative of religious insight, they hope to evade both

the older metaphysical assumptions as well as the other inadequacies of the other alternatives.

But there is an obvious problem with model language about God. There are only three alternatives for descriptive God-talk. Either it is equivocal (totally different), univocal (totally the same), or else analogical (both the same and different). Ramsey's qualified models seem confessedly not univocal. Ferré also disavows Thomistic analogy. It would seem, then, that model language is equivocal. It does not really provide us with any descriptive knowledge of God. It can evoke an experience of a we-know-not-What. One seems to be left with a religious a-*cog*nosticism, i.e., he has no cognitive knowledge of God.

What is the way out of the dilemma posed by the alternatives of religious language? A thorough reexamination of all the positions seems to be called for. Only then will we be able to include the insights of each into a meaningful whole that makes religious language what it is.

NOTES CHAPTER TEN

1. Other religious expressions may be found in Art, Image, Conduct, and Institution, but they are not directly related to our study here. W. C. Smith has a good comparison of many of these in his book, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, pp. 156ff.

2. Cf. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 25. However, he acknowledges that in specific cases a myth may precede the ritual.

3. W. L. King, *Introduction to Religion*, pp. 141, 142.

4. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 8.

5. Which comes first will probably depend on whether a myth or a ritual was used to evoke the religious experience. If the religious experience came via a myth, the ritualistic expression of that experience would be subsequent, and vice-versa. If, however, the religious experience came some other way, the first means of expression would depend on whether the individual had greater propensity to act or to talk.

6. King, *Introduction to Religion*, p. 141.

7. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 20.

8. For a treatment of this kind the works of Eliade are suggested, viz., *The Sacred and the Profane*, *Myth and Reality*, and *The Myth of the Eternal Return*.

9. See Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 201.

10. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 117. Tillich calls these latter two the "intuitive" and the "active" forms of symbol expression respectively.

11. See the discussion of Tillich's special use of "symbol" later in this chapter.

12. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 41.

13. King, *Introduction to Religion*, pp. 134-136.

14. Michael Novak, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 110.

15. "It [demythologization] is an attempt which never can be successful, because symbol and myth are forms of the human consciousness which are always present. One can replace one myth by another, but one cannot remove the myth from man's spiritual life. For the myth is the combination of symbols of our ultimate concern," Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 50. With this Jaspers agreed when he wrote, "The real task, therefore, is not to demythologize, but to recover mythical thought in its original purity. . . ." Karl Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, p. 17.

16. Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, pp. 96, 53.

17. Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 423.

18. Cf. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, pp. 48, 49.

19. "What is important is the fact that 'primitives' are always aware of the difference between myths ('true stories') and tales or legends ('false stories')" Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 11n. Eliade points out that it has been only in the 20th century that Western scholars have rediscovered myth as a "true" story as opposed to "fable" or "fiction," ibid., p. 1.

20. Cf. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 6. From the time of Xenophanes (c. 565-470) on, the Greeks came to reject more and more the mythological expressions found in Homer and Hesiod until the word "myth" was eventually emptied of any metaphysical value, ibid., p. 1, cf. pp. 152, 153.

21. On the origin of myths see F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, pp. 139ff.; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 145ff., and Bergson, *Two Sources*, pp. 119ff.

22. Bergson writes, "Let us take, then, in the vaguely and doubtless artificially defined realm of imagination, the natural 'cut' which we have called myth-making and see to what use it is naturally put. To this faculty are due the novel, the drama, mythology together with all that preceded it. But then, there have not always been novelists and dramatists, whereas humanity has never subsisted without religion," *Two Sources*, p. 108.

23. Myths have other functions too: (1) They are means by which religious men became aware of the Transcendent (cf. Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, p. 3); (2) they supply models for human behavior (cf. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 8).

24. Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, pp. 85, 87.

25. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 121.

26. Ibid. Cf. also Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, pp. 16, 17.

27. Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, p. 85.

28. Eliade said, "In general it can be said that myth, as experienced by archaic societies, (1) constitutes the History of the acts of the Supernaturals; (2) that this History is considered to be absolutely *true* (because it is concerned with realities) and *sacred* (because it is the work of the Supernaturals); (3) that myth is always related to a 'creation,' it tells how something came into existence, or how a pattern of behavior, an institution, a manner of working were established; this is why myths constitute the paradigms for all significant human acts; (4) that by knowing the myth one knows the 'origin' of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will; this is not an 'external,' 'abstract' knowledge but a knowledge that one 'experiences' ritually, either by ceremonially recounting the

myth or by performing the ritual for which it is the justification; (5) that in one way or another one 'lives' the myth, in the sense that one is seized by the sacred, exalting power of the events recollected or re-enacted," *Myth and Reality*, pp. 18, 19.

29. Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, pp. 15, 16. The untranslatability of a myth we take to mean untranslatable into nonmythical (i.e., into nonsymbol language). Myths are translatable from one language (e.g., Greek) into another (e.g., English).

30. Cf. Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, p. 8.

31. Ibid., pp. 15, 8.

32. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, pp. 141, 187; Cornford's discussion is helpful on this point. But we need not follow him when he adds that "it then becomes an 'explanation' (*aition*), professing to account for the existence and practice of the ritual, just as the [platonic] Idea is erected into an explanation or account (*logos*) of the things that partake of it. . . ." Ibid., p. 259. There seems to be no reason why a logos can't be an expression of a mythos without being an explanation or justification of it. See the discussion below.

33. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 122.

34. Cornford lists several examples of concepts borrowed by Greek philosophy from their religious predecessors, *From Religion to Philosophy*, chs. 1-4.

35. Cf. Smart, *Religious Experience*, p. 27.

36. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, pp. 139, 127.

37. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 146.

38. Ibid., p. 115.

39. See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, III.

40. Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 128.

41. Ibid., p. 151.

42. Whitehead wrote, "Accordingly though dogmas have their measure of truth, which is unalterable, in their precise forms they are narrow, limitative, and alterable; in effect untrue, when carried over beyond the proper scope of their utility," *Religion in the Making*, p. 140.

43. Josiah Royce, "The Problem of Job" in *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 442.

44. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 137. But Whitehead was overreacting when he wrote, "You cannot claim absolute finality for a dogma without claiming a commensurate finality for the sphere of thought within which it arose," Ibid., p. 126. This is not true if by "dogma" one means the truth being expressed and not the expression of the truth. For surely the finality of the truth that is being expressed does not necessitate the finality of the way in which it is being expressed. Furthermore, even a given expression of truth can be "final" within a given linguistico-cultural milieu, in the sense of being the very best way possible to express that truth in those terms. Then too, one should be careful not to confuse "finality" and "authority," for a given expression of truth (dogma) may be authoritative within a given linguistico-cultural milieu without being final in the sense that no other or no future expression of it could be better.

45. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 330.

46. Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 429.

47. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 29.

48. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 117.

49. John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God*, p. 127.

50. On this point Ian Ramsey suggests, "Only God could know his own name. . . . The inevitable elusiveness of the divine name is the logical safeguard against universal idolatry," *Religious Language*, p. 129.

51. On this point Tillich wrote, "'Adequacy' of expression means the power of expressing an ultimate concern in such a way that it creates reply, action, communication. Symbols which are able to do this are alive," *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 96.

52. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, pp. 138, 57.

53. See A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, ch. 1.

54. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Sec. 654.

55. Martin Heidegger, "The Problem of Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology," in *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 64.

56. Ian Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, pp. 19-20.

57. Novak, *Belief and Unbelief*, pp. 98-103, 68-70.

58. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 91.

59. The Christian paradigm for the meaning of Logos in the incarnate Christ (John 1:1, 14) is especially revelatory of this meaning of *logos*. Christ is a declaration of God. He "fleshes out" the meaning of the infinite reality of God in a personal, concrete, human manifestation. As the Logos of God, Christ by no means objectifies God, but He does reveal the objective existence of the divine subject who claimed to be the "I AM" (Exod. 3:14). Marshall McLuhan uses the former and W. L. King uses the latter term. See King, *Introduction to Religion*, pp. 138-139.

60. Paul Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, pp. 100, 83-84.

61. Hegel, *Logic*, Vol. I, Bk. I, ch. 3.

62. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 272.

63. Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, p. 43.

64. Benedict Spinoza, *Epistola 50 (Opera)*, IV, p. 240.

65. Plato wrote, "What is not, in some respects has being, and conversely that what is, in a way is not," *Sophist* 241 d.

66. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 7, 35, 39, 66, 72, 346, 366.

67. Cf. *Enneads* V, 2, 1; V, 3, 11; VI, 9, 4; VI, 8, 11; V, 5, 6; II, 9, 1.

68. *Enneads*, VI, 7, 29.

69. Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, p. 40.

70. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 15.

71. John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, pp. 27-28.

72. Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

73. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, Q. 7, A. 7, body.

74. The first systematic treatment was made by Cardinal Cajetan, *The Analogy of Names*. The most comprehensive textual study is a recent one by George Klubertanz, *St. Thomas on Analogy*. Another significant contribution has come recently from Ralph McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy*. Until recently Eric Mascal's *Analogy and Existence*, has been perhaps more well known than the others,

but is superseded now by the work of Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*.

75. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 29-30; *Summa Theologica*, I, 4, 3.

76. Frederick Ferré, "Analogy in Theology," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, pp. 94-97.

77. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, pp. 7, 12-13, 19-20, 60-71.

78. Ibid., p. 20.

79. Ibid., pp. 12-17.

80. Ibid., pp. 13, 15-17.

81. Ibid., p. 20.

82. Ibid., *Religious Language*, pp. 104, 99.

83. Ibid., *Models and Mystery*, pp. 48, 51, 60-61, and *Prospect for Metaphysics*, pp. 153-164.

2, 1). For "He had no need of Being, who brought Being to be" (VI, 8, 19).

The need for negations is now evident. The Source of all multiplicity must be absolutely simple. But all names taken from the world of multiplicity and even from the intellectual world (which involves a duality of knower and known) cannot be applied to an absolutely simple Being without negating the multiple implications from the terms. Since the One is the qualitiless source of all qualities, no quality may be affirmed of it without qualification by negation. Put another way, the reason that there can be no positive names of the One is that it is the Ultimate and there is nothing more ultimate in terms of which it can be described. It would be to "ask for a principle beyond, but the principle of all has no principle" (VI, 8, 11). The One is nothing but itself and cannot be named in terms of anything else. "Thus the One is in truth beyond all statement; any affirmation of a thing . . . ; we can but try to indicate, in our own feeble way, something concerning it" (V, 3, 13). But "we must be patient with language; we are forced for reasons of exposition to apply to the Supreme terms which strictly are ruled out; everywhere we must read 'So to speak'" (VI, 8, 13). But in what way can we learn how "so to speak" of God? Plotinus never calls God Matter, Evil, or Non-Being. How does one learn "so to speak" appropriately of God? Plotinus has two aspects to his answer: First, we name God indirectly from His effects or emanants. Second, we know God by direct intuition, which transcends all cognitive knowing and which serves as a positive basis for all cognitive negations of God.

Naming God From His Emanational Effects

The positive names given to God by Plotinus are many. God is called Good, Beauty, Being, Actuality, First, Supreme, Energy, etc. All of these names are improperly applied to God; that is, the characteristic belongs properly to the created effects of God. He wrote, "The One is all things and no one of them: the source of all things is not all things: and yet it is all things in a transcendental sense" (V, 2, 1). The One "eludes our knowledge, so that the nearer approach to it is through its offspring" (VI, 9, 5). In brief, although we cannot speak It, we are able to speak of it in terms of what has come from the One (V, 3, 14).

Several observations about this causal naming of God are called for at this point. First, God is thus named only from His sequents in a transcendent sense. God is not really like the goodness, beauty, and being He causes. They are at best only a visible and multiple "copy" of the invisible One which caused them (V, 5, 5). The created world is merely a "vestige" or "image" of the God who completely transcends it (VI, 8, 18; 7, 38). We know that the One is "a nobler principle than anything we know as Being; fuller and greater; above reason, mind, and feeling; conferring powers, not to be confounded with them." But how does it confer these things, "as itself possessing them or not? How can it convey what it does not possess, and yet if it does possess how is it simplex?" Plotinus continues, "The explanation is, that what comes from the Supreme cannot be identical with it and assuredly cannot be better than it — what could be better than The One or could exceed it in any sense? The emanation then must be less good . . ." (V, 3, 14-15). All that comes from God is nothing more than a trace of the transcendent One from which they emanate. God is in no way really like His multiple effects.

Second, God is named from His emanations by way of extrinsic attribution. That is, God is called Good because He causes goodness, not because this goodness He causes can be properly attributed to Him. Plotinus clearly affirmed that the One "bestows that itself does not possess" (VI, 7, 15). God gave rise to all being but does not have being Himself. The reason for this is that Unity is the basis for being and not being the basis for Unity. Plotinus is very clear on this point: "It is, therefore, an existent Unity, not an existent that develops Unity. . . . In the pure Unity there is no Being save in so far as Unity attends to producing it" (VI, 6, 13). Unity (God) is beyond being and the only sense in which He is called Being is by extrinsic attribution because He is the Cause of being. Properly speaking, God is not Being but He is the Unity which is the cause of the varying unity which beings have.

The Intuitional Basis for All Naming of God

One problem remains: giving God positive names from His extrinsically related created effects does not provide any proper knowledge of God. God is really not Being, Good, Beauty, etc. God is the transcendent Unity beyond all these. All of these must

an indefinite number of negations. For there is an endless number of other qualities that might be possible for a given being. *All* of these other possibilities must be negated before one can truly know what this given being is like. The first difficulty with Plato's negation by relative nonbeing is now more clearly in view. All negations imply some positive understanding. How would one know which of the endless variety of things to negate unless he had some positive understanding of the thing from which they were being eliminated? Every negative presupposes a positive. It cannot be said of a being that it is not this or that, unless one already has a positive understanding of what this or that is.

Furthermore, the relative nonbeing does not answer Parmenides' monistic dilemma. For to differ by nothing is not to differ at all. Unless there is some difference in the very being of one being as opposed to another being, they differ by nothing at all. If there is no difference in their constitutive reality, then there is no real difference. Whatever has no distinction from another in its actuality has no actual difference from that other. When one places, as Plato did, all differentiation in the realm of nonbeing, then the realm of being is left without any distinctions at all, i.e., wholly identical. Monism follows necessarily.

The problems of Parmenides' and Plato's inadequate answers were bequeathed to the Platonic tradition which culminated in Plotinus in the early third century A.D. Plotinus offered a different solution by way of negation.

PLOTINUS: NEGATION BY INTUITION OF THE BEYOND-BEING

Plotinus felt that he was not trapped by the Parmenidean dilemma. Parmenides had wrongly assumed that being was pure and simple, that it never came in degrees or kinds. This is not so for Plotinus. There is a complete hierarchy of Being that ascends all the way from the least nearly perfect to the most nearly perfect being and even to God who goes beyond all being. Hence, in answer to Parmenides, Plotinus affirmed that beings differ in the degree of unity they possess. Not all things have the same amount of being. Beings are graded by the degree of unity they have. If true, this would avoid monism, but how does it solve the problem of knowledge by negation?

A Brief Sketch of the Plotinian System

The way things differ is by the degree of unity they have. The more unity something has, the higher degree of being it possesses. Hence, the basic movement in Plotinian thought is from unity to multiplicity and then back to unity. It all begins with absolute unity (God).

From Unity to multiplicity. Since all multiplicity presupposes some prior unity, there must be ultimately some absolute simplicity at the source of all multiplicity in being. This absolute simplicity (God) does not have being, for being involves multiplicity and He has no multiplicity whatsoever. Hence, God is the absolute Unity (the One) beyond all being. Absolute Unity is without knowledge of itself, since all knowing involves at least the self-duality of knower and known. Therefore, when out of the necessity of its nature this absolute simplicity unfolded and reflected back upon its own absolute unity it became a Mind (*Nous*) or knowing being. When this Mind reflects inward upon itself, it produces other minds, and when reflecting outward, it gives rise to Life (World Soul) and through soul it gives rise to all other souls (living things). Since the entire process is a necessary unfolding of unity to greater and greater multiplicity, it must end at last in the most multiple of all — matter. It is here that the whole process peters out. For matter is the brink of oblivion; it is the place at which the multiplicity has reached the point that if it went further it would become absolutely nothing. And since Being is good, it follows that matter is evil (since it is the most multiple of all). Matter has no residue of good in it but is the mere vacuous capacity for good (V, 4, 1; 6, 6; VI, 7, 37; IV, 2, 2; II, 4, 11).[5]

There is, then, a complete hierarchy of being (and goodness) from the First to the last; from God to evil; from Beyond Being to nonbeing; from Beyond Mind to matter; from absolute Unity to absolute multiplicity. And the latter follows from the former with the same emanational necessity that rays radiate from the sun or that a flower unfolds from a seed. However, there is also an inherent necessity in that the latter (and lower) cannot destroy the former (and higher). Absolute multiplicity cannot destroy absolute Unity. Darkness cannot annihilate Light, and nonbeing cannot abolish Being. There is, in fact, a kind of boomerang of Being.

When the last something overlooks the brink of utter oblivion, it recoils back toward Being. The last remnant of good is repelled in the face of utter evil. The move upward from total multiplicity and evil is thus necessitated by the nature of unity and goodness. For it is evil that is necessitated by the Good and not the reverse. It is multiplicity that is contained within Unity and not the opposite. As Unity necessarily unfolds into diversty, so diversity must ultimately be enfolded again in Unity. Emanational necessity is a two-way ticket; the return trip is guaranteed because the Source of all is superior to all and must ultimately subsume all.

From multiplicity to Unity. The return trip is focused in man. He alone partakes of all levels of unity. His body is composed of matter, the most multiple and evil of all. His soul has a lower aspect in touch with the body but a higher dimension in contact with the realm of Mind. In order to begin the trip toward Unity, man must turn from the outward material multiplicity to the inner unity of his soul (i.e., asceticism). And on the inward side, man must turn upward to the higher mental realm of the soul (i.e., meditation) by which he is in touch with Mind itself. In brief, one must move from the sensible to the intellectual. Still in quest of the absolute Unity from whence he came, man must become one with the *Nous,* the Mind which is the source of all minds. To know Mind one must become identical with it, since knowing is an identification of Knower and Known. However, even when man's mind becomes one with Mind, it is not yet returned home to absolute Unity. For Mind itself has a simple duality of knower and known. Now since one cannot transcend the realm of Mind by an act of mind, only a transmental act of intuition will suffice. One must move, then, from the sensible to the intellectual and from the intellectual to the intuitional to complete the trip to absolute Unity. In order to reach the One it is necessary to merge with it; a man must become one with the One. This cannot be achieved in any cognitive state but only by mystical intuition, which ascends out of the sensible through the intellectual to the intuitional. By turning away from multiplicity and mounting toward greater unity one will come at last to the greatest Unity, when he has become one with the One (IV, 8, 4; I, 6, 7; III, 8, 10; VI, 9, 4 and 10).

The Need for Negative Language of the One (God)

Plotinus is very careful to insist that no positive descriptions of this absolute Unity (God) are possible. He agrees with Plato about the One that "it can neither be spoken of nor written of" (VI, 9, 4).[6] Even when God is called One, "this name, The One," contains really no more than the negation of plurality. This is why the Pythagoreans used the symbol "Apollo," meaning literally "not-many." "If we are led to think positively of The One, name and thing, there would be more truth in silence." For the designation "The One" is "a mere aid to inquiry, [and] was never intended for more than a preliminary affirmation of absolute simplicity to be followed by the rejection of even that statement" (V, 5, 6). Hence, everything Plotinus affirms of God in one place he denies in another. The name "One" means only "not-many." It does not have being but is beyond all being (III, 8, 9). "The One, therefore, is beyond all things that are 'Thus': standing before the indefinable, you may name any of these sequents but you must say, 'This is none of them'" (VI, 8, 9). The One has no knowledge. "There is, we repeat, duality in any thinking being; and the First is wholly above the dual" (V, 6, 6). Further, the One cannot even have power. "The Source of all this cannot be an Intellect; nor can it be an abundant power: it must have been before Intellect and abundance were" (III, 8, 11). Even the term "First" does not really apply to it. For "in calling it The First we mean no more than to express that it is the most absolutely simplex . . . only in the sense that it is not of that compound nature which would make it dependent on any constituents" (II, 9, 1). The term "One" is not to be taken as the first in a series of numbers. "It refuses to take number because it is measure and not the measured" (V, 5, 4). Although Plotinus often refers to God as Good and Beauty, both qualities of goodness and beauty are denied of God. For "shape and idea and measure will always be beautiful, but the Authentic Beauty, or rather the Beyond-Beauty, cannot be under measure and therefore cannot have admitted shape or be Idea" (VI, 7, 33). In brief, the One cannot be anything which is derived from it — and everything comes from it — because it "bestows what itself does not possess" (VI, 7, 15). For "in order that Being may be brought about, the source must be no Being but Being's generator" (V,

2, 1). For "He had no need of Being, who brought Being to be" (VI, 8, 19).

The need for negations is now evident. The Source of all multiplicity must be absolutely simple. But all names taken from the world of multiplicity and even from the intellectual world (which involves a duality of knower and known) cannot be applied to an absolutely simple Being without negating the multiple implications from the terms. Since the One is the qualitiless source of all qualities, no quality may be affirmed of it without qualification by negation. Put another way, the reason that there can be no positive names of the One is that it is the Ultimate and there is nothing more ultimate in terms of which it can be described. It would be to "ask for a principle beyond, but the principle of all has no principle" (VI, 8, 11). The One is nothing but itself and cannot be named in terms of anything else. "Thus the One is in truth beyond all statement; any affirmation of a thing . . . ; we can but try to indicate, in our own feeble way, something concerning it" (V, 3, 13). But "we must be patient with language; we are forced for reasons of exposition to apply to the Supreme terms which strictly are ruled out; everywhere we must read 'So to speak'" (VI, 8, 13). But in what way can we learn how "so to speak" of God? Plotinus never calls God Matter, Evil, or Non-Being. How does one learn "so to speak" appropriately of God? Plotinus has two aspects to his answer: First, we name God indirectly from His effects or emanants. Second, we know God by direct intuition, which transcends all cognitive knowing and which serves as a positive basis for all cognitive negations of God.

Naming God From His Emanational Effects

The positive names given to God by Plotinus are many. God is called Good, Beauty, Being, Actuality, First, Supreme, Energy, etc. All of these names are improperly applied to God; that is, the characteristic belongs properly to the created effects of God. He wrote, "The One is all things and no one of them: the source of all things is not all things: and yet it is all things in a transcendental sense" (V, 2, 1). The One "eludes our knowledge, so that the nearer approach to it is through its offspring" (VI, 9, 5). In brief, although we cannot speak *It*, we are able to speak *of* it in terms of what has come *from* the One (V, 3, 14).

Several observations about this causal naming of God are called for at this point. First, God is thus named only from His sequents in a transcendent sense. God is not really like the goodness, beauty, and being He causes. They are at best only a visible and multiple "copy" of the invisible One which caused them (V, 5, 5). The created world is merely a "vestige" or "image" of the God who completely transcends it (VI, 8, 18; 7, 38). We know that the One is "a nobler principle than anything we know as Being; fuller and greater; above reason, mind, and feeling; conferring powers, not to be confounded with them." But how does it confer these things, "as itself possessing them or not?. How can it convey what it does not possess, and yet if it does possess how is it simplex?" Plotinus continues, "The explanation is, that what comes from the Supreme cannot be identical with it and assuredly cannot be better than it — what could be better than The One or could exceed it in any sense? The emanation then must be less good . . . " (V, 3, 14-15). All that comes from God is nothing more than a trace of the transcendent One from which they emanate. God is in no way really like His multiple effects.

Second, God is named from His emanations by way of extrinsic attribution. That is, God is called Good because He causes goodness, not because this goodness He causes can be properly attributed to Him. Plotinus clearly affirmed that the One "bestows that itself does not possess" (VI, 7, 15). God gave rise to all being but does not have being Himself. The reason for this is that Unity is the basis for being and not being the basis for Unity. Plotinus is very clear on this point: "It is, therefore, an existent Unity, not an existent that develops Unity. . . . In the pure Unity there is no Being save in so far as Unity attends to producing it" (VI, 6, 13). Unity (God) is beyond being and the only sense in which He is called Being is by extrinsic attribution because He is the Cause of being. Properly speaking, God is not Being but He is the Unity which is the cause of the varying unity which beings have.

The Intuitional Basis for All Naming of God

One problem remains: giving God positive names from His extrinsically related created effects does not provide any proper knowledge of God. God is really not Being, Good, Beauty, etc. God is the transcendent Unity beyond all these. All of these must

be affirmed of God only to be negated of Him. God is described in these terms really inappropriate to Him only to stimulate man's search in His direction. These terms are used for "conveying a conviction, at the cost of verbal accuracy" (VI, 8, 13). The One can neither be spoken of nor written of, Plotinus insisted. "If we nevertheless speak and write about it, we do so only to give direction, to stimulate toward that vision beyond discourse . . ." (VI, 9, 4). Rational and cognitive thought and language can do no more than point in the direction of the ineffable God who can be known only by mystical intuition. "Our knowledge of the One comes to us neither by pure thought . . . but by a presence which is superior to science . . . , for science implies discursive reason and discursive reason implies manifoldness" (VI, 9, 4) — Katz' translation). In this superior mystical intuition "no longer is there thing seen and light to show it . . . ; this is the very radiance that brought both Intellect and Intellectual object into being . . ." (VI, 7, 36). In fact, "only by a leap [from the intellectual] can we reach to this One which is to be pure of all else . . ." (V, 5, 4). The man who experiences this mystical union is "no longer himself nor self-belonging; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into it, one with it: center coincides with center . . ." (VI, 9, 3). If a man does not attain this temporary meditative union, it is because he has not completely purified himself of all multiplicity. "There is no vision, no union, for those handling or acting by anything other: the soul must see before it neither evil nor good nor anything else, that alone it may receive the Alone" (VI, 7, 34).

There is a very important function for this noncognitive intuition of God in relation to the negative religious language used to describe God. Plotinus recognized that every negative presuppposed a positive. He realized that it would be impossible to negate multiplicity of God unless there was some prior awareness of His unity. He wrote, "It is impossible to say 'Not that' if one is utterly without experience or conception of the 'That'; there will generally have been, even, some inkling of the good beyond Intellection" (VI, 7, 29). In Plotinus' case it is this nonrational experience of the One that enables him to make rational negations such as that it is not-many. E.g., his positive intuition of the Beyond-Being enables him to make the negations that it is not Being. Without these positive intuitions of what God is, it would of course be impossible to affirm

what He is not. And since even the emanations of God do not properly describe Him, the appropriateness of applying to God certain things which flow from Him is dependent, too, on a prior awareness of the God to whom they are appropriately (albeit not positively) attributed. Negative language about the Transcendent is utterly dependent for its meaning on prior positive intuition of God gained via mystical union.

The Neoplatonist Proclus (410-485) systematized Plotinus' philosophy in his *Book on Causes*. Through the unorthodox Syrian monk Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500), this Neoplatonic thought was passed on to the Christians of the Middle Ages. In his book *On the Divine Names,* Dionysius affirmed the incomprehensibility of God. God, he said, cannot be known directly but only indirectly in a threefold way. (1) First we may *affirm* of God what the Bible says of Him. This is called positive theology. (2) Next, we must *deny* that these qualities apply to God in the same sense in which they apply to creatures. This is negative theology. (3) Finally, these terms must be applied to God in a *higher way*. Thus one ends with a negation of a negation. In true Plotinian style, God remains above all affirmations.

Moses Maimonides: Negative Attributes of God

Moses ben Maimonides was a highly respected Jewish philosopher of the later Medieval period. He too has a very strong negative theology. Maimonides placed the root of all evil in theology in a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Assuming that figurative and anthropomorphic language is actually descriptive of God leads to polytheistic error or a defective monotheism. If one wishes to leave the realm of empirical metaphor and "rise to a higher state, viz., that of reflection, and truly to hold the conviction that God is One," then he "must understand that God has no essential attribute in any form or in any sense whatever. . . . Those who believe that God is One, and that He has many attributes, declare the unity of God with their lips, and assume plurality in their thoughts."[7]

Five ways to attribute something to God positively. Maimonides outlines five possible ways an attribute could be positively affirmed of God. He denies the applicability of the first four to the monotheistic God of Judaism and opts for the last one. (1) "First, an

object is described by its *definition,* as e.g., man is described as a being that lives and has reason; such a description, containing the true essence of the object, is . . . nothing else but the explanation of a name." Of this kind of attribution Maimonides said, "All agree that this kind of description cannot be given of God; for there are no previous causes to His existence, by which He could be defined." [8] That is, there is nothing more ultimate than God in terms of which He can be defined.

(2) "Secondly, an object is described by *part of its definition,* as when, e.g., man is described as a living being or as a rational being." But, adds Maimonides, "All agree that this kind of description is inappropriate in reference to God; for if we were to speak of a portion of His essence, we should consider His essence to be compound." [9] That is, God is simple and has no parts. Hence, one cannot speak of *part* of God's essence.

(3) "Thirdly, an object is described by something different from its true essence, by something that does not complement or establish the essence of the object" [i.e., by a quality]. This kind of attribution does not befit God. For "quality in the most general sense, is an accident. If God could be described in this way, He would be a substratum of accidents." [10] This would mean that God possesses these qualities only accidentally and not essentially, in which case they would not be truly descriptive of His essence. Furthermore, all qualities imply composition. "Hence, it follows that no attribute coming under the head of quality in the widest sense, can be predicated of God." [11]

(4) "Fourthly, a thing is described by its relation to another thing, e.g., to time, . . . or to a different individual; thus we say, Zaid, the father of A, . . . who dwells at a certain place, or who lived at a stated time." Now "this kind of attribute does not necessarily imply plurality or change in the essence of the object described." But, on the other hand, "such relations are not the essence of a thing, nor are they so intimately connected with it as qualities." Now, at first thought, commented Maimonides, "it would seem that they may be employed in reference to God, but after a careful and thorough consideration we are convinced of their inadmissibility. It is quite clear that there is no relation between God and time or space." God cannot be related to time, "for time is an

accident connected with motion, "which includes befores and afters in a numbered series (1, 2, 3, etc.). And clearly God cannot be related to any temporal numerical series. Further, "since motion is one of the conditions to which material bodies are subject, and God is immaterial, there can be no relation between Him and time. Similarly, there is no relation between Him and space." [12]

"But what we do have to investigate and to examine is this," wrote Maimonides, "whether some real relation exists between God and any of the substances created by Him, by which He could be described." The answer to this is also negative. "That there is no correlation between Him and any creatures can easily be seen; for the characteristic of two objects correlative to each other is the equality of their reciprocal relation. Now, as God has absolute existence, while all other beings have only possible existence. . . , there consequently cannot be any correlation" [between God and His creatures]. It is impossible to imagine a relation between intellect and sight. "How, then, could a relation be imagined between any creature and God, who has nothing in common with any other being; for even the term existence is applied to Him and other things, according to our opinion, according to pure homonymity [the sound being the same but the meaning different]." Consequently, Maimonides concludes, "there is no relation whatever between Him and any other being." The reason for this radical disjunction is brought out in Maimonides' next comment: "For whenever we speak of a relation between two things, these belong to the same kind; but when two things belong to different kinds though of the same class, there is no relation between them." How, then, "could there be any relation between God and His creatures, considering the important difference between them in respect to true existence, the greatest of all differences." [13] Therefore, even though relational attributes do not necessarily imply plurality or chance, one is wrong in applying them to God in any positive sense.

(5) "Fifthly, a thing is described by its *actions;* I do not mean by 'its actions' the inherent capacity for a certain work [as the *ability* of a carpenter to build] . . . but I mean the action the latter has performed" [i.e., of the *act* of building]. Only this kind of predication can be made of God. For "this kind of attributes is separate from the essences of the thing described, and, therefore, appropriate to be employed in describing the Creator, especially

since we know that these different actions do not imply that different elements be contained in the substance of the agent, by which the actions are produced. . . . "[14] For all actions flow from the essence of God and not from any alleged accidents superadded to His essence. In brief, the only things appropriately attributed to God are actions that flow from His essence but are not in any positive way descriptive of His essence.

Having eliminated philosophically any positive descriptive attributes of God, Maimonides is faced with the innumerable biblical passages that predicate many things of God in a positive way. His answer is summed up in this principle: "The Torah speaketh in the language of man." Biblical language is anthropomorphic. "Many of the attributes express different acts of God, but that difference does not necessitate any difference as regards Him from whom the acts proceed." For instance, a fire can bleach, blacken, boil, burn, harden, melt, and consume. Surely these actions of fire do not relate at all to the nature of fire. Thus, the many actions of God, a free Cause, give us no information of His essence. In fact, the so-called relations between God and creatures "exist only in the thoughts of men." When Moses asked to know the essence of God, "God promised that He would let him know all His attributes, and that these were nothing but His actions. . . . Consequently the knowledge of the works of God is the knowledge of His attributes, by which He can be known." But none of these works provide any knowledge positively descriptive of God. In short, "nothing can be predicated of God that implies any of the following four things: corporeality, emotion or change, nonexistence, . . . and similarity with any of His creatures." And, "those who believe in the presence of essential attributes in God, viz., Existence, Life, Power, Wisdom, and Will, should know that these attributes, when applied to God, have not the same meaning as when applied to us. . . . When they ascribe to God essential attributes, these so-called essential attributes should not have similarity to the attributes of other things . . . just as there is no similarity between the essence of God and that of other beings." Hence, "the terms Wisdom, Power, Will, and Life are applied to God and to other beings by way of perfect homonymity, admitting of no comparison whatever."[15]

Maimonides provides the key to his elimination of all positive

attributes to God in the following passage: "It is known that existence is an accident appertaining to all [caused] things, and therefore an element superadded to their essence. . . . But as regards a being whose existence is not due to any cause . . . existence and essence are perfectly identical; He is not a substance to which existence is joined as an accident, as an additional element." Consequently, "God exists without possessing the attribute of existence. Similarly, He lives without possessing the attribute of life; knows without possessing the attribute of knowledge . . ." and so on. Likewise, "God's unity is not an element superadded, but He is One without possessing the attribute of unity." In brief, God does not have any attribute appropriately applied to Him. For example, God does not have existence in any way similar to that of a creature; God's existence is absolute and unique. In like manner, God does not have wisdom as a creature does; God's wisdom is infinitely different. How can this be known, since there is no positive knowledge of the essence of God? The answer is found only in negative theology.

