Philosophy of Religion

Randy Ridenour
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Oklahoma Baptist University

January 2016

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Preface

Why should a Christian minister study the philosophy of religion? The simple answer is that it is the only way that we can maximize our impact on the world. This can be demonstrated in three ways. First, Christians have the misconception that all you need to know is the Bible. For those of us in the reformation tradition, the Scripture is authoritative for all matters of belief. Our starting point is that the Bible is true. Other people don't assume that, however. They will require some reason to believe in the Bible. When asked why they believe the Scripture to be true, most Christians will reply something like "Because all Scripture is inspired, just read 2 Tim. 3:16." Citing a verse to prove the Bible is true to someone who doesn't already believe it won't convince them. Some kind of philosophical argument is needed.

Second, when you critically examine your beliefs, those beliefs become stronger. As we grow up, we get our beliefs from authority figures such as parents, ministers, and also from our peers. Are those beliefs really our own? Only after we've examined them and found that there are good reasons for holding them. Plato said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Compare that statement to Paul's in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "Test everything. Hold on to the good."

Third, we have an obligation to ask the hard questions about our faith. Other people are asking those questions, and we have a calling to witness to, minister to, and make disciples of them. If we have never considered the difficult questions, we won't be able to answer them when they are asked. This only results in a lost ministry opportunity. For example, when you study philosophy you learn arguments for the existence of God, but you also learn arguments against. Other people know those arguments well, and if you have no response, you will never reach them. There is nothing in good philosophy that conflicts with Christian belief. Good philosophy always leads to truth, and truth never conflicts with the Truth. We still need to study philosophy that we think is wrong, because we need to know not only that it is wrong, but why it is wrong.

So, a person who already has a commitment to Christian belief might see this course as an opportunity to reflect on those beliefs and strengthen them. Many of us have grown up in religious families and have never really examined the nature of our religious beliefs. Critically examining those beliefs is an important part of the process by which we make them our own. Finally, most people in the world have strong beliefs concerning these issues. Those beliefs are the basis for how they perceive themselves and the world around them. We cannot truly understand others unless we understand the reasons for their beliefs. If we do not truly understand them, we cannot hope to reach them. This course will be an exciting journey, may God fill that journey with peace and joy.

Randy Ridenour, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Oklahoma Baptist University

NOTE: This text is provided as a service to the students of the Northern Ghana Baptist Theological Seminary. It is a draft, so please do not cite or share with people outside the seminary.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 What is Philosophy of Religion?

As stated above, the philosophy of religion is essentially philosophical reflection on topics regarding the rationality and coherence of religious belief. So, to understand what philosophy of religion is, one must first understand the foundational concepts of philosophy and religion.

What is philosophy? As you would guess, there is no uncontroversial single definition. One way to come to understand the nature of philosophy is to explore how the term is used in everyday use. If you listen carefully to your own speech and that of those around you, you will realize that the term is used in ordinary discourse. These are just some examples of expressions that are commonly overheard: "My philosophy is...," or "I live by the philosophy that...." Everyone claims to have a philosophy of life, whether or not they claim to be a philosopher. What usually completes these expressions is a statement of key beliefs that the speaker feels form the core of the human experience as he sees it.

As you listen to people express their philosophies of life, you will also notice that these beliefs are rarely, if ever, supported by any evidence. They are usually merely asserted. Imagine that you are engaged in a conversation with George who asserts this claim: "My philosophy is that you should do whatever makes you happy." How do you think George would react if you responded to this assertion with "Why do you think that?" More than likely, he would have no good response you your question. There are at least two reasons for this. First, we do not spend very much time or intellectual energy examining why we hold such beliefs. Second, even if we were to devote the time and energy to the examination of our core beliefs, we would find that,

for the most part, they are extremely difficult to prove true or false. So, let's assume that the everyday meaning of the term 'philosophy' is this: a set of beliefs that are difficult to prove are true, but are important to the way we understand ourselves and the world around us.

The academic study of philosophy, then, is the study of those core beliefs. Although it is impossible to give a precise test that could be used to determine if a particular question was a philosophical one or not, there are some important common features that such questions often have. The questions that philosophers are concerned with are very general. The question "Does God exist?" is certainly a philosophical question. The question "What does God want me to do with my life?" is probably not. This is not to say that the second question is not important. It is just not in the scope of the discipline of philosophy. It is something that I, as a Christian believer, would certainly ask; but not one that I would engage as a philosopher.

Philosophers usually rely primarily on reason to answer these questions, rather than observation. This means that philosophy is not an empirical science like physics, biology, or chemistry. Philosophers do perform experiments of a certain kind, but these are thought experiments that do not involve laboratories and test subjects. For example, recall our friend, George, who believes that people ought to do whatever makes them happy. A way to test this using a thought experiment is to consider a person that is made happy by abusing children. If George were to deny that the person ought to abuse children, then George's philosophical theory has failed the test. George cannot coherently believe that people ought to do anything that makes them happy, and that some things should not be done no matter what.

Although philosophy is not considered an empirical science, this does not mean that philosophers never appeal to any observations whatsoever. This does mean that the observations that philosophers make are observations that can be made by almost anyone. You will find that one of the most famous arguments for the existence of God begins with the observation that the word operates in an orderly fashion. Such observations require no special experimental equipment; they require only that the person simply look at the world. The experience that is appealed to in this case, is a very common one. So with this in mind, let's adopt this working definition of philosophy: philosophy is the study using primarily speculative means of those concepts and beliefs that form the core of our value system and understanding of reality. In other words, philosophy is an attempt to analyze and evaluate these beliefs.