Only negative attributes are descriptive of God. According to Maimonides, "the negative attributes of God are the true attributes . . . while the positive attributes imply polytheism. . . ." For "we cannot describe the Creator by any means except by negative attributes." The only thing negative attributes have in common with positive ones is that both circumscribe their object by excluding what would otherwise have not been excluded. But unlike positive attributes, negative ones do not provide us with any direct information about the essence of the object being described. From this it is clear to Maimonides that God has no positive attributes whatsoever.[16]

What, then, is the function of negative attributes? They "are necessary to direct the mind to the truths that we must believe concerning God, for, on the one hand, they do not imply any plurality, and, on the other hand, they convey to man the highest possible knowledge of God." For when we say that God's nonexistence is impossible, we learn that He is totally different from all other kinds of beings. Likewise, when we say that God is not many (i.e., He is One) we learn that there is no other unity like His. And by way of these negative attributes "all we understand is the fact that

He exists, that He is a Being to whom none of His creatures is similar, who has nothing in common with them, who does not include plurality, who is never too feeble to produce other beings, and whose relation to the universe is that of a steersman to a boat; and even this is not a real relation. . . . " And one advances in his knowledge of God by the addition of more negative attributes. For by "each additional negative attribute you advance toward the knowledge of God, and you are nearer to it than he who does not negative, in reference to God, those qualities which you are convinced by proof must be negatived."[17]

Attributing positively to God the perfections found in creatures would imply imperfections in God. For "though perfections as regards ourselves . . . in reference to Him they would be defects. . . . " Silence is better than predicating positive characteristics of God. For "the glorification of God does not consist in *uttering* that which is not to be uttered, but in *reflecting* on that which man should reflect." And the only appropriate reflections on God are that He is totally removed from any similarity with His creatures. He is *not* like any perfection found in creation.[18]

Maimonides shows by illustration just how one goes about negating certain characteristics of God. One may know *that* a ship exists without knowing *what* it is. But if it can be determined that it is not a mineral, a body, or a plant, that it is not flat or round or solid, then soon one can arrive at the notion (by negation) of what it is. "In the same manner you will come nearer to the knowledge and comprehension of God by the negative attributes." But you "arrive at some negation, without obtaining a true conception of an essential attribute." And "those who do not recognize, in reference to God, the negation of things, which others negative by clear proof, are deficient in the knowledge of God, and are remote from comprehending Him." In fact, "the smaller the number of things which a person can negative in relation to God, the less he knows of Him . . . but the man who affirms an attribute of God, knows nothing but the same; for the object to which, in his imagination, he applies that name, does not exist."[19]

Only the Tetragram (YHWH, Yahweh) indicates God's true essence and its meaning cannot be known. It denotes "absolute existence" but this can be known only negatively as that that which cannot not be. In brief, God can be understood only in terms of

His own essence and no man can know the essence of God. God's Name is peculiar to Himself. The best men can do is safeguard its transcendent unity by negating all plurality from it. Thus negative theology is the only protection of monotheism.[20] Despite the fact that Maimonides refers to God as Wisdom and Absolute Existence, he has no positive conception of what these mean. God has no intrinsic causal relation to His creatures and, hence, cannot be named from perfections found in them. What God is essentially must remain unknowable, except negatively.

Thomas Aquinas: Via Negativa

Scholastic philosophers held Maimonides in high regard. Aquinas agreed with Maimonides that no man could in this life grasp the essence of God in a positive way. For "the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches. Thus we are unable to apprehend it by knowing *what* it is. . . . For this reason, we must derive the distinction of God from other beings by means of negative differences."[21] This Aquinas calls knowledge of God by way of remotion. In this regard, also, it is improper to say that God is like any of His creatures. "For although it may be admitted that creatures are in some way like God, it can in no way be admitted that God is like creatures; because, as Dionysius says: 'A mutual likeness may be found between things of the same order, but not between a cause and that which is caused.'"[22] Elsewhere Aquinas adds, "What is comprehended is perfectly known. . . . But no created intellect can attain to that perfect mode of the knowledge. . . . " For "God, whose being is infinite is infinitely knowable. Now no created intellect can know God infinitely. . . . Hence, it is impossible that it should comprehend God."[23] Further, God is simple and "reason cannot reach a simple form, so as to know *what* it is; but it can know *whether* it is."[24] As far as the essence of God is concerned, "we cannot grasp what God is, but only what He is not. . . . "[25]

But unlike Maimonides, Dionysius, and Plotinus, Aquinas was convinced that positive affirmations were possible of God. There is an intrinsic causal relation between God and creation. For if God caused goodness, He must be Goodness; if He caused existence, He must be Existence, and so on. Therefore, even though it is not possible to know the essence of God as such, it is possible

to make some positive affirmations about God's essence by virtue of what comes from God. [26] God cannot produce what He does not Himself "possess"; He cannot give what he does not have. In Aquinas' own words, "Since every perfection of creatures is to be found in God, albeit in another and more eminent way, whatever terms denote perfections absolutely and without any defect whatever, are predicated of God and other things." [27] The basis, then, for positive affirmations about God is the intrinsic causal similarity between Creator and His creatures.

There are three important differences between the Thomistic *via negativa* and the method of the Neoplatonic philosophers before him. [28] (1) First, the *via negativa* is not the negation of all positive attributes of God but the denial of any imperfections in Him. "Negative theology does not assert negations of God; it denies limitations of Him." [29] (2) Second, "the idea of negation is always based on an affirmation; as is evidenced by the fact that every negative proposition is proved by an affirmative: wherefore unless the human mind knew something positive about God, it would be unable to deny anything about Him." [30] (3) Third, the positive affirmations are made possible only by the intrinsic causal relation between Creator and creatures. God must "possess" the perfections He produces. Or, more properly, if God *causes* goodness, being, etc., then He must *be* Goodness, Being, etc.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Two factors emerge from our discussion of negative God-language. First, a totally negative God-talk is meaningless. Unless there is some positive knowledge of God prior to the negations, there is no meaningful way to know what to negate of God. Every negation implies a prior affirmation. Complete negation without any affirmation is complete skepticism about God. Second, without some kind of negation there is no way to preserve the transcendence of the theistic God. Unless all plurality, change, and finitude are eliminated from God, the theist falls into pure anthropomorphism or semantical idolatry. Finite, limited concepts cannot be applied descriptively to an infinite God without qualification. Hence, some form of qualification or negation is absolutely essential to meaningful attributions of the transcendent God of

theism. But negations alone will never suffice. For unless there is also some affirmative knowledge of God, the theist is also left in skepticism.

NOTES CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Parmenides, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 269-278.
2. Cf. *Phaedo*, 100 d, 102 d, 103 e; *Republic* VII, 526 a-b.
3. Plato, *Sophist*, 241 d.
4. Plato gives the argument against this proposed solution himself. See his *Parmenides* 130 b-d.
5. All references from Plotinus are from his *Enneads*, translated and edited by Stephen MacKenna.
6. See Plato, *Parmenides* 142 a.
7. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 67.
8. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
9. Ibid., p. 70.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 71.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
14. Ibid., p. 72.
15. Ibid., pp. 73-75, 78-80.
16. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
17. Ibid., pp. 83-84.
18. Ibid., pp. 85-87.
19. Ibid., pp. 88-89.
20. Ibid., pp. 90-91.
21. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 14.
22. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 4, 3, ad 4.
23. Ibid., I, 12, 7.
24. Ibid., I, 12, 12.
25. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 30.
26. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 12, 12.
27. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 30.
28. Nicholas of Cusanus (15th century) carried on the strict negative tradition among Christian mystics after Aquinas. See Cusanus' *On Learned Ignorance*, chs. 24-26.
29. Austin M. Farrer, *Finite and Infinite*, p. 60.
30. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, VII, 5 body.

12

Positive Language About God

There are two basic attempts to develop a positive God-talk. One is by way of univocal language and the other by way of analogical language. The former was expounded by Scotus and the latter by Aquinas. Each makes an essential contribution to theistic language. Although at first the positions seem to be mutually exclusive, in the final analysis their complementarity provides a crucial insight into the nature of religious language.

THE SCOTISTIC INSISTENCE ON UNIVOCAL CONCEPTS

John Duns Scotus made one point unmistakably clear: there can be no meaningful positive talk about God unless it involves at the basis of it univocal concepts. Equivocal or analogical concepts leave one in skepticism. Scotus' argument may be summarized in two parts: first, the impossibility of analogous concepts; second, the necessity of univocal concepts.

The Impossibility of Analogous Concepts

Henry of Ghent, a contemporary of Scotus, defended what he called an "analogous concept of being." According to Henry, God is known in a "universal" concept that is only analogically common to Himself and to creatures. This concept is conceived of as though it were one notion because of the close resemblance of the concepts it contains, but in reality the concepts are diverse. As creatures actually exist, they are determinate forms of being. But the mind prescinds from all these determinations and forms a simple concept of being which is undetermined but is determinable. As applied to God, this concept of being is unqualified and unde-

termined in any sense, because His being is incapable of any restrictions. Being in this sense is both undetermined and indeterminable. Now determinable being (creatures) and indeterminable being (God) have nothing positive in common; they agree only in what is denied, viz., determination. Therefore, the concept of being common to God and creatures is really not one concept but two. But because of the similarity of these two concepts the mind fails to distinguish between them, as two distant objects tend to fuse before the eye. This dual concept is what Henry calls an analogous concept. [1]

Scotus strongly objects to Henry's analogous concept. (1) First of all, Scotus reminds Henry that if God and creatures are distinguished only by a negation, then there is no distinction at all. For "there is no need to make the distinction that we cannot know what God is; we can only know what He is not. For every denial is intelligible only in terms of some affirmation." (2) Second, Scotus notes that an analogous concept is really two different concepts. Hence it is really equivocal. For either there is at the base of these two concepts one univocal concept from which they draw their common meaning or else they are two entirely different concepts. If the former, there must be a univocal concept at the basis of the so-called analogous concept. If the latter, there is no common meaning in the so-called analogous concept. And whatever is predicated of God and creatures by way of such an equivocal concept must mean something entirely different. Therefore, if concepts of God were analogous, they would be equivocal. [2]

The Necessity of Univocal Concepts of God

But theistic language is not equivocal or analogical for Scotus; it is univocal and, hence, it evades the alternatives of skepticism and meaninglessness. By univocal Scotus means that "which possesses sufficient unity in itself, so that to affirm and deny it of one and the same thing would be a contradiction. It also has sufficient unity to serve as the middle terms of a syllogism." Scotus then gives four arguments to support his contention that concepts must be univocally understood of both God and man. [3]

(1) First, "every intellect that is certain about one concept, but dubious about others has . . . another concept of which it is certain." Proof of this premise is as follows: "One and the same

concept cannot be both certain and dubious, or there is no concept at all, and consequently no certitude about any concept." The other premise is this: "Every philosopher was certain that what he postulated as a first principle was a being. . . . Yet he was not certain whether it was created or an uncreated being, whether it was first or not first." The reason for this is as follows: "Someone perceiving the disagreement among philosophers can still be certain that any of the things that they have acclaimed as the first principle has being [e.g., fire, water]." Scotus dismissed the possibility that the different philosophers had different concepts of being. He said, "By such an evasion all possibility of proving the unity of any concept would be destroyed. The fact of great similarity plus the irreducible simplicity of all the concepts argue that ultimately they are one. Further, if there were two different formal concepts, one would have to conclude that there were two formally opposed first principles of being. [4] In summation, if the intellect can be certain about the concept of being without knowing it refers to created or uncreated being, and if it is necessary to have a univocal concept in order to be certain about anything, then we must have a univocal concept of God's being. Otherwise, we would have no knowledge at all of God, which is contrary to both faith and philosophy.

(2) Secondly, the concepts used of God must be univocally understood because "no object will produce a simple and proper concept of itself and a simple and proper concept of another object, unless it contains this second object essentially or virtually. No created object, however, contains the Uncreated essentially or virtually. . . . Therefore, it produces no simple and proper concept of the 'uncreated' at all." But "no concept could arise in virtue of the active intellect and the sense image [which are the way all created objects are understood in this life] that is not univocal but only analogous with, or wholly other than, what is revealed in the sense image." Hence, it would be impossible to have any natural knowledge of God unless it is known via univocal concepts. But we do have natural knowledge of God. Therefore, this knowledge must come by way of univocal concepts. [5]

(3) Third, our concept of God must be univocal, since "the proper concept of any subject provides sufficient ground for concluding to everything conceivable which necessarily inheres in that

subject." But "we have no concept of God . . . that enables us to know every necessary attribute which we conceive of Him, as is evident from the fact of the Trinity, and other necessary attributes that we know by faith." Therefore, we have no proper concept of God. But this is patently false, as faith teaches us. Hence, we must have at least some concept which is properly (i.e., univocally) applicable to Him. [6]

(4) Fourth, "either some pure perfection has a common meaning as applied to God and creatures or not. If not, it is either because its meaning does not apply formally to God at all (which is inadmissible), or else it has a meaning that is wholly proper to God [and not to creatures]. . . ." But this latter alternative is contrary to the truth affirmed by Anselm that "we first know something to be a pure perfection and secondly we attribute this perfection to God." Furthermore, if pure perfections were found only in God, there would be no such perfections among creatures. The proper metaphysical approach is to begin with a concept (such as will or intellect) and finding that it contains no imperfection, "attribute these to God — but in a most perfect degree." Finally, "if you maintain that this is not true, but that the formal concept of what pertains to God is another notion, a disconcerting consequence ensues; namely that from the proper notion of anything found in creatures nothing at all can be inferred about God, for the notion of what is in each is wholly different." [7]

Beneath these four arguments for univocity is one fundamental contention, viz., if there is no univocity in our concepts about God, then there is no certainty in our knowledge about God. For "one and the same concept cannot be both certain and dubious. Therefore, either there is another concept [which is certain], or there is no concept at all, and consequently no certitude about any concept." In other words, if there is no univocal basis for meaning, then one is forced on an infinite regress of nonunivocal concepts in search for the one elusive univocal concept by which the nonunivocal ambiguity can be resolved. "For every intellect that is certain about one concept, but dubious about others has, in addition to the concept about which it is in doubt, another concept about which it is certain." Scotus flatly concludes, "I say that God is conceived . . . in some concept univocal to Himself and to a creature." [8]

In summation, there are only three alternatives in our concepts about God. Either they are understood equivocally (i.e., in a totally different sense), in which case we know nothing about God; or they are understood analogically (i.e., with partly the same but partly different meaning), in which case we must have some univocal concept of God enabling us to know which part of the analogous concept applies to God and which does not apply to Him; or else the concepts of God must be univocal (i.e., having totally the same meaning) in the first place. Therefore, either there are univocal concepts about God or else we know nothing about God. There must be either univocity or skepticism. It would appear that Scotus has made his point. Equivocal God-talk says nothing about God. And analogical God-talk seems to work only if there is in the analogy an identifiable univocal element. If there is no such identifiable univocal element, the concept is at best ambiguous and at worst equivocal. If it is ambiguous, it can be clarified only in terms of a nonambiguous univocal concept. But if there is an identifiable univocal element in the analogy, then analogy after all is a form of univocal understanding of God. For it involves an identifiable univocal concept that can be applied to God without change, along with the other elements of the combined analogous statement that cannot be applied to God. In brief, analogy either has a univocal element in it or it does not. If it does not, it is ultimately equivocal talk, which leaves us in skepticism about God. On the other hand, if analogy does have a univocal element in it, then it really contains a univocal concept after all, which proves some true knowledge about God.[9]

THOMISTIC CONTENTION FOR ANALOGOUS PREDICATION

Thomas Aquinas was familiar with and flatly rejected the insistence on univocal God-language. Aquinas wrote, "It is impossible for anything to be predicated univocally of God and a creature."[10]

Aquinas' Rejection of Univocal Predication

In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (I, 32) Aquinas offers six arguments against univocal predication of God and creatures. They are as follows:[11]

(1) First, only those effects that receive from their cause the specific form of that cause can receive a univocal predication of

that form of them and of God. But "the forms of the things God has made do not measure up to a specific likeness of the divine power." All creatures are "in a divided and particular way that which in Him is found in a simple and universal way." So, "it is evident that nothing can be said univocally of God and other things."

(2) Secondly, even if "an effect should measure up to the species of its cause, it will not receive the univocal predication of the name [attribute] unless it receives the same specific form according to the same mode of being." But no creature has the same mode of being that God has, for "there is nothing in God that is not the divine being itself, which is not the case with other things. Nothing, therefore, can be predicated of God and other things univocally." That is, God's mode of being is necessary and the creature's is contingent. Hence, no univocal predication according to the mode of being is possible between God and creatures.

(3) Thirdly, "whatever is predicated of many things univocally is either a genus, a species, a difference, an accident, or a property." But God's essence cannot be defined in any way; nor are there any accidents in God; He is what He is essentially. He is unique in kind and does not share in class or kind with any other being. "It remains, then, that nothing is predicated univocally of God and other things."

(4) Fourthly, "what is predicated of many things univocally is simpler than both of them, at least in concept. Now there can be nothing simpler than God either in reality or in concept. Nothing, therefore, is predicated univocally of God and other things." Since the one thing in common is always simpler than the many things having it in common, any univocal predication of God and others would have to be more simple than God, which is impossible.

(5) Fifthly, "everything that is predicated univocally of many things belongs through participation to each of the things of which it is predicated. . . . . But nothing is said of God by participation. . . . Nothing, therefore, can be predicated univocally of God and other things." God does not participate in anything; rather, all things participate in Him. If there were a common univocal predication in which God participated, then this something would be more ultimate than God.

(6) Sixthly, "nothing is predicated of God and creatures as though they were in the same order, but rather, according to priority and posteriority." For God is Being essentially and all other things have being only by participation in God. But "what is predicated of some things according to priority and posteriority is certainly not predicated univocally." For the prior possesses the characteristic essentially and the posterior possesses it only by participation in the prior. "It is impossible, therefore, that anything be predicated univocally of God and other things."

In the *Summa Theologica* (I, 13, 5) Aquinas rests his case against univocal predication on the first argument above. "All perfections existing in creatures divided and multiplied pre-exist in God unitedly." Hence any perfection applied to a creature signifies something distinct from its essence. But when applied to God, this perfection signifies God's very essence. E.g., creatures *have* wisdom but God *is* wisdom. "Hence it is evident that the term wise is not applied in the same way to God and to man. The same applies to other terms. Hence, no name is predicated univocally of God and other creatures."

Implied in Aquinas' objection to univocal predication is another argument. He implied in the "On the Contrary" part of the article (which is the rebuttal of the opposing view but not necessarily his own view) an argument with which Aquinas did agree, viz., this: [12] "God is more distant from creatures than any creatures are from each other. But the difference of some creatures [from each other] makes any univocal predication of them impossible, as in the case of those things which are not in the same genus. Therefore, much less can anything be predicated univocally of God and creatures." In essence, then, the argument is this: between an infinitely perfect being and finitely perfect beings there is an infinite difference in perfection (certainly an infinite differs from a finite in more than a finite way). And where there is an infinite difference in perfection there cannot be a univocal predication. A given perfection cannot mean totally the same thing as applied to God and creatures, for God and creatures are separated by an infinite degree of perfection. As Thomas put it elsewhere, "Every effect of an univocal agent is adequate to the agent's power: and no creature being finite, can be adequate to the power of the first agent which is infinite." [13] And what is true of power is also true of any other perfection. An

infinitely perfect Cause produced finitely perfect effects. And the perfections found in these effects cannot be predicated in exactly the same manner (i.e., univocally) of God.

The Need for the Via Negativa

It is at this point that the need for the *via negativa* becomes apparent. As Plotinus correctly observed, God cannot possess perfections the way created things possess them. In this sense God does "produce what He does not possess," [14] because God does not really *possess* anything He produces. God does not *have* wisdom and being; God *is* wisdom and being. Whatever perfections creatures possess must be completely negated of God for the sense in which He "possesses" those perfections is completely different from the way they are possessed by creatures. For, properly speaking, God does not really possess them at all; rather, these perfections are of the essence of God. Univocal predication would destroy the distance between God and creatures necessitated by the different kinds of beings that they are. God is an infinitely perfect Being and all other beings are only finitely perfect. If any attribute were predicated in the same way (i.e., univocally) of both God and creatures, then it would either imply the finitude of God or else the infinitude of creatures. As long as God is viewed as infinitely perfect, nothing that is finitely perfect can be applied to God without qualifications. It was the necessity for these qualifications that was appreciated by the proponents of negative theology. When a perfection taken from the finite world is applied to God, it must be applied to God infinitely, since He is an infinite Being. Unless the finite conditions of a perfection can be negated, there is no way it can be appropriately applied to an infinite Being.

Aquinas' Rejection of Equivocal Predication

However, as it was also shown in the last chapter, the *via negativa* alone will not suffice. For if all meaning is negated when one removes the finite connotations of a term, he is speaking mere equivocations. Unless there is some common meaning that applies to both God and creatures, the meaning it has as applied to creatures is totally different from the meaning it has as applied to God. And a totally different meaning is an equivocation that leaves us in skepticism about God. Aquinas agrees with Scotus that equiv-

ocal language leaves one with no knowledge of God. Although Aquinas refers to God as an "equivocal Cause" (i.e., of a different order than finite causes), he offers several arguments against equivocal predication of that Cause.[15]

(1) First, in equivocals "it is entirely accidental that one name is applied to diverse things: the application of the name to one of them does not signify that it has an order to the other." But "this is not the situation with names said of God and creatures, since we note in the community of such names the order of cause and effect. . . . It is not, therefore, in the manner of pure equivocation that something is predicated of God and other things." That is, terms with the same spelling but different meaning [as "bark" of a tree or a dog] are equivocals by chance. But where one thing is the cause of the other, there is no mere chance connection between the terms expressing these things, but there is an order of reference that signifies that one is related to the other.

(2) Secondly, "where there is pure equivocation, there is no likeness in things themselves; there is only a unity of a name. But . . . there is a certain mode of likeness of things to God. It remains, then, that names are not said of God in a purely equivocal way." The minor premise was supported by a preceding article (I, 29) where Aquinas argued that "some likeness must be found between them [cause and effect], since it belongs to the nature of action that an agent produce its like, since each thing acts according as it is in act." The similarity of Creator and creature is supported, too, by Holy Scripture which says that God made man in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26).

(3) Thirdly, "when one name is predicated of several things in a purely equivocal way, we cannot from one of them be led to the knowledge of another. . . ." But "from what we find in other things, we do arrive at a knowledge of divine things, as is evident from what we have said [above]." Therefore, "such names are not said of God and other things in a purely equivocal way." That is to say, unless there is some likeness between creatures and God, we could never rise, as we do, from a knowledge of created things to a knowledge of God.

(4) Fourthly, "equivocation in a name impedes the progress of reasoning." And "if nothing was said of God and creatures except

in a purely equivocal way, no reasoning proceeding from creatures to God would take place. But the contrary is evident from all those who have spoken about God." That is to say, not only would equivocation make knowledge of God impossible (as the third argument contends) but it would impede any reasoning about God built on knowledge gained from the world in which reasoning all theologians engage.

(5) Fifthly, "it is also a fact that a name is predicated of some being uselessly unless through that name we understand something of the being. But if names are said of God and creatures in a purely equivocal way, we understand nothing of God through those names." For "the meanings of those names are known to us solely to the extent that they are said of creatures. In vain, therefore, would it be said or proved of God that He is a being, good, or the like."

(6) Sixthly, even if nonequivocal names tell us only what God is not, at least they agree in what they deny of God. A totally equivocal denial of God would be the same as affirming the same thing that is being denied of God. Hence, even negations of God cannot be equivocal.

In a later work Aquinas rests the case against equivocal predication on one central argument: Equivocal predication is impossible "because if that were so, it follows that from creatures nothing at all could be known or demonstrated about God."[16] But it is patently false that we know nothing about God. Hence there must be some nonequivocal predications about God.

Analogical Predication: The Only Alternative

If terms can be applied to God either univocally or equivocally, then they must be predicated of Him analogically. In Thomas' own words, "This name God . . . is taken neither univocally nor equivocally, but analogically. This is apparent from this reason — Univocal names have absolutely the same meaning, while equivocal names have absolutely diverse meanings; whereas analogicals, a name taken in one signification must be placed in the definition of the same name taken in other significations."[17] Therefore, terms denoting perfections taken from creatures can be applied to God only in an analogous way. "For we can name God only from

creatures. Hence, whatever is said of God and creatures is said according as there is some relation of the creature to God as to its principal cause, wherein all the perfections pre-exist excellently." Further, comments Aquinas, "this mode of communion [i.e., analogy] is a mean between pure equivocation and simple univocation. For in analogies the idea is not, as in univocals, one and the same [in its application]; yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals; but the name which is used in a multiple sense signifies various proportions to some one thing." [18] For example, God is named Good because He is the Cause of goodness. The Cause is Good and, hence, when it causes goodness in something else it communicates of what it *is* to what its creature *has* by created participation. The causal connection between Creator and creatures is the basis for the similarity in the analogous predication. Creation cannot be totally unike its Creator, since every perfection it has it acquired from Him.

There is another very fundamental argument for analogy that takes us back to Parmenides' dilemma. [19] According to the monist Parmenides, if there is more than one being in the universe, these beings must differ by either being or nonbeing. But they cannot differ by nonbeing for that is nothing, and to differ by nothing is not to differ at all. Neither can things differ for that is the very respect in which they are identical, and they cannot differ in the very respect in which they are identical. Hence, there cannot be more than one being in the universe. Hence, the belief that there is only one being — i.e., monism. Now there are only two horns to this dilemma. [20] Either one's principle of differentiation is inside of being or it is outside of being. If outside, then things do not differ in being; they are identical in being and monism is true. The only way to maintain a pluralism essential to theism is to insist that things differ in their very being. But how can they differ by the only thing they have in common? The answer is that they cannot, if being is univocal. For if being means exactly the same thing wherever it is found, it follows that there can be only one being.

There are only three alternatives. Being is either equivocal, univocal, or analogical. *If being is univocal,* indicating exactly the same thing, wherever it is found, then there can be only one being in the universe. For whatever one points to as being here

is identical with whatever one points to as being there or anywhere else. Unless there is a real difference between this or that being, they are really the same. If there are no differences in being, then being cannot have differences; it must be all the same. On the other hand, *if being is equivocal,* there cannot be more than one being in the universe. For if *this* is a being, *that* cannot be a being. For in equivocation the meaning is entirely different and the only way to be entirely different from being is to be nonbeing. Hence, if this is a being, then that is nonbeing. Once one being is identified, it is the only being possible, if being is understood in an equivocal sense. For the opposite from something is nothing. And if this being exists, then every other "being" (taken in an equivocal or totally different sense) does not exist. Hence, if being is understood in an equivocal sense, there can be only one being in the universe. This philosophy is called monism.

There is only one way out of this monistic dilemma — *the analogy of being.* That is, being does not mean exactly the same thing wherever it is found. Being is not univocal; beings do differ in their very being. There is an infinite Being and there are finite beings. And there are different kinds of finite beings. God is uncomposed Being and all creatures are beings composed of essence (*what* they are) and existence (*that* they are). [21] In God, essence and existence are identical, but they are not identical in finite things. This difference in the very being of things makes it possible for there to be many different kinds of beings. Of course, beings are not totally different in their being. They all exist, but their kinds of existence differ. God exists necessarily; all other things exist contingently. God *is* Existence; all other things *have* existence. God and creatures differ in their *kind* of being (essence) but they are alike in their *be*-ing. God exists and man exists; herein is the similarity in *fact.* The difference is in the *mode* of existence each possesses. God exists independently and man exists dependently, but both exist. This similarity and difference comprises the analogy of being and the only alternative to a monism of being.

Since being is used analogously between God and creatures, being can be predicated of God and creatures only in an analogous way. Were it to be predicated any other way, it would not be truly descriptive of the different ways in which God and creatures have being. Since there is a similarity in being between God and

creation, being cannot be predicated either equivocally (differently) or univocally (identically) of them. And since the being of God is necessary and essential, anything that is predicated of Him must be predicated of His essence, i.e., He must have it essentially. It follows, then, that not only being but goodness, truth, power, and whatever may be said of God must be predicated in an analogous way. For God does not have these in the same way creatures do. In fact, God does not *have* them at all; God *is* the perfections that His creatures only *have* by causal participation. The Cause is most eminently the perfections which its created effects have only finitely.

In summary, analogy of being (and predication) is the only salvation from monism and from skepticism. It is the only alternative to monism, since if beings cannot differ, there can be only one being. It is the salvation from skepticism because, unless there is a similarity in being, there can be no knowledge of infinite Being derived from finite beings.

Univocal Concepts but Analogical Predication

There is one apparent contradiction that has not yet been resolved. Scotus demonstrated that analogous concepts would not save one from skepticism. Only univocal concepts can guarantee knowledge. But if Thomas rejects univocal predication, how then can he avoid skepticism? The answer and reconciliation between Scotism and Thomism lies in the distinction between a concept and a predication. Scotus was right that the concept that is applied to both God and man must be univocally *understood;* but Aquinas was correct in arguing that this concept must be analogically *affirmed* of God and creatures. That is, the *definition* of the attribute applicable to both God and creatures must be the same, but the *application* of it differs. For in one case (God's) it is applied without limits and in the case of man it is predicated with limitations. God, for instance, is good infinitely; man is good only finitely. Good may be defined in the same univocal way for both, however, as "that which is desired for its own sake." But God is to be desired for His own sake absolutely, whereas creatures are to be desired for their own sake only relatively. Likewise, being may be defined univocally as "that which is," but this univocal concept is predicated of God and creatures in an analogous way.

God is "that which is" in a pure and simple way; a creature is "that which is" only by participation. Or, more properly, God *is* Existence and creatures *have* existence.

This distinction has not always been fully appreciated by Thomists, but recent works on analogy by Thomists have come to recognize its validity. Armand Maurer states the distinction very clearly: "It is not generally realized that St. Thomas' doctrine of analogy is above all a doctrine of the *judgment* of analogy, and not of the analogy of concept. . . . "[22] For generic concepts are univocal when *abstracted* but analogical when *asserted* of different things, as man and dog are equally animal but are not equal animals. That is, "animal" is defined the same way (say, as "a sentient being"), but animality is predicated differently of Fido and of Socrates. Socrates possesses animality in a higher sense than Fido does. Likewise, both the flower and God are said to be beautiful, but God is beautiful in an infinitely higher sense than flowers are. For if beauty means "that which, being seen, pleases," then the pleasure of the beatific vision of God is infinitely greater than the pleasure of viewing a flower. In brief, Scotus was correct in insisting that our concepts must be univocally *understood* and defined. But Aquinas was right in insisting that any concept drawn from the finite world must be *predicated* of God in an analogous way.

Finite Concepts Do Not Necessitate Finite Predications

Aquinas recognized that all concepts are finite; they are limited by the very finite circumstances in which they arise.[23] Men never derive infinite concepts from sensory experience. "Since God infinitely exceeds the power of our intellect, any form we conceive cannot completely represent the divine essence, but merely has in some small measure an imitation of it. . . . "[24] This is why Aquinas said God "is one in reality and many things logically."[25] For the simple essence of God is known not simply by any *concept* of it but only by way of many *predications* about it. There is no concept taken from creation that is adequate to *express* the divine essence, yet many things can be *affirmed* of the essence of God. We cannot know the substance of God, but we can predicate many things about God substantively.[26]

But how can univocally understood finite concepts be predicated analogously of God without losing their meaning? Does not a limited concept lose all of its meaning when it is applied without limits to an infinite Being? Aquinas answered this question by making a distinction between the (unlimited) *thing signified* and the limited *mode of signification*. The mode in which concepts are conceived is always finite for human beings, but what these concepts signify is not necessarily finite. In fact, "since every perfection of creatures is to be found in God, albeit in another and more eminent way, whatever terms denote perfections absolutely and without any defect whatever, are predicated of God and other things; for instance, goodness, wisdom, and so forth." On the other hand, "any term that denotes such like perfections together with a mode proper to creatures, cannot be said of God except by similitude and metaphor. . . . "[27] For example, some terms by their very denotation cannot be applied to an unlimited being, such as "rock" or "arm." For an "infinite rock" is contradictory, as is an "infinite arm." Other terms, however, do not necessarily denote what is limited, even though they are conceived in finite concepts. For instance, there is nothing essentially limited about being ("that which is") or goodness ("that which is desired for its own sake") or beauty ("that which, being seen, pleases"), etc. Hence, these terms may be predicated of God metaphysically (i.e., actually) and not merely metaphorically (i.e., symbolically). These terms do not lose their content, because they retain the same univocal definition; neither do these terms carry with them the necessary implications of finitude, because they are not applied to God univocally (i.e., in the *same* way they are applied to creatures). They are predicated analogically, meaning not identically nor in a totally different way. How is it known that God must be (in an infinitely perfect way) what these terms denote? Because God is the cause of these perfections and causes communicate according to their own perfections in a mode appropriate to the effects they cause. An infinitely perfect God communicated perfections to His creatures in a finitely perfect manner. Hence, even though there is an infinite difference in perfection between God and creatures, there is nevertheless not a total lack of similarity. The created sequents are similar to their creative Source.

The Causal Basis for Analogy Between God and Creatures

Aquinas rested the case for a similarity between God and creatures in the causal relation. Each of the first four ways of proving God's existence is clearly based on causality and it is implied in the fifth way. Even the very Platonic appearance of the fourth way from grades of perfection imports causality to complete the argument.[28] And once it is shown by causality *that* God is, then Aquinas can unpack *what* God is from the analogy implied in this causal relation. Just how often Aquinas makes explicit reference to causality as the basis for analogy will become apparent in the following quotations. The important question here is what kind of causality is the basis for the similarity between God and creatures. The most helpful work on Thomas' doctrine at this point is the classic by Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*. The analysis here follows that of Mondin.[29]

Analogy is based in intrinsic causality. Unlike Maimonides and the Neoplatonists, Aquinas held to an intrinsic causal relationship between God and creation. An extrinsic causal relation is such that only one thing possesses the characteristic properly and the other thing improperly by virtue of a causal relation to it. To illustrate, food is called "healthy" only because it causes health in a body, but, properly speaking, only organisms are healthy and not food. And God was *called* good only because He caused it, not because He *was* good. No so with the causal relation between God and the world; it is an intrinsic relation where both God and creatures possess the perfections properly, only each according to its own mode of being. God must be good because He causes goodness; He must be Existence because He causes things to exist, and so on. There is an intrinsic causal connection and, therefore, analogy between the Cause and its effects.[30]

Analogy is based on efficient causality. God is the producing cause of all that exists, not merely the purposing (final) Cause of Neoplatonic philosophy. For Aquinas, God brought the world into being from nothing. The world did not come about by any imitation of the divine being but by a creation flowing from it. The theistic God is the cause of the world's being, not merely of its form. God created the world; He did not simply make it out of

stuff which was already there. In brief, creation is *ex nihilo* not *ex hula*. God is the efficient cause of the very *be*-ing of the world. For, wrote Aquinas, "everything that, in any way whatever *is*, must needs be from that to which nothing else is the cause of being. . . . Therefore, from Him is everything that in any way whatever *is*."[31]

Elsewhere he wrote, "It belongs to a thing to have an efficient cause according as it has being." And "the reason why an efficient cause is required is not merely because the effect can not-be, but because the effect would not be if the cause were not."[32]

Analogy is based on essential causality. It is clear from the foregoing that God is the essential (*per se*) Cause of creation and not merely an accidental (*per accidens*) cause of it. That is, God causes the very being of the world and not merely its becoming. Further, essential causes generate their own kind. For instance, musicians give birth to nonmusicians (*per accidens*), but men generate only men (*per se*). Hence, when beings are created, it is by virtue of an essential causal relationship. Only Being gives rise to being. Thomas wrote, "Some likeness must be found between them [i.e., between effects and their cause], since it belongs to the nature of action that an agent produces its like, since each thing acts according as it is in act. The form of the effect, therefore, is certainly found in some measure in a transcending cause, but according to another mode and in another way."[33] Only that which exists can communicate existence to another. And since all caused existence is communicated to it by its cause, there must be some essential similarity in existence between this existing effect and its cause.

Analogy is not based on material causality. God, as efficient Cause, is the cause of the existence and all of the perfections of everything which exists, but it does not follow from this that everything resulting from His causality resembles Him. The material upon which efficient causality operates causes some characteristics that do not flow from the nature of the cause itself. For example, when the sun causes heat in clay this is efficient causality, for the sun is communicating heat of itself to another. But when in the process of doing so the sun also hardens the clay this is by way of material causality in the clay. That is, the hardness does not flow from the nature of the sun (for the same sun softens other things,

such as wax) but from the condition of the clay upon which the sun is exercising its efficient causality. Also, boiling water causes the egg to be hot by efficient causality, but it causes the egg to get hard only because of the material condition of the egg (i.e., material causality). Likewise, God is the cause of the existence of matter, but He is not like the material; He is the cause of all perfections but not of the imperfection resulting from the limiting conditions of a material world. An effect resembles its efficient cause only insofar as the effect flows from the nature of the cause but not insofar as that causality is conditioned by the finite world on which it operates.

Analogy is based on principal, not on instrumental causality. Effects resemble their primary causes but not necessarily their instrumental causes. To illustrate, the fountain pen is the instrumental cause of the exam and the student is the principal cause of it. Only the student's mind resembles the exam; the fountain pen does not. For the exam does reflect the thoughts of the student, even though it is not like the fountain pen. In like manner, the perfections of the world resemble their principal Cause (God) but not necessarily their instrumental causes.

In summation, the analogy between creature and Creator based on causality is secured only because God is the principal, intrinsic, essential, efficient cause of the being and perfections of the world. In any other kind of causal relationship an analogical similarity would not necessarily follow. But in an analogy of being similarity must follow, for Being communicates only being, and perfections or kinds of being do not arise from an imperfect being. Existence produces only after its kind, viz., other existences.

Now that analogy has been more completely expounded, the criticisms offered earlier by Ferré against intrinsic analogous Godtalk must be reviewed.[34] The objections and answers are as follows:

(1) *Why select some but not all qualities drawn from the world and apply only these to God?* Because only some things flow from God's efficient, essential, principal, and intrinsic causality. Only these are the perfections found in finite creation which do not necessarily denote what is finite. Hence, since only these concepts do not necessitate a limited application of their meaning, they alone may be appropriately applied to an unlimited Being.

(2) *Words divorced from their finite mode or conditions are vacuous or devoid of meaning.* Not so. The univocal *concept* of the words remains the same; only the way in which they are *predicated* changes. And even in the predication there is a similarity based on the efficient causal relation to God. The meaning of words like goodness, being, and beauty are not *emptied* when applied to God; they are merely *extended* without limits. That is, the perfection indicated by an analogous predication is not negated; rather, it is released from any limiting mode of signification and applied essentially to God. Since the perfection denoted by some terms does not necessarily imply any limitations, there is no reason why it cannot be predicated of an unlimited Being. Simply because all terms are limited in *derivation* does not mean that they must be limited in *application*.

(3) *Analogy rests on the assumption that causality provides a similarity.* This assumption is justifiable in terms of intrinsic, essential, principal, efficient causality but not in terms of just any kind of causality. Mondin, whose work was not mentioned in Ferré's criticism of analogy, successfully defends analogy against this charge. Being communicates only being. The Cause of existence cannot produce perfections which it does not "possess." If God causes goodness, then He must be good. If He causes existence, then He must exist. Otherwise the absurd consequence ensues that God gives what He does not have to give.

(4) *Any analogous predication of God as a "first Cause" involves an infinite regress of meaning to identify the univocal element.* This objection holds true for nonunivocal *concepts,* but it is not true of univocal concepts that have analogical *predications.* It is true that one must have a univocal understanding of *what* is being predicated of the first Cause, but it does not follow from this that *how* it is predicated of different kinds of beings must be identical (i.e., univocal). Indeed, if it is known that one Being is infinite and another being is finite, then *how* a quality is predicated must differ from *what* is being predicated. For to predicate a perfection in the same way of an infinite Being as it is predicated of a finite being (viz., finitely) is really to predicate it equivocally, since an infinite Being does not have qualities in a finite way. The only way to avoid equivocation when predicating the same

perfection of both finite beings and infinite Being is to predicate it differently (i.e., analogously) according to the mode of being that each is.

(5) *Even assuming the challengeable metaphysical assumption that there is a similarity among beings, that ontology is not univocally expressible.* First of all, this is not a mere assumption for a theist; it is the only salvation from monism. If there are many beings, there must be an analogical similarity among beings. Were this not so, there could be only one being in the universe. For if being means entirely the same thing wherever it is found (univocity), there can be only one being. And if being means something entirely different (equivocity), then once one being is identified everything else must be totally different which is nonbeing. Only if beings are similar, but neither totally identical nor totally different, can there be more than one being in the universe. God is and I am (and you are). And we are all different beings. Hence, there must be an analogy of being that permits all of us to exist (the similarity) and yet allows each to exist differently; each of us has *being* (existence) but each is a different *kind* of being (essence). And in God existence and essence are identical. Hence, creatures, like God, exist, but creatures exist only in a manner analogous to God. For God exists essentially and all else exists dependently.

Secondly, being is univocally conceived but it is analogically predicated of God and finite beings. The concept is understood to mean the same thing, viz., being is "that which is or exists." God exists and man exists; this they have in *common.* But God exists infinitely and independently, whereas man exists only finitely and dependently; this they have in *difference.* In short, *that* they both exist is univocally conceived; *how* they each exist is analogically predicated. For God exists necessarily and creatures exist only contingently; there is a distinct difference in the *mode* of existence, even though the *fact* of their existence is the same (i.e., they both exist).

The objections to analogous God-talk based on existential causality appear insufficient. Analogy seems to be the only adequate answer to the problem of religious language.

Summary and Conclusion

All negative God-talk implies some positive knowledge of God. But positive affirmations of God are possible only if there are some univocally understood concepts that can be applied to both creatures and Creator (as Scotus argued). On the other hand, since God is infinitely perfect and creatures are only finitely perfect, no perfection found in the finite world can be applied univocally to both God and creatures (as Aquinas argued). But to apply them equivocally would leave us in skepticism. Hence, whatever perfections found in creation and can be applied to God without limits are predicated analogically. The perfection is *understood* univocally (in the same manner), but it is *predicated* (only in a similar manner), because to affirm it univocally in a finite way of an infinite Being would not truly be descriptive of the way He is. And to affirm it equivocally in an infinite way would not be descriptive of Him at all. Hence, the only way a univocal concept drawn from the finite world can be predicated of God is analogically.

Notes Chapter Twelve

1. Scotus, Philosophical Writings (from Ghent's *Summa* XXIV, 6), pp. 20-21, 180-181.

2. Ibid., pp. 18, 22-23.

3. Ibid., p. 23.

4. Ibid., pp. 23-25.

5. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

6. Ibid., p. 26.

7. Ibid., pp. 27-28.

8. Ibid., p. 23.

9. This same argument for the necessity of a univocal concept has been repeated by many others. See W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 89ff. Stuart Hackett, *The Resurrection of Theism*, pp. 127-130.

10. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, VII, 7, body.

11. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 32.

12. What Aquinas would disagree with in the argument in the "On the Contrary" is its conclusion, viz., "Therefore, whatever is said of God and of creatures is predicated equivocally." He clearly defends analogical predication in the body of the article, which *is* his view.

13. Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, VII, 7, body.

14. See chapter 11 (cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 3, 14-15).

15. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 33.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 13, 5.

17. Ibid., I, 13, 10.

18. Ibid., I, 13, 5.

19. See chapter 11.

20. For an excellent article on the pluralistic alternatives to monism see Leonard J. Eslick, "The Real Distinction: Reply to Professor Reese," *The Modern Schoolman*, XXXVIII, no. 2 (January, 1961), 149-161.

21. See Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*.

22. Armand Maurer, "St. Thomas and the Analogy of Genus," *New Scholasticism*, Vol. XXIX, (April, 1955), p. 143.

23. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 84, 1-8.

24. Thomas Aquinas, *On Truth*, II, 1, body.

25. Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, VII, 6, body.

26. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 12, 4; I, 13, 2.

27. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 29.

28. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 2, 3.

29. Published by Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands, 1961.

30. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 13, 5; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 29-30.

31. Ibid., II, 15, 2.

32. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 44, 1 ad 2 and 3.

33. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 29, 2.

34. These criticisms were offered by Frederick Ferré. He directed only four of the six against intrinsic analogy but a fifth one may be applied, as well. See chapter 10.

13

Model Religious Language

Much of contemporary religious language is concerned with the adequacy of empirically grounded language models that are appropriate to religious discourse. The background of this interest is traceable to David Hume and the later Vienna Circle of philosophers in the early 1900's, centered around Ludwig Wittgenstein. The primary interest in contemporary philosophy of religious language is with the possibility of meaningful religious discourse.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE PROBLEM

The contemporary problem of religious language springs out of British empiricism from David Hume. Early logical positivists, such as A. J. Ayer, popularized the cause that culminated in the semantical atheism of men like Paul Van Buren. Let us trace the development of the problem.

Hume's Two Kinds of Propositions

In the last lines of his famous *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Hume sounded the battle cry:

> If we take into our hands any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reason concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it contains nothing but sophistry and illusion.

That is, according to Hume, there are only two kinds of meaningful statements: (1) statements expressing relation of ideas, which are true by definition but are not informative about the real world, and (2) statements about matters of fact, which are informative

about the world but which are derived only from empirical experience. The first kind are certain, being true a priori (e.g., mathematical statements); the second are known to be true with varying degrees of probability from experience (a posteriori) and are subject to change by future experience. Kant later called Hume's first kind of statement analytic (i.e., explicative), because the predicate adds nothing to the concept of the subject; the latter he called synthetic (i.e., ampliative), because the predicate does add something not found in a mere analysis of the subject. Now, for Hume there were only these two kinds of meaningful statements; everything else was to be consigned to the flames as meaningless. "When we entertain any suspicion," he said, "that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but inquire, *from what [sense] impression is that supposed idea derived?* And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion." Anything, therefore, that is not purely definitional or tautological must be derived from sensory impressions, or else it is meaningless. Granted this twofold categorization of meaningful statements, one could prognosticate the future of theology without too much difficulty. It, too, is destined for "the flames."[1]

Wittgenstein's Linguistic Silence

The father of language analysis, Ludwig Wittgenstein, was not as radical as Hume, although he operated in the same empirical ballpark. Wittgenstein ended his famous *Tractatus* with these words: "What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence." Silence, it is true, seems less severe than Hume's flames but the implications for religious language are grave nonetheless. What Otto called the experience of the Numinous and Schleiermacher a feeling of absolute dependence Wittgenstein referred to as "the feeling of the world as a limited whole . . . the mystical feeling." Wittgenstein was not attempting to eliminate the religious *experience;* his concern was with whether or not it could be *expressed* in words. He wrote, "There are indeed, things that cannot be put into words. . . . They are what is mystical." Again he wrote, "It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists," for *"how* things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world."[2]

In essence, Wittgenstein is suggesting that if God is truly inexpressible we are not able to express Him. And what cannot be put into words we must be speechless about. If true, this would not eliminate religious experience but it would eliminate religious language.

A. J. Ayer: Religious Language and Verification

One of the more vocal members of the early Vienna Circle was the Englishman, A. J. Ayer, who in his popular *Language, Truth and Logic* attempted to eliminate all metaphysics and theology.[3] Carrying through the implications of Hume's two kinds of meaningful statements, Ayer laid down a verificational principle for meaning: no statement can be meaningful unless it is either (1) purely definitional (tautological) or, (2) empirically verifiable. The former are certain but the latter can never be certain.[4] A statement can be empirically verifiable for a person, "if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express — that is, if he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false."[5] Anything neither purely definitional nor verifiable by sense experience is literally nonsensical.

Ayer felt that an application of the verification principle to religious language would eliminate any meaningful God-talk. The only propositions that are informative are empirical, and empirical statements do not tell us anything about God who is transempirical.

The first chapter of Ayer's book is entitled "The Elimination of Metaphysics." Since no metaphysical statement is empirically verifiable, "all metaphysical assertions are nonsensical." And as for "the possibility of religious knowledge," wrote Ayer, "we shall see that this possibility has already been ruled out by our treatment of metaphysics."[6]

The problem with Ayer's strict view of meaning became apparent: his principle of verifiability was neither purely tautological nor empirically verifiable. It, too, was meaningless on his own grounds. In later revisions Ayer expanded the sphere of meaningful statements. "I do not wish to deny," he wrote, "that in some of these senses [of meaning] a statement may properly be said to be meaningful even though it is neither analytic nor empirically verifiable." But even in this revised form he quickly added, "I con-

fess that it is unlikely that any metaphysician would yield to a claim of this kind." In other words, he still intended to rule out metaphysics and theology, even though he realized "that for an effective elimination of metaphysics it needs to be supported by detailed analyses of particular metaphysical arguments."[7] There is no way to eliminate the whole of metaphysics in advance, but there is still the hope that, piece by piece, every statement about God will be shown to be meaningless. For, according to Ayer, there is no apparent way that noncognitive reality can be put into cognitive language. Statements about God are literally "non-sense" statements.

The logical positivism of Ayer must be distinguished from atheism. He clearly denied atheism or agnosticism. "Our view that utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical . . . is actually incompatible with them. For if the assertion that there is a god is nonsensical, then the atheist's assertion that there is no god is equally nonsensical. . . ." As for the agnostic, "he does not deny that the question whether a transcendent god exists is a genuine question. . . . But we have seen that the sentences in question do not express propositions at all. And this means that agnosticism also is ruled out."[8] What, then, is Ayer's position if it is neither theism, atheism, nor agnosticism? It might be called "a-*cog*-nosticism," that is it is noncognitivism. No cognitively meaningful statements can be made about any supposed transcendent reality. We are again consigned to the Wittgensteinian "silence" about God.

Paul Van Buren: Semantical Atheism

Contrary to Ayer's expectations, some theologians did accept his kind of verification. And predictably it led to a semantical atheism. Paul Van Buren, admitting his linkage to Hume, wrote, "The empiricist in us finds the heart of the difficulty not in what is said about God, but in the very talking about God at all." For "we do not know 'what' God is, and we cannot understand how the word 'God' is being used." Hence, "simple literal theism is wrong and qualified literal theism is meaningless." In brief, "today, we cannot even understand the Nietzschian cry that 'God is dead!' for if it were so, how could we know? No, the problem now is that the *word* 'God' is dead." The word "God" and all of its transcendent equivalents have no meaning. There appears to be no way em-

pirically to ground language that attempts to express that which is transempirical. We are left, not with no God, but with a God that we cannot talk about, i.e., with semantical atheism. [9]

It is out of this context that contemporary religious philosophers of language have struggled to develop meaningful God-talk. Two representative examples are Ian Ramsey and Frederich Ferré. Let us begin with Ramsey.

IAN RAMSEY: QUALIFIED DISCLOSURE MODELS

Ramsey built his religious language out of an empirical setting and tests it by its empirical adequacy. He begins with what he calls disclosure situations and proceeds to elaborate a religious language by way of qualified models.

Disclosure-Commitment Situations

There are two aspects to the kind of experiences which may be called religious: an empirical situation that evokes discernment and also elicits a total commitment to what is discerned. The unusual empirical situations that evoke discernment Ramsey takes as the experiential anchorage for the meaning of religious language.

Discernment situations. Sometimes just ordinary empirical situations "come alive." In routine, everyday occurrences, suddenly the "ice breaks" and the "light dawns." For example, when a judge recognizes the accused as his long-lost love, then "eye meets eye." Or, when the twelve lines on a paper suddenly take on the "depth" of a cube. Or, when a formal dinner party instantly takes on a "new dimension" when someone splits his jacket. In each of these ordinary empirical settings there is a disclosure; something more is revealed than the purely empirical. The situations take on a depth of dimension beyond the sensory; they are disclosure situations that provide a discernment that goes "beyond" the mere empirical facts of the situation. [10]

According to Ramsey, metaphors and verbally odd words have the same disclosure power. He even goes so far as to say that "what is not verbally odd is void of disclosure power." [11] Nicknames evoke personal response better than given names, e.g., "sweetheart." Ramsey also finds tautologies such as "I am I," "duty for duty's sake," or "love for love's sake" to be revelatory of more than they say linguistically. In fact, he takes "I-language"

to be a key to God-talk in two ways: both are verbally odd; both are straightforward but strained, and both gain their meaning in use. [12] But their literary and logical oddity do not make them nonsensical. On the contrary, odd words and metaphors by their very similarity-with-a-difference can generate significant insight the same way that two slightly different pictures can create a depth perspective in a 3-D viewer. [13]

What Ramsey wishes to illustrate by both his empirical and his verbal examples is that there is disclosure value in both ordinary empirical and ordinary verbal expressions. The oddity available in both these ordinary areas has disclosure value. There is more in empirical language and situations than "meets the eye." Ordinary language, with its verbal oddities, and ordinary empirical experience, with its "ice-breaking" ability, amply demonstrate that both experience and language are capable of conveying what goes beyond the immediate data given in either.

Commitment situations. Of course, not every disclosure situation provides a religious disclosure. Beholding one's lost lover does not thereby bring God into focus. And ripping one's jacket does not reveal Divinity, and so on. A religious disclosure has another dimension; it is a disclosure that evokes a commitment, a total commitment.

First of all, Ramsey clarifies what is meant by a total commitment. It is like the patriot's "my country, right or wrong" or the moralist's "duty for duty's sake." Further, religious commitment can be understood by distinction from two other kinds of commitments. In a hobby, one is *totally* committed to only *part* of the universe (say, to coins or stamps). It is total because it is all-absorbing but it is partial because there are other areas of life besides these. Conversely, in doing mathematics one is *partly* committed to the *whole* universe. That is, one is loosely committed to a given set of axioms (say, Euclid's), knowing that others are possible, but he is committed to applying them everywhere. That is, the Pythagorean theorum will be just as true in Moscow and Peking as in New York. But in a religious commitment, one is *totally* committed to the *whole* universe. To borrow terms reminiscent of Plotinus and Schleiermacher, it is a commitment of one's all to the All. The religious commitment is total because of the extent of its loyalty and it is universal, since "it is a commit-

ment suited to the whole job of living — not one just suited to building a house, studying, [etc.]. . . ."[14]

Combining these two dimensions of discernment and commitment, Ramsey defines a religious experience as one in which one responds to a discernment situation by making a total commitment. The empirical situation provides the meaningful grounding for the "more" or "beyond" which it reveals and other total commitment situations (as to duty, one's country, etc.) offer meaning for one's response to the disclosure. Together, the discernment-commitment situations express what is meant by a religious experience.

Religious Language: Qualified Models

Since the religious experience itself is "odd" or unusual, it is only natural that no straightforward empirical language will be adequate to express it. It is necessary, then, in developing an adequate religious language to qualify models and metaphors from human experience in order that their disclosure power can be evocative of what goes beyond the ordinary empirical situations, viz., to the transcendent.

The meaning and use of models. Ian Ramsey seeks to elaborate a meaningful language about transcendence by what he calls "disclosure models." Contrary to "picturing models" or "scale models," a "disclosure model" does not attempt to describe anything, rather it becomes currency for a moment of insight. "The great value of a model," said Ramsey, "is that it enables us to be articulate when before we were tongue-tied." Disclosure models are the means by which the universe reveals itself to man, and they are to be judged primarily on their ability to *point* to mystery, not on their ability to *picture* it. Indeed, it is part of the purpose of a religious model to leave a mystery intact. "The intention is to produce, from a single model, and by means of some qualifier, an endless series of variants, . . . in this way witnessing to the fact that the heart of theology is permanent mystery."[15]

Ramsey gave examples of words that have evocative power, such as indefinite pronouns or nicknames. A nickname is a "word which has intrinsically the fewest possible empirical connections, but is very much filled out 'in use.'" That is, language about God is not declarative; it is evocative. Ramsey holds that by the use of non-descriptive, evocative language one can avoid being literalistic or

purely anthropomorphic about God, for he has learned that no one model has a single, all-exclusive track to mystery any more than one metaphor can do full justice to a sunset or to human love and affection. That is to say, disclosure models "are not descriptive miniatures, they are not picture enlargements; in each case they point to mystery, to the need for us to live as best we can with theological and scientific uncertainties."[16]

If Ramsey's models are not descriptive of God, at least they do answer Wittgenstein's challenge to keep silent unless one can speak meaningfully.[17] That is to say, even *if* individual disclosure models do not speak descriptively about God, nevertheless they do permit one to speak.[18] Indeed, even though each of Ramsey's models is not cognitively descriptive nor empirically verifiable (as are scientific models), yet by virtue of the fact that they are indefinitely qualifiable, not only can one speak about God but he can speak endlessly. And in so speaking, Ramsey contends, one's language does not suffer "death by a thousand qualifications" but rather gives "life by a thousand enrichments."[19]

The qualification of models. Further, even though individual disclosure models are not ontologically descriptive, nevertheless they do help to build "family resemblances." But, Ramsey warned, "let us always be cautious of talking about God in straightforward language. Let us never talk as if we had privileged access to the diaries of God's private life. . . ." When we speak of God as "supreme love," e.g., "we are not making an assertion in descriptive psychology. . . ." Rather, we are using a *qualified* model ("love" is qualified by "supreme") whose logical structure can be understood only in terms of the disclosure-commitment situation in which it arose.[20]

What he calls "qualifiers" are "words which multiply models without end and with subtle changes." They create what Wittgenstein called "family resemblances" or a family of models. By means of qualification of one model or metaphor, many of them can be related in an overall meeting place between contexts. And it is at this juncture that the mystery resides.[21] That is, by mapping out the similarities engendered by the meeting of the many metaphors, one may gain increased insight into the mystery. As Max Black put it, "A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using lan-

guage directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other. . . ." [22] It is in this way that metaphors help to visualize the similarity in various situations and thus to begin to form a master map of family resemblances. "Metaphors then are not just link devices between different contexts. They are necessarily grounded in inspiration. Generalizing, we may say that metaphorical expressions occur when two situations strike us in such a way as to reveal what includes them but is no mere combination of them both." [23]

Ramsey develops three groups of qualified models. (1) First, the negative attributes of God, which do not describe everyday experience but hold together all aspects of everyday experience in a unity. "God is immutable" is an example. Here the model is drawn from changing experience and is qualified by the "im" or "not," which points to a transcendent dimension beyond the experience. (2) A second group of models is one-word positive attributes of God, such as "perfection" and "simplicity." Here one begins by assessing various imperfections in everyday experience in a decreasing order until the "light dawns" and there is a disclosure of what "perfection" means. (3) The third class of qualified models is composed of two-word positive attributes of God, such as "first Cause" or "infinitely good." The nouns are the models drawn from experience and the adjectives are the qualifiers pointing to a dimension beyond experience. [24] Here the two purposes of qualified models can be seen: to point to a dimension beyond the empirical and to indicate the logical limits to the model itself by virtue of its qualification.

It is important at this point to indicate the function of the term "God." According to Ramsey, "God" is an integrative term, bringing together the separate discernment-commitment disclosures into a unifold whole. It is a master map that combines all of the perspectives gained from the individual models. "God" is "the integrator word which provides the most simple, far-reaching and coherent metaphysical map." The term "God" functions like the term "I" in ordinary language — the term that brings together the whole language-logic of self-awareness. [25] The term "God" is the linguistic integrator of religious awareness (arising out of discernment-commitment situations) the way the term "I" linguistically summarizes one's self-awareness.

The adequacy of models: empirical fit. The question, according to Ramsey, is not whether one can speak in literal descriptions about the divine nature; the real question is: How can one be reliably articulate? Models help us to articulate theology reliably when two conditions hold: (1) "In all cases the models must chime in with the phenomena; they must arise in a moment of insight or disclosure," and (2) "A model in theology does not stand or fall with . . . the possibility of verifiable deductions. It is rather judged by its stability over the widest possible range of phenomena, by its ability to incorporate the most diverse phenomena not inconsistently." This is what Ramsey calls the method of "empirical fit," which has no scientific deductions emerging from it to confirm or falsify the stated theories. "The theological model," he said, "works more like the fitting of a boot or a shoe than the 'yes' or 'no' of a roll call." In brief, religious language is empirically anchored (in disclosure situations) and pragmatically tested by the way it enables one to piece together the empirical data. That is, there must be something in man's experience of the universe that matches to a degree the model under consideration. "There must be something about the universe and man's experience in it which, for example, matches the behavior of a loving father (portrayed, for instance, in Luke's parable of the two sons)." [26] Further, whereas there is no strict verification, as in science, there is confirmation based on the way the model "fits" the range of phenomena it consistently incorporates. The wider the range of experience that is consistently incorporated, i.e., the better the "fit," the more adequate is the master model. Each additional disclosure incorporated makes the fit more nearly perfect, in a manner similar to the way a polygon with ever-increasing sides approaches closer to a circle. [27] So the many qualified models that constitute one's master model, "God," also constitute the empirical basis for meaning for all talk about this "God." And the adequacy of the macro-model ("God") is judged by its empirical "fit" over the entire range of human experience.

Evaluation of Ramsey's View

Ramsey disclaimed that individual models were descriptive of God. However, when the models are appropriately qualified and combined into a master map (which is integrated by the word

"God") and confirmed by their empirical fit, it would seem that Ramsey has the equivalent of a description of God. It is not a literal description, to be sure. Every model must be qualified; no metaphor or term from finite experience can be applied to God without being qualified. But when the overall map is made which incorporated all of the insights gained from the various disclosure situations (a map that fits with increasing adequacy the total range of human experience the way a polygon with an increasing number of sides approaches a circle), then it would seem that we have an adequate description of God. Whether evocative or descriptive or both, the master model is discourse about God. It does answer the problem of an empirically grounded God-talk.

The remaining question is this: Which of the categories of religious language — univocal, equivocal or analogical — do Ramsey's qualified models fall into? At least one serious student of Ramsey, Jerry Gill, contends that Ramsey's view falls into the broad tradition of Thomistic analogy. Gill speaks of "the similarity between Ramsey's view and that of Thomas Aquinas. Little, if any, distortion results from roughly classifying Ramsey's position within the tradition which maintains the analogical nature of talk about God." [28] Ramsey himself wrote, "To talk of God as 'heavenly father' or 'divine creator' is to speak analogically. . . . That is, one is endeavoring to suggest a qualified similarity between a concrete aspect of past and present experience, and future experiences." [29] If this interpretation is correct, the model must serve as the univocal concept and the qualifier as the *via negativa* by which the model is applied without limits to an infinite Being. The many models correspond to the many predications of one absolutely simple Being. And the master model expressed by the term "God" is a contemporary attempt to indicate that there is only one God, about whom, nevertheless, it is necessary to say many things. If this is in fact what Ramsey is doing, then his whole project will fall into equivocation, unless he, along with Thomas, establishes a metaphysical causal link or similarity between God and the world. Without this, there is no basis in reality for the similarity between God-talk and the God about whom one is talking. At best, all of his God-talk will be nothing more than authorized parables that are not really descriptive of God. [30] Or, at worst, it will be a linguistically possible and empirically adequate way of engaging in

religiously evocative language that is not cognitively descriptive of the way God really is. [31] In short, without an analogy built squarely on the ontological similarity of Creator and creature, God-talk is purely equivocal. Only metaphysical analogy can save qualified models from equivocation.

Frederick Ferré: Metaphysical Models

Ferré clearly intends that his religious model language have cognitive truth value. He confessedly builds a metaphysical synthesis based on the religious model, which is subject to truth tests.

The nature and function of models. Ferré defines a model as that "which provides epistemological vividness or immediacy to a theory by offering as an interpretation of the abstract or unfamiliar theory-structure something that both fits the logical form of the theory and is well-known. . . . " [32] Models have two traits in common with metaphors: their language is literally false and yet they are not without "point." Religious models are no exception. [33] Like other models, religious models benefit theories by giving them "ideational definiteness" that is not directly observable, i.e., by providing "conceptual unity" that suggests otherwise unseen areas that could be incorporated into the proposed theory, and by suggesting fruitful lines of future inquiry. [34]

Ferré classes models along three lines: type, scope, and status. By "type" he means the degree of concreteness that the model has, i.e., its ability to be "built" or "pictured." "Scope" shows the degree of inclusiveness the model has, i.e., how much reality it purports to represent. And "status" reveals how much importance is attached to each model, such as its dispensability or indispensability. A model of sufficient scope can link otherwise divergent areas of experience into a coherent world view. [35]

There are at least three functions for models in Ferré's thinking. First, models suggest a point-by-point resemblance. Next, they serve a heuristic value of pointing the investigator toward new discoveries. Finally, models fulfill the holistic desire in man to have an "explanatory model" that approximates in a limited way the general coherence he would like to find in the world as he experiences it. [36]

Models in religious language. Religious models have some differences from scientific models, as well as the above-mentioned

similarities. (1) One significant difference is that a scientific model can largely achieve separation between reality and the observer, whereas in theological model theory, the observer's views of himself and of the world are both involved in the ultimate models themselves. (2) A second important difference is that scientific models are judged only as more or less helpful but not as true or false. In theology, truth questions are relevant to models and the models are incomprehensible apart from the theories they illuminate.[37] (3) Further, theological models draw upon a different set of facts than do scientific models. In theism the facts are composed of spiritual characteristics like personality — will, purpose, wisdom, love, etc. And for Christianity in particular the facts center in the "creative, self-giving, personal love of Jesus Christ. . . ."[38] (4) Finally, there is a difference in scope: in science, theories change only rarely and reluctantly, while models change more rapidly. But in theology, theories (which tie models with other cognitive areas) change occasionally, while high-level models are quite resistant to change.[39]

Ferré finds his core of religious imagery in the Scriptures, the creeds and in the traditions of the believing community. When this imagery is used to represent the "ultimate character" of the universe, it serves as a "metaphysical model."[40] This spiritual imagery serves as a focusing model which in turn gives more concrete interpretation to the relatively more abstract conceptual scheme which attempts to put one's beliefs into propositional form. The key concept, of course, is "God."[41] The theistic model built of religious imagery serves to shape the attitudes and values of those in the believing community, but it also has truth value. This is not to say that religious language is to be taken literally. On the contrary, God-language is richly anthropomorphic; God is beyond all our inadequate pictures and concepts. Hence truth is ascribed *not* to the individual expressions which together form the dominant model for the biblical understanding of reality *but to the model itself.*[42] And the believing community justifies this ascription by building an all-inclusive conceptual synthesis around this theological model drawn from the imagery of Scripture. And all data from other areas of knowledge, as sense perceptions, history, science, are incorporated into this total synthesis provided by this organizing theistic model.