Philosophical issues and questions can be divided into three major areas. The first is metaphysics. Metaphysics is the study of the fundamental nature of reality. The most important subdivision of metaphysics is ontology, which

explores and analyzes the kinds of things that exist. The second major area of philosophy is epistemology, which is the study of knowledge. The third area is ethics. There is also a specific area of philosophy for every intellectual activity in which humans engage: philosophy of mind, philosophy of art, philosophy of science, etc. Each one of these specific areas explore the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical issues that relate to its subject matter. In philosophy of religion, one begins to explore these issues by asking these questions: Does God exist? How can we know? How would the existence or non-existence of God affect the nature of morality?

One thing that beginning philosophy students find most disturbing is that there seem to be many questions but few, if any, conclusive, answers. For every philosophical argument, no matter how good, there are reasonably good objections. In fact, nothing in philosophy can be proved to be true beyond a shadow of a doubt. This does not mean, however, that all philosophical positions are equally good. Philosophical theories are evaluated using three criteria: internal consistency, explanatory power, and simplicity. A theory is internally consistent if it does not contradict itself. A theory has great explanatory power if it helps us to understand other features of reality. Unfortunately, simplicity is not very simple to define. Theoretical simplicity is an intuitive notion. There are several senses in which theories can be simple or complex. An important kind of theoretical simplicity is ontological simplicity. A theory is ontologically simple if it is committed to fewer existing kinds of things than its competitors.

The major tool that philosophers use to attempt to establish the truth of a philosophical claim is the argument. An argument is a set of statements, one of which is intended to be proved by the rest. The one that is intended to be proved is the conclusion, the reasons that are offered in support of the conclusion are called the premises of the argument.

Arguments are classified as either deductive or inductive. An argument is deductive if the person presenting the argument intended the premises to absolutely guarantee the truth of the conclusion. If the intention was simply that the premises establish the probable truth of the conclusion, then the argument is considered inductive.

Deductive arguments are either valid or invalid. An argument is deductively valid if the truth of the premises succeed in guaranteeing the truth of the conclusion. It is impossible for the a deductively valid argument to have true premises and a false conclusion. It is not necessary that a valid argument actually have true premises, but if those premises were true, then the conclusion would also have to be true. For example, consider the following argument:

1. If Tulsa is the capital of Oklahoma, then Oklahoma is the largest state in the country.
2. Tulsa is the capital of Oklahoma.

∴ Oklahoma is the largest state in the country.

Both premises of this argument are false. The conclusion of the argument is also false. Nevertheless, the argument is valid. If the premises were true, then the conclusion would have to also be true. Validity is not a function of the actual truth value of the premises and conclusion, but rather a function of the logical relationship between the premises and the conclusion.

If an argument is not valid, then it is invalid. Here is an example of an invalid argument:

1. If Lassie is a dog, then Lassie is a mammal.
2. Lassie is a mammal.

∴ Therefore, Lassie is a dog.

Both the premises and conclusion are true. The truth of the premises do not guarantee the truth of the conclusion, however. One way to show this is to tell a story that makes the premises true, but the conclusion false. Imagine that Lassie were the name of a cat. Both premises would then be true, but it would be false that Lassie is a dog.

So, when offering a deductive argument for a conclusion, validity is obviously important. If the argument is invalid, the premises are irrelevant to the truth of the conclusion. As you can see in the first example, however, validity alone does not guarantee a good argument. A good argument is valid and has true premises. This is called a sound argument. Sound arguments always have true conclusions. Since they are valid, it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false. Since the premises are in fact true, then, the conclusion must also be true.

Inductive arguments never guarantee the truth of the conclusion; at best, they simply establish its likelihood. It is therefore pointless to speak of their being valid or invalid. Inductive arguments are classified as strong or weak, depending on how likely the truth of the premises makes the truth of the conclusion.

Religion may be even more difficult to define than philosophy. It is not simply belief in God, nor is it worshipping God. There are belief systems (primarily Asian religions) that are considered to be religions, but do not include a belief in any God. Religion has been defined as an attitude of awe towards the divine, the supernatural, or the mystery of life, accompanied by

beliefs that affect the basic patterns of individual and group behavior. The word comes from the Latin 'religare,' which means 'to bind.' Religious belief is traditionally what most deeply binds a society together.

Ninian Smart identified six characteristics that religions have, which he called the "*dimensions of religion.*" They are

1. The experiential dimension—the feelings generated by the religion in the believers.
2. The mythic dimension—how the religion conveys an understanding of ultimate reality in terms of symbolic speech and stories.
3. The doctrinal dimension—the basic beliefs of the religion.
4. The ethical dimension—the moral law woven into the fabric of the religion.
5. The ritual dimension—the practices of the particular religion.
6. The social dimension—how the religion structures interpersonal relationships.
7. The material dimension—how the religion uses ordinary objects to symbolize the sacred.[1]

The beliefs of a religion generally concern five different topics. First, humans have a problem. The problem may be ignorance, sin, weakness, etc. Second, this problem requires a resolution. Third, the resolution somehow involves something that is transcendent. Fourth, the transcendent entity, whatever it may be, can be known. Finally, something is required in order to achieve the resolution.[2]

The primary kind of religious belief that we will focus on in this course is *classical theism.* According to classical theism, God is a transcendent spiritual being who is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnibenevolent (perfectly good).

Now, we can see that philosophy of religion involves the analysis and critical evaluation of religious beliefs. It is always frightening to attempt to critically evaluate the beliefs that you consider most important, but it must be

[1] Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[2] William Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 4th (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

done. Why? If you want to be a minister, you must also be a theologian. If you want to be a theologian, you must also be a philosopher.