Testing religious models. Religious models serve many noncognitive functions,[43] but Ferré is strongly against reducing religious language to purely noncognitive functions. What he calls noncognitive autonomy is: (1) unnecessary, since attitudes and actions are just as subject to critical demands as are matters of fact; (2) irresponsible, for commitments have consequences that demand critical examination; (3) dangerous, because one's own life policies seriously affect the lives of others. "To throw critical reflection to the winds in just the most important aspects of life would be the ultimate example of penny-wisdom and pound-foolishness. . . . I cannot conceive a more perfect definition of the unexamined life."[44]

No world view (metaphysical model) should ever be adopted arbitrarily; one should always have reasons for adopting a given master model. Technically speaking, however, one cannot directly test a theistic model; the tests are applied directly only to the synthesis that results from applying the organizing theistic model to the whole range of human experiences. There are really three strata in one's total account of things. The first level is a preverbal metaphysical model of symbol (taken from the imagery of Scripture). Next comes the set of propositions that attempt to express this in a cognitive way. Finally, there is the whole range of functions, cognitive and noncognitive, verbal and nonverbal, that make up the religious language-game. Now the latter cannot be evaluated directly, and the first is precognitive. Thus, truth tests must be applied to the second level only. These propositions on the second level do two things: first, they explicate the primary model and, second, they give structure to the totality of the third level. So the truth tests are applied not to the metaphysical model (first level) but to the metaphysical synthesis (second level).[45]

Ferré offers five truth tests for the truth of the total synthesis built on religious models:[46] (1) *Consistency.* The synthesis must be free of contradiction both among and within the key statements involved. (2) *Coherence.* Consistency must also be external, extending in a unified way to all bodies of knowledge. (3) *Applicability.* It must be relatable to individual experience. (4) *Adequacy.* It must be applicable not just to some experiences but to all domains of feeling and perception. (5) *Effectiveness.* The synthesis must be a usable instrument for coping with the total environment

of human experience. More recently Ferré has summarized these under three headings: consistency, coherence, and adequacy.[47] In brief, a metaphysical synthesis is adequate only if it is able "to put all experience into a pattern that is *whole*, that is *pervasive*, and that is *adequate*."[48]

How would one know whether his religious language, which serves as an organizing model to the overall metaphysical synthesis, is adequate? The answer is, in short, by applying the above tests. This is not an afternoon's activity. In fact, as Ferré notes, "the true falsification of a metaphysical position is more like an erosion than an explosion — a gradual process in which the inadequate metaphysical view is not disproved but rather, is quietly abandoned."[49]

Just how does the theistic model fare on Ferré's tests? This question is not answered in detail by Ferré, but he does suggest the direction the answer might take.[50] (1) Christianity has been *effective* in the past, but there is doubt about its effectiveness in the present and in the future. (2) Few would dispute the *applicability* of love and reverence, but this is only a minimal test. (3) *Adequacy* is a complex test involving many levels which Christianity appears to meet fairly adequately. (4) No clear *contradictions* have been demonstrated in Christianity but never have the proposed solutions gained universal acceptance. (5) Christianity has a striking internal *coherence* but the external coherence with other bodies of knowledge is not as obvious. There are almost certainly some empirical statements in Scripture that are false (as the sun standing still for Joshua). Our conclusion, says Ferré, can only be tentative. But commitment is integral to any life worth living, so we must make our leap of faith based on what seems to be the most adequate metaphysical system arising out of one's religious models.[51]

Ferré is by no means irrevocably committed to the position that the Christian theistic model is the most adequate in terms of these truth tests. Other theistic models and even nontheistic models may be of equal or even greater weight than Christian theism.[52]

Evaluation of Ferré's Metaphysical Model

There is no question that Ferré has an interest in truth. He takes religious language as the metaphysical model by which one

can make propositional statements that are subject to truth tests. But are these statements descriptive of reality? Does God-talk tell it like it is? Ferré disavows any literal descriptions of God. The Bible, which provides the imagery for the theistic model, is anthropomorphic. Religious language, he tells us, is not to be taken literally of God. Hence, it seems clear that Ferré is not in the univocal camp. Our models, when applied to God, do not give us positive knowledge as they do when applied to finite things in this world.

There are only two alternatives left for Ferré: equivocity and analogy. We may assume that Ferré wishes to avoid equivocation in God-talk; otherwise, the whole stress on the cognitive and the test for truth would be redundant. Presumably he wishes not merely to speak truth linguistically but to speak truth about reality. If so, his metaphysical synthesis built on religious model language is to be taken as the most nearly adequate expression of truth he can come up with about reality. If this is not what Ferré has in mind, his propositional "truths" are not really true about anything; they are at best merely the most nearly complete and adequate way of conceptualizing one's experience of the we-know-not-what which is otherwise called reality. On the presumption, then, that truth statements are statements about something, i.e., about reality, Ferré's keen interest in truth would rule out the possibility that he intends religious language to be understood equivocally.

The only remaining alternative is that Ferré intends his metaphysical synthesis (built on religious model language) to be taken analogously. There are indications both in Ferré's own writings and in those he highly respects that it is indeed the case that Ferré's view is a kind of analogy. Ferré's thinking was highly influenced by that of Dorothy Emmet, as the following quote indicates: "Metaphysics starts from the articulations of relationships, which are judged to be constitutive of an experience or experiences in a significant way. . . . A conceptual expression of such a relationship is then extended *analogously* as a coordinating idea, in terms of which further ranges of experience may be interpreted."[53] However, Ferré severely criticized analogy based on intrinsic causality, as was discussed earlier.[54] But what does this leave Ferré? He also objected to analogy based on an extrinsic connection. He wrote, "A wholly extrinsic attribution of qualities to God says nothing at all about the intrinsic or proper attributes of God." In an extrinsic

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analogy, he continued, "we are left with no more idea of God's own characteristics that that he is responsible for the various characteristics of creation. . . ." [55] Now it would seem that Ferré has hedged himself in and must choose a way out. Is his implied kind of analogy really a kind of extrinsic analogy? [56] If so, then according to Ferré it really tells us nothing about God. But, on the other hand, God-talk is clearly not univocal for Ferré. Ferré must choose, then, between equivocation and the analogy of intrinsic attribution (which he rejected). [57] In view of the conclusion of the preceding chapter, one could only hope that Ferré would reexamine the intrinsic analogy built on the causal connection between Creator and creatures. There seems to be no other way to establish a meaningfully descriptive God-talk.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Contemporary religious language vacillates between equivocation and analogy. At times it seems to be a restatement of Thomistic analogy in the contemporary context of qualified models. [58] On other occasions it appears to be reducible to equivocal God-talk. At best, models can be used as univocally conceived expressions which must be appropriately qualified of their limiting connotations before they are attributed to an infinite God. But even here the problem remains as to how one could know that the characteristics expressed in his model were really descriptive (in an analogous way) of God. Unless an ontological causal connection and similarity between God and creation is established (such as we attempted in chapters 9 and 12), then the hope for a meaningfully descriptive God-talk is nil. All that remains is "discourse" and "disclosure" about a we-know-not-what, and this is only discourse and disclosure without description. Only an analogy based in the similarity of creature and Creator can support meaningfully descriptive religious language.

NOTES CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sect. XII, Part III.
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6:45; 6:522; 6:44; 6:432.
3. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, ch. 1.
4. Ayer later modified this view to include some empirically certain statements such as those that refer to the content of a single sensory experience. See Ibid., p. 10.

5. Ibid., p. 35. This principle, too, was later modified by Ayer. See ibid., p. 10.
6. Ibid., pp. 41, 114.
7. Ibid., p. 16.
8. Ibid., p. 115.
9. Paul Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, pp. 100, 83-84.
10. Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 20-30.
11. Ian Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, p. 69.
12. Michael Novak develops "I-language" in *Belief and Unbelief*, cf. pp. 74ff.
13. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 42-50.
14. Ibid., pp. 36-37, 40, 55. Ramsey is getting at the same thing Paul Tillich called an "ultimate commitment."
15. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, pp. 7, 19-20, 12-13, 71, 60-61, 65, 21.
16. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, pp. 162, 56. Ramsey said, "The intention is to produce, by a single model, and by means of some qualifier, an endless series of variants . . . in this way witnessing to the fact that the heart of theology is permanent mystery," *Models and Mystery*, p. 20.
17. "It is interesting to notice, first, that the possibility of articulation is still, as it always was, the basis of a model's usefulness. The great virtue of a model is that it enables us to be articulate when before we were tongue-tied. But it is evident that articulation now is much more tentative than it was before, that is when it was developed on the basis of a scale model. . . . In fact on the new view, the crucial question is: *How* can we be reliably articulate?" Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, pp. 12-13.
18. In a doctoral dissertation on Ian Ramsey, Jerry Gill concludes that "Ian Ramsey's interpretation adequately meets the challenge of Logical Empiricism concerning the cognitivity of Christian language," *Ian Ramsey's Interpretation of Christian Language*, 1966, p. v.
19. Ramsey wrote, "We must emphasize that models in science . . . enable us to generate verifiable deductions, and models in theology . . . make possible empirical fit," *Models and Mystery*, p. 19.
20. Ibid., p. 20, and *Religious Language*, pp. 104, 99.
21. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, pp. 60-61, 48, 51.
22. Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*, p. 54.
23. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, p. 53.
24. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, p. 56f.
25. Ian Ramsey, *Prospects for Metaphysics*, pp. 153-164, 174.
26. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, p. 16.
27. Ian Ramsey, "Talking about God: Models, Ancient and Modern" in *Myth and Symbol*, p. 91.
28. Jerry Gill, unpublished doctoral thesis: "Ian Ramsey's Interpretation of Christian Language," p. 42.
29. Jerry Gill, "The Meaning of Religious Language," *Christianity Today*, IX:8; January 15, 1965, p. 19.
30. See I. M. Crombie, "Theology and Falsification" in A. Flew (ed.,) *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, pp. 122-129.
31. Ramsey does speak elsewhere about establishing the reality of God in other ways, e.g., via a historical argument of miracles. See his "History and the Gospels: Some Philosophical Reflections."

32. Frederick Ferré, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology," p. 24.

33. Frederick Ferré, "Metaphors, Models and Religion," p. 332.

34. Frederick Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 373ff.

35. Ferré, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology," pp. 13ff.

36. See Ferré, "Metaphors, Models and Religion" for this analysis.

37. Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 381.

38. Ferré, *Language, Logic and God*, p. 164.

39. Ferré, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology," p. 36.

40. Frederick Ferré, "The Logic of Our Current Opportunity," *The Philosophy Forum*, VIII (June, 1970), pp. 61-87.

41. Frederick Ferré, "Science and the Death of God," p. 148.

42. Frederick Ferré, *Exploring the Logic of Faith*, p. 56.

43. Ferré lists at least nine noncognitive functions of religious models as "ceremonial," "self-committal," "liturgical," "reassuring," "judging," "challenging," "ethical," "existential," and "convictional" (*Exploring the Logic of Faith*, chapter 4). He also lists some quasi-cognitive functions of religious language as "bliks," "parables," "imagery," "heurestic," and "attentional" (*Language, Logic and God*, p. 129ff., and elsewhere). The noncognitive functions of religious language Ferré summarizes under "conative" and "emotive" (*Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 350ff.).

44. Ferré, "Science and the Death of God," pp. 150-151.

45. Ferré, *Exploring the Logic of Faith*, pp. 165-166.

46. Ibid., pp. 166ff.

47. Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, ch. 1.

48. Ferré, "Science and the Death of God," p. 147.

49. Ferré, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology," p. 36.

50. Ferré, *Exploring the Logic of Faith*, pp. 172ff.

51. Ibid., pp. 178-179. See also "Science and the Death of God," p. 153.

52. Ibid., pp. 153ff.

53. Dorothy Emmet, *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking*, p. v. (Emphasis added.)

54. See the end of chapter 12.

55. Frederick Ferré, "Analogy in Theology," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, pp. 95-96.

56. Battista Mondin calls Emmet's analogy (which Ferré seems to follow) an "analogy of representation," *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p. 76.

57. Since Ferré reflects no awareness of Mondin's classic work on analogy, *Principle of Analogy*, perhaps a better understanding of analogy based on intrinsic causality of being would help to move him in the right direction.

58. For a restatement of analogy in analytic terms by a Neo-Thomist see James F. Ross, "Analogy as a Rule of Meaning for Religious Language," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, I, 3 (September, 1961).

Four

God and Evil

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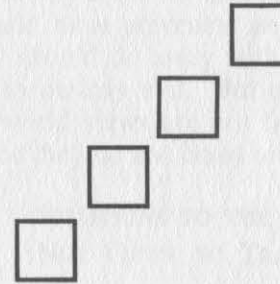
The Nature of
the Problem of Evil

Another major area of concern to any philosophy of religion is the problem of evil. Evil is a serious problem for any world view, but it is especially acute for theism. For the theistic God is all-knowing and could have prevented an evil world; He is all-loving and presumably should do away with evil; He is all-powerful and has the ability to destroy evil. But evil remains in the world. Why? The other world views are not faced with precisely this same dilemma, since they do not boast an all-loving and all-powerful God.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL
NOT OPEN TO TRADITIONAL THEISM

There are several solutions to the problem of evil not open to traditional theism that we have defended (in chapter 9). Each of these views is representative, in fact, of a nontheistic view.

Illusionism's Answer to Evil

The theist does not deny the reality of evil. He cannot say, "Nothing is really evil, it only appears to be so." Evil is taken as an undeniable fact of human experience. Taken broadly, evil is anything that frustrates human aspirations and expectations. Evil is pain, sickness, disease, hate, murder, and cruelty. Who can consistently deny the reality of these things?

The theist takes as inadequate the illusionist's contention that evil has no reality, for several reasons. (1) Illusionism does not account for the *origin* of the illusion. Whence has come this strong and all-pervading myth that evil does exist? (2) Further, it does not explain the *apparent reality* of the illusion. Why is it that "if

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I sit on a pin and it punctures my skin, I dislike what I fancy I feel"? (3) Also, denying the reality of evil does not eliminate the *presence* of evil. Even illusionists experience pain and death. They, too, are subject to harm and hate by others, and, like all nonillusionists, they finally die. In brief, there is little if any advantage gained by denying the reality of evil; the illusionist still experiences evil like the rest of us. (4) Illusionism is no more than a "beautiful theory" that is ruined by a brutal gang of facts. As Freud would say, "It would be nice if it were true that no evil existed, but the very fact that men wish it to be so makes this belief highly suspect." In short, illusionism is itself an illusion. There is no distinct advantage gained by denying the reality of evil, and it does stretch one's credulity to believe that something so apparently real, so totally pervasive and so persistently present in life is a complete lie. Accepting the illusionist's position demands that one admit that all of life as he experiences it is deceiving him. Now whereas this is logically possible, it is practically unhelpful and existentially distasteful, to say nothing of it being philosophically highly improbable. It is more likely that the illusionist is being deceived than that all men are being deceived by the presence of evil as a fact of life.

Sadism's Answer to Evil

Few men have troubled themselves with believing that God is a cosmic sadist who deliberately created the world and inflicted evil on it because He enjoyed observing things suffer. Besides the fact that this view is eliminated for a theist by his commitment to God as all-good, there are several nontheistic reasons for rejecting sadism. (1) First, the term "God" seems eminently inappropriate for such a being with such malicious intent. (2) Second, how can the universe be ultimately evil? Does not evil presuppose good? By what standard, if there is no ultimate Good (or, God), could one declare the activity of this demonic creator to be *not*-good? And if there is a good God more ultimate than this evil demon, then it is not He that is the cosmic sadist but lower demonic forms. The problem, then, takes on the shape of traditional theism, which will be discussed subsequently. (3) Third, as Hartshorne remarked,[1] it does seem incongruous to say there is a demonic God who is both responsible for and at the same time adverse to all

that exists; who is both intimately united with and savagely opposed to all he made; who loves the world enough to create and sustain it only because he wants to hate it. In short, a cosmic sadist would not be a being worthy of the name God; it presupposes an ultimate Good in the universe, and its very functions as preserver and destroyer are incompatible.

Finitism's Answer to Evil

A far more popular view since Hume is to concede that God is finite in either power or love (or both). For if God is willing to prevent evil but not able, then He is impotent. And if He is able but not willing, then He is malevolent. But since there is evil, God cannot be both all-good and all-powerful. Finitism seems to be the only alternative.

The theist rejects the finitist's solution for several reasons. (1) First, a finite god, like all finite beings is a dependent and caused being and, therefore, needs a cause to explain its existence (as was shown in chapter 9). Only an infinite Cause explains the existence of finite things. (2) Further, a finite god is not a religiously worthy object of worship. Anything less than an ultimate is not worthy of an ultimate commitment. A less than perfect being should not be the object of religious devotion.[2] (3) Finally, a finite god cannot guarantee the outcome in the struggle against evil. The cause of good may lose. Hence, moral initiative is diminished (if not defeated) where there is no assurance that the cause of right will prevail. In essence, a finite god is metaphysically impossible, religiously unworthy, and ethically demoralizing for people in their struggle against evil.

Theism must reject finitism's solution to the problem of evil. The only hope that evil can and will be destroyed and/or ultimately justified is that there is an all-loving and all-powerful God who can accomplish this formidable task.[3] There is every indication that nothing less than infinite wisdom could devise a plan to destroy evil; that nothing short of infinite love would desire to completely eliminate evil, and that nothing but infinite power could possibly bring these plans and desires to fruition. If there is no infinite God, there appears to be no final solution to the problem of evil.

Determinism's Answer to Evil

There is another way out of the problem of evil for those who believe in God: perhaps God was not free *not* to create the kind of world that inevitably engendered evil (i.e., the world we have). That is, maybe God was forced to create the kind of world we have. This is commonly a pantheistic view but it is open to certain forms of theism that hold that creation does not flow freely from God's will but it follows necessarily. If God is a necessary Being, they argue, then creation must unfold from Him as necessarily as a flower develops from a seed.[4] As Spinoza said, "Things could not have been brought into being by God in any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained."[5] For since God is the "most perfect" Being possible, it follows that He must produce every degree of perfection possible. And every degree of perfection from highest to lowest necessarily includes within it every possible imperfection as well. Hence, the world as we have it is the necessary and "most perfect" product possible of the necessary and "most perfect" Being possible.

Theism has traditionally and consistently denied this possibility for various reasons. (1) First, biblical theists have concluded from revelation that creation was a free act of God (cf. Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:11). Creation flows from God's will freely and not necessarily. God was free not to create. (2) Second, God has no *need* to create. An absolutely perfect Being lacks nothing, but is completely self-sufficient. The theistic infinite God is not a seed which needed to unfold in order to realize itself; He is eternal reality who needs no further realization of His Being. The pantheistic God is imperfect because it is not complete without creation; it must produce in order to perfect itself. Not so with the theistic God who is absolutely perfect eternally. (3) Also, the nature of an absolutely perfect Being does not necessitate that it *do* anything but merely that it *be* the absolute Good that it is. The determinist's view of creation is built on the highly questionable application of the Platonic principle that "the Good is diffusive of itself." This is taken by Platonists to mean that Good must overflow itself to others; that absolute Good must flow outward and generate more "goods." The theist contends, on the contrary, that if there were a need within Good to reproduce, then God would not be absolutely good. Any being which must produce in

order to perfect itself is not perfectly good to begin with. An absolutely perfect Being has no *need* to share its goodness by creating anything else, unless it *wills* to do so. (4) Furthermore, even granting a necessary creation (which the determinists hold), it is not at all obvious why an absolutely perfect Being had to make an *imperfect* world. A perfect world would follow from a perfect Being, but why is an imperfect world necessitated from the nature of a perfect Being? Finitude does not necessitate evil, it only makes evil possible. It is not obviously contradictory to have a finitely perfect world. Why, then, did not the perfect nature of God necessitate the creation of a finitely perfect world? Surely the world as it now is — with cancer, cruelty, and war — is not perfect. It does not take infinite intelligence to see that just a little less sin, sickness, and sorrow would make this world *better*. And if the world could be improved, then it obviously is not a perfect world.

Impossibilism's Answer to Evil

There is another possible evasion of the problem of evil that a theist may take and yet believe in a free and infinite God. It may be that it is impossible for even a God infinite in knowledge to foreknow future free events. God may have knowingly created free beings without the ability to foresee what they would do with their freedom, viz., bring all this evil into the world. God, let us grant, could control by His almighty power everything that is not free. But God cannot control what free beings will do with their freedom without violating their freedom. Even an infinite God cannot do what is contradictory. He cannot make square circles; He cannot not be God, and He cannot know what is impossible to know. This position deserves more attention.

There are arguments which would indicate that even an all-knowing God cannot foresee future free acts and their results. The first argument is as follows:[6]

1. God can foresee events only if there is a necessary order of causes over which He has control.

2. But a necessary order of causes under divine control is contrary to human freedom.

3. Hence, either God cannot foresee free acts or else there are no free acts.

4. But there are free acts.

5. Therefore, God cannot know free acts and their results.

The second argument has been recently stated this way: [7]

1. Whatever is foreknown by God is known to be true in advance (God cannot know an error to be true).

2. Whatever is known to be true in advance by God cannot be changed (an all-knowing God cannot change His mind about what is true).

3. But whatever cannot be changed eliminates freedom (for freedom implies the ability to do otherwise).

4. Hence, whatever is foreknown by God eliminates freedom; and conversely, freedom eliminates the ability of God to foreknow what it will do.

The theist has several objections to the first argument: (1) First, foreknowledge does not imply foredetermination; God can foresee something will happen without foredetermining that it must happen. [8] (2) The theistic God is timeless and does not fore-see anything; He sees everything in one eternal now. Hence, knowledge of what men do with their freedom does not determine what they do; it merely observes what they do. God sees what they are doing (by their own freedom) but not what they must be doing (by any alleged divine necessity).

The second argument of impossibilism is also deficient. [9] (1) First, it makes no sense to speak of something true in advance. It was merely known in advance that it would be true later when it was freely chosen. (2) Second, a man may have the ability to do otherwise, even though he does not choose to do so. And God could know that this is the case, viz., that the man was free to do otherwise but would not choose to do so. (3) Finally, God does not fore-see; He sees all right now. And if God sees something is true right now, then there is no problem at all about it allegedly being true in advance.

The implications of this for impossibilism's answer to the problem of evil are these: (1) First, God can foresee without foredetermining and, hence, He knew that evil would occur. (2) In traditional theism God does not fore-see at all; He knows what is going on in the whole course of time in one eternal now. [10] Accordingly, God

cannot be exonerated of the responsibility for an evil world on the grounds that it was impossible for Him to see that evil would occur in the world He created. (3) Even granting that God could not foresee future free acts, certainly there is nothing contrary to omniscience in claiming that God new what could happen if He made free creatures. That is, even if God did not know what would happen if He created free beings, nevertheless, He certainly knew what could happen. And it did happen, with God knowing in advance that it might happen. Why did He take the great risk that became a reality? God must still be charged with the responsibility of creating the possibility of all the evil that did actualize. For surely it is not contradictory for an all-knowing mind to be aware in advance of all the possibilities inherent in or available to that which it creates. (4) Finally, centering attention on freedom does not answer why there is apparently much evil in the world not traceable to free acts. Why does not God eliminate natural evil and suffering which, by virtue of His omnipotence, He can control without violating man's free acts?

Solutions to the Problem of Evil Open to Theism

Granted the above conclusion that the theistic God is one who freely created the world, knowing the evil that would result, the alternatives for a solution are numbered. There are two sets of alternatives; the hypothetical ones and the actual ones.

The Hypothetical Alternatives for Theism

The theistic God had before Him only five alternatives with respect to creating anything, as they bear on the problem of evil. And in view of the evil that has happened, one can ask: Why did God not choose one of the other alternatives open to Him?

1. *God could have created nothing at all.* A God who freely creates was free not to create. And a God who knew that creation would become so corrupt should not have created at all. A nonevil nothing would be better than an evil something. According to theism, this was an actual possibility for God. Leibniz attempted to avoid the difficulty by contending that other worlds were *logically possible* for God but that this world was *morally necessary* for Him to create. [11] But this solution will not do when it is applied

to the choice to create or not create, since it violates God's freedom. Moral necessity comes from the nature of God. And God was not under any compunction of His nature to create anything. It may be argued properly that the best of all beings must *do* His best in creating only if He *decides* to create something. But there is nothing in the moral nature of God that necessitates that He create anything. The only necessity in God's nature as such is that He *be* God — nothing else. In brief, it was morally possible that God not create anything; it would not have been immoral if He had not created anything. The application of Leibniz' position would be an unnecessary concession to determinism which either, as pantheism, (1) implies a lack in God or else (2) is built on the unjustifiable Platonic principle of plenitude. (3) But in either case, it is ultimately unhelpful to Leibniz' own theism, for God did create a world that could be better. This world is not the best of all possible worlds as Leibniz held it to be; it could be improved upon, as any reasonable theist or atheist can readily see, by reducing just some of the evil.

But the fact that it was actually possible for God not to have created this world which He did create causes a discomfort to theism. If God could have avoided making a world that He knew would become this corrupt, then why did He not do so? This actual possibility for God and, therefore, this hypothetical possibility within a theistic framework, is an actual problem for theism. No theistic solution to the problem of evil will be complete without satisfactorily addressing this possibility that was open to God.

2. *God could have created only beings who are not free.* Another option open to a theistic God is the creation of a world without free beings. Since free creatures, not being under God's direct control, are able to bring about evil, it would have been an effective guarantee against such evil not to create such beings at all. If God was under no necessity of nature to create any specific kinds of beings, then why did He specifically create the kind He knew would choose evil?

Here again, theists are sometimes tempted to appeal to the Platonic principle of plenitude to justify their cause. Descartes, e.g., argued that "God always wills what is best," which included for him the fact that man was free to choose wrong even if he knew the right.[12] But if this is taken to mean that whenever God wills

to do something, it must be something moral, then there are problems for theism. First, is it really necessary that whatever God does must be a moral activity? Cannot God make an amoral world if He wishes to do so? Second, granted that whatever God does, He must do His best (for less than His best would be an evil for God), does it follow that God cannot make the best possible amoral world? If God is really free to create any kind of world not contradictory to His nature, then why not a perfect amoral world (without free creatures), as well as a perfect moral world (with free creatures)? The nature of God only necessitates, at the most, that whatever God chooses to do, He must do His best. As has already been shown, God did not have to choose to create anything. And if He chose to create something, there seems to be no reason why it had to be something moral. As long as it were not something immoral, there is no problem in holding that the theistic God could have made an amoral world.

But here again theism faces a problem. For if God could have avoided evil by creating a world without any free creatures in it, then why did He not choose to do so? It would have eliminated in advance the sum total of human misery which has ensued because God did not create a world of beings which are not free.

3. *God could have created beings who are free to sin but who do not sin.* Another option open to the theistic God was the creation of free beings who never exercise their option to sin. This kind of world would have the advantages of there being free creatures without the obvious disadvantages of there being any evil resulting from the misuse of freedom. In fact, it would seem to be a better alternative among possible moral worlds than the one we have (where there are free creatures who do sin). And if God is obligated to do His moral best whenever He decides to do something with moral implications, then it would seem that God has failed to do His best in creating the kind of evil world that we have.

Theists have sometimes tried to evade this dilemma by holding that a world of free creatures who never do sin is impossible.[13] They say it is impossible to be free and yet not be free to sin. If one is not really free to do otherwise, he is not free at all. Freedom without sin is a contradiction, it is argued. But this seems to be an ill-advised tack for theism for a number of reasons. (1) First, there is no obvious logical contradiction involved in affirming that

men are *able* to do otherwise but never actually *do* otherwise than good. It seems obvious enough that men who always get up at 6 A.M are free to get up at 4 A.M. but never choose to do so, etc. However, it would be contradictory to affirm that free men never sin because it is *impossible* for them to sin. But it is not contradictory to hold that they never sin because it is *undesirable* for them to do so. Men in fact sometimes choose not to do evil and, hence, it is not in theory impossible that men would always choose to avoid evil. (2) The theistic God has infinite persuasive power. With the proper conditioning and motivation, supplied by God, the perfect Persuader, these free beings could be divinely enticed to always do what is right. (3) Furthermore, God is free but is not free to sin. Proper freedom is the freedom only to do the good, not evil. And if special case is pleaded here in that God's nature will not permit Him to sin whereas man's does, then what about Christ's human nature? Was it impossible for Christ to sin as a man? If so, then the whole temptation would appear to be a farce and His moral example for believers would lose its motivating force, since it was impossible for Him to sin anyway. If He had nothing to worry about in facing sin but men do, then how can His sinless life be of any encouragement to men, etc? (4) Finally, most theists believe in a final state of perfection that the Bible calls "heaven." This, it is believed by many theists, will be a state of perfection where there is no more sin or sorrow (cf. Rev. 21-22). Therefore, freedom without sin is not a contradiction.

The dilemma, then, must be faced. If God will produce *in the end* a condition for free creatures where there will be no more sinning, why did He not make it this way *from the beginning?* If heaven will be a place with free beings who do not sin, then why did God not make earth that way too? If God has the power to create the conditions for freedom to exercise itself without abuse *ultimately,* then surely God should do it *immediately* if He can. If having free beings who will not sin is possible in heaven, why is it impossible on earth? Or, more specifically, if there is some better way to do it (as is indicated by these alternatives), why did not God do it this way for the rest of mankind? Surely an all-perfect God should do it (even, *must* do it) the best way possible. And it would seem best to create free creatures who do not sin from the *beginning,* rather than to permit sin and evil only to

produce in the *end* what could have been done in the beginning without all the waste and suffering. Why beat one's head on the wall because it feels so good when it is over? It feels even better not to have done it in the first place.

4. *God could not have created beings who are free but who must sin.* The position that God could have created beings who are free but who must sin, we take it, is contradictory. A being would not really be free not to sin if he were under necessity to sin. If a creature cannot avoid evil, he cannot be held responsible for doing what was inevitable. Responsibility for sin can be laid at the doorstep of only those who have the ability to respond against sin, even if this ability is never exercised. That one ought to do something implies that he can do it.

Some might object that the Christian doctrine of depravity affirms precisely the opposite, viz., that sin is inevitable. Fallen man cannot avoid sinning. He has lost his ability not to sin. Sin is inevitable and unavoidable for men. Several observations are pertinent to this objection: [14] (1) First, according to Christian teaching, man was not created in a depraved state; he was created with the ability not to sin, and he lost this ability when he sinned. (2) Second, even fallen man has the ability not to sin, only it is not his own ability; it is the ability made possible by the grace of God. Ought always implies can, but the "can" or ability not to sin may be taken in two ways: either (a) one has the ability not to sin in his own power (which the doctrine of depravity denies), or (b) it may be taken to mean that one has the ability not to sin by aid of the grace of God available through redemption (which the depravity doctrine does not deny). (3) Finally, depravity claims that all men *will* sin, but not that all men *must* sin. Sin is unavoidable, not because it is necessitated by God in violation of man's freedom but only because it is known by God who sees the exercise of man's freedom. God knows that all men will sin, but He does not determine by the created nature of their freedom (or, nonfreedom) that all men must sin. In brief, God pronounces that sin is inevitable in general but that each sin is avoidable in particular (by the grace of God). Fallen man has the God-*given* ability (whether he has received it or not) to resist each particular sin he encounters, [15] even though God knows that all men will freely choose not to avail themselves of this divine grace. Hence the biblical doctrine

of depravity does not entail the acceptance of the contradictory proposition that God created beings who are free but who must sin. If they have the ability not to sin, they cannot also be under the necessity to sin.

5. *God could have created beings who were free and who would sin.* The preceding alternative showed that it is impossible for God to create beings who both must sin and cannot sin. But this last alternative reveals that it is possible to create beings who need not sin but who will sin. Just as it is possible to have creatures who can sin but never will sin (as Christ or as the blessed in heaven), even so it is possible to have creatures who have the ability not to sin but who nevertheless do sin. It is possible to have an ability that one does not choose to exercise. A man who is a total abstainer from alcoholic drinks has the freedom to drink them, but he chooses never to exercise that freedom. Or, conversely, an alcoholic has the ability not to drink (indicated by the fact that many do quit), even though he may choose not to exercise that ability. Likewise, fallen man has the ability not to choose evil, even though inevitably he does not choose to exercise that ability to avoid evil.

This latter alternative, according to theism, is that which brought about the kind of world we do live in. It is the alternative that the theistic God did choose. Hence, in view of the fact that the world of theism is one in which an all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God chose to create beings who would inevitably bring evil upon themselves and others, all of the other positions (1-4) are purely hypothetical. Even if the theist might wish another one were true, he is committed to defending this last alternative. God did it this way, and the theists who believe this is the case must offer their justification for the way God chose to do it.

The Actual Alternatives for Theism

The actual alternatives for theism are dictated by the kind of world we do have, not the kind of world there might have been. The hypothetical alternatives just discussed show only the possible alternatives open to God. But since, according to theism, God chose one of these alternatives, there is only one alternative open to theism, viz., to defend the option that God took. There is, in fact, only one actual alternative for theism, viz., to defend the claim

that a world where beings are free and do evil (viz., this world) is at least as good as any other option available to God.

I. *Things a theist need not prove in order to answer the problem of evil.* There are a number of things that are not necessary for a theist to establish in order to justify God's choice of this kind of world. (1) First, he need not show that this world is literally the best of all possible worlds but only that there could be no better world or nonworld — that this world is at least *as good* as any other possibility open to God. The theistic God cannot be expected to do better than what is possible, for this is impossible and He cannot do what is actually impossible. On the other hand, it seems eminently fair to require of God that He do the best that is possible for Him to do. Anything less than the most nearly perfect possible would be incompatible with an all-perfect Being. (2) Second, the theistic solution to evil need not demonstrate exactly *how* God can achieve the highest perfection out of a world with evil in it. The ultimate modus operandi of the Infinite may be beyond the grasp of finite beings. (3) Finally, the theistic solution need not definitely *prove* that this world is the best possible alternative. Definite proof is rare in any philosophical endeavor. It will be taken as sufficient if the theist can offer a plausible but verifiable solution that is not incompatible with the theistic God but is achievable by Him. Proving that an evil world is definitely as good as a nonevil world is unnecessary; establishing a probability that it is as good is a necessity for theism.[16]

II. *Things a theistic solution to evil must accomplish.* The theist must show that his solution (1) is at least possible, i.e., it is not contradictory or impossible, (2) offers evidence to indicate that it is achievable, and (3) presents a way to know how it can be verified and/or falsified if it is or is not achieved.

1. The first of these three conditions needs little comment. The theist cannot reject other positions that are contradictory and accept a contradictory or impossible position of his own. Whatever mystery may be involved in showing *how* an evil world is reconcilable with a perfect God, there can be no reservations in showing *that* the two are not necessarily incompatible.

2. The second condition is an important requirement in view of the nature of the problem. It will be granted that it is not suffi-

cient for theism to establish the mere possibility of an answer to evil; the theistic solution must be plausible. There must be some evidence to indicate that the theist's solution is actually true. The reasons for this requirement are obvious enough. (a) First, evil is prima facie incompatible with a perfect God. (b) Second, evil is used as the main evidence against theism, and one cannot do away with an opponent's main evidence by simply showing that it is possible that it is not true. (c) Third, even believers in God cannot rest content in Him if there is any doubt about the achievability of His good intentions with their lives and world.

3. The third condition stated above is a necessary test for truth. No position can be justified as true unless there are some stipulated conditions under which one could know that it is or is not true. An unjustifiable and/or unverifiable faith is not worth believing, if it is believable at all.

The Apparent Dilemma Facing Theism

It might seem to the careful reader by this point that the structure given the problem has already prevented a successful theistic answer, since two seemingly incompatible positions have already been claimed for theism. For it has been stated that God must do His best and that this world that He made is not the best. That would seem to settle the question against theism right there. On the contrary, this apparent dilemma does not eliminate a theistic alternative but it would, if true, eliminate all theistic alternatives but one. Let us put the apparent dilemma in its full form.

First, it will be taken here as true that *God must do His best*. It seems axiomatic that to do less than His best would be an evil for God, as it is for man. We would not praise a man for rescuing only one drowing man if he could have saved two more. Doing good is not enough, if it means that one chooses a lesser good as opposed to a greater good. The man who rescued one man when he could have rescued three has really chosen a greater evil, namely, allowing two men to drown rather than allowing none to drown. Now there is no reason not to believe that the same applies to God.[17] If God is opposed to a *little* unjustified suffering, then surely it would be a twisted logic to conclude that He is not opposed to a lot of unjustified suffering. Likewise, if God is under moral obligation to help *some* innocent sufferers, then surely He is bound to

help many, even the *most* He possibly can. The Christian doctrine that God loves all men and that Christ died for all men would support this point from the point of view of biblical theism (see John 3:16; 1 John 2:1).

However, it is meaningful to raise the question of whether the categories of better and best apply to God, since His absolutely simple nature is the one standard for all that He does. That is, if God's nature is the standard for His actions,[18] then how can any action for Him be judged to be any more than either good (i.e., in accordance with His nature) or bad (i.e., not in accordance with His nature)? If God performed anything less than the *most* moral action possible, it would simply be immoral, not more or less moral. This is exactly the point being made above, viz., that God must do His best and anything less than His nature (which is the standard for what is best) would not even be good at all. So, in effect, in a theodicy it is what is known about God's nature (as the absolutely simple and final standard for whatever He does) that must be compared with what is said to follow from His will as the efficient cause of all He does. And if it could be demonstrated that the will of God brought into existence what is contrary to the nature of God, then it would be shown that there is evil will in God. But since, according to theism, God is an absolutely simple Being whose will and nature are identical in reality (only formally distinguishable), then a corrupted will in God would mean a corrupted nature in God. Further, this reason seems correct because if God willed something contrary to an absolutely perfect standard (which He alleged was but which turned out not to be), then He would not be an absolutely perfect Being. In short, at best finite godism would be true and at worse atheism, *if* it could be demonstrated that the will of God caused anything short of the best it could possibly do. God must do His best or else it is an evil for Him. Hence, if God produced anything less than a world that could be produced by an absolutely perfect Being, then God is not an absolutely perfect Being. But, according to theism, God is an absolutely perfect Being. Hence, the theist must show that what God produces in this world of free but evil beings is the best possible world that could be produced.

The second horn of the theist's dilemma is this: *this world is not the best of all possible worlds*. Even granting that some of the

evil in it is necessary, this world still has too much evil in it. Not only could the world easily get along without so much violence, cruelty, and cancer, but it would seem to be much better off without these altogether. Again, if this were not the case, then all of the theistic talk of a state of immortal perfection (or, heaven) is meaningless. If this world, as it is, constitutes the best of all possible worlds, then the nontheist can scarcely be criticized for insisting that the best God can do could be improved. The theist not only can conceive of how to improve the world but hopes for improvement and works for it when calamities strike him. The hope of heaven and immortality are the theist's own arguments against this being the best of all possible worlds.

In view of what seems to be such an obvious point, it is misdirected effort for theism to defend the thesis that this world is the best of all possible worlds. If this is the case,[19] Voltaire was right in satirizing Leibniz' "best of all possible worlds" in his famous *Candide*. For all of the conceivable misfortune that can and does happen to people in this world cannot (other than satirically) be attributed to the best of all possible Beings. Clearly this is not the best possible world a perfect God could create. Just a little less corruption, hatred, and war would easily improve this world.

The dilemma seems most painful for theism. God must do His best and yet this world He made is not the best. Is there any way out? Only one: *this is not the best of all possible worlds, but it is the best of all possible ways to achieve the best of all possible worlds.* A sinless heaven is better than an evil earth, but there was no way for God to achieve a sinless heaven unless He created beings who would sin and did sin in order that out of their sin He could produce the best world where beings could sin but would not sin. An imperfect moral world is the necessary precondition for achieving the morally perfect world. The achievement of this final goal is possible only if God is infinite. Certainly nothing less than an infinitely wise and powerful God could guarantee the outcome. And if the outcome cannot be guaranteed, then the present evil world would not be worth it. Another alternative would have been better. Hence, the possibility of this solution depends on the infinity of God. The plausibility of this answer will depend on the evidence that can be gathered to indicate that God is at work performing this task. And the verifiability of this solution will be de-

termined by the criteria a theist can offer to test his solution. These are the subjects of the following chapters. But before we turn to them, we must look more closely at the various dimensions of the problem of evil that the theist must address.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL FOR THEISM

There are three aspects to the problem of evil for Theism: the metaphysical, the moral, and the physical. The problems will be stated here only briefly. The theistic answers will be only indicated here but elaborated on in the next three chapters.

The Metaphysical Aspect of the Problem of Evil

The shape of the metaphysical dimension to the problem of evil is this:

1. God is the author of everything in the world.
2. Evil is something in the world.
3. Therefore, God is the author of evil.

It would seem that the theist would not want to deny either the first or second premise. A denial of the first would capitulate the sovereignty of God to some form of dualism. Theists would not want to admit some kind of given or surd for which God is not responsible and/or over which He has no control. Neither does the denial of the minor premise seem appropriate to theism, for such would appear to be a denial of the existence and reality of evil. Since theism opposes illusionism, it would seem inconsistent to deny that evil really exists in the world.

The theist's reply, in brief, is this: there is an equivocation on the word "something" in the second premise of the antitheistic argument.

1. God is the author of everything.
2. But evil is not a thing (i.e., a substance).
3. Hence, God is not necessarily the author of any evil (substance).

Evil is not a substance or thing. Everything God made was good (cf. Gen. 1:31; 1 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15). Further, to deny that evil is not a real entity or substance is not to say that evil is not a reality. On the contrary, evil is real; it is a real privation in things. And this real privation or lack in things does not derive

from God but from free creatures who brought about this corruption in the nature of things. And there is nothing evil about freedom as such, but this good thing called freedom is responsible for bringing about the corruption in the world. This answer to the metaphysical aspect of evil leads naturally to the moral problem of evil, viz., Why did God create a free world wherein He knew this corruption would arise?

The Moral Aspect of the Problem of Evil

The entire first part of this chapter has centered on the moral aspect of the problem of evil. There are several ways of summarizing the moral problem, most of which include, by implication at least, what will later be separated out as the physical aspect of the problem of evil. The dilemma was shaped by Pierre Bayle in the 17th century: [20]

1. Evil exists.
2. An omnipotent God could destroy evil.
3. A benevolent God would destroy evil.
4. Therefore, since evil is not destroyed, then either —
   a. God is omnipotent and, hence, malevolent in some way, or
   b. God is benevolent and, hence, impotent in some way, or
   c. God is both malevolent and impotent, or
   d. there is no God at all.

In view of what has been said, the theistic answer can be anticipated; premise four is denied by theism. According to theism, God is working on the problem in the best way to handle evil, and He will destroy it. This is not the best world, but the theist believes that it is the best way to achieve the best world. It remains to be seen whether the theist can provide the evidence for this view. Prima facie, at least, it is a possibility.

There is another way to state the moral problem which zeros in more specifically on the matter of human freedom. It can be put in this form:

1. God is responsible for making everything in the world, including human freedom.
2. Human freedom is what brought about moral evil in the world.
3. Hence, God is responsible for what brought about moral evil in the world.

Theists would not deny this conclusion; they would only want to (1) clarify the conclusion and (2) deny the unwarranted deduction the antitheist would want to draw from the ambiguous conclusion. First, the conclusion is not this: (a) God is responsible for all the evil in the world; rather it is this: (b) God is responsible for creating the freedom through which evil came into the world. That is, God is responsible for creating that which made evil possible (viz., free creatures), but He is not responsible for what they actually do with their freedom any more than automobile manufacturers are responsible for all the accidents resulting from reckless driving. Second, if God is responsible only for the *possibility* of evil, not its *actuality*, then the antitheist cannot validly conclude that God is responsible for all the actual evil in the world. Especially is this so if the theist can support his contention that with the possibility of evil (viz., freedom) also comes the possibility of achieving a greater good. And if this is so, then God who is obligated to do the best He can would be obligated to create a world wherein the greatest good can be achieved (that is, if He was going to create a moral world at all, then He was morally obligated to create the best one He could). If theism can establish the plausibility of this claim, it will have answered the moral aspect of the problem of evil.

The Physical Aspect of the Problem of Evil

There is at least one residual problem: not all evil is clearly a result of human freedom, and even the physical evil that does result from free choice could be thwarted by divine intervention. But if God allowed these physical evils, then it would seem to be immoral for men to work against the purposes of God in resisting physical evil. Camus' statement of the problem is perhaps best known. Speaking about a plague brought on a city by rats, he argued —

1. Either one must join the doctor and fight the plague or else join the priest and not fight the plague.
2. But not to fight the plague is antihumanitarian.
3. But to fight the plague is to fight against God who sent it.
4. Therefore, if humanitarianism is right, theism is wrong.

The most appropriate response of theism is to deny the third premise. The Christian theist believes the plague is universal and

that it is the plague of sin resulting from the abuse of freedom. Hence, Christians should work against the Plague, not merely against its *results* but against its *cause*. It is morally right to do both, but it is most essential that we do more than treat symptoms. The deadly disease itself must be cured. Indeed, this is precisely where the Cross of Christ and true love for humanity springing from it are essential to the cure. Hence, the Christian works more vigorously, and certainly more effectively, against the plague by attacking it at its very source in man's free choice to rebel against God and bring the plague of sin on his own head (Gen. 3:16f.; Rom. 5:12; 8:18ff.). In brief, the plague is ultimately caused by man's self-will and, hence, to work against it is not to work against God but to work for God and against man's sinful choices. Treating the *symptoms* is an act of mercy, and works of mercy are the works of God (cf. Luke 10:29ff.). Treating the *cause* of the plague is basic as a work of redemptive love which is also to work for God (cf. 1 John 3 - 4).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Theistic belief eliminates several proposed solutions to the problem of evil. The theist, as opposed to the illusionist, admits that evil is real; and, unlike the dualist, the theist does not hold that evil is an eternal given. The theist, in contrast to the sadist, acknowledges that God is good. Also, the theist denies that God is limited, as the finitist claims; and he denies that God was not free in creation, as the determinist contends. Nor does the traditional theist beg off, as the impossibilist does, on the grounds that God could not foresee that evil would happen. On the contrary, the theist admits (1) that God could have refrained from creating anything; (2) that He could have created a world without free creatures in it; (3) that He could have created a world where creatures are free but do not sin; (4) but that God could not have created a world where men are free but must sin, for this is a contradiction; (5) finally, that God could have created a world where men could and would sin. The latter is the kind of world God did create, presenting the problem for theism as to why God did not choose any other alternatives, some of which appear to be better than this evil world.

The problem of evil has three dimensions for theism: (1) Why

did God create anything imperfect (metaphysical problem)? (2) Why does God permit the imperfect to exist (moral problem)? (3) Why does unnecessary human suffering and pain exist if there is an absolutely perfect God (physical problem)?

NOTES CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. Charles Hartshorne, "The Necessary Existent," in *The Ontological Argument*, ed. Alvin Plantinga, p. 127.

2. J. N. Findlay, an atheist, makes a strong case for this same point, arguing that anything less than an absolutely perfect Being would be unworthy of religious devotion. See "Can the Existence of God be Disproved?" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A. Flew, pp. 47-53.

3. Two other atheists, E. H. Madden and P. H. Hare, make this same observation. See *Evil and the Concept of God*, pp. 110-111.

4. See Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV, 8, 6.

5. See Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, Proposition XXXIII.

6. See Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* for a discussion of this argument deriving from Cicero (cf. Augustine *City of God*, V, 9, 2).

7. This is Arthur Prior's way of putting it. See *op. cit.*, p. 695.

8. See Augustine, *On Free Will*, III.

9. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* - I, 10, 2-3. Their arguments are these: (1) First, God is immutable (changeless); (2) Whatever is temporal involves change; (3) Hence, God cannot be a temporal being. In other words, God is unlimited and if He were not eternal, then He would be limited in time. But since God is unlimited in His existence in every way, He cannot be limited in His existence in any way (including limitation by time).

10. God knows everything *in* the eternal present but He does not know everything *as* the present moment in time; He knows the past *as* past and the future *as* future, etc.

11. Gottfried Leibniz, *Monadology*, pp. 53-55.

12. Rene Descartes, *Meditations*, IV.

13. See J. M. E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 166, cited by Flew, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 145.

14. See my treatment of depravity in *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, pp. 100ff.

15. If sin were not always avoidable by God's grace, then Christ would have had to sin, too, which the Bible denies. For a critique of the view that sin is unavoidable (but forgivable) see ibid., pp. 110-112.

16. If theism had no other line of evidence (such as it has in the cosmological argument), then it would be necessary to do more than establish mere plausibility for the justification of evil. For in that case the *whole* theistic argument would turn on the seemingly most probable solution to the evil question. (The reason for the word "seemingly" will become clear in the answer to the problems of evil in chapter 16.) But the favorable probability (we think even undeniability) of the cosmological argument gives theism an "edge" as it enters the question of evil. In short, a theist enters the area of evil armed with the infinitely good and perfect

God of the cosmological argument. This kind of God may be his greatest apparent liability (because this kind of God makes the problem of evil more acute), but as was said earlier, such a God is also the theist's only hope for a solution to evil.

17. The same ethical principle does not apply to God *because* it applied to man, as if everything that men ought not do, God ought not do either. For this is not so. E.g., God, the Author of life, has the right to take life; men do not. But God's nature *also* commits Him to doing His very best infinitely, as man's nature demands that he do his best finitely.

18. We reject the tradition in ethics stemming from Ockham that contends that God is free to act contrary to His own nature. If this were so, then ethics would be (1) arbitrary, (2) reversible, (3) futile, (4) unbelievable, and God may decide that hate is normative tomorrow or that unbelievers will go to heaven. If such an ethic were possible, it would be unworthy of God and unbelievable by men.

19. The "aesthetic" illustrations used by both Augustine (see *On Order,* I, 1, 2; II, 4, 12), and Leibniz (*Theodicy,* Objection I) lend to the belief that they are defending this present evil world as the best possible. Chapter 16 will offer an explanation for this inadequate solution and place these illustrations in another context.

20. See the end of chapter 6 above for the other ways to state the problem and for theistic answers to it.

15

The Metaphysical Problem of Evil

The first dimension of the problem of evil for theism is the metaphysical. If God created everything that exists and since evil exists, is God the author of evil? Theists obviously deny that God created any evil things, but in denying this, theism is open to attack from two sides, dualism and illusionism. Was evil already there co-eternally with God? Or is evil unreality and, hence, that which would not come under the creation of God? Either choice is contrary to traditional theism.

THE PROBLEM OF METAPHYSICAL EVIL AND ALTERNATIVES FOR THEISM

As was indicated in the preceding chapter, the basic metaphysical problem for theism can be put into these propositions:

1. God is the cause of everything that exists.
2. Evil is something that exists.
3. Therefore, God is the cause of evil.

In view of this form of the problem, there are only two alternatives open to the theist: (a) he may deny the first premise and lay himself open to a type of dualism, or (b) he may deny the second premise and be charged with illusionism. But actually the theist cannot retreat to either of these positions, for in so doing he would deny theism.

Illusionism Is a Denial of Theism

If the theist denies the reality of evil, he has capitulated to pantheism. The thesis that all sin, suffering, and death are only illusory has already been rejected by theism.[1] Furthermore, the theist

cannot change his mind and reverse course here on the basic reality of what he experiences, for to do this would be to forsake his whole position for pantheism. If I do not exist and/or if there is no real finite world, then theism is not true, but pantheism. And, on the contrary, if the finite world that men experience is real, then the evil that men experience in this world is real, too. But if evil really exists, how can a theist disclaim that God created it?

Dualism Is a Denial of Theism

Does theism necessitate the position that God created everything that exists? Is it not possible that there is outside of God some surd evil that He did not create but with which He is locked in deadly struggle? The answer to this is yes for some quasi-theisms or panentheisms, but no for Judeo-Christian theisms. Plato, e.g., held that the Demiurgos only formed the matter that was eternally there; He did not bring the matter into existence. Plato's God was only a Former, not a Creator; He formed the world *ex hula* (out of matter already present) but did not create it *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).[2] The Judeo-Christian types of theism have consistently rejected this position and attributed all of creation, including the matter or stuff of which the world is made, to God's causality.[3]

In like manner, Judeo-Christian theisms have rejected the quasi-theisms or panentheisms of Hartshorne and Whitehead. Incorporating the evil world into a finite pole of God does not eliminate the problem; in one sense it makes evil a worse problem that it is for traditional theism. At least the theistic God is sovereign over evil and is in no way identical with the process of evil in the finite world. The positing of a bipolar God is a futile attempt to Christianize Platonic dualism. It robs the theistic God of His supremacy, purity, and ability to defeat evil.

The theistic objections to a God whose nature in part enters into the finite world process in the struggle with evil can be summarized as follows: such a limited God is not powerful enough (1) to guarantee a greater value in the future than He has achieved in past ages, (2) to realize any maximal value for the universe at any one time (but only serially over eons of time), (3) to stop any devaluation process that sets in, (4) to attain aesthetic value (order in the world) without unwarranted pain to creatures, (5) to overcome the lack of unachieved value in Himself, or (6) to elicit

proper admiration and worship from creatures. Who could worship a God so ghastly as to be helplessly bound to the world processes that He cannot even jam the creative process and stop the whole show? Who could make a total commitment to a God so impotent that He is not able to guarantee optimal value in Himself, to say nothing of value in the universe or for the individual?[4]

It is an outrageous slur on the nature of God to paint Him as more interested in aesthetic order, in a serial record of values, or in self-development than with relieving the pain of His creatures. The best realizable by a finite God in the struggle against evil may be a very bad world. And to console creatures with the fact that much value has been realized and preserved in God *over the long run* is as unhelpful as saying that a million dollars will be given to a certain family *over the next several generations*. Only an infinite God could possibly guarantee a better kind of world than the present one. And the dualistic God of panentheism is not infinite in His active struggle with evil. He is in fact tied by His nature to an evil process in which there is no assurance of change for the better.

Theism cannot afford the panentheistic alternative. Imperfection and evil cannot be of the very essence of an absolutely perfect being which the theistic God is held to be. Accepting this kind of dualism (or any other kind) would entail rejecting theism. Therefore, the dilemma remains: evil is real and God is the cause of every reality and, hence, the cause of evil.

THE THEISTIC ANSWER TO METAPHYSICAL DUALISM: EVIL IS NOT A REAL ENTITY

In terms of the antitheistic argument stated above, the theist denies the second premise and restates the syllogism this way:

1. God is only the efficient Cause of every finite substance (and nothing else).
2. Evil is not a substance (either finite or infinite).
3. Therefore, God is not the efficient cause of evil.

The ambiguity in the argument against theism is in the phrase "everything that exists." This phrase may be taken in two ways: (a) everything that exists in itself but not in another, or (b) everything that exists in another but not in itself. The first meaning

is what traditional theists ascribe to "substance" and the second is what they mean by "evil" in a metaphysical sense. That is, evil has no existence of its own; it exists only in substances that God has created but it has no subsistence of its own. In short, evil is an ontological parasite.

Augustine: All Things Are Metaphysically Good

The classic theistic answer to the problem of a metaphysical dualism of good and evil was given by Augustine in reply to Manichaeism. The Bishop of Hippo insisted that substances as such are good; all things are good because God created them. Any corruption of these substances cannot come from the incorruptible God and, furthermore, all corruption can occur only in a good substance that is being corrupted.

Every substance as such is good. In opposition to the Manichaeans of his day who held that there were two co-eternal substances, one Good and the other Evil, Augustine argued that every substance as such is good. He offered two reasons for his position. First, positively speaking, "God is the supreme existence, [and] it follows that non-existence is contrary to Him." For "the contrary of existence is non-existence." But God is good and everything He creates is good. "Consequently as from Him is everything that by nature is good. Thus every nature is good, and everything good is from God."[5] More formally stated: (1) God is the Creator of all being. (2) Everything God creates is good like Himself. (3) Hence, everything that exists is good. This is precisely, Augustine reminds us, what the book of Genesis declared, viz., God viewed everything He had made and said, "It is very good" (1:31).

Secondly, there is the negative argument that supports the contention that every substance as such is good. This can be observed by the fact that when evil is removed from a substance, the nature remains in a purer state, but when all good is removed, nothing remains at all. So, "if after the evil is removed, the nature remains in a purer state, and does not remain at all when good is taken away, it must be good which makes the nature of the thing what it is, while the evil is not nature, but contrary to nature." So then, concludes Augustine, "no nature as far as it is a nature is evil; but to each nature there is no evil except to be diminished in respect of good."[6]

In order to dramatize his point, Augustine declared thorns and thistles to be metaphysically good, along with formless matter and even the flames of hell.[7] And to the Manichaean retort that anyone who believes all substances to be good should offer his hand to a scorpion, Augustine replied that poison is not evil; it is good, good in itself and good for the scorpion. "For if the poison were evil in itself, the scorpion itself would suffer the first and most."[8] Even the Manichaean kingdom of evil had in it things like power, memory, life, intelligence, etc. — all of which are good. Augustine concludes, "All these things . . . cannot be called evil: for all such things, as far as they exist, must have their existence from the most high God, for as far as they exist they are good."[9]

The supreme Good is incorruptible. Not only is every nature as such good, but the supreme Good is incorruptibly good. "For the chief good is that than which there is nothing better, and for such a nature to be hurt is impossible."[10] The supreme Good is the standard of absolute perfection and the standard of all perfection cannot be less than perfect. God is simply perfect, and no simple nature can be destroyed. In order for something to be torn apart it must have parts; in order for it to be decomposable, it must be composed. Since God, the absolute Good, has no parts or composition, He cannot be corrupted in any way. That which is the very standard by which evil is measured cannot itself be evil.

Only created goods are corruptible. All creatures are corruptible. Anything *of* God (and there is only one — the Son of God) is incorruptible; all other things are merely *from* God and are corruptible. In Augustine's words, "For *from* Him are heaven and earth, because He made them; but not *of* Him because they are not of His substance." Hence, all creation is not *ex deo* (out of God) but *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).[11] And because created things are not of an incorruptible substance, they are corruptible. So, created being by its very nature contains within it the possibility (but not the necessity) of metaphysical evil. Creation makes evil possible; evil is made actual only by the creature, not the Creator. For God has no evil and can do no evil.

Evil is not a substance. "For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name 'evil.'" Evil "is not a substance; for if it were a substance, it would be good." Since evil

lacks any nature of its own, it is not a substance but a privation of the substance of another. Evil is not a nature; "evil is that which is contrary to nature. . . ."[12] What is called evil, then, is not a substance or nature of its own but a deficiency in some substance. Evil does not subsist in itself; it lives only in another. It is an ontological parasite.

Evil is a corruption of substance. "It must first be inquired," wrote Augustine, "what is evil, which is nothing else than corruption, either of the measure or the form, or the order, that belongs to nature." Elsewhere he said, "This is a general definition of evil; for corruption implies opposition to nature, and also hurt. But corruption exists not by itself, but in some substance which it corrupts; for corruption itself is not a substance." Evil is like rottenness and rust which do not exist in themselves but only in something else as the corruption of it. There is a sense, however, in which a nature is called evil, viz., when it becomes a corrupted nature. He commented, "Nature therefore which has become corrupted, is called evil, for assuredly when incorrupted it is good; but even when corrupt, so far as it is nature it is good, so far as it is corrupted it is evil."[13] A substance, then, that is privated is called an evil substance. However, despite the privation, what there is of the substance is good.

Evil is not caused by God. What is the cause in the privation of a substance; why are some created things evil? Augustine was sure of one thing: God, the absolute Good, is not the cause of metaphysical evil. "For how can He who is the cause of the being of things be at the same time the cause of their not being — that is, of their falling off from essence and tending to nonexistence?" He frankly confesses that one cannot know an efficient cause of metaphysical evil, for a cause of nothing is nothing and "that which is nothing cannot be known." In short, there is no efficient cause of metaphysical evil. Being as such does not corrupt being. Hence, there is nothing in being as such to explain why beings corrupt. Created beings, insofar as they are beings, do not corrupt either their own beings or those of others. And it is certain that uncreated Being cannot corrupt being. "For as far as they are corruptible, God did not make them: for, corruption cannot come from Him who alone is incorruptible."[14] If no being, finite or infinite, is the

efficient cause of the corruption of substances, then how does it come about?

Freedom is the cause of evil. The ultimate cause of metaphysical evil is moral; the cause of privation is pride. Without the freedom of the creature to exalt itself as the greater good, there is no explanation of the origin of evil. Augustine wrote, "Sin is indeed nowhere but in the will" and "justice holds guilty those sinning by evil will alone. . . ." In fact, sin is so much a voluntary evil that it is not sin at all unless it is voluntary." If one asks what is the cause of evil willing, Augustine replies, "What cause of willing can there be which is prior to willing. . . ? Either will is itself the first cause of sin, or the first cause [a free creature] is without sin."[15] In other words, if freedom is the cause of evil, then it is meaningless to ask what is the cause of freedom; freedom is the first cause of evil and one cannot ask what is the cause of the first cause. Free will is the reason *why* evil natures exists, and it is not meaningful to ask why of the reason why.

It is meaningful, however, to ask *how* evil arose. Evil results when the free creature turns away from the infinite good of the Creator to the lesser goods of creatures. "For it is evil to use amiss that which is good." Freedom itself is a good thing (i.e., it is a perfection belonging to some finite beings), but evil results from a misdirection of this freedom. Evil "is not the striving after evil nature but the desertion of better [nature]." How evil begins in free creatures is illustrated by how it began in Satan: "If the mind, being immediately conscious of itself, takes pleasure in itself to the extent of perversely imitating God, wanting to enjoy its own power, the greater it wants to be the less it becomes. Pride is the beginning of all sin. . . ."[16] In brief, a nature is corrupted when by the abuse of the perfection of freedom it engages in the pride of self-deification, i.e., of considering its own finite good more ultimate than God's infinite good. Pride is the ultimate source of metaphysical privations.[17]

Evil never completely corrupts a good. God permits evil but never to the point of completely destroying a good. For "the goodness of God does not permit this end, but so orders all things that fall away that they may exist where their existence is most suitable. . . ." The saved are suited by their nature for heaven and

the wicked by their nature for hell, but both kinds of beings have an ordered existence that is appropriate to them. So even though God did not *originate* evil, He does *order* it for His own good purpose. "In this way, though corruption is an evil, and though it comes not from the author of natures, but from their being made out of nothing, still, in God's government and control over all that He made, even corruption is so ordered that it hurts only the lowest natures, for the punishment of the condemned" but the righteous are enabled to "keep near to the incorruptible God, and remain incorrupt, which is our only good."[18]

But even when creatures misuse the good things God has made, they do not vanquish God's will to preserve the good. For "He knows how to order righteously even the unrighteous; so that if they . . . should misuse good things, He through the righteousness of His power may use their evil deeds, rightly ordaining to punishment those who have perversely ordained themselves to sins."[19] In spite of the tendency of evil willed by creatures to corrupt things, God is able to preserve both existence and order in His universe to produce an overall good.

Evil is part of a total picture of good. Because God does control and order evil, evil itself is part of a total picture of good in the universe. Failure to see this ultimate harmony in the universe with evil in it is like charging an artist for lack of harmony in his mosaic by concentrating on only one piece of it. One must step back and view the overall picture in order to get the proper perspective on evil. Even a cock fight, the act of prostitution, and "ugly" members of the body provide by contrast part of the total picture of good."[20] The divine Architect of the universe knows how to bring an ordered harmony out of a world of free but evil creatures. Artists cannot give a total picture without ordered contrasts, and the divine Artist is no exception.

Augustine's position on the metaphysical problem of evil may now be summarized: An absolutely good God created a finitely good universe containing good creatures who freely chose the lesser good of themselves to the higher good of God, thus corrupting creation. God, nevertheless, is able to use the evil of the parts for the greater good of the whole according to His own good purposes. A summary in Augustine's own words is given in this passage: "There is no way of solving the religious question of good and

evil, unless whatever is, as far as it is, is from God; while as far as it falls away from being, it is not of God, and yet is ordered by Divine Providence in agreement with the whole system."[21]

Aquinas: Evil Is a Metaphysical Privation

The theistic answer to the problem of metaphysical evil that Augustine began was further elaborated by Aquinas. According to the latter, evil is a metaphysical privation with no formal cause and only an indirect efficient cause.

Evil is a privation in a good. Agreeing with Augustine, Thomas wrote "Evil denotes the lack of good," not a mere absence. Because "not every absence of good is an evil." If mere absence were evil, then nonexistents would be evil. And if every absence were an evil, then a man would be evil for not having the strength of a lion. "But what is evil is *privation;* in this sense blindness means the privation of sight." In short, "a thing is called evil for lacking a perfection it ought to have; to lack sight is evil in man, but not in a stone."[22] This is so because sight is a perfection that is not constitutive of the nature of stones, but is of the nature of man.

Evil, then, is a privation in a nature but "a privation is not a nature or real essence, it is a negation in a subject." Hence, "every evil is based on some good, for it is present in a subject which is good. . . . Evil cannot exist but in good; sheer evil is impossible."[23] Evil has no essence of its own; it is a privation of good belonging to another.

Not just any kind of evil, however, can exist in just any kind of good. For "not any kind of good is the subject of evil, but that alone which is potential to a perfection of which it can be deprived."[24] In other words, a being must naturally have the perfection before he can be privated of it. Stones cannot lose their sight; only sighted beings can lose sight.

Evil has no essence of its own. According to Aquinas, "there is no justification for holding that there are two kingdoms, one of good, the other of evil." The erroneous idea that there are two kingdoms arose by men mistakenly supposing that all contraries are based on first principles. But "there is not one first principle of evil as there is of good. (1) in the first place, the original principle of things is essential good. . . . (2) In the second place, the

first principle of good things is supreme and perfect good containing all goodness in itself. . . . (3) In the third place, the very notion of evil is irreconcilable with the notion of a first principle, because evil is caused by good [incidentally]. . . ." In brief, "nothing can be essentially bad. Every being as being is good; evil does not exist except in a good subject." And "there cannot be a supreme evil, for though evil lessens good, it can never totally destoy good. . . ."[25]

Nothing can be totally evil. It follows that no essence can be completely corrupted. "Were all good entirely destroyed — and this would be required for evil to be complete — evil itself would vanish since its subject, namely good, would no longer be there." When a substance is completely corrupted, it is no longer a substance, because it is completely gone. A totally rotten tree is no longer a tree; it has lost its essence as a tree. For "while good remains, nothing can be an entire and unmitigated evil. For this reason . . . a wholly evil thing would be self-destructive."[26] And God, the Cause of all being, will not permit anything to go out of being contrary to His desires.

Evil has no formal cause. When evil is examined on the typology of Aristotle's four causes it becomes evident that evil has no formal cause and it has only an indirect efficient cause. (1) The *material* cause (subject) of evil is good, since evil has no essence of its own but exists only in the subject of another, viz., in a good. (2) And evil has no *formal* cause because it lacks any form; it is disorder, not order. Evil is a corruptor or privation of form. (3) Further, evil has not *final* cause (end or goal) "but is rather a privation of due order to end." (4) But "evil has an *efficient* cause; this, however, is indirect, not direct." That is, since "only what is good can cause," then "evil is a by-product" of the action of good causality. "Hence, it is true to say that evil has naught but an incidental cause; in this sense good is the cause of evil." Evil is caused by good accidentally in several ways:[27] (a) by a defect in the action of either the principal or instrumental cause, (b) by the very energy of the agent producing the action, and/or (c) by the intractibility of the matter receiving the action. For example, the proper objective of fire is to heat. If it burns that which it was intended merely to heat, it does so accidentally by the very energy of

its causal power, not because destruction is its proper goal. And if the fire does not heat, it is either because it lacks sufficient energy or because the object of the heat is not suitable to receive heat.

How God caused evil incidentally. In view of these distinctions, Aquinas refines Augustine's view that God is not the efficient cause of evil. God "as it were indirectly causes the corruption of things," not because this is His proper end but because sometimes: (1) there is a defect in the instrumental cause God uses (say, a genetic deformity passed from parent to child), (2) the very action of causal efficacy causes a defect [God destroys some things in the process of making others], or (3) there is an incapacity or impotence in the object being caused [e.g., physical beings are limited by the very nature of their material composition].[28] Hence, in the very creative process even a perfect principal cause can be the incidental efficient cause of imperfections in creation by virtue of the action, instrumentality, and receptivity of its causal efficacy.

Human nature is neither diminished nor destroyed by evil. The corrupting influence of evil on man does not touch his nature as such but only the ability of that nature to function properly. "The very principles, components, and resulting properties of human nature, such as the psychological abilities of the soul and so forth . . . are neither destroyed nor diminished by moral evil." For "sin cannot destroy man's rationality altogether, for then he would no longer be capable of sin."[29] That is, "the ability of the subject to act in the proper fashion" is not destroyed by evil. In the fall, man did not lose his ability to act as man, namely as a rational human being.

Furthermore, the diminution because of sin is "the slackening of qualities and forms," not the subtraction of them. For instance, "the more multiplied the acts, the readier the subject becomes to receive the perfection and form of activity. And, conversely, the more weakened the subject becomes by contrary dispositions induced by repeated and strong contrary acts, the slacker grows the power for right activity. . . . But sin does not strike at the root, since it does not diminish nature itself;" what it does is to block the ability from reaching its end; the disability consists in interposition of a barrier." For "the capital of human nature diminished by sin is the natural inclination to virtue instinctive in man

as a rational being; to act aright is to act according to reason." Now "the inclination to virtue should be taken as a kind of intermediate between two extreme terms," one rooted in human nature and the other the process of activity toward reaching its end or goal. "Weakening may affect either side. But sin does not strike at the root, since it does not diminish nature itself." Furthermore, the ability of human nature to function as good cannot be destroyed even by an infinite interposition of the barriers of sin that infinitely lessen the ability to act virtuously, for beneath all these layers and rooted within human nature "the instinct for right action always remains radically intact." [30]

In summary, for Aquinas the nature of man as a rational and moral being is not directly diminished nor destroyed by evil. But the inclination to do good can be infinitely diminished (though not completely destroyed) by sin. In brief, fallen man is metaphysically good and only morally weakened. Man can by the habitual practice of sin effectively block his own natural ability to do good (which can be overcome by God's grace), but the metaphysical nature being blocked is still essentially good. The inclination to good can be diminished even infinitely, but the nature of man as good cannot be destroyed without destroying man as man. Depravity does not destroy one's humanity. In fact, evil is not centered in man's nature as such but in his will. Evil results from free choice, not from any created inclination of human nature to do evil.