Where does your theology come from? Most of those in the evangelical tradition would reply that it comes from the Christian Scriptures. But, how do you know that the Bible is true? When asked this, the common reply is an appeal to the inspiration of Scripture based on 2 Timothy 3:16 or 2 Peter 1:20. The argument then is this: If 2 Timothy 3:16 is true, then Scripture is true. 2 Timothy 3:16 is true, therefore, Scripture is also true. This is a valid argument, but it is not likely to convince anyone who doesn't already believe the conclusion. To convince anyone else, you must be prepared to give some kind of philosophical argument.

Plato famously reports Socrates as claiming that the unexamined life is not worth living. A fitting paraphrase is that the unexamined belief is not worth believing. Take this course as a challenge to examine your beliefs, and in so doing, come to understand them, strengthen them, and better present them to a questioning world.

1.2 Questions

1. What is your definition of religion?
2. Explain the six dimensions of religion listed in the text.
3. What is a belief?
4. What are the five basic areas concerning religious belief? Explain your own religious belief with respect to these areas.
5. What is natural theology?
6. How does the analytic approach to philosophy of religion differ from the phenomenological approach?
7. Define classical theism.
8. What is the difference between reflective belief and unreflective belief? Are most believers reflective or unreflective? Is there any advantage that one kind of belief has over the other?
9. Explain the concepts of validity, invalidity, soundness, inductive strength, and weakness.
10. Change the argument presented in the second example so that it is valid.

Chapter 2

Religious Experience

William James called religious experience "the deeper source of religion..." and our beliefs and doctrine only "secondary products."[1] All religions have an experiential component, and the religious belief of an individual is often thought to be grounded in that individual's religious experience. Consider the experiences that you have with respect to your own religious activities. For most of us, religious activity is filled with visual, auditory, and tactile experiences of all kinds. For instance, we might see the beauty of the stained glass windows of the church, or hear the choir sing as the organist plays, or even taste the juice or wine as we observe Protestant Communion or Catholic Eucharist.

One could argue that these experiences, however, are nothing more than ordinary experiences in a religious context. Others might claim that there is something extra-ordinary about at least some of these experiences, that the worshipper experiences something more than the colors of a pretty window or the sounds of an organ. Somehow, the worshipper experiences something that transcends the ordinary things of this world. We often speak of experiencing God, but just what is the nature of such experience? Is it a direct experience of God? Is it an indirect experience of God through ordinary things? Could it simply be an experience of the ordinary that is misinterpreted as an experience of God? As you can guess, each one of these options has its adherents.

We have many different kinds of experiences. Some are perceptions of other things, as in the experience of the tree in one's backyard. Some of our experiences are feelings, such as when one experiences joy or sadness. Both of these have been suggested as the proper account of religious experience,

[1] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916).

and they are discussed in the text. Also discussed is Richard Swinburne's account and defense of religious experience. Since his account is particularly important, I would like to focus on it.

According to Richard Swinburne in his book *The Existence of God*,[2] there are five kinds of religious experience. The first is a perception of God by perceiving an ordinary non-religious object. This might be the experience that the believer has when seeing the beauty of the mountains or a newborn child.

The second is an experience of some unusual public object. This could be a common vision experienced by pilgrims at some religious shrine, or it could be a strong feeling of the presence of God experienced by those attending a church service.

The third kind of religious experience is a private sensation that can be described with ordinary language. There are people who, in the midst of praying about some difficult situation in their lives, report experience a feeling of peace, that somehow, everything will be fine in the end. This feeling of confidence that is gained is private, it belongs only to that individual, but it can be described in ordinary terms.

The fourth kind of religious experience is a private sensations that cannot be described. Such experiences are most often associated with mysticism. The experience is said to be ineffable, which means indescribable, or incapable of being expressed. The 13th century Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, evidently had such an experience late in his life. On December 6, 1273, he experienced something as he worshipped. All that he could say about this experience was that everything that he had written now seemed to him to be worthless.

Swinburne's final kind of religious experience is that of having no sensation whatsoever. In many Asian religions, Zen Buddhism, for example, this is believed to be the ultimate goal of religious meditation.

Swinburne's taxonomy of religious experience appears to be exhaustive, and not experiences need be of the same kind. Regardless what one decides about the kind of religious experience a particular experience is, there are some important questions that must be asked. First, why do some people have such experiences while others (even other believers) do not? Second, should such experiences be taken as good evidence for the existence of God or a supernatural aspect of reality?

Swinburne has responses to both questions. If God exists, we would expect him to do something to make Himself known to humans. Swinburne claims

[2]Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

that we would not expect God to do so much, however, that His presence is completely transparent. This would place too great a limitation on human freedom. If God's existence, justice, desires, and intentions were completely evident, our belief in him and responses to His will would not be voluntary, but would be forced. It is as if you were traveling through a city with an omniscient police force, one that you could not possibly deceive. The city also has an extreme punishment for every violation of the law. Would you feel that you were voluntarily obeying the laws of the city, or would you feel that you really had no choice?

Swinburne believes that one's choice to obey the law in such a city would be much like one's choice to believe in and obey God, if God were to make Himself known with no possibility of doubt whatsoever. Consider this study guide that you are now reading. You can feel it, see it, and hear the sound that is made as you turn the pages. You believe that it exists. Is that belief free, or is it compelled given your experience? Do you choose to believe that the book exists, or do you simply find yourself believing it given that have the experiences that you do. You probably find that you are not really free to believe that book does not exist, because your experience overwhelms any real possibility of choice.