Conclusions From the Augustinian-Thomistic Solution

Without entering into the intramural dispute as to whether evil corrupts the actual nature of man or merely man's ability to act according to his nature, it would seem that we can draw from these two great theistic thinkers the following points regarding the problem of metaphysical evil. (1) Metaphysically speaking, evil has no essence or being of its own; it is a privation of the essence or being of another. Evil has no form of its own, i.e., it has no formal cause. (2) God is not the direct efficient cause of evil. Metaphysical imperfection can occur only as a by-product of God's efficient causal activity. (3) Moral evil, which can and does affect the functioning of man's nature (if not the nature itself), is rooted in human freedom. God willed the freedom (which is good) but

creatures will the evil. (4) The nature of man cannot be totally corrupted or else man would no longer be human. (5) Man's metaphysical nature is not diminished to the point that man is no longer rationally and morally responsible for his actions. (6) The grace of God enables man to overcome whatever propensities to evil he has so that he is able not to sin. (7) The fact of finitude makes evil possible but not necessary. Corruption is *possible* because man is a corruptible creature (only God is incorruptible), but evil is *actual* only because of human freedom. That is to say, all metaphysical evil is either a condition of, or result of, or in some way connected with, free will.

Unnecessary kinds of evil are a redundancy in a theistic universe. Whatever corruptions of substances there are must be either a necessity born out of the creative process or else a necessity for the conditions and functioning of human freedom. In essence then, theism's answer to the problem of metaphysical evil is intertwined with its answer to the problem of moral evil. Free creatures are ultimately responsible for the metaphysical corruption in the world (either directly or indirectly). The answer to metaphysical evil is found in moral evil.

In summation, the theistic solution to the problem of metaphysical evil answers *how* things (or, substances) can be evil (viz., by way of privation), but it does not answer *why* they are corrupted. For even the total picture of contrast of good and evil in the present world is not as good as it apparently could be. Why, then, did God allow the *possibility* of evil to be *actualized?* The hope for the solution to this problem comes from the theist's answer to the moral problem of evil. In other words, the theistic answer to metaphysical evil raises another question, namely, the problem of moral evil. For, granted that God is perfect and that He can make a world with no metaphysical imperfections in it, the theist must look elsewhere for a solution as to why there are metaphysically imperfect things in the world.

In other words, metaphysical privations explain *how* evil exists without entailing dualism but it does not *ipso facto* account for *why* a perfect God permits these imperfections to exist. Before attention is turned to the theist's moral answer to the apparent metaphysical imperfections in the world, there remains one more

problem that is created by the answer to the metaphysical aspect of the problem of evil.

The Theistic Answer to Metaphysical Illusionism

The insistence on the fact that evil has no ontological status of its own, that it is a privation of being, opens up another problem for theism. If evil has no existence of its own, then how can theism defend the reality of evil? This problem can be treated much more briefly in view of the foregoing discussion. The answer is this: *Evil is not a real entity but it is a reality.* Evil is not a thing but it is a *real lack* in things. Affirming that evil is no *thing* does not mean that evil is nothing at all. To say that evil does not exist in itself (i.e., it is not a substance) is not to say that evil does not exist in anything else. Evil does exist in things, and its existence there is not illusory. For instance, blindness is a reality. It is a real lack to be blind; the blind lack the quality of sight. And the inability to see is a real privation. In like manner, it is real to be crippled, handicapped, or retarded. It is no doubt easier for those who do not have these deprivations to think that they are not real; those who are deprived know the reality of the privation. Metaphysical evil is as real as the metaphysical privations that exist, for evil is a corruption of what is or, better, of what ought to be.

Evil is not nothing; it is the lack of something that should be there. The difference between evil and nothing is like the difference between a zero and nothing at all. There is a real difference, for example, between having a zero after two fives (550) and having no zero there (55); the difference would be almost $500.00 if it were on one's pay check. The zero, like evil, is not nothing at all. It is the capacity or potentiality for something. And in the case of evil, this nothing in itself is the privation of something that should be there. Metaphysical evil indicates something missing that ought to be there. And it is a reality to have something missing that ought to be there, as hundreds of illustrations from everyday life give ample testimony. True, metaphysical evil is no thing (it has no thinghood), but it is the real lack of something (i.e., some characteristic) that belongs to a thing.

The reality of evil is as great as the reality of darkness when one needs light. It is as real as the reality of sickness when one wants

to be well and as the reality of death when one desires to live. None of these — darkness, sickness, death — is literally nothing. Darkness is not nothing; it is the absence of light. Likewise, sickness is the absence of health, and death is the absence of life which belongs to a being. All of these are real lacks. Similarly, evil is just as real, although it has no more being of its own than does darkness or sickness.

Total and complete evil would be nothing, but such a situation never exists. There is never a totally rotten tree or a totally rusted car, for then they would no longer be a tree or a car. A totally moth-eaten garment does not exist, for the obvious reason that the moths ate the whole thing. But as long as some things exist imperfectly, evil is a reality, a real privation in existing things. And so long as this is the case in a theistic world, some explanation is called for to indicate why a perfect God would allow imperfect things to exist.

Summary and Conclusion

If God is the cause of all that exists, the theist must explain how and why evil exists. *How* evil exists is this: it exists parasitically, i.e., as a privation in other things. For evil never exists in itself but exists only in other things as the corruption of them. Just how evil is possible in finite things is explainable in two ways: (1) since all finite things are composed, they are decomposable, and (2) in the process of causality certain evils can occur as the result or by-product of free choice. *Why* the absolutely perfect God will allow the possibility of metaphysical evil to actually happen is not accounted for on a metaphysical ground alone; one must look to freedom and the solution to the moral problem of evil for a solution to this problem. In short, privation successfully explains how evil *could* exist in a nondualistic universe, viz., as a real corruption in other things, but it does not thereby show why a theistically perfect God *would* permit such privated or imperfect beings to exist. The theistic answer to this must be found in the analysis of moral evil.

NOTES CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. See the end of chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 14 above.

2. See discussion on Plato in chapter 8.

3. Biblical support for creation *ex nihilo* is taken from passages like Genesis 1:1; John 1:1, 2; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11.

4. See discussion in chapter 9. The atheists Madden and Hare have some good arguments against these quasi-theisms too. See their *Evil and the Concept of God*, chapter 6.

5. Augustine, *Against the Epistle of the Manichaens*, XL, 46, and *On the Morals of the Manichaeans*, I, 1.

6. Augustine, *On the Nature of the Good*, XVII.

7. Ibid., XXXVI, XVIII, XXXVIII.

8. Augustine, *Morals of the Manichaeans*, VIII, 11.

9. Ibid., IX, 14.

10. Ibid., III, 5. Cf. *Epistle of the Manichaens*, XXXV, 40.

11. Augustine, *Nature of the Good*, XXVII; X; and *Epistle of the Manichaeans*, XXV, 27.

12. Augustine, *City of God* XI, 9; *Confessions* VII, 12, 18; *Morals of the Manichaeans* II, 2.

13. Ibid., V, 7; *Epistle of the Manichaeans*, XXXV, 39; *Nature of Good*, IV.

14. Augustine, *Morals of the Manichaeans*, II, 3; *On Free Will* II, XX, 54; *Epistle of the Manichaeans* XXXVIII, 44.

15. Augustine, *Two Souls: Against the Manichaeans*, X; *On Free Will*, I, 1, 1; III, xvii, 49.

16. Augustine, *Nature of the Good*, XXXVI, XXXIV; *On Free Will*, II, XIX, 52; III, XXV, 76.

17. Augustine taught that Adam's evil choice passed on moral corruption to the whole race so that even infants are born guilty, having been implicated to guilt by Adam's evil will even before they express their own. See *Retractions* I, 9, 4. The will of fallen man is affected by sin but it is enabled by God's grace to keep His commands. See *On Grace and Free Will*.

18. Augustine, *Epistle to the Manichaeans*, XXXVII, 44.

19. Augustine, *Nature of the Good*, XXXVII.

20. Augustine, *On Order*, I, i, 2; III, viii, 49; II, iv, 12.

21. Augustine, *Morals of the Manichaeans*, VII, 10.

22. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, 48, 3; *Compendium of Theology*, 114; (Gilby, *Philosophical Texts*, 465).

23. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 7, and 11; (Gilby, 467).

24. Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, 117 (Gilby, 469).

25. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, 49, 3 (Gilby, 477).

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., I, 49, 2; (Gilby, 487). The illustrations are mine, not Aquinas'.

28. Ibid., I, 49, 2.

29. Ibid., I, 45, 1.

30. Ibid., I, 45, 2.

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The Moral Problem of Evil

There are three kinds of evil: metaphysical, moral, and physical. Cruelty is an example of moral evil, blindness is an instance of metaphysical evil and an earthquake is an example of physical evil. Of course, some physical metaphysical evils result from human freedom, but it seems obvious enough that some nonmoral evil is not the result of human freedom. Therefore, there is justification in treating the question of natural evils separately. By natural evil we mean, then, those evils that do not result directly from human free choice. And by moral evil we mean those evils, whether spiritual or natural, that do result from human free choice.

THE PROBLEM OF MORAL EVIL AND THE ALTERNATIVES FOR THEISM

Moral Evil: The Problem and Actual Alternatives

The basic shape of the problem of evil was stated by Bayle in the seventeenth century.[1]

1. Evil exists.
2. An omnipotent God could destroy evil.
3. A benevolent God would destroy evil.
4. Therefore, since evil is not destroyed, either —
   a. God is omnipotent and, hence, malevolent in some ways, or
   b. God is benevolent and, hence, impotent in some way, or
   c. God is both malevolent and impotent, or
   d. there is no God at all.

But none of the alternatives a, b, or c are in accord with the infinitely perfect and powerful God of theism. Hence, the conclusion

d, "there is no God" would follow. That is, if the only kind of God that can exist is an infinitely perfect one (according to theism), and an infinitely perfect God cannot exist (in view of the problem of evil), then it would follow that no God exists at all. Or, if the theist wishes to back off from his insistence that God must be absolutely powerful and perfect (and, hence, forsake his theism), then some kind of finite god is the most he can conclude in view of the problem of evil.

The theist objects to the third premise and replies thus: *God is destroying evil and will one day complete the process.* If true, this would qualify as an explanation for evil, but it would leave at least two problems for theism: (1) Why did such a God permit evil, to begin with? (2) What is the evidence that evil will finally be destroyed? Before we examine the theistic answer to these questions, let us look at another way to put the problem of moral evil.

1. God is responsible for making everything in the world, including human freedom.
2. Human freedom is what brought about moral evil in the world.
3. Therefore, God is responsible for what brought about moral evil in the world.

A theist would not deny this conclusion. He would only deny that it is morally incriminating to God. God is responsible only for the *possibility* of evil resident in human freedom but not for the *actuality* of evil that results from freedom. The theist's reply could be stated this way:

1. God is morally culpable only for acts He actually performs.
2. God does not actually perform morally evil acts (human freedom does).
3. Therefore, God is not actually culpable when men perform morally evil acts.

It is unlikely that the antitheist will accept the truth of the first premise, on the grounds that there were better alternatives open to God. At this point, the burden on theism is to show that there were no better ways to produce a moral world (which is what we will attempt to show below). Or, to phrase the antitheist's reply differently, he may charge that God is responsible for *permitting* evil, even though He does not *produce* it. And this would be morally reprehensible to an absolutely perfect and powerful God

who both knew evil would result and yet does nothing to prevent it. In this form, the task of theism is to show that evil is permitted by God for morally good purposes.

In brief, no matter how the problem is phrased, the minimal burden on theism is to give the moral justification for why God: (1) created the *possibility* of evil, since He knew that it would be actualized by human freedom and (2) why God is *permitting* evil to continue when He has the power to stop it. Without an adequate answer to these problems, theism has not met its challenge in the face of the moral problem of evil that exists in the world.

Moral Evil: The Bind of the Hypothetical Alternatives

What makes the problem of evil so acute is that theists admit by the very kind of God in which they believe that there were three other alternatives that God could have chosen but did not choose to take. (1) Traditional theism admits that God could have elected not to create a world of any kind. God was free not to create. Creation flows from God's will and not from any necessity of His nature. (2) Further, theism acknowledges that God could have created an amoral world where there were no free creatures. Without freedom there would be no moral evil. (3) Finally, we admitted that God could have produced a moral world of free creatures who simply would never choose to sin.

It is this third alternative that provides the most discomfort to theism and it bears further examination. Some theists object to the possibility of a perfect world, contending that even if it is logically possible that no one will ever sin, it is virtually certain that sooner or later some creature will sin. How could God guarantee that free creatures would never sin without eliminating their freedom? (1) One answer is His supernatural prevention of their evil acts. An omnipotent God would have no problem in turning the murderer's knife into putty, the assassin's bullet into cotton, and the lyncher's noose into a noodle, etc. Every time someone intended evil toward another, God could intercept the results of his act and prevent evil. But the theist could protest two things: first, that this would not really eliminate evil, for men would still be thinking and intending evil; secondly, that in preventing evil from happening in the world, God has also destroyed the possibility of improving the world. The second objection has merit and will be discussed below. The first

objection is a possibility but it is not destructive of the view that God could make free creatures who will never sin.

(2) Another possibility is that God could have created only those beings that He foreknew would not do evil. This seems possible because if creatures sometimes do not sin, there is no reason why they could not always freely choose not to sin. But the theist might object that this is both contrary to what we know of human freedom, and it leaves no guarantee that someday someone might not decide to exercise his option to do evil. Without some factor or force to prevent evil will, surely evil choices will occur sooner or later.

(3) But there is another way for God to have kept creation from evil without destroying freedom, viz., by His infinite power to persuade men not even to think evil by unveiling the infinitely appealing good of His own nature to them. Surely the "Beatific Vision" is an infallible method of persuasion and an omnipotent God can assure its completely effective operation. Now the theist would not claim that this is impossible but only that it would be less worthy of God to do so. It would be like eliciting the desired response from a child by bribing him with candy. In effect, luring men to God before they freely choose to come by irresistible persuasion is a violation of full human freedom. One could always wonder what they would have chosen to do on their own. It bespeaks more of divine dignity to allow free choice to do evil before one is permanently persuaded to do only the good. Hence, a world with evil is a morally necessary prerequisite to the most perfect world possible. A less perfect moral world is possible, but then it would not be the most perfect moral world that an infinitely perfect God could achieve. In brief, permitting evil is the best way to produce the best world.

But in order to establish the thesis that this evil world is the best way to achieve the best world possible, the theist must show that (1) no world at all, or at least no moral world, would not have been better than an immoral world and that (2) a moral world where men never sin would not have been better than one where men do sin. [2] In short, why did God choose what appears to be less than the best alternative (viz., a moral world with evil) when He is allegedly the best possible Being?

THEISTIC ANSWERS TO THE PROBLEM OF MORAL EVIL

How can theism establish that this is the best way to obtain the best world? How can all the evil brought about by human freedom be justified, to say nothing of the physical evil that is apparently not the result of human freedom?

In terms of the shape of the problem given above, the theist must support three premises to establish probability for this "best way" (to the best world) position. (1) First, the view that this world is the best way to obtain the best world is *possible*, i.e., it is not an impossible or contradictory position. (2) Next, no other possible alternative is more *probable*. (3) Finally, there is sufficient reason to believe that the best possible world is achievable. Let us examine these in more detail.

The Possibility of a Theistic Answer

If it can be demonstrated that this present world is not the best of all possible ways to achieve the best of all possible moral worlds, then our theistic answer to the problem of evil fails. Let us first acknowledge that we offer nothing like rationally inescapable arguments here. We admit the logical possibility that there may be an impossibility in the alleged process of producing a perfect world. However, we have reason to believe that there is no impossibility involved in this view for the following reasons: (1) First, there is *no apparent contradiction* in affirming that evil can be the condition for a greater good. We are not arguing that evil *is* the greater good (this would be contradictory); we are contending only that permitting evil *leads* to a greater good.

(2) Further, there is *experiential precedent* for this kind of solution. It is sometimes the case in our individual experience and that of others that evils lead to good, and there is no apparent reason why it cannot be true of the universe as a whole. That is to say, there are certain things that we freely choose to do as ends *to a greater good* which, if they were chosen as ends *in themselves*, would be considered evil. For instance, the pain of getting a tooth pulled is a case in point. Pain for pain's sake would be an evil, but pain for the sake of a healthier, happier life is not an evil. And this is precisely the point we wish to make about this evil world being the means to a better one. It is not a question of beating one's head on the wall because it feels so good when one

stops. Rather, it is more like the strain and pain of training which is a necessary condition for achievement in any area of life. No theist who believes there is a better possibility would will the evil of this present world as an end in itself. But if this evil can be suffered as the necessary condition to a greater good, there is no reason why one should rule out in advance the possibility of this being an answer to the problem of evil. In brief, the fact that there is no logical contradiction in our view that this evil world is the best way to the best world and the fact that we have experiential examples of evil means being the condition to good ends are sufficent to establish the *possibility* of this view.

(3) Finally, there is *apparently no way to disprove the possibility* of the truth of this position without engaging in an invalid type of ontological argument.[3] For the premises of the disproof would have to be either true definitionally or empirically. But there is nothing logically contradictory about the statement "This evil world is a condition for achieving a better one." And any premise based on how the world was experienced in the past and is experienced in the present cannot logically eliminate the possibility that it may be different in the future. We conclude, therefore, that the position that this world is the best way to achieve the best world is at least a possible position, whatever probability or improbability it may turn out to have.

The Probability of a Theistic Answer to Evil

The probability of the theistic solution to evil, which we will call the "best way" to the best world view (in contrast to the "best world"[4] view) can be established in three ways: (1) By an inference from the nature of God as the best Being and by the fact that this present world is not the best world, we can infer that this evil world must be the best way to produce the best world. (2) By comparing the alternatives available to the theistic God, it can be concluded that the morally best world is better than a morally good world or than no moral world at all. (3) By examining human history and experience, one can see the evidence of the probability of this best world to come. The first two arguments are *internal* to theism. One is based on the actual alternative God chose and the second on the hypothetical alternatives open to Him. The third argument is external to theism in that it indicates a way to verify

our "best way" view from other than a direct inference from the nature of God.

I.   *The argument from the nature of God and this world.* The basic logic in this first argument for our theodicy is thus:

1. God is an absolutely perfect Being.
2. Producing less than the best possible world would be an evil for an absolutely perfect Being.
3. But an absolutely perfect Being cannot produce evil.
4. God produced this world.
5. But this world as *is* and as *has been* is not the best possible world.
6. Therefore, there must be a perfect world *to come* (of which this present world is a necessary prelude to its production).

Two comments are called for on this statement of the argument. (1) Since we have already defended the truth of the five premises earlier (and even granted them to the nontheist in his argument against theism) there is no reason to withdraw them here.[5] (2) The first premise is verifiable.[6] The argument is not a priori. The cosmological argument is an a posteriori argument from human experience. It is based in our experience of beings as contingent or dependent and proceeds to infer that there must ultimately be an independent Being upon which dependent beings are depending. Anything that would falsify the cosmological argument, therefore, would falsify the conclusion (6, above) which we have just drawn from it. What would that be? Several things would falsify the cosmological argument or at least leave it unverified: (1) If nothing existed, i.e., if everything went out of existence, there would of course be no one (and no need) to verify God's existence (God needs no verification of His own existence). (2) If nothing contingent existed, i.e., if one no longer experienced his own contingency (or that of anything else), then the cosmological argument could not get off the ground. If one should suddenly (and sanely) awaken tomorrow morning and experience himself as a necessary Being (with all the necessary power and knowledge that goes with it), then the cosmological argument would not be needed (he would be God). (3) One could falsify the cosmological argument by showing that an infinite regress of existentially dependent causes of present existents is possible. For in that case it would not be necessary to conclude

a *first* Cause of all that exists. (4) Finally, if it could be shown that being can be caused by nonbeing, i.e., that the principle of existential causality is not true, then the theistic argument can be falsified. But since we have here offered a means of falsification and have given our argument that the theistic God has been verified, then there is no reason why this theistic conclusion cannot be used as a (verifiable) premise in an argument for the "best way" hypothesis on evil. [7] In short, theism can be used to support theodicy.

II. *The argument from the alternatives open to God.* Another argument from within the theistic framework deals directly with the alternatives open to God. It was admitted that God has four possibilities with respect to creating a moral world, i.e., a world with free creatures in it: (1) God did not have to create any world at all; He was free not to create either a nonmoral or a moral world but to simply create nothing. (2) He did not have to create a moral world at all; He could have not created free creatures and, hence, have thereby prevented all the evil that free creatures have brought on themselves. (3) Or, God could have created free beings who would never use their freedom to bring about any evil. (4) Finally, God could have (and evidently did) create free creatures who did exercise their freedom to do evil. The problem for our theodicy is to show just cause for God's choice of 4 over 1, 2, or 3. Before our argument is set forth, it should be pointed out again that it is not necessary to demonstrate that the third alternative is better but only that the other alternatives would not have been better. By "best way" we mean there was no better way for God to do it. This fulfills the requirement that the best Being did His best in that there was no better way available to Him.

a. *No world vs. some world is the first alternative.* Would no world have been better than some world, especially this world? Would nothing have been better than something? There are two ways to reply to this: either it is a meaningless question or else something is better than nothing. The first tack would argue that something and nothing cannot be compared, since there is no common ground on which they could be compared. This would be so if there were nothing else at all by which they could be compared, but is this really so? In the theistic reference, finite existence and finite nonexistence are comparable to infinite existence.

God exists and is the ground for saying that something is better than nothing. But the problem is with the word "better." First, does it mean *morally* better or *metaphysically* better? Obviously the latter, because free creatures (which constitute a world as moral) are not in the picture here. Being is better than nonbeing in a metaphysical sense because to be deprived of being is a metaphysical evil. [8] This is true, however, only if one grants that Being is and nonbeing is not. And there seems to be no way to deny that this is so without affirming it is (i.e., it is *undeniably* so).

But if finite being is better than finite nonbeing because it is more like the infinite Being, then would it not follow that it was metaphysically necessary for God to create the most finite beings possible? If the Most is the best, then is not the more the better? Not so. There is nothing metaphysically better than an infinite Being. But finite being does not add to the perfection of infinite Being; there cannot be more than an infinitely perfect Being. All finite perfections are derived from the theistic God and dependent on Him, and none of them add anything to Him. (Hence, a universe with only an infinitely perfect Being is as metaphysically perfect as it can possibly be.) There is no metaphysical necessity to create anything else. Furthermore, whatever else God freely gives existence is not better (metaphysically) than what does not exist; it is simply *good* and neither better nor worse. There is only one way to compare something and nothing by way of God and that is to call something good. What is, is good and what is not, is not good. But what is not is not less good than what is; it is simply not good. Likewise, what exists is not more good than what does not exist; it is simply good.

Even if one does not concede that existence is metaphysically good and nonexistence is not good, he certainly cannot argue that it is metaphysically better not to be than to be. For if there is no ground on which to compare being and nonbeing in order to affirm that being is better than nonbeing, then neither is there any basis on which it can be said that existence as such is not as good as nonexistence. And if God is used as the standard of comparison, it is already granted that He is and that He is good. Hence, what does not exist could not be said to be like God who does exist. So we may still conclude that the creation of something is "at least as good as" not creating anything. Technically, of course, the

"at least as good as" means that there is no means of comparison, unless one says simply that something is metaphysically good and nothing is not metaphysically good. This is not to say that non-being is evil. Only privations of beings are metaphysical evils. Completely nothing is not an evil in anything. There must be a being that lacks something in its being that it ought to have in order for there to be evil. The complete absence of being is not a lack; it is an *absence* of being and absences are not evil, only lacks are. [9] In either case then, our "best way" theodicy is still intact because to be is good and not to be is not a good and is not an evil. In short, the creation of something was good by way of comparison with God, and no creation at all is not good and not evil; it is simply not anything.

b. *A nonmoral world vs. a moral world.* Granting that nothing is not better than something metaphysically, if both worlds are non-moral, certainly the theist cannot contend that a morally bad world is better than no world at all. Would not no world at all have been better than this morally bad world? We will reply to this in two parts: (1) as with metaphysical good, there is no standard by which one can compare a moral universe and a nonmoral universe except to say that a moral universe is morally good or bad and a nonmoral universe is not morally good, but it is not thereby morally bad. (2) Again, the only possible standard is the moral nature of God. And here the most that can be said is that since God is free, it is good (though not necessary) to make other free things but not bad to make things that are not free.

But it is here that the comparison involves a problem. God is free but He is free only to do good, yet He made creatures who are free to do good and evil. Would it not have been better to make beings who are free only to do the good rather than beings who are free to do both good and evil? This is a fair question, but it is not the point under discussion. For the comparison here is between a moral and a nonmoral world, i.e., one without free creatures and one with free creatures; the other is a question of two different kinds of moral worlds. Moral and nonmoral worlds cannot be compared except to say that a moral world is good and a nonmoral world is not morally good. But neither is it morally bad; it simply does not compare with a moral world at all. Does

this mean that an immoral world (i.e., a morally bad world) is possible for God? No, but not because it is worse than no moral world but because it is worse than a morally better world (this will be discussed next). The only conclusion being drawn here is that there is no way to affirm that no world would be better than a moral world (whether a good or bad one). For if it happened to be a bad world, it is not really *worse* than none at all. And even if it happened to be a good one, it would not thereby be morally *better* than no world; it would simply be morally good as compared with a world that is not morally good but it not evil either.

Let us put this point another way for the sake of clarity. There is no way to compare nonfree creatures and free creatures so that we may say one is morally better than the other. To be free is good and not to be free is not to have that good, but it is not thereby to be evil (stones are not evil because they have no free-dom. In fact, stones do not lack freedom; freedom is simply absent in them.) Further, to be free to do evil (which is what a moral world entails) is good and not to have this freedom is not thereby an evil. But what about both being free to do evil *and doing it?* Is this not morally worse than not being free at all? No, the abuse of freedom is wrong, not because nonfreedom is evil but because freedom to do only the good is better than freedom to do both good and evil. But this is only another way of saying that an im-moral world cannot be declared morally bad *in comparison to* a nonmoral world but only in comparison to a morally better one. There is no way to affirm meaningfully that a nonmoral world would be better than a moral world (whether it be a good or bad one). The final and decisive battle against theism on moral grounds must be fought on moral grounds, i.e., about two moral kinds of universes, one of which seems better than the other.

c. *A morally good world vs. a morally better world.* [10] The real rub for theism in establishing the probability of a "best way" theo-dicy is that it seems both logically possible and morally preferable to have a world where men are free but do not sin as opposed to a world where men are free but do sin. Why then, if there is a theistic God, does the latter kind of world exist if the former would have been better? This is a meaningful question because it is comparing like with like, viz., two moral worlds wherein one ap-pears to be morally better than the other. But once the problem is

resolved to this form it immediately poses two problems for the antitheist.

(1) The first problem concerns the standard of the comparison. How can one world be judged better than another world unless there is a moral Basis beyond the world by which the worlds are compared? And if the antitheist grants an ultimate standard of Good beyond the world, then is he not arguing in a vicious circle? For he is claiming that there is no ultimate Good (God), because he has found something (viz., evil) that is not ultimately good. And if the antitheist backs off his claim that he has found some evil that is not really ultimately evil, then he cannot use it to disprove that there is an ultimate Good in the universe. To state the dilemma in other terms, how can an antitheist use the nature of God as the standard of what is morally better in order to prove that there is no God? For once he grants that there is an ultimate standard for morality beyond the world, he has thereby granted what the theist calls God. And if the antitheist insists that this moral Basis beyond the world is not to be identified with God but with some eternal (Platonic) Good to which even God (if there is one) must be subject, then the theist may reply that the dispute is merely verbal and that the antitheist really believes, as does the theist, that there is an eternal and ultimate moral Basis beyond this world.

There is another tack that the antitheist may take in view of his dilemma. He may simply wish to press the charge that theism is internally inconsistent, i.e., that this kind of evil world is incompatible with the theist's own conception of God as the morally best Being. The antitheist may insist that, judged on the theistically granted definition of God, this evil world is not as good as a moral world where sin never happens. What could be better than a world where there is full freedom without evil?

(2) This brings us to the second and decisive problem for the antitheistic attack, viz., can we have our cake and eat it too? Is it really possible to have the morally best world possible without permitting evil to occur? Can the perfect world be achieved without the precondition of an imperfect world? Is there any way to persuade men never to sin again without first permitting them to sin and allowing them to learn from their sin why they should never more sin? In short, is not this evil world the "best way" to

obtain the best world? Our answer to all of these questions is affirmative.

d. *A morally perfect world by way of a morally imperfect world.* In outline, the basis for our contention that permitting an evil world is the best way to achieve the morally best world is twofold. First, a world with the greater number of moral virtues is morally better than one with a lesser number of them. And certain virtues like courage, fortitude, mercy, and forgiveness are attainable only in a world where sin occurs. Secondly, a world with a higher attainment of moral virtues is better than one with lesser attainment of them. And experience shows that many virtues are heightened by the presence of evil — such as love and kindness. Experience also shows that the appreciation of something is enhanced by the threat or reality of its loss. This being so, the highest degree of moral perfection is possible only if evil is permitted as a precondition for the achievement of this higher good. And theism is forced by its own commitment, as well as by antitheistic criticism, to acknowledge that the best possible Being must employ the best of all possible means to produce the best of all possible ends. We can summarize the argument this way:

1. God must produce the morally best world He can produce (i.e., if He is going to produce a moral world at all).
2. A world where evil serves as a condition for the attainment of higher virtues is better than one where less than the highest virtues are achieved.
3. This world is a world wherein evil serves as a condition of the attainment of the highest virtues possible.
4. Therefore, this world is better than a world where evil never occurred.

The proviso of the argument, of course, is that the best possible world will be achieved by this present evil world. More will be said in a moment about the achievability of the perfect world. First, let us spell out another argument implied in our case for the "best way" theodicy. It goes like this:

1. God would not produce a world where free men will always do evil if it were possible to produce one where free men will nevermore do evil.
2. This is a world where free men do evil.

3. Therefore, this world is not God's final production (there will be a better one where free men will nevermore do evil).

Since the truth of the premises has already been discussed and they are an obvious part of the theistic argument by now, we proceed to combine the two arguments to support the "best way" thesis as follows::

1. It is morally better for God to create the morally best world possible (to do less than His best is evil for God).
2. A world with higher moral virtues is a morally better world.
3. A world where men are permitted to sin as a precondition to a better world is better than one where they are not.
4. This present world is one where men are free and do sin.
5. Therefore, this present world is better than a world where men never sin.

Perhaps the ambiguity that misleads antitheists can be cleared up by this distinction: the free world where men never sin would be the *best* world possible, but it cannot be the *first* world. For unless an imperfect world is permitted (as the condition for achieving the freedom without evil), the perfect world cannot become a reality. There is no way to get to the promised land except by going through the wilderness. The antitheist is right about the final goal, viz., a world where men are free but won't sin. But he is wrong about the possibility of creating such a world fully achieved and perfected from the beginning. Even an all-powerful God cannot do the impossible, and it is impossible for Him to create directly consequences that demand conditions without first permitting the conditions.

1. God cannot do what is impossible. [11]
2. It is impossible to create conditional virtues directly.
3. A world with the highest moral virtues is conditioned on the presence of evil.
4. Therefore, God cannot create directly (without allowing the presence of evil) a world with the highest moral virtues in it.

Since the second premise is the one to which an antitheist is most likely to object, it calls for justification. Is it really impossible for God to create directly a morally finished or perfected world? Why could He not have done so? According to biblical theism, God created Adam fully adult. The first trees in the Garden

of Eden could have been created "fully grown." There is no reason why the Grand Canyon could not have been created with all the strata in it. All of these things imply process in the ordinary sense but none of them actually demand a process; an omnipotent God could have created them without a process. If so, why did He not create the world from the beginning with its full moral perfection? Why did not God produce the best from the first without the evil process? Surely it would have been better.

We lay aside the argument that even some physical things cannot be produced by God without a process, and rest our case on the argument that at least optimally free beings cannot be morally perfected without the presence of evil. (1) First, Adam was not created with morally achieved perfection; only testing could do that. (2) Second, even Christ the perfect man was said to have been made "perfect through suffering" (Heb. 2:10). That is, the perfection He had became even more perfect through suffering in an evil world. The cross itself, the highest expression of love (cf. John 15:13 and Rom. 5:8), would not have been possible without the presence of evil. Christ prayed, "My Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me"; but, knowing it was not possible, He added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Surely, if it had been possible to avoid the horrible agony of the cross, then an all-loving and all-powerful God would have spared His Son from it; but He did not. Biblical theists can only assume that no other way was possible.

3. Human experience shows that some ends cannot be attained except through certain means. There is no way to become a great pianist without long and hard practice, or a great athlete without strenuous training, and so on. One cannot learn patience except through tribulation. Even God cannot create patience directly in a free life, because patience and the other higher perfections are *learned*. God cannot "learn" man anything. God can only *teach*; man must do the *learning*. And learning is a process for man. Man is a being in process (i.e., spatio-temporal being), and the only way beings in process learn anything is by the *process* of learning. And without the presence of evil, the greatest lessons in life will never be learned. Jesus was said to have "learned obedience through what He suffered" and thereby was "made perfect" (Heb. 5:8). As we shall see later, in the final analysis obedience

to God is the ultimate lesson to learn. And the very best way to learn it is by disobedience to God. For if God never permitted actual disobedience, how would man ever *learn* from experience (and experience is the best way men learn) that obedience is better than disobedience? This leads to our last point.