Swinburne's argument, if successful, has two advantages for the theist. First, it explains why religious experience seems qualitatively different from ordinary experiences. If God wants our belief in him to be free, then experiencing God would have to be different from experiencing a book, tree, or a human being. Second, it explains why some people claim to have religious experiences while others do not. If religious experience is designed by God to be somewhat muted and not overwhelming, then it would easily be misinterpreted by nonbelievers. Of course, there are other ways to explain these things. In the section on Reformed Epistemology, we will look at some of these alternative explanations.

So, Swinburne can explain the peculiar nature of religious experience. Should it be taken as evidence for the existence of God? Swinburne claims that it should, just like seeming to experience a tree is good evidence for the existence of the tree. Notice that I said "seeming to experience a tree." You cannot experience a tree and there not exist any trees; likewise, you cannot experience God and he not exist.

This is important to avoid begging the question against the nonbeliever. The argument should not be "I have experienced God, therefore God exists." The argument is valid, but unpersuasive. The person who doubts the truth of the conclusion (God exists), will under no circumstances be inclined to grant the truth of the premise (I have experienced God). The argument should

rather be "I have had an experience that seems to be one of God, therefore God exists."

This does not significantly weaken the argument however. In fact, if we were honest, we would say that it is possible that we could be wrong about the tree that we experience. We could be hallucinating, having a dream, or being deceived by God. Even so, having an experience that seems to be one of a tree is very good evidence for the existence of a tree.

This is what Swinburne calls the *Principle of Credulity*. Ordinarily, having an experience is good evidence for belief in the existence of the apparent object of that experience. In the absence of any special considerations that would count against the experience, a religious experience ought to be taken by the person who has it as genuine. Since it is impossible to have a genuine experience without the existence of the object of that experience, religious experiences ought to be taken by those that have them as good evidence for the existence of God.

What are the special considerations that must be absent? First, one must not be able to show that the experience was had under a condition that was found to be unreliable in the past. For instance, consider the things that people claim to see while under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs, or the sounds that you hear while at home alone on a dark, stormy night. The persons having such experiences probably should not take them to be genuine, however, since such conditions have been shown to produce unreliable experiences in the past. Second, one must not be able to show that the apparent object of the experience was probably not present or probably did not cause the experience. Imagine that I thought I saw the President while at a convention in Dallas, but later hear that he had been in Europe for the entire week. Given this, it was highly unlikely that my experience was genuine. I should not believe that the President was in Dallas at the convention, since, whatever caused my experience, it was not likely to have been the President.

So, does religious experience fail these tests? Are the conditions under which people ordinarily have religious experiences usually unreliable, or unlikely to have been caused by God? Believers do not usually have religious experiences under the influence of anything that causes the senses to be unreliable. One would have to show that people usually have religious experiences under unreliable conditions, but how would one show that? I suppose one could show it by proving that religious experience fails the second test. To do this, one must show that people usually have religious experiences when God is not present. How could one show this? Presumably, one could show this by proving that God does not exist. But in the absence of such a proof, people should take their religious experiences to be genuine.

What about someone who has not had such an experience? Should the personal experience of a person provide any evidence for the existence of the object of that experience to anyone else at all? Possibly, it depends on what one thinks about the person who has had the experience. Imagine that I tell you that in the Garden of the Gods, in Colorado Springs, there is a rock formation that looks exactly like two camels kissing. You then ask me how I know that such a rock exists, and I reply that I have seen it myself. Should you believe me? In the absence of any special considerations, yes. So long as you have no reason to think that I had this experience under unreliable conditions, or have no independent evidence that that such a rock formation does not exist, or have no reason to believe that I would lie about such a thing, you should probably believe me. If my experience conflicts with your own experience, then you probably should not.

Now, let's imagine that you have had religious experiences and I have not. Does my experience conflict with yours? When do experiences conflict? Imagine that you have never seen the Kissing Camels in Colorado Springs. Does you failure to have the experience conflict with my having it? That depends on why you failed to have the experience. The first question that should be asked is this: did you honestly look for it? If we were both looking in the same direction, presumably at the same exact location, and one saw it, but the other didn't, then that counts as a conflict. If you have never been to Colorado Springs, however, then your having never seen anything there shouldn't be thought to conflict with my seeing something. So, what about those who fail to have religious experiences? Have they simply not happened to have ever had one, or have they honestly been seeking to experience God, but have never been able to experience Him? If it is the former, then their failure to have a religious experience should not count against those who have had them. I have never had a migraine headache, but I don't believe that my failure to have one constitutes good evidence against those who claim to have them.[3]

So, there is yet no sufficient reason to doubt one's religious experience. One should also be careful not to infer too much from one's religious experience, however. Your experience of the tree presumably tells you a great deal about what the tree is like. We tend to correlate properties of the mental image with properties of the object that causes that image. Given the likely image, you might should probably believe that the object has leaves, a bark-covered trunk,

[3]See William J. Wainwright, *Mysticism, A Study of its Nature, Cognitive Value, and Moral Implications* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), for more tests of the reliability of religious experience.

and several branches. Given your experience, you can have fairly detailed knowledge of the object of that experience. This is because there is a great deal of cognitive content to the experience.

Now, consider a religious experience that is commonly reported, an experience of the presence of God, let's say. What does this experience enable one to know about God? That depends on how much cognitive content there is in the experience. Now, consider the traditional properties, or attributes, of God. God, in classical theism, is thought to be infinitely powerful, loving, and morally good. It is not likely that any religious experience is sufficient to completely support these attributes of God. The believer might experience something that she interprets as the presence of a very powerful, knowledgeable, or loving being, but what possible experience could only be caused by a being with unlimited power, knowledge, or love?

Understand that this does not mean that one's religious experienced was not caused by a being like the one of classical theism. Presumably, the experience is compatible with God's being unlimited with respect to power, knowledge, and moral goodness. It is just that the experience is probably also compatible with God having certain limits with respect to these things. This means that a genuine religious experience would be compatible with the existence of the God of classical theism, but not entail the existence of such a being. [4] If so, then religious experience is not enough in itself to justify belief in any of the major world religions. Something else is required, be it philosophical argument or revelation.

2.1 Questions

1. Explain Swinburne's five types of religious experience. Give examples of each one. Which do you think is the most common type?

2. Which of Swinburne's types would provide the best justification for religious belief? Which would provide the worst?

3. What is the Principle of Credulity? Is it plausible? Give some conditions under which the principle would fail.

[4] To say that x entails y is to say that there is a valid argument from x to y, or it is impossible for x to be true and y false. In this case, a religious experience entails that God is infinitely powerful if and only if it is impossible to have such an experience and God be limited in power.

4. What is your position on the possibility of religious experience as justification for religious belief? How much of your religious belief system is fully justified by your religious experience?

5. If religious experience cannot provide a complete justification for religious belief, can it provide a partial one? Explain.

6. How diverse is the range of religious experience as reported by humans? Is there any core that is common to these reports?

7. Is there any kind of experience that you can imagine that would count against your religious belief? If so, what would it be?

8. If there is no possible experience that would count as evidence against your belief, does that present a problem for justifying religious belief on the basis of experience?

Chapter 3

Faith and Reason

What is the relationship between faith and reason? Is religious faith rational, irrational, or non-rational? Is belief in God something that can be proved using reason or is it contrary to reason? Is the believer doing something wrong when examining evidence or giving proofs? As Tertullian famously asked, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"

In ways, this issue can be understood as a conflict between two different groups that can be found in each one of the major the major world religions, including Christianity. One group emphasizes evidence, argument, and belief based on reasons. The other emphasizes experience, feeling, and belief based on something that cannot be expressed. In the medieval period of Christianity, these two groups were the scholastics and the mystics. The scholastics were committed to natural theology, but others saw this as an excessive intellectualizing of the faith.

Mysticism was, in many ways, a reaction to this extreme rationalism. Mystics generally denied the need for a rational basis for one's faith, instead they stressed the importance of a direct encounter with God. Every major religion has had a mystical component at one time or another. William James defined mysticism as an immediate experience of the divine. There are four characteristics of mystical experience. First, mystical experiences are often thought to be ineffable. That is, they cannot be expressed or explained to another. The person who has had the experience cannot convey what it was like to anyone else. Second, the experience has a noetic content, that is, it is apprehended or understood by the one who had undergone it. Mystical experiences have meaning to those who have them. Third, they are transient. The experiences are fleeting and temporary. They are not permanent states.

Finally, they are passive. A mystical experience is something that a person has, not something a person does.

You might consider medieval scholasticism and mysticism to be two extreme positions with respect to faith and reason. What place does reason have in religion? Surely, it is mistaken to claim that reason has no role whatsoever. Reason can be a great aid in both teaching and understanding what we believe. The interesting question is this: what role does reason have in proving, or validating what we believe?

A common position is what the text calls "Strong Rationalism." This is often given the name "Evidentialism." Evidentialism is the position that one ought only believe what one can prove to be true, given the evidence. There are may theists who are evidentialists; there are also atheists who are evidentialists. The former believe that the have sufficient evidence for the existence of God, while the latter believe there is no such evidence.

Theistic evidentialists include Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who are responsible for some of the most famous arguments for the existence of God. The best example of an atheistic evidentialist is W.K. Clifford. In the work cited in the text, Clifford argues for this principle:

C: It is always (morally) wrong for someone to believe something without sufficient evidence.

To argue for this principle Clifford uses the example of a ship owner, which is found in the text on page 46. The example is persuasive at first glance; but on further reflection, the principle cannot possibly be true. To understand this, let's assume that C is true. If so, then it would be wrong to believe it without sufficient evidence, but what evidence would be sufficient to show that it is never permissible to believe something without good evidence? Surely, Clifford's example, no matter how good, is insufficient to show that such belief is always wrong. In fact, there seems to be no possible body of evidence sufficient to support C. So, if C is true, it is morally wrong to believe it. Given this, the only reasonable thing to do is to reject C.

Anti-evidentialists believe that reason, evidence, and proof are neither required nor important for religious belief. Fideism is a kind of anti-evidentialism. The fideist believes that faith is crucial for religious belief, and that believing on the basis of evidence is incompatible with faith.

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Theistic evidentialists include Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who are responsible for some of the most famous arguments for the existence of God. The best example of an atheistic evidentialist is W.K. Clifford. In the reading that follows in this chapter, Clifford argues for this principle:

C: It is always (morally) wrong for someone to believe something without sufficient evidence.

To argue for this principle Clifford uses the example of a ship owner, which is found in the text on page 46. The example is persuasive at first glance; but on further reflection, the principle cannot possibly be true. To understand this, let's assume that C is true. If so, then it would be wrong to believe it without sufficient evidence, but what evidence would be sufficient to show that it is never permissible to believe something without good evidence? Surely, Clifford's example, no matter how good, is insufficient to show that such belief is always wrong. In fact, there seems to be no possible body of evidence sufficient to support C. So, if C is true, it is morally wrong to believe it. Given this, the only reasonable thing to do is to reject C.

Anti-evidentialists believe that reason, evidence, and proof are neither required nor important for religious belief. Fideism is a kind of anti-evidentialism. The fideist believes that faith is crucial for religious belief, and that believing on the basis of evidence is incompatible with faith.

3.1 Pascal's Wager

Faith, Reason, and Evidence

Pascal (1326-1662), another important fideist, does not reject reason. In his work, the Pensees, he says that "Reason is not contrary to reason" and to think so would be both "absurd and ridiculous." Nevertheless, he is very skeptical of the value of the traditional arguments for the existence of God. According to Pascal, such arguments could only convince a few who have the education and training required to follow complex philosophical arguments. Even then, he believes, they can only convince the mind. They fail, though, to "convince the heart" or provide the necessary ground for a devoted faith.

Finally, they, at best, prove the existence of a generic deity, and not "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

He does grant that there is great evidence for the existence of God. There is the apparent design that we have already discussed, the testimony of the saints, the occurrence of miracles, and revelation. On the other hand, there is disorder in the world, evil, and reasons to doubt the miracle accounts that are reported. Where does this leave us? In Pascal's words, there is "too much to deny, too little to be sure." This evidence is sufficient to convince anyone who genuinely seeks God or already has faith. The problem, Pascal contends, is not with the evidence, it is with human nature itself.

Pascal believes that there are three reasons for the ambiguity of the evidence. First, when we seek evidence, we are using the mind. God, however, is pure love and cannot be comprehended by those who do not love him. Second, we are fallen, sinful human beings. This affects not only our ability to do what is right, but also our ability to fairly assess evidence. Finally, if the evidence were compelling and clear that an omnipotent and omniscient God existed, then religion would be compelled, not free. God, however, desires a free response, not a compelled belief. So, given these three reasons, it should be no surprise, according to Pascal, that the evidence is so ambiguous.

Rational Decisions

Imagine that you are in a position to decide among several alternative actions. How do you decide what to do? Sometimes, we base our decision on the consequences of the alternative possible actions. What happens, in the end, is determined by two things: 1) what you decide to do, and 2) what the facts are. For instance, imagine that you are deciding whether to go to the movies or stay in the dorm to review your reading notes in case there is a pop-quiz in class tomorrow. You really want to see the movie, and you don't think that a quiz is very likely. The ultimate outcome is determined by your choice, which you control, and certain other facts (namely facts about future quizzes), which you do not control. It is rational to do the action that will have the best outcome, what philosophers call the greatest level of utility.

We represent this decision in a decision matrix. The rows represent the possible actions that are available to you. The columns represent the possible states of the world. In the cells, we insert some utility value. For example, if you go to the movie and there is no quiz, everything is good. If you go to the movie and there is a quiz, then it's bad. So, going to the movie has high utility if there is no quiz; low utility, otherwise. So, what should you do? It depends on several factors. Let's assume that you care about your grade in

Table 3.1: Movies or Study?

	Quiz	No Quiz
Go to Movie	Very Bad	Good
Stay Home	Very Good	Reasonably Good

Table 3.2: Coin Toss Game

	Heads	Tails
Call Heads	$2	$0
Call Tails	$0	$2

the class and that a quiz, if there is one, would affect that grade very much. What you should do, then, depends especially on what you know about the likelihood of having a quiz and how badly you want to see the movie. Now, imagine that you will have several opportunities later to see the movie and none of them will interfere with any studies. So, a decision matrix for this decision would look something like this.

Remember, the only thing you control is which row gets selected. So, if you choose the first row, the best outcome you can have is good, but the worst is very bad. If you choose the second, the worst is still reasonably good, but the best is very good. What should you do?[1] This is called a decision under uncertainty This means that you have no idea how to assess probabilities to the various states of the world. You can't say how likely it is that there will be a quiz.

Sometimes, you can say what the probabilities will be. These are called decisions under risk. Wagers are good examples. Let's say that you have a chance to play a game in which you guess the outcome of a coin toss. If you get it right, you win two dollars. If you get it wrong, then you win nothing.

What should you do here? It doesn't really matter since the best outcome and the worst outcome is same on both rows. If you play the game, what should you expect to gain? What you can reasonably expect is called the expected utility of a decision. In this case, it's important to be able to calculate the expected utility, since you'll need to know the maximum amount that it's rational to pay to play the game. The expected utility of a choice is calculated by multiplying the probability that the choice is right by the payoff, then subtracting the probability that the choice is wrong multiplied by the cost. Here's the formula:

[1]Notice that I'm not asking what you would do. Like Pascal, I believe that our ability to reason is susceptible to certain less than noble desires on our part.

Table 3.3: Another Coin Toss Game

	Heads	Tails
Call Heads	\$2	\$0
Call Tails	\$−20	\$0

$$EU = [\Pr(C) \times \text{Payoff}] - [Pr(\neg C) \times \text{Cost}]$$

C means that the choice was right; $\neg C$ means that it was wrong.

Since the payoff is two dollars and there is no loss (besides your cost to play), and the probability of winning (and losing) is 0.5, the expected utility is one dollar. You can think of it this way. If you played this game ten times, you should expect to win five of them. So, you can expect to win two dollars for every time you win, for a total of ten dollars. That's equivalent to winning one dollar each time you play. It would be rational to pay up to one dollar to play this game.

Now, let's change our payoff table for the coin toss game. To keep it simple, there's no entry fee. You only pay when you lose the game.

What should you do now? If you call heads and win, you win two dollars. If you call heads and lose, you break even. If you call tails and win, however, you break even. If you call tails and lose, you lose two dollars. You can't really lose by calling heads, but you can't really win by calling tails! We call this a case of superdominance: A superdominates B if and only if the worst outcome under A is at least as good as the best outcome under B, and there is at least one way the world could be where A has a better outcome than B.; calling heads superdominates calling tails. Notice that in a case of superdomination, the probabilities don't really matter. Even if you are told that the coin is biased against heads, and will show tails 99% of the time, you should still call heads.

The Wager

Now you know enough to determine what would be a rational wager in a casino (Note: the expected value of any game of chance in a casino is negative. Otherwise, the casinos would go out of business.) What does this have to do with religious belief? According to Pascal, "Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that

Table 3.4: Pascal's Wager

	God Exists	God Doesn't Exist
Believe	∞	0
Don't Believe	$-\infty$	0

He is." Presumably, if you wager against God, you gain nothing if you win, but lose everything if you lose.

1. Either God exists or does not.
2. There is no evidence that is sufficient for establishing either of the two possibilities.
3. Nonetheless, we are forced to choose to either believe or not.
4. There is little cost in believing that God exists, but there is potentially an infinite reward.
5. There is little reward in believing that God does not, but infinite risk.
6. Therefore one should believe that God exists.

The payoff table for this representation of the Wager would look like this:

In this case, believing superdominates not believing. How much should you be willing to wager? If we assign equal probabilities to God existing and God not existing, the expected utility of believing in God would be equal to $(\frac{1}{2} \times \infty) - (\frac{1}{2} \times 0)$, which equals infinity! So, you should be willing to wager any finite amount at all, no matter how great. Notice that the probability values make a difference only in one case, where the probability of God existing is zero. So, as long as it is remotely possible that God exists, the only rational choice is to believe.

Notice that, according to Pascal, it is not the case that a person should believe because there is a preponderance of evidence for the belief. Instead, a person should believe because it is a rational wager to make. Imagine that someone offered you an opportunity to play this game: a penny is tossed as you call either heads or tails. If you are wrong, you lose the penny. If you are right, then your opponent pays you one million dollars. Would it be rational to agree to such a wager? Most would agree that it would be, because there is a very large potential payoff and little risk. Notice that the game would still be rational to play if there was only a small probability of your winning.

Even if it is likely that you would lose, the minimal risk involved justifies the gamble.

So, according to Pascal, belief in the existence of God is rational. It is not epistemically rational, that is, there is sufficient evidence for it. It is prudentially rational. One should believe it because it is in one's best interests.

Is he right? Many have been persuaded, and this is a common argument even today. The first premise is certainly true. We can grant the second for the purpose of discussion. It is true that one must either believe or not believe, so the third premise seems true. Christian belief certainly costs the believer something. Imagine all of those Sunday mornings that you could have slept in, but instead attended services. Christian belief has cost others much more; it cost some their very lives. Whatever the cost that was paid, however, it was a finite one. On the other hand, if traditional Christian belief is correct, the reward for believing is infinite. The reward for not believing is not having to pay the cost associated with believing. The risk, however, is infinite. So, the believer risks some finite amount, but stands to gain infinitely. The unbeliever stands to gain some finite amount, but risks infinitely.

Unfortunately, Pascal's wager fails. The classic objection to Pascal's wager is called the Many-Gods Problem. Imagine that you are persuaded by Pascal's argument. What should you do? Presumably, you should believe, but what should you believe? Should you become a Christian, a Muslim, or a Jew? Should you become an adherent of Zen Buddhism, Baha'i, or a form of Hinduism? If there is no sufficient evidence for the existence of God, then presumably there is also no evidence for what God wants, or under what conditions God would reward the believer.

Pascal's wager fails because there is more than one option. In fact, evidentialism will also fail for the same reason. For any body of evidence, there is always more than one belief that is consistent with that evidence. That does not mean, however, that I can simply believe anything I like. Some beliefs are better than others, even when they are equally supported by evidence. Several criteria for judging beliefs apart from the evidence have been proposed. Simplicity is one. Simple explanations for the evidence are preferred to complex ones. Internal consistency is another. An important criterion is explanatory power. An explanation that explains much of what I believe to be true is preferred to one that explains little. These criteria, however, can fail. Sometimes, simple explanations turn out to be false, or our judgments of consistency turn out to be mistaken.

One that is not discussed is Blaise Pascal. It is important to note that Pascal did not reject reason, but believed that there is no sufficient evidence to establish either the existence or non-existence of God. He argued that one

should believe in the existence of God anyway. His argument has become known as "Pascal's Wager." It is as follows:

1. Either God exists or does not. 2. There is no evidence that is sufficient for establishing either of the two possibilities. 3. Nonetheless, we are forced to choose to either believe or not. 4. There is little cost in believing that God exists, but there is potentially an infinite reward. 5. There is little reward in believing that God does not, but infinite risk. Therefore one should believe that God exists.

Notice that, according to Pascal, it is not the case that a person should believe because there is a preponderance of evidence for the belief. Instead, a person should believe because it is a rational wager to make. Imagine that someone offered you an opportunity to play this game: a penny is tossed as you call either heads or tails. If you are wrong, you lose the penny. If you are right, then your opponent pays you one million dollars. Would it be rational to agree to such a wager? Most would agree that it would be, because there is a very large potential payoff and little risk. Notice that the game would still be rational to play if there was only a small probability of your winning. Even if it is likely that you would lose, the minimal risk involved justifies the gamble.

So, according to Pascal, belief in the existence of God is rational. It is not epistemically rational, that is, there is sufficient evidence for it. It is prudentially rational. One should believe it because it is in one's best interests.

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Faith and reason are, in the end, compatible. The religious believer can offer reasons for her belief, but these reasons will never be conclusive. As we will see shortly, the best arguments are never completely compelling. No matter how good the evidence, then, there is always room for faith.

3.2 W.K Clifford

From William K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in *Lectures and Essays* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1879).

I. The Duty of Inquiry

A shipowner was about to send to sea an emigrant-ship. He knew that she was old, and not overwell built at the first; that she had seen many seas and climes, and often had needed repairs. Doubts had been suggested to him that possibly she was not seaworthy. These doubts preyed upon his mind, and made him unhappy; he thought that perhaps he ought to have her thoroughly overhauled and and refitted, even though this should put him at great expense. Before the ship sailed, however, he succeeded in overcoming these melancholy reflections. He said to himself that she had gone safely through so many voyages and weathered so many storms that it was idle to suppose she would not come safely home from this trip also. He would put his trust in Providence, which could hardly fail to protect all these unhappy families that were leaving their fatherland to seek for better times elsewhere. He would dismiss from his mind all ungenerous suspicions about the honesty of builders and contractors. In

such ways he acquired a sincere and comfortable conviction that his vessel was thoroughly safe and seaworthy; he watched her departure with a light heart, and benevolent wishes for the success of the exiles in their strange new home that was to be; and he got his insurance-money when she went down in mid-ocean and told no tales.

What shall we say of him? Surely this, that he was verily guilty of the death of those men. It is admitted that he did sincerely believe in the soundness of his ship; but the sincerity of his conviction can in no wise help him, because he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him. He had acquired his belief not by honestly earning it in patient investigation, but by stifling his doubts. And although in the end he may have felt so sure about it that he could not think otherwise, yet inasmuch as he had knowingly and willingly worked himself into that frame of mind, he must be held responsible for it.

Let us alter the case a little, and suppose that the ship was not unsound after all; that she made her voyage safely, and many others after it. Will that diminish the guilt of her owner? Not one jot. When an action is once done, it is right or wrong for ever; no accidental failure of its good or evil fruits can possibly alter that. The man would not have been innocent, he would only have been not found out. The question of right or wrong has to do with the origin of his belief, not the matter of it; not what it was, but how he got it; not whether it turned out to be true or false, but whether he had a right to believe on such evidence as was before him.

There was once an island in which some of the inhabitants professed a religion teaching neither the doctrine of original sin nor that of eternal punishment. A suspicion got abroad that the professors of this religion had made use of unfair means to get their doctrines taught to children. They were accused of wresting the laws of their country in such a way as to remove children from the care of their natural and legal guardians; and even of stealing them away and keeping them concealed from their friends and relations. A certain number of men formed themselves into a society for the purpose of agitating the public about this matter. They published grave accusations against against individual citizens of the highest position and character, and did all in their power to injure these citizens in their exercise of their professions. So great was the noise they made, that a Commission was appointed to investigate the facts; but after the Commission had carefully inquired into all the evidence that could be got, it appeared that the accused were innocent. Not only had they been accused of insufficient evidence, but the evidence of their innocence was such as the agitators might easily have obtained, if they had attempted a fair inquiry. After these disclosures the inhabitants of that country looked upon the members of the agitating society, not only as per-

sons whose judgment was to be distrusted, but also as no longer to be counted honourable men. For although they had sincerely and conscientiously believed in the charges they had made, yet they had no right to believe on such evidence as was before them. Their sincere convictions, instead of being honestly earned by patient inquiring, were stolen by listening to the voice of prejudice and passion.

Let us vary this case also, and suppose, other things remaining as before, that a still more accurate investigation proved the accused to have been really guilty. Would this make any difference in the guilt of the accusers? Clearly not; the question is not whether their belief was true or false, but whether they entertained it on wrong grounds. They would no doubt say, "Now you see that we were right after all; next time perhaps you will believe us." And they might be believed, but they would not thereby become honourable men. They would not be innocent, they would only be not found out. Every one of them, if he chose to examine himself in foro conscientiae, would know that he had acquired and nourished a belief, when he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him; and therein he would know that he had done a wrong thing.

It may be said, however, that in both these supposed cases it is not the belief which is judged to be wrong, but the action following upon it. The shipowner might say, "I am perfectly certain that my ship is sound, but still I feel it my duty to have her examined, before trusting the lives of so many people to her." And it might be said to the agitator, "However convinced you were of the justice of your cause and the truth of your convictions, you ought not to have made a public attack upon any man's character until you had examined the evidence on both sides with the utmost patience and care."

In the first place, let us admit that, so far as it goes, this view of the case is right and necessary; right, because even when a man's belief is so fixed that he cannot think otherwise, he still has a choice in the action suggested by it, and so cannot escape the duty of investigating on the ground of the strength of his convictions; and necessary, because those who are not yet capable of controlling their feelings and thoughts must have a plain rule dealing with overt acts."

But this being premised as necessary, it becomes clear that it is not sufficient, and that our previous judgment is required to supplement it. For it is not possible so to sever the belief from the action it suggests as to condemn the one without condemning the other. No man holding a strong belief on one side of a question, or even wishing to hold a belief on one side, can investigate it with such fairness and completeness as if he were really in doubt and

unbiased; so that the existence of a belief not founded on fair inquiry unfits a man for the performance of this necessary duty.

Nor is it that truly a belief at all which has not some influence upon the actions of him who holds it. He who truly believes that which prompts him to an action has looked upon the action to lust after it, he has committed it already in his heart. If a belief is not realized immediately in open deeds, it is stored up for the guidance of the future. It goes to make a part of that aggregate of beliefs which is the link between sensation and action at every moment