4. The best and only truly effective way to teach any lesson to man's freedom (i.e., his *will* as opposed to his *mind*) is to *persuade* it by the good, not merely to *instruct* it by the right. If there is any lesson that emerges from human experience it is that morality is not produced by legislation. By that I mean that morally right conduct does not follow automatically from simply making laws and informing free men what is right and what is wrong. The law does not automatically elicit obedience. The only way to get free men to do the right is to persuade them by the good. If a man sees that it is good (i.e., what is best) for him, then his will is moved to do it. Simply preaching right and wrong to him falls on deaf ears (even Adam in the state of innocence had the same problem) unless his will is moved by the good in it. If this is so, why did not God reveal the infinite good of His nature (i.e., give men the Beatific Vision) from the very beginning? In this way their will, being persuaded by an infinite good, would never have turned to evil and we would have our perfect world in which sin never arose.

5. It is because a Beatific Vision from eternity would not have gained the highest moral perfection of the universe and, hence, would have been less worthy of God and less worthwhile to man. Such a divine infusion of absolute good would short-circuit the very process by which man *learns* everything, viz., by the process of experience. And learned perfections are more valuable to free creatures than those that are not learned, just as hard-earned money has more value than money inherited without effort. God does not need to learn anything as God; He already *knows* all that anyone else can ever *learn*. The learning process, then, can only be more valuable to free creatures. And that is precisely the point we are trying to make. But a perfect God would by His perfections be obligated to do what is better for His free creatures. For it is the free creatures that He wants to learn the most they can from their experiences in an evil world. God needs to learn nothing about good by contrast with evil, since He is absolutely good. But crea-

tures are only finitely good, and the only way a finite free being can gain the maximum freedom out of his condition is to have it tested under less than ideal circumstances. God is free to do only the good, since He has nothing to learn from evil. But finite man, on the other hand, has much to learn from evil. The presence of evil is in fact a necessary condition for the maximization of moral perfection for free creatures. If men were shown "the sweet by and by" before they lived in the wretched here and now, they would possibly be persuaded not to do evil but they would never have learned for themselves why doing evil is wrong. And it is a greater good for free creatures that they learn for themselves. An initial infusion of absolute good into everyone's life would mean that God would have determined how freedom was to be used. And it is not morally best to determine for free men how they will use their freedom. It would be like a teacher telling his students how wise he is, rather than letting them decide for themselves.

6. Finally, there is reason to believe that an initial infusion of absolute good into the lives of men would not only be morally less worthy of God (as just argued), but that it would actually be contrary to full finite freedom.[2] For an infinite persuasion is irresistible and what is irresistible allows no room for free choice; it is in fact a coercion of freedom. For instance, if I choose to sit on my patio on a beautiful summer day and am "persuaded" to leave by some hornets, I am not really free to stay. Only the original choice to sit there was truly free, not the coerced choice to leave. And an infinite good is even more persuasive than hornets. A world of good and evil is a necessary condition for determining who really desires to choose the good and who chooses the evil. A world that finalizes these choices may follow, but it would be a violation of free choice to persuade men's wills by infinite goodness to do what they would not have done were they really free to do otherwise.

If an infinite good is irresistibly persuasive in its power so that men would not truly be free were God to expose them to it, then does it not follow that the saints will no longer be free in heaven? Heaven becomes a place of bondage and the loss of true freedom. On the contrary, true freedom is the freedom to do the good, not the free choice to do evil. And this is the lesson men of good will learn while on earth. In heaven freedom will be emancipated

from the bondage of doing evil. Evil is privation or lack, and it is better not to have a moral lack. And even though it is true that in heaven men are no longer free to sin (a freedom that was highly valued here on earth), nonetheless men were once free to do so, whereas men with a Beatific Vision from the beginning would never have been free to do evil. Furthermore, the inability to do evil in heaven (i.e., the loss of free choice) is only a permanentizing of what one, by his free choice here on earth, really desired to be achieved. That is, the Beatific Vision is, by God's irresistibly persuasive power, *not* a frustration but a fulfillment of what the godly have really chosen. And it is of no small significance to note, too, that without this permanentizing of choices made here on earth there would be no way to guarantee the destruction of sin. That is, the only way to produce a permanently perfect world is by permanentizing the choices made here on earth so that it is no longer possible to change them for the worse. (Whether it will be possible to change them for the better will be discussed subsequently.) Men will choose to do only the good because they will to do so. And they will not choose evil, because they no longer have any desire to do so, being perfectly satisfied with an infinite good.

In summation, it is impossible for God to create directly a world with achieved moral values of the highest nature. He must first allow evil as a precondition of the greatest good. Hence, this world with freedom and evil is the best way to produce the morally best possible world. So far we have offered two arguments for the probability of our "best way" hypothesis, (1) one from the inference that God as the best Being must do what is best; (2) another from the fact that an evil world is a better way of achieving the best world than a world where evil was never permitted. We now turn to our third and final means of verification for this theodicy.

III. *Eschatological verification of this theodicy.* If sometime in the future a perfect world is achieved, our theodicy will have been finally verified. But what if such a world does not come? Will theism have been falsified? No, *theism* will not have been falsified; at most, only *this theistic solution* to the problem of evil will be so far unverified.[13] Theism could still be true and/or another solution to the problem of evil be the right one.

Now granting our "best way" to the best world solution to the

problem of evil, it must be noted that it cannot really be falsified eschatologically for the simple reason that no matter how much time passes, the end has not yet come. In brief, as John Hick showed, there is not a symmetrical relation between verification and falsification. Some things can be verified but not falsified. Hick uses immortality as an example.[14] If men can witness their own funerals and continue consciously in life, their immortality will have been verified. But if no one survives death, there is no one to falsify the hypothesis that men are immortal. In a similar but somewhat different way, we argue that if the perfect world comes, our thesis will be confirmed. But if at any given time the perfect world has not come, the thesis has not thereby been falsified, for the perfect world may yet come. There is no specified time limit as to when the Eschaton will appear. Whenever it comes, there is still an eternity of bliss ahead, which will make the sufferings of time minute by comparison and eminently worthwhile.

Now the skeptic may wish to level the same criticism against our thesis that is leveled against Hick's eschatological verification, viz., that something which can be confirmed only in the future is of no assistance in deciding the truth now. And both theist and nontheist want to know the truth now. It makes a good deal of difference in the way they think and act in this life as to what will be the truth about the supposed next life. At best, eschatological verification saves the theistic position from *meaninglessness,* but it does nothing to establish any probability of its *truth* (at least not for the all-important present when truth questions must be decided upon, according to theism).

This is a valid criticism against Hick's use of eschatological verification but not against ours for two reasons. (1) First of all, this is offered by Hick (at least in his article, "Theology and Verification") as the *only* way to verify theism. We have already established by an independent argument (based on man's present experience as a contingent, dependent being) verification for the existence of the theistic God. We do not have all our theistic eggs in the eschatological basket. Eschatology will *confirm* our case for theism but it is not the only support for it. The cosmological argument is the basic evidence that there is an absolutely perfect Being who operates with absolute perfection. (2) Furthermore, unlike Hick, we do offer verifiable indication from both the present

and the past that the final, perfect end will be achieved. It is to this evidence which we now turn.

There are two kinds of presently obtainable evidence for the probability of our thesis that this evil world is the best way to achieve the perfect world: human experience and divine intervention. (1) First, as was indicated earlier, human experience is witness to the fact that free beings achieve higher moral perfection through suffering than without it. (2) Second, divine intervention is an evidence that something has been done to reverse the course of world events for the better.

(1) Let us examine the first line of evidence. (a) Certain virtues are unachievable without the presence of evils. Fortitude cannot be achieved without suffering; courage is not possible without danger, and patience cannot be perfected without tribulation. (b) Other virtues cannot be realized in their highest degree without the precondition of evil. One gains a greater appreciation for food after he has hungered and for water after he has been thirsty. Similarly, the highest appreciation for health is realized only through suffering. And the indications of human experience are that this is in fact what happens to individuals. Evil is the occasion of greater good. The presence of social injustices does activate men's social consciousness. The cry of the needy does touch the hearts of the philanthropic, and the fact of cancer does occasion determined research to cure it.

But even if one grant that there is progress in the lives of individuals toward a higher moral perfection, is there any reason to believe that the world as a whole is progressing toward this perfection? Is mankind learning the proper use of freedom by the abuse of freedom? It seems safe to say that in the history of mankind virtually every lesson from the experiences of men with evil will have been learned by some individual somewhere at some time. The problem is that the race as a whole has not been able to profit from these experiences. The lessons have been *learned* by the race but they are not *remembered* by the race. And even if they were remembered, some men would still not be motivated to apply them. Perhaps if these lessons were stored in some giant computer as a total fund of human experience that could be appealed to by supreme authority as decisive for all human activity, then the race could profit by what its individuals have collectively learned. His-

tory shows that men are fruitlessly learning the same lessons over and over again. If there were a memory bank available to the united authorities of men which could be appealed to as decisive in what is good for free creatures, then there would be grounds in human experience for demonstration to all other free creatures who had not these experiences. It would be a wasted effort if every man had to learn every lesson of evil for himself. But there is no such giant computer memory bank available to apply these lessons to the whole race and no united authority to apply them to the race. Or is there? The theist says there is. The omniscience of God has stored every lesson learned by every individual; the omnipotence of God can apply it to the whole race, and the love of God can provide the motivation for men to want to learn the lessons of freedom. So the infinite power and perfection of God which was the theist's initial liability turns out to be his only hope of explaining how the human race will ever learn from its mistakes, i.e., learn how evil never pays. The infinity of God lends probability to the thesis that the world is profiting by its abuse of freedom. It is profiting from it because God is storing the lessons for men. All the lessons of why freedom without evil is better than freedom with evil are being preserved by God and will ultimately be applied by Him to the whole race in order to convince them of the wrongness of evil. Then, when the infinitely persuasive good of God's nature is revealed, it will not violate but perfect the freedom to do good which free choice to do evil has shown is the only proper good for free creatures.

(2) The *biblical* theist has a further evidence for the probability of his thesis, viz., the supernatural intervention of God in world events.[15] The omnipotence of God makes miracles *possible;* the omnibenevolence of God makes them *probable* in view of our evil condition, but only human history shows that they are *actual.* But according to biblical theism, God has manifested Himself in human history (the incarnation of Christ) and He did do something to defeat evil (the atonement of Christ) and He did provide assurance — historically verifiable assurance — that this is true, (the resurrection of Christ).[16] It is not our purpose to develop these arguments here; others have done so adequately enough to indicate a probability in favor of the fact that God has moved in the time-space world against evil. Furthermore, there is further evidence in

the history of the believing community that evil is being overcome in the lives of all those who avail themselves of this overcoming power.

And the assurance to the biblical theist that the final perfect end will come is the prophecy of Scripture. The Bible was correct in its supernatural prediction that Christ would come and *defeat* sin (His first advent), and this lends probability to its predictions that Christ will come again (His second advent) and *destroy* evil. It is not our task here to prove this is true nor to persuade all skeptics that it is so but merely to indicate the probability that rational men have seen in this kind of verification. The evidence is available for others who want to know both from history and from Christian experience.

The Achievability of a Theistic Answer to Evil

So far we have argued for the *possibility* of a theistic solution to moral evil on the grounds that (1) there is no apparent contradiction in affirming that this world with evil in it is the best of all possible ways to achieve the best possible world, (2) there is confirmation in human experience that the presence of evil is the occasion for achieving greater moral virtues, and (3) there appears to be no way to disprove our thesis in the strict sense without engaging in a fallacious ontological type of argument (i.e., a purely a priori one). We then defended the *probability* of our solution that an evil world is the best way to achieve a perfect world in the following three ways: (1) The nature of God as absolutely perfect demands that whatever He does He do perfectly. (2) Of the alternatives open to God this present world is the best kind of world to achieve the maximum moral perfection demanded by His nature. (3) The final verification of our "best way" will be in the future when a perfect world is achieved. Now we turn briefly to the third and final aspect of our case for a "best way" theodicy — its *achievability*.

Is it really possible to bring good out of evil? In view of the persistence and power of evil down through the centuries, is it possible that evil will ever really be vanquished completely? Even granting that some good can be achieved out of some evil, how can the greatest good be derived from the great evil that has occurred in the history of free moral beings? It seems logistically

impossible to make every evil count for some specific good. Surely much unnecessary and wasteful evil has occurred in the process of achieving this supposed greater good. And further, no explanation is provided via the "best world" hypothesis to anything but moral evil; what about all the evil that does not result from the abuse of human freedom, such as sickness, death, and natural disasters?

There are really three separate questions here: (1) How is it logistically possible to achieve the maximum moral good out of the abuse of moral freedom such as our world has experienced? (2) How can we account for the moral evil that never brought about any greater good? (3) What explanation is offered for the many evils not resulting from the abuse of freedom such as natural disasters? The third question is the subject of the next chapter. The first two will be dealt with here.

1. *The achievability of a maximum moral perfection.* How God can bring good out of evil is not a serious problem for theism. An omnipotent God can do anything that is not impossible. And the possibility of this solution has already been defended. An all-powerful Being *can* accomplish anything necessary and an all-loving Being *will* accomplish it. As a matter of fact, the theistic God is the only kind of God who could possibly solve the problem of evil. As William James put it, "The world is all the richer for having a devil in it, so long as we keep our foot upon his neck."[17] But the only assurance that we really have our foot on his neck is the infinitely powerful God of theism. Hence, the infinite perfection and power of God, which at first appeared to be the theist's greatest liability, turns out in the end to be the only hope for a solution to the problem of evil. Only an all-powerful Being can guarantee the defeat of evil without destroying freedom. Only an omniscient Being can utilize the various strains of good and evil into the long range plan for the greatest good. And only an all-loving God would permit creatures the freedom to reject even Him. Our argument can be stated briefly:

1. It is logically possible for evil to turn out for a greater good.
2. An all-powerful God has the ability to bring the greatest good out of evil.
3. An all-loving God has the desire to bring the greatest good out of evil.

4. An all-knowing God has the wisdom to bring the greatest good out of evil.

5. Therefore, the greatest good will be brought out of evil.

Since the antitheist has already granted theism the truth of premises 2, 3, and 4, his only hope lies in showing that it is impossible to use evil as a means of achieving a greater good. And, as we have just seen, there seems to be no way of doing this. Evil does sometimes produce a greater good and there is no reason why it could not always produce a greater good, especially if there is an all-perfect, all-powerful God to guarantee that it will.

2. *All moral evil is a necessary condition to achieving a greater good.* Many antitheists will accept the fact that some evils lead to greater goods, but the problem for them is explaining the seemingly exorbitant waste of human lives in the pursuit of this supposed greater good. Surely the same goal could be achieved without this much suffering. Why does God allow unnecessary moral evil? Certainly He could intervene miraculously and stop just the unnecessary evil without jamming up the mechanism that is working to accomplish this greater good.

Here again the theist's answer to the economy of God's use of evil in the plan to achieve the greatest good is that only a theistic God can guarantee man that unnecessary evil will not occur. For only an omniscient God can devise a plan to maximize good and minimize the evil necessary to this greater good. And only an omnibenevolent God can assure us that this world is the best plan to achieve the most good. And only an omnipotent God can make the outcome certain. In brief, *only* the theistic God can provide an answer that is both actually adequate for achieving the greatest good and is also existentially adequate for those who believe that there is an answer to evil. Theism holds out the only sure hope to solve the problem of moral evil. The achievability of the answer is guaranteed by the infinity of God.

The theist need not defend all the specifics of the history of evil as they have unfolded in the universe as the exact acts and the exact amounts of evil necessary to achieve the greatest moral good possible. All that is necessary to an adequate theodicy is this: (1) That this *kind* of world be permitted where free men actually do evil. (2) That *all* evil be given a full opportunity of occurring,

whether it ever occurs or not. This will give full assurance that God has not violated the creature's free choice. (3) That *some* evil actually occur, viz., at least enough to provide the occasion for the achievement of the greater moral virtues not possible without evil. (4) That the *total amount* of evil that does occur be no more than is necessary to the achievement of the overall plan to obtain the greatest good possible. Now 1, 2, and 3 are the case with the world we have and could be known only by an infinite mind. It is unnecessary to defend the specific amounts of evil that specific people suffer (sometimes seemingly unnecessarily large amounts) because they can be justified as part of a total amount of evil that is justifiably allowed.

Not everyone in the universe has to commit every sin to learn from it. God, as the Great Computer, is recording all the lessons of sin that any free creature has ever learned. And God will make this fund of human experience available to men throughout eternity to come as a human witness that evil is always wrong. This fund of proven experience with evil will be man's own testimony to man that true freedom is only the freedom to do good, and that free choice to do evil is really destruction of true freedom. The choices of good and their consequences will be a testimony to the truth of what is good of this truth, and the choices of evil and their consequences will be a witness to what is evil.

But how can theists justify the fact that much evil never does in fact bring this alleged greater good either in this life or the supposed life to come? Suffering makes some people better but it makes others bitter. Fear occasions courage in some but cowardice in others. Tribulation produces patience in some but frustration in others. And what is even more severe from the point of view of biblical theism is that the world to come does not turn out to be a perfect world. There are St. Pauls, to be sure, but there are also Judases. And did not Jesus say it would have been better for Judas if he had never been born?

There are several important things to recognize about a world capable of optimal moral perfection. First, this implies a world of optimal moral freedom, for only a free world is a moral world and only a world of greatest moral freedom is a world of greatest moral perfectibility. Second, only a moral world where evil actually occurs is one where the greatest moral good is achievable. For

the highest moral perfection is dependent on the presence of evil obstacles. With this in mind, we can see why the best possible moral world must have both a permanent heaven (where evil will nevermore be done) and a permanent hell (where evil can evermore be done but not spread).

(1) First, in the game of life, as in other games, some must win and some must lose.[18] When men are given the opportunity freely to choose either to do good or to do evil, they must be given the opportunity to follow through with their own choices. For God to coerce men to do the good would be both unworthy of His nature and a violation of their freedom. Likewise, for God to snuff out the freedom of all who misuse their freedom would be beneath the dignity of the Divine. It would be tantamount to saying, "If you do not freely choose to love Me, I will take away your freedom." No, it is more befitting an absolutely perfect Being that He allow men to freely reject Him if they desire. As C. S. Lewis pointed out, there are only two kinds of people in the universe: "those who say to God, 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'thy will be done.'"[19] The former constitute those in heaven and the latter, those in hell.

But what if a man, upon arriving in hell, changes his mind? What if a few more chances here on earth would help persuade a man to change his mind? Again the theist's answer is based in the infinity of God. An all-loving God will surely give every opportunity possible for a man to choose to submit his will to God's will. If one more chance or a hundred or a thousand would elicit the decision to do God's will freely, then surely God would give it. On the other hand, an all-knowing God who sees that the choice to do His will will never come no matter how many more opportunities are given will not force a man against his will.[20] God will permit a man the free choice to do his "thing" eternally just as He will permit other men to do His "thing" forever. Only those persons will be permitted in heaven who God knows would never change their will; and only those will be pronounced reprobate and eternally "dead" who God knows will never change their will. In brief, the omniscience of God guarantees that the decisions are eternal (cf. Luke 16:26; Heb. 9:27).

The finality of the decisions is the only way to guarantee the ultimate perfection of the universe. Sin cannot be allowed to be

forever. This present world is not the best possible world. And the best possible way to end this world is by a "great divorce." Just as it is true on earth that one partner's irreconcilable unfaithfulness leads to a final separation, even so those who do not will to be married to God must be granted a final divorce. Love is perturbing to one who does not desire to be loved by a certain person or to love that person. In fact, there comes a time when the gifts of love and love itself must be finally rejected by the one who is in love with another. And, as Lewis forcefully wrote, "The only place in the world where one is free of the perturbations of love is hell."[21] Those in love with themselves will be permitted to live forever with this choice; those in love with God will likewise be permanentized in this choice. But up leads up and down leads down and never the twain shall meet (cf. Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:10ff.).

(2) Secondly, it is better to allow failure, with the opportunity for a greater good, than not to give the opportunity at all. The objection that God should not have created a world with men (like Judas)[22] who He knew would choose their own way is not justified for many reasons. (1) First, the door of hell is locked on the inside.[23] It is locked, to be sure; the decision is final but the decision was free. Men may not want to be there but they have willed to be there and will be eternally unwilling to will the conditions of their own release (viz., to will to do God's will). The results of drug addiction are no doubt undesirable but they are chosen. The drunk undoubtedly is displeased with his hangover but becoming drunk is what he decided to do, little by little. (2) Further, it is better to offer something better, knowing it will be refused, than not to offer it at all. For instance, it is better to try to transcend racial barriers by love, even if one knows he will be misunderstood in his attempt, than not to love at all. The kind of love which forgives one's enemies is the greatest kind of all. (3) It is better that God loves men, even if they reject this love, than for God not to love them at all. Love, despite the anticipated rejection, actually magnifies God. It is in this sense that even the wrath of man shall praise God. For no love is more worthy than the love that loves while being rejected. (4) There is a sense in which it is better for freedom to fail to achieve the good than that it be forced to do good. John Stuart Mill said, "It is better to be an

unhappy man than a happy pig." [24] A pig has no moral freedom; a man does. And even if a man does not achieve his own highest good, it is better that he be allowed to live with his own free choice to do evil than to force him to do good. Heaven would be worse than hell for those who do not will to be there. For to force a man to praise forever the one he hates would be worse than allowing the man to curse Him. Demanding that a man consent to love God against his will would be a divine rape. It is better that each man be given the free choice to love or not to love God.

(3) The world where not all men love God and do His will is not a failure. It is not less than the best possible moral world. For love succeeds even when it is not received. It succeeds in two ways. First, it succeeds in manifesting its highest expression. Where sin abounds, there grace does much more abound. The true nature of love is more obvious where it is rejected. And God so loved men that He gave them the freedom to reject His love. Second, it is better to have loved and lost than not to have loved at all. It is better for God to have loved all and lost some than for Him not to have loved at all. It is better, because the only worthy way for love to elicit a response is to elicit it freely. It is unworthy to demand love; one must never love because he has to love but only because he wants to love. It is for this reason that God does not usually miraculously intervene in the basic moral process of the world. First, miraculous prevention of evil consequences would not eliminate moral evil; men could still think moral evil. Evil is in the will, not only in actions. Further, destroying all evil action would eliminate the lesson that evil is providing for free creatures. Men would never really learn anything from their experiment with evil if all the consequences of evil acts were intercepted by God. In short, a world where evil never happened is not logically *impossible* but it would be morally *unproductive*.

In brief, evil is a necessary condition and a necessary by-product of a maximally perfect moral world. (1) Evil is a necessary *condition* because: (a) without it certain higher moral perfections could never be accomplished and (b) without the experience of evil, men could never learn for themselves that evil is wrong (and it is a higher good that free men learn the lesson for themselves). (2) Evil is a necessary *by-product* of a moral world because: (a) in a serious game of life's choice between good and evil some must

win and some must lose, and (b) even those that lose do so only by their free choice which, but the rejection of God's way, magnifies the love of God which permits men's rejection of Himself.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The theistic God is absolutely perfect. Such a God need not create anything, let alone a world with moral beings in it. But if He decides to make a world with free beings, it must be the best He is capable of producing. For doing less than His best would be an evil for God. But an optimally perfect moral world should contain the following components: (1) the process leading to the final achievement of a world where men are free but never will do any evil; (2) a world wherein is permitted the full and final uncoerced exercise of moral freedom; (3) a world in which there is permitted the presence of enough evil to provide both the condition for the achievement of higher moral virtues and a comprehensive lesson of the wrongness of evil for free creatures; (4) a world where free creatures learn for themselves why evil is wrong. Now, a world where sin never occurred certainly could not fulfill the requirements for an optimally perfect moral world. In fact, it is difficult to conceive of a world that would better suit these conditions than the world we now live in. And the absolutely perfect and powerful God of theism is both the only hope and the ultimate assurance that the greatest moral perfection will be finally achieved from this present world.

NOTES CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. *Selections from Bayle's Dictionary*, ed., E. Beller and M. Lee, Jr., pp. 157-183.

2. See J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind*, Vol. LXIV, No. 254 (April, 1955) and Antony Flew, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A. Flew.

3. See chapter 6 for a theistic defense against a contradiction in the antitheistic argument from evil.

4. Leibniz held the "best world" view. See his *Theodicy*.

5. See chapter 9.

6. On the need to show how one's beliefs can be verified or falsified, see "Theology and Falsification" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ch. VI, ed. A. Flew.

7. See chapter 9.

8. See chapter 15.

9. See discussion in chapter 16.

10. Some philosophers have questioned whether such an originally perfect world is possible. See Ninian Smart, "Omnipotence, Evil and Supermen," in *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 485-493, ed. George Abernathy; and Alvin Plantinga, "The Free Will Defense," *God and Other Minds*, chapter 6.

11. Elton Trueblood has some helpful suggestions on what is impossible to God with regard to evil. See his *Philosophy of Religion*, ch. 17.

12. For our discussion of freedom see the end of chapter 17.

13. Two other possible directions for theism are: (1) this present world is the very best that God can do with fully free beings, and (2) God is not obligated to produce the best world possible but only a good one. Plantinga defends the former alternative and Aquinas the latter.

14. See John Hick, "Theology and Verification," *The Existence of God*, pp. 253-274.

15. See Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* and C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*.

16. See Frank Morrison, *Who Moved the Stone?*

17. William James, *Variety of Religious Experience*, p. 55.

18. See C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 106. Just why God did not create a world where all men would ultimately learn from the misuse of their freedom is answerable along the following lines. First, in every game some must lose. The game of life is no exception. Secondly, a world where everyone ultimately turns to God is logically possible, but God by foreknowledge may have seen that it was unachievable. That is, He may have seen that some men would never willingly love Him. Thirdly, God could not guarantee such a world against human choice without violating both His own perfect love and man's full freedom, both of which are necessary for a morally perfect universe. Fourthly, a world where it just so happened that every single free creature turned out to freely love God would be morally suspect. Was everyone really loving God freely or had He pulled some invisible puppet strings to accomplish this? Finally, both human freedom and divine love — essential components of a morally perfect world — are magnified when some creatures finally reject God. The fact that God will not force Himself on anyone and the fact that He created some men who He knows will never go His way shows just how loving God is. Also, the fact that some men will never change their will indicates just how free man is. Hence, the Christian doctrine of hell that teaches that some men will remain eternally impenitent and reprobate is compatible with a morally perfected universe. Since eternal rejection of God will diminish neither God's love nor man's freedom, neither can it in any way diminish a morally perfect world.

19. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, p. 69.

20. Jesus' statement that Tyre and Sidon "would have repented" if the mighty miracles He performed elsewhere had been performed there (Matt. 11:21) may be only a hypothetical hyperbole. The parallel phrase says, "It would be more tolerable for you." Or, Jesus may be referring only to the national existence of these cities and not to the destinies of the individual souls in them.

21. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p. 139.

22. Jesus said, "It would have been better for that man (Judas) if he had not

been born" (Matt. 26:24). But the word "better" may mean only desirable and surely Judas' judgment was undesirable to him. And even if "better" is taken to mean "beneficial," the context implies only that this would have been better for Judas as an individual, not necessarily better for the whole world. Further, it says only that it would have been better for Judas not to have come into being; it does not say that, once he is in being, it would be better to go into nonbeing. Once he exists as a free creature, it is better that he be given the full choices of his freedom. However, it seems best to take it as a hypothetical hyperbole of severe judgment.

23. Cf. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, ch. 8.

24. John S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

The Physical Problem of Evil

Evil is a three-dimensional problem for theism. (1) First, how to account for the *reality* of evil is the metaphysical problem of evil. Theists answer this problem by noting that evil is not a real thing but a real privation in things. God created only the possibility of the privation; finite freedom is responsible for actual privations in things (see chapter 15). (2) This leads to the moral problem of evil which asks why God created even the *possibility* of evil by making free creatures who would sin. Theists answered this by pointing out that only by permitting the possibility of evil can God produce the best possible world; an evil world is the best possible way to obtain the best possible world (see chapter 16). (3) This leads us to ask the problem of physical evil, viz., what about all the evil that is not connected with human freedom? That is, what about the *gratuity* of much human suffering? Why does an absolutely perfect Being allow unnecessary and unredeemable human suffering, such as sickness, pestilences, and hurricanes?

THE PROBLEM OF PHYSICAL EVIL FOR THEISM

It seems apparent that not all evil is a result either directly or indirectly of the abuse of human freedom. Even granting that free choice is the cause of some physical evil, it seems clear that at least some physical evil is not the direct consequence of human choice. How can theism account for this gratuitous evil? Why is there so much useless suffering and pain that are unconnected with the abuse of human freedom?

Posing the Problem of Physical Evil

Perhaps the best known statement of the problem of physical evil is in Camus' *Plague.* Speaking about a plague of rats visited upon the city of Oran at the beginning of the Second World War, Camus insisted that:

1. Either one must join the doctor and fight the plague or else join the priest and not fight the plague.
2. But not to fight the plague is antihumanitarian.
3. And to fight the plague is to fight against God who sent it.
4. Therefore, if humanitarianism is right, theism is wrong.
5. Humanitarianism is right.
6. Therefore, theism is wrong.

The theist denies the truth of the third premise, but just how he can make a case for his point remains to be seen. The severity of the dilemma for theism in the face of the problem of physical evil in evident from McCloskey's statement of it: [1]

1. The theist is morally obligated to promote the greatest good.
2. The greatest good cannot be achieved by eliminating suffering (according to theism), for —
   a. if the necessary condition for achieving something is eliminated, then the possibility of achieving that something is eliminated,
   b. and eliminating evil would (according to theism) eliminate the necessary condition for achieving a greater good;
   c. hence, the greatest good cannot be achieved by eliminating suffering.
3. Therefore, the theist is morally obligated (in accord with his own thesis) not to work to eliminate all evil.

We may summarize the argument against theism from physical evil in this form:

1. If suffering is justifiable, it is wrong to work against it.
2. It is not wrong to work to eliminate suffering (it is right to do so).
3. Hence, suffering is not justifiable.
4. But if evil is not justifiable, then the theistic God does not exist.
5. For God's existence is incompatible with unjustifiable suffering.

6. And there is unjustifiable suffering (from premise 3 above).

7. Therefore, the theistic God cannot exist.

The dilemma is this: if suffering is the condition of a greater good, then one should not work to eliminate suffering lest he be working (indirectly) to eliminate the greatest good. If God sent the plague to punish us, then we are working directly against God when we fight it. Hence, whether suffering is a condition for achieving a greater good or a consequence of doing evil, one is working against the greater good by working against suffering. Theism is unhumanitarian.

Proposed Theistic Solutions to Physical Evil

Theists have replied in various ways to the problem of suffering. These theistic answers will now be examined in the light of antitheistic objections to them. In one way or another all of the theistic solutions contend that physical evil is necessary to the greater good which the theistic God is committed to achieving. But each particular solution is attacked by antitheistic objections.[2]

1. *Evil is a necessary contrast to the good.* One learns and appreciates the good only by contrast with evil. If everything were pleasure without contrasting pain, one would not fully understand and appreciate pleasure. The color red for example, is learned by contrast with other colors; if all were red, one would not really know what red is.

Antitheists point out three problems with this position: (1) At best it explains only some kinds of physical evil, viz., those connected with pain. (2) Further, much less pain would accomplish the same result. (3) The appreciation of health and sanity does not necessitate that one has been previously sick or insane. Even if evil depends on good, experience shows that one can know right without knowing wrong.

2. *Evil is a necessary by-product of laws that bring good results.* God created a world in which natural laws work for the overall benefit of the world and man but which involve some necessary by-products that are evil.[3] For instance, what is evil for the worm is good for the bird that eats it; evil for the lower forms of life is a necessary by-product of a world in which good is possible for the higher forms of life.

There are three basic problems with this view from the antitheistic standpoint: (1) It explains only some kinds of evil, especially those connected with animal pain. (2) An omnipotent God could have created a different kind of world without these evil by-products in it. (3) An omnipotent God could miraculously intervene in this kind of world and stop (at least some) evil by-products without disturbing the overall moral fiber or without upsetting the regularity and predictability of the laws of nature. In brief, the by-product theory tries to exonerate God by capitulating His sovereign control over the world He has created. It implies that God's hands are tied by the laws He has made.

3. *Evil is necessary to punish the wicked.* Natural calamities including sickness, earthquake, tornadoes, and death are sent as a judgment of God on wicked men. The punishment may be for sins committed either (a) publicly, (b) secretly, or (c) in a previous life.[4]

The objections to this position from the antitheistic point of view must be divided into two parts. The first reply will treat (a) and (b): (1) This view is contrary to the biblical teaching on Job who suffered innocently. (2) Jesus, too, indicated that sin was not the cause of all suffering (Luke 13:4). (3) It does not explain the apparent unjust distribution of suffering which includes many innocent adults and children and even babies born with deformities.

The suggestion that such suffering can be explained by sins committed in a previous life has several problems: (1) Biblical theism denies the truth of the reincarnation theory: men have only one physical birth and death (Heb. 9:27). (2) Jesus repudiated the view that a certain man was blind because he had sinned in a previous existence (John 9:3). (3) It does not explain why God permitted the sin in the first incarnation. (4) It amounts to a systematic delusion of Christians (and other theists) as to why God is punishing men.

4. *Evil is a necessary example to others.* God inflicts evil on a Job precisely because He knows that He will be steadfast in his faith and serve as a good example to others. Suffering is in effect substitutional in that the patient suffer as a pattern for others to emulate.

This explanation of physical evil has several serious problems: (1) It would account for only a small amount of suffering at best. (2) It definitely does not account for mass disasters. (3) Not everyone is a Job, and the purpose backfires when the sufferer renounces God rather than praises Him.

5. *Evil is necessary as a warning to the wicked*. Pain serves to prod the wicked into a recognition of God. It is a kind of divine megaphone to arouse a morally insensitive world to God's purposes for their lives. [5] The awful powers of nature stir men from religious indifference to reverence.

Antitheists see several loopholes in this hypothesis about physical evil: (1) Physical suffering and natural catastrophes often turn men away from God rather than to God. (2) Further, the evils would not need to be nearly so deadly to evoke the awe in those who are aroused by them. (3) An omnipotent God has less deadly but equally effective methods of stirring up religious sentiment in men, such as miracles and special revelation. (4) Such evil demonstrations of power as hurricanes and earthquakes are inconsistent with the omnibenevolent nature of the theistic God. In short, the goodness of God would be much more effective than the power of God in turning men to Himself.

6. *Evil is a necessary part of the best possible world*. This world with evil in it is the best of all possible worlds because evil is an integral part of the total picture of good. [6] Even God could not have made it better. Finite worlds cannot be perfect, but this finite world has the minimal amount of evil for the maximal amount of moral good. Just as one piece of a mosaic may be ugly but yet be an essential part of a beautiful whole, so evil fits into the total picture of good as an essential ingredient.

From the point of view of nontheists there are a number of flaws in the explanation of physical evil: (1) An all-powerful God could have made a world without any evil in it. (2) Even a minimal amount of evil is incompatible with an absolutely perfect God. (3) Even granting evil as part of a total picture of good, still a better total picture could be made than this world. For there is an unjust distribution of evil in the world. The theistic God is like the old schoolmaster who punished the whole class because of what a few individuals did.

7. *Evil is necessary for ultimate harmony*. Just as a musical chord heard in isolation may sound dissonant but when heard in context sounds harmonious, so it is with evil. An event seen in isolation from the finite human perspective is really good when seen from the infinite perspective of God. Hence, the problem of evil disappears when seen from God's perspective. [7] All is well in God's eyes.

This solution to suffering is open to a number of serious objections from antitheists: (1) It makes all evil only prima facie and eliminates the need for reform, since any change may affect the ultimate harmony. (2) It makes God a systematic deceiver, since what appears evil to us is not really evil in His eyes. (3) The so-called "higher morality" has no meaning to man because it is completely different from our concept of what is moral. (4) It requires that what we ordinarily call wrong is right when God does it. This double standard morality is unjust. [8] Why, e.g., is murder right simply because God does it to men in natural disasters?

8. *Evil is a necessary condition for achieving the best world*. Present evils eventually lead to long-run goods. All is well that ends well, and in the end a greater good will be achieved via physical suffering than without it. For first-order evils are a necessary condition for achieving second-order goods. For instance, pain, misery, and disease are necessary to bring into being the more noble virtues of courage, endurance, and benevolence. [9]

The antitheistic objections to this view are five: (1) It does not explain why God permitted the first-order evils; God could have achieved the same end without such ghastly means. (2) The price for the long-run goods is too high to pay; the good end does not justify the evil means to attain it. (3) Furthermore, some long-run consequences are not good but evil; sometimes evil only produces more evil. (4) How long is the long run? either the theist does not know or else he tells us that the long run means when good appears, which is tautological. (5) Immortal bliss does not really compensate for any evil suffered. A torturer consoling his victim by telling him of the bliss that will follow does not explain why the victim had to suffer any torture to begin with.

9. *Evil is a necessary interference of systems*. A more recent theistic innovation suggests that natural evil results from the mutual

interference of natural systems.[10] Everything, in just being itself, interferes of necessity with the movement of other systems. The organic, e.g., conflicts with the functioning of the inorganic world. This mutual conflict is indigenous to any world of genuine natural forces. Ridding the world of this conflict would eliminate the natural world altogether. And eliminating this kind of world would be contrary to the intent of divine goodness to make all possible kinds of excellences including physical ones.

The antitheist offers several objections to this thesis: (1) God could have created another kind of world without conflicting natural forces. (2) Even a natural world could have much less interference in it than ours has. (3) It implies that all kinds of existence (including physical existence) is a necessary value, a premise disputed by both Schopenhauer and some Oriental philosophies. (4) It implies that evil is an ugly patch that somehow makes the whole beautiful (this is subject to the same criticisms leveled against the "best world" view); satisfying God's desire to create all kinds of excellences at the expense of all this human agony is not compatible with the morality of God (nor is it worth it to man).

10. *Evil is necessary to build character.* According to this view, the rough edges of the world are necessary to produce spiritually significant beings. A world without tears would not produce charity or sympathy. A world without suffering would be morally bland. It is the pressure on coal that forms diamonds. Pain is a perfecting process.[11]

As a solution to the problem of physical evil, this view is subject to many antitheistic criticisms: (1) First, the character-building argument obviously does not apply to some kinds of evil, such as insanity or brainwashing. (2) At best, it can account for only small amounts of evil, which would not include mass disasters or maiming of character. (3) Again, the price is too high for the yield. (4) God could have produced spiritually significant beings without allowing physical evil. (5) If some goods depend on evils, then we should not work to eliminate these evils; otherwise, we are working against the greater good which can be achieved by them.

Since theists have sometimes used a number of these ten arguments in combination, one more antitheistic objection should be noted here. Madden and Hare refer to the theistic move to combine the arguments into one overall answer to the problem of evil as

the "ten-leaky-buckets-tactic." "It amounts to saying," they insist, "that while one cannot carry water far in a leaky bucket, with ten of them he can."[12] Certainly if one solution does not hold water, then nine more that do not hold water are not going to provide the answer.

A THEISTIC SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF PHYSICAL EVIL

Many of the antitheistic criticisms gain their weight on the basis of several assumptions that we have already shown to be wrong, viz.: (1) that an all-powerful God could have achieved the best possible moral world without permitting physical suffering, (2) that a greater good does not result from the presence of evil, (3) that all physical evil cannot be explained as necessary to human freedom (i.e., by moral evil), and (4) that the best world possible is not worth the price in evil that must be paid to achieve it. First we will lay out the proposed solution to the problem of physical evil and then we will examine again the remaining criticisms of this kind of solution.

A Theistic Solution: Physical Evil Is Necessary to Maximal Moral Perfection

Each of the proposed theistic solutions was correct in making physical evil somehow necessary. For unnecessary evil of any kind would certainly be incongruous with an absolutely perfect God. If there had been any way God could have achieved the greatest moral good without evil, then He should have done it. But we have already argued (in chapter 16) that (1) this kind of world with free beings who do sin is the best of all possible ways of obtaining the best of all possible worlds, and (2) no other world or nonworld would have been morally better than this world. Building on this conclusion, then, it remains for us only to indicate just how it is that physical evil fits into the necessity of this kind of moral world.

There are several obvious ways and some other possible ways that combine to explain the presence of physical evil as an essential part of the kind of world that is the best way to produce the best world. Each of these points is not a "leaky bucket" trying to help other leaky buckets hold water. Rather, there is so much water (evil) to account for and each argument accounts for so

much of it. The buckets are not leaky; each is solid, but each holds only so much water. All the buckets together, however, hold all the water necessary to account for the presence of physical evil in a world necessary to produce an optimally perfect world.

Before we list the various ways that physical evil can be accounted for, we must set forth the characteristics of an optimally perfect moral world: (1) It must be a world such that a greater than it could not be achieved; since God is the best possible Being, it follows that if He makes a moral world at all, it must be the very best possible moral world. (2) Since freedom is the essence of a moral world, the highest moral world must permit the greatest exercise of moral freedom possible; to curb moral freedom would be to limit the free moral potential of the world. (3) The amount of evil permitted must be justifiable in view of the moral good achieved. (4) An optimally perfect moral world should ultimately destroy evil. In brief, if evil can be destroyed without destroying freedom, then a perfect moral world will be achieved. Now this is precisely the kind of world that the theistic God is producing through the world that we now have, as was shown in the preceding chapter. All that remains here is to show how physical evil is a necessary part of this morally "best way" to obtain the morally best world. The logic of our argument can be outlined this way:

1. The kind of world where men freely do evil is the best way to produce a morally perfect world.
2. This present world is the kind of world where men freely do evil.
3. Hence, this present evil world is the best way to produce a morally perfect world.
4. But physical evil is a necessary part of this kind of present evil world.
5. Therefore, physical evil is a necessary part of the best way to produce a morally perfect world.
6. But it is necessary for God to permit whatever is necessary to the production of a morally perfect world.
7. Therefore, it is necessary for God to permit physical evil in order to produce a morally perfect world.

The sixth premise is supported by the fact, previously established, that doing less than His best is an evil for God. It is the fourth

premise that carries the burden of our theistic argument. How can it be demonstrated that all physical evils that happen in this world are really necessary to a morally free world? Even if some physical evil is necessary, is there not an exorbitant and unfairly distributed amount of physical evil in this world? The necessity of all the physical evil in this world is defended by theism in the following ways:

1. *Some physical evils are necessary conditions for moral perfection.* First, there are higher second-order goods that cannot be achieved without the presence of first-order evils. Sympathy is not achievable without misery or patience without tribulation. Courage is unobtainable without fear and endurance is occasioned only by hardship. In brief, some virtues would be totally absent from a world without physical evil. Second, the highest degree of other virtues is unobtainable without the presence of physical evil. For instance, the highest degree of appreciation of pleasure is impossible without pain. The greatest recognition of the value of health comes only after one has been sick. Indeed, justice is more fully appreciated after one has suffered injustice; love is more appreciated if one has been hated, and so on with almost all the virtues. In short, the highest moral achievements in almost any virtue are conditioned (at least in part) on the presence of physical evil, and some virtues are completely unobtainable without this precondition.

Now it is not sufficient to retort that a morally significant world is obtainable without these. Of course it is, but that is not the point under discussion. A morally perfect God must produce a morally *perfect* world, not merely a morally *significant* world. The antitheist cannot back down on his insistence that God must do His moral best here, for if he does, his case is defeated. For if God does not have to do His best, why is the antitheist complaining that there were morally *better* alternatives open to a theistic God? The full force of the antitheistic argument is dependent on the thesis that theism has admitted, viz., that doing less than His best would be an evil for an absolutely perfect God. But if God is absolutely perfect and must do His best, it follows that it is necessary to permit physical evil as the occasion for obtaining the highest moral perfection possible. We may summarize the argument in this manner:

1. It is necessary for God to do His moral best (i.e., if He chooses to do anything moral).

2. A world without the attainment of all the virtues possible or without the highest attainment of each virtue would not be the morally best world possible.

3. It is necessary to have physical evil in order to attain some virtues and in order to obtain the highest degree or other virtues.

4. Therefore, it is necessary for God to permit physical evils (as the condition) by which He can produce the morally best world.

The nontheist could object, of course, that it would not take so much evil to accomplish this task, but the theist responds by pointing out that the positing of evil as a necessary condition for a greater good is not intended to account for all physical evil but only some. The rest of the evil is a necessary part of the best kind of world for producing the best possible world in other ways.

2. *Some physical evils are a necessary consequence of human free choice.* We have already established that the free choice to do evil is a necessary part of the "best way" theodicy. But in a physical world where one creature is free to do evil, certain kinds of physical evil follow. (1) First of all, men freely bring some physical evil on themselves. If a man is free to get drunk, the evil of hangovers will result. Those who are free to take drugs will be subject to the evil of bad trips and addiction. Where men are free to smoke, disease and death may follow. And if men are free to eat all they want, the evils of obesity will also be present. (2) In a world of free choice some physical evil to other men will result directly from the abuse of one person's freedom. For example, if men are free to get drunk and drive, they will be able to inflict injury and death on other men. If cruelty is a possibility within freedom, it will be possible for someone to suffer torment. If the pleasures of swimming and boating are possible, the pain of drowning is also possible. A world with the freedom to invent will produce implements that will be used for both good and evil. There is no way for God to prevent all physical suffering without tampering with the full exercise of human free choices. And we have already agreed that the full exercise of free choice is a necessary

part of a maximally moral world. (3) Some physical evil to others results *indirectly* from the abuse of freedom. A careless man can cause himself a physical disability (e.g., maiming or blinding himself) which can occasion suffering both for himself and others. In the same way, an abuse of one's body can pass on deformities to future generations. Indeed, the Bible declares that Adam's abuse of free choice brought the evils of sorrow and death on all men. [13] This abuse of freedom accounts for a vast amount of physical evil. Some theists have estimated that between eighty and ninety-five percent of physical evil results from moral freedom. [14]

The antitheistic move to invoke divine intervention to prevent physical evil is insufficient for several reasons. (1) It would hinder the full exercise of freedom. For part of the exercise of freedom is not merely to think evil but to actually *do* some evil. If all evil actions were prevented by divine miracle or persuasion, then men could not really freely *do* what they want to do. And this kind of limitation upon freedom would be less than the optimal moral freedom called for in an optimally moral world. (2) If God prevented *all* physical evil from actually happening, He would be eliminating the possibility for men to learn the *lesson* from doing evil. And since in the long run it is the lessons that men learn from the abuse of free choice that guarantee the defeat of evil, it is necessary for God to allow men to learn the lessons for themselves. (The giant computer of God's omniscience is storing the lessons of human experience for later and eternal application in destroying evil without destroying freedom. See chapter 16.) (3) The elimination of physical pain would also eliminate physical pleasure. In a nonphysical world all the pleasures of the senses would be entirely absent. No one could ever enjoy food, sex, or sports. One might ask, "What is left?"

If the antitheist insists that God could at least intercept *some* evil consequences without disrupting the plan, then he must be reminded that according to the Bible and human history God has sometimes intervened to intercept evil consequences. Preventative miracles are known to biblical Christians. If it would seem that God could do more of this kind of thing, we must remind ourselves of two things: (a) An infinite mind is in a better position to know just how much is too much for optimal moral perfection, and (b) even a finite mind can see that too much divine interruption would

upset the regularity and predictability of nature upon which our human lives depend in very crucial ways.

Also, the antitheistic attempt to contend that God could have created a nonphysical world that would have eliminated any kind of physical evil will not suffice. (1) As long as there are free beings doing evil there will be evil consequences, whether they are physical or spiritual consequences. Making the world purely spiritual would not eliminate evil consequences but would merely make them wholly spiritual consequences. (2) Neither the theist nor the atheist has this nonphysical world. Both must account for what they have — a physical world. Now there is nothing incongruous with the nature of God to create a physical world with physical evil, providing that physical evil be a necessary part of producing a morally perfect world. (3) According to biblical theism, there is a spiritual world of finite beings and it is evil, too. Angels, like men, abused their free choice and brought evil into their nonphysical world. (4) A physical world may be necessary to occasion the kind of moral effort needed to achieve the optimal moral perfection. Presumably, purely spiritual beings have no need of food and they move with effortless ease. If so, physical conditions occasion some effort essential to achieving higher moral good that angels are unable to attain.

3. *Some physical evil is a necessary consequence of the free choice of demons.* Biblical theism proposes a solution that would easily account for *all* of the other physical evils in the world. Fallen angels are demons who inflict suffering on even the innocent.[15] Job was attacked by the devil (Job 1). Paul said, "A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me . . . " (2 Cor. 12:7). Both some insanity and some sickness are attributed to evil spirits in the New Testament (Mark 5:1ff.). In view of the existence of evil spirits who are opposed to God and His plan, all manner of physical evils, including "natural" disasters, can be easily explained. And the plausibility of this solution is supported by the fact that part of the tactics of these supernatural evil beings is to deceive men into believing lies, including the lie that evil spirits do not exist (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10, 11). For the Christian, the fact that Christ was tempted by, talked with, and cast out, evil spirits is sufficient to verify their existence and evil activity in this physical world (cf. Matt. 4:1ff.).

If the theist is asked why God does not destroy the demonic powers, he answers that God already has defeated them and will one day finally destroy them. God is destroying them in the most just way possible, viz., by permitting them the maximal moral freedom necessary with the minimal evil essential to achieve the optimally moral perfect world. The best way to defeat evil is to let it express itself; it is ultimately self-defeating. At any rate, it would be morally unworthy of God to nip evil in the bud simply because it is biting the divine hand. An infinitely perfect Being does not react impatiently or impulsively to the appearance of opposing forces. God readily concedes battles to win the war. One who is in sovereign control and motivated by infinite love is neither threatened nor intimidated by the finite forces of evil. Christ has already defeated evil (Heb. 2) and God will destroy it in due time (Rev. 20 - 22).

4. *Some physical evil is a necessary moral warning.* Physical pain is a blow in man's moral solar plexis. It hits morally lethargic men where it hurts. When a man is down physically, there is a greater chance that he will look up morally and spiritually. As C. S. Lewis succinctly stated it, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."[16] True, not all men are aroused positively by pain, but the opportunity is there for all. God is calling, whether all men are responding or not. Some do respond and it is better that the others be warned than that they meet their doom unawares. It certainly would not be morally right for the medically informed not to warn of the evils of lung cancer and heart disease to smokers. In fact, the cough and shortness of breath are God's way of warning smokers of physical evils to come. The toothache warns man of something worse coming, and a pain in the side or in the chest may be warnings of impending sickness. Surely God would be less than moral not to provide warnings of moral disaster to come. Physical evils often serve this role very effectively.

5. *Some physical evils are necessary components of a physical world.* There are instances of evil that are constitutive of the very processes of a natural world. Natural evil is a component of a physical world in several ways. (1) Some evil is a result of lower forms being used to sustain higher forms. A natural world is one

in which certain higher forms of life are dependent on lower forms. Animals feed on plants and minerals, plants feed on minerals, and man feeds on all of them. In such a world, the pain of the lower is necessary for the life of the higher. (2) Other natural evil results from the overlap of systems in the spatio-temporal continuum. Wherever there are two or more things vying for the same place at the same time, there will be conflicts. Such is indigenous to a world of physical forces. (3) Other evils result as by-products of a process that produces the overall balance of nature. If there is to be a sun to warm the earth for life and growth, it will also burn other things that are exposed to it too much, like human skin (which also serves other good purposes). If there is air to breathe and water to drink, then it will be possible for men to suffocate in water. None of these evil by-products is the intended result of the natural process, but they are a necessary result of the achievement of other natural goods. It is possible that floods, droughts, earthquakes, tornadoes, and other natural disasters are all necessary byproducts of a physical world. And since we have already ruled out regular miraculous intervention into the physical world (and the alternative of a nonphysical world), it follows that the kind of physical world we have with natural evils in it is compatible with the "best way" to obtain the best possible world.

It should be added that the present world with natural evil, even though it serves well as a condition to achieving the best possible world, is not the best kind of physical world possible. In contrast, an immortal resurrection body and a new heaven and a new earth without sickness, sorrow, and decay will be perfect.[17] And the reason God did not create the perfect physical world first is that the greatest moral perfectibility is not obtainable in any other kind of world than the natural type of world we have. The characteristics of a natural world are necessary constituents of a world that is the necessary condition for achieving the best world possible. These essential physical characteristics include the following factors found only in a physical world like our own: (1) the presence of pleasure to encourage man, (2) the presence of pain to warn him of moral consequences, (3) the existence of sex by which he can reproduce his kind and enlarge his creative freedom, (4) a material medium by which he can express his appreciation for God (e.g., art), and (5) an environment in which struggle and effort

are possible in order that higher goods can be achieved. All of these things are made possible by a material world. And each one contributes to the process of freedom and serves as part of the condition for achieving the greatest moral good possible.

In summation, there are many different functions served by physical evil. But all physical evil is necessary to the moral conditions of free creatures (human or angelic), which conditions are necessary for the achievement of the best possible world. Natural evils are necessary to a natural world and a natural world is essential to (or, at least not incompatible with) the conditions of full freedom that are necessary for the achievement of the best possible world.

OBJECTIONS TO THE THEISTIC SOLUTION TO PHYSICAL EVIL

We must face some residual problems with our theodicy that have not been explicitly answered in the foregoing discussion. Each objection will be stated and answered in the context of the solution we have proposed, even though the objections are sometimes leveled at different theodicies than the one suggested here.

1. This Theodicy Implies That the End Justifies the Means

The first objection to the "best way" solution implies that an evil means is the best way to obtain the best end. The view that a good end justifies performing evil means to reach it is an ethic rejected by most theists and many nontheists. How, then, can the theist justify this utilitarian approach?

The theist does not say that a good end justifies God's *performing* evil acts, but it only justifies God's *permitting* such acts. God cannot perform any evil, but He can permit evil in order to perform the good of bringing good out of evil. God is interested in bringing the greatest good for the greatest number, but not at the expense of performing or promoting any evil. God will, however, refrain from preventing some evil (i.e., He will permit men to use their freedom to do evil), only because He knows that He can achieve a morally perfect world in this way. In brief, God has utilitarian goals (the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run), but He does not use utilitarian means (doing evil that good may come) in order to achieve them. But ultimately, only God can *permit* evil in order to accomplish a greater good, since (a) only

God is omniscient and can foresee what the long-range results will be, and (b) only God is omnipotent and can guarantee that permitting evil means will help achieve the greatest good in the long run.

In brief, it is true that God works on an end-justifies-the-means philosophy but with two important differences than the way this is normally conceived: (1) The end of the greater good only justifies *permitting* evil as a condition for achieving this end, not promoting or performing any evil. God merely permits free creatures to exercise their freedom to do evil, knowing that He can bring a greater good out of it than if they were not permitted to do evil at all. (2) Permitting evil to gain the long-run good is ethical for God but not necessarily for men because: (a) First, only an infinite God can guarantee that a greater good will come from permitting evil. (b) In permitting freedom in order to achieve the highest moral good, God is acting in accord with the norm of His own absolutely perfect nature in order to determine what is the long-range good. That is, the means is good, not simply because it accords with the end (or brings the greatest good) but because this *end* is in accord with the *norm* of God's nature. In other words, God not only commands others to act in accord with His nature but He, too, in determining what is the greatest good in the end, is complying with the moral demands of His own nature.

2. This Theodicy Does Not Account for the Large Amount nor the Unequal Distribution of Physical Evil

Even granting that some or even much physical suffering can be accounted for along the lines suggested above, the amount of human suffering seems exorbitant. It would appear that much less suffering and a little more divine intervention would have been the case if there were an infinitely perfect and powerful God.

There are several observations relevant to this criticism: (1) First, certainly no finite mind is in a position to press this point. Only an infinite mind could calculate the precise amount of human suffering essential to obtaining a morally perfect world. (2) The theistic argument for an infinitely perfect God and the historical and experiential arguments that He does miraculously intervene in the world lend credibility to the belief that the right amount of evil is being allowed to accomplish the greatest good. (3) The

theodicy suggested here does not require weighing exact amounts of evil or measuring the degree of distribution, for two reasons: (a) a man is rewarded in the afterlife according to what he does in this life and (b) specific amounts and degrees of evil are not essential to our theodicy but only a certain kind of world where all kinds of evil are freely permitted and enough do occur to occasion the greatest moral achievements and the complete moral lesson (for all men) that all kinds of evil are always wrong. (4) Ultimately, it is necessary for theism to demonstrate only that *more* good than evil results from permitting freedom. That this "more" is not the "most" good achievable is what the antitheist must prove. And without superior knowledge it would seem that there is no way to actually prove that more good is possible without getting less freedom, which would be a lesser good.

In brief, the exact *amounts* and *distribution* of evil are not crucial to our theodicy but the full *opportunity* for freedom and evil and the learning of the lesson that all *kinds* of evil are wrong is essential.

3. This Theodicy Entails a Double Standard

If God declares good the process of evil that achieves a greater good but declares it evil for men to promote this evil, then there are two standards of good, one for God and another for men. For God condemns men for operating on an end-justifies-the-means ethic which He employs Himself.

There are several misconceptions entailed in this objection. (1) First, as was just pointed out, God does not employ an end-justifies-the-means ethic; God does not perform or promote evil in order that good may come. He merely *permits* evil because He can achieve a greater good with it than without it. (2) Permitting evil is not an evil for a Being who can achieve a greater good from it, and only God is such a Being who can guarantee the achievement of the greatest good in the long run from permitting evil. (3) Both the end and the means must be morally right for both God and man; and permitting the full exercise of finite freedom is morally right means to the morally best end. (4) God does not pronounce the evil process good for either Himself or anyone else; it is only the *end* that is pronounced good, not the evil *means*. The ugly "part" of the beautiful mosaic is not beautiful; in itself it is ugly. But it is part of an overall beauty. Likewise the dissonant chord

is not harmonious in itself; it is dissonant. But the whole to which it contributes is harmonious. This is not declaring evil good; evil *as such* is evil. But evil *as a means* to a greater good is not evil *as such*. Or, changing the illustration, the parent does not will his sick child the pain of the operation but the pleasure of restored health. Likewise, God does not will the performance of the evil but only the production of the good end obtained from permitting the evil.

(5) The same moral principle can be applied to God and creatures only analogously. For example, both God and man must love (i.e., will one's own good and the good of the other) but God must will His own good infinitely and the creature's good only finitely, because of the differences in their mode of being. This is not a double standard but the analogous application of the same standard to different objects. An everyday example will help. It is wrong for a man to uproot bushes out of his neighbor's yard but not out of his own yard. One is sovereign over the plants of his own yard, but he has no rights over the shrubs in his neighbor's yard. Now God is sovereign over all life. Hence, what would be murder for men is not murder of God. For God gives life and has the right to take it; men do not.

(6) There is only one standard for both God and man, viz., the nature of God. When God justifies the *end* (e.g., the greatest good for the greatest number) and the *means* of attaining that end (freedom), He is judging both in terms of the *norm* of His nature. There is only one standard (God's nature) by which God determined whether the end to be achieved (viz., a finitely perfect moral world) would be justified. And it is only in view of the norm of His nature that God can justify the end of producing a perfect world and the means of permitting evil to achieve such a world.

(7) When God permitted evil means to produce a good end, He was not thereby predestinating the world to be evil. God did not load the dice of life in favor of evil means to achieve good ends. God created the world in full awareness of what men would freely choose to do. And foreknowledge does not imply foreordination.[18] God knew how men would exercise their freedom but did not tilt the scales of freedom one way or the other. God foreknew what men would decide and so He created this kind of world in accordance with His foreknowledge (Rom. 8:29; 2 Peter 1:2). In

brief, God wills directly the good end; He wills only indirectly the evil means necessary to produce that good end. The reader has no doubt found himself willing the relief from a toothache directly but the painful means of obtaining this relief only indirectly as a necessary means of attaining this relief.

In brief, no double standard is involved in God's action to permit an evil means to obtain a good end, even though men are not permitted to do exactly the same thing, but: (a) men experience similar situations on a limited scale (e.g., parents giving more freedom to maturing children), yet (b) only God can achieve good ends by permitting evil on the long range, and (c) both God and man are committed to performing acts and producing ends that are in accord with the norm of their respective natures.

4. This Theodicy Implies That It Is Wrong to Alleviate Human Suffering

The most pointed criticism of this theodicy is that it would seem to necessitate an inhumanitarianism. For if suffering is the condition for a greater good, then in working against suffering one is eliminating the possibility of achieving the greater good. It is God's plan to use evil to bring about a greater good. Hence, if one works to eliminate all evil, he is working at cross purposes with God.

This objection is built on three mistaken notions. (1) First it assumes that God is promoting evil or at least that He is not working to alleviate it. As was already affirmed, God is not *promoting* or producing any evil in the world. And God is *permitting* evil only because it is a necessary condition to producing the greatest good. *If there were any other way to obtain optimal moral perfection, God would not even permit evil.* Further, God *is* working against evil. His moral law urges us not to do evil. He sends warnings against doing evil, and, He sends evil consequences for doing evil. God sent Christ to defeat evil and will send Him again to destroy evil (Heb. 2:14). The entire thrust of God's efforts on this planet have been an all-out attack on evil.

(2) Second, when man works against evil, he is not frustrating the purposes of God but fulfilling them. It is a misunderstanding of God's foreknowledge of free acts and God's commands to do good that misleads the antitheistic argument. Man's duty, like

God's duty, is not to promote the evil means to good ends; man's role is to work against all evil. In so doing, he is not working against God, because God is not working to promote evil means. God knows what evil means will be available for the achievement of the greater good, because God knows what every free creature will do with his freedom before he ever does it. Both God and men must be against the production of evil means as well as evil ends. But only God can permit evil means because only God can guarantee that a greater good will result from permitting evil.

(3) The third mistaken notion of the antitheistic objection to our kind of theodicy is that since God sent the plague of evil, it follows that men should not work against it lest they be fighting God. First of all, God did not cause the plague; man's free but evil choices did. God did not send the plague; He merely allowed it, because He knows that through it He can bring a greater good. Further, the Christian does not work merely against the *result* of of the plague which is death; he works against the *cause* of the plague which is sin. Or, in other words, the plague results from the misuse of the creature's freedom, and the Christian is working most earnestly to correct this source of evil. For by getting men to submit their will to God through Christ who died for the willfully evil, the Christian offers a cure for sin. Christianity fights sin at its source — the only truly effective way to fight the plague. Every other effort will be nothing more than a treatment of symptoms. This is not to say that Christians should not treat symptoms, they should. But what evil needs is a cure, not a cover-up. And every effort is being made by God, and should be made by men also, to eliminate the plague at its source. Thus, theism is not antihumanitarian. In fact, it is the only truly humanitarian view, for it alone permits man full freedom and yet guarantees a morally perfect world.

5. This Theodicy Exalts Human Freedom at the Expense of Divine Sovereignty

Another set of objections to our theodicy is that it both makes human freedom indeterminate and robs God of His sovereignty. Human actions are not determined by God or by anything else. God, who is allegedly the cause of all, turns out not to be the controlling cause of human actions. In fact, the sovereign God is

not really sovereign over the universe, because the creature can sovereignly determine his own destiny in opposition to what God desires for him.

There are two problems here: 1) the nature of human freedom and 2) its relation to divine sovereignty. First, as to the nature of freedom, we imply a view of moral self-determination. No moral action is externally determined nor is it indeterminate. Moral actions are self-determined. (1) Every moral action would have to be either (a) caused from without, (b) not caused, or (c) self-caused. (2) But to cause a moral action from without would be a violation of freedom, it would be determinism, and it would eliminate individual responsibility for the action. Ultimately, it would make God directly responsible for performing evil acts. (3) And not to be caused at all would make the act gratuitous, arbitrary, irresponsible, and unpredictable. But human acts are predictable and responsible (God knows what men will do with their freedom and holds them responsible for it).[18] (4) Hence, human moral acts must be self-caused or self-determined. (5) Now self-caused *acts* are not a contradiction (as self-caused *beings* are contradictory). For it is not impossible for someone to cause his own *becoming* (which is what free choice does), but it is impossible for someone to cause his own being. Men freely determine to become this or that, but they never determine their own *be*-ing. God alone is the Cause of the being of everything that exists (see chapter 9). (6) Hence, self-determination is neither contradictory nor irresponsible. A man is responsible for what he by moral choice comes to be. That is to say, he is responsible for his own free moral self-determination.

Secondly, how can God be in sovereign control of the world if man has the final say about his own destiny? Is it not an infringement on divine sovereignty to invest man with the ultimate decision about anything? The theistic reply is that God sovereignly willed human freedom. God determined that man would be a self-determining creature. God caused the man to have self-causality of moral thought and action. Human freedom is delegated sovereignty. The Sovereign made man sovereign over his own moral destiny. Nevertheless, God is in control over the whole process because (1) God is operating through the process of freedom in accordance with His own foreknowledge; God sees what freedom

will do and that He can bring a greater good out of it; (2) God is in sovereign control of the end in which men's free choices will be permanentized according to their own will so that free choice to do evil will bring eternal bondage to the autonomy of one's own evil will, and the freedom to do the good will bring eternally liberation to an infinite good. In brief, God (the primary Cause) is working in and through the self-causality of human freedom (the secondary cause) to produce the greatest good for the greatest number (the final cause) in accordance with the absolute perfection of His own nature (the exemplar cause).

As a matter of fact, this view of human self-determination is not only compatible with God's sovereignty but it exalts God's dignity. God is not threatened by the full exercise of human freedom. He knows that ultimately men will say either, "*Thy* will be done" or "*my* will be done." A God who would permit only the former is less than magnanimous. The fact that God will allow the creature to bite giving His hand exalts His love in the highest moral degree. And the fact that God does not coerce anyone to love and obey Him but withholds the infinite persuasion (of the Beatific Vision) until a man has willed to do His will forever indicates, too, that He has elicited love from men in the most morally worthy way conceivable. Infinite Love will receive love from finite men only if it is freely given. Heart-twisting, like arm-twisting, is beneath the dignity of the Divine. Only those who will to do His will know the true and eternal Good which God is.

Summary and Conclusion

Physical evil is essentially connected with moral evil. Moral evil is the best way to produce the optimally perfect moral world, and physical evil is a necessary part of this kind of evil world. Physical evil is necessitated in several ways: it is a condition, consequence, component, and warning in a morally free world. The evil that is not directly or indirectly traceable to human freedom is attributable to evil spirits. No exact measurement of evil is necessitated by this theodicy but only that the full exercise of evil be permitted to serve both as the ground of achieving the maximally perfect world and as the means of demonstrating to man via the exercise of his own free choice that doing God's will is the only true freedom. The free choice to do evil results in the bondage of a man's choices,

in the death of freedom to do good. Physical evils are a necessary condition and concomitant of the best kind of world for achieving the best of all possible moral worlds.

Notes Chapter Seventeen

1. H. J. McCloskey, "God and Evil" in *The Philosophical Quarterly* (April, 1960), reprinted in Nelson Pike, *God and Evil*.

2. E. H. Madden and P. H. Hare give the most comprehensive list of objections, *Evil and the Concept of God*, ch. 4. See also Nelson Pike, *God and Evil*, pp. 67-83.

3. See F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, II, 197-205, reprinted in *Philosophy of Religion*, G. L. Abernethy and T. A. Langford, pp. 470-477.

4. See W. H. Sheldon, "God and Polarity," in *Basic Problems in Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Bronstein, p. 513.

5. See C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, ch. 6.

6. Lebniz, *Theodicy*.

7. This view is similar to the previous one, but it is listed separately by Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, pp. 60ff.

8. See John Stuart Mill, *Nature and Utility of Religion*, reprinted in *The Existence of God*, ed. John Hick, pp. 114-120.

9. See *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, s.v. "Good and Evil," by W. D. Niven.

10. See Austin Farrer, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited*, pp. 71-94.

11. Several theists have used this kind of argument, including Irenaeus, Schleiermacher, and William Temple. See Temple's work, *Nature, Man and God*, partly reprinted in Abernethy and Langford, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 451-462.

12. Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God*, p. 53.

13. See Genesis 3:15ff.; Romans 5:12; 8:18ff.

14. See Hugh Silvester, *Arguing With God*, p. 32.

15. See Revelation 12:9; Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4.

16. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 81.

17. See Romans 8:18ff.; Revelation 21-22.

18. If God can foreknow a world where men freely choose not to sin (which we granted the antitheist), then there is no reason He cannot foreknow a world where men freely do evil, which He will then use as a condition for a greater good. And if the antitheist wishes to withdraw the possibility of God foreknowing a sinless world without foreordaining it, then he has thereby withdrawn his main argument against theism. For in that case, it was not really possible to create free beings who would simply never choose to sin. And if this is so, then the antitheist cannot object to God creating free beings who do sin, on the grounds that a sinless free being was possible.

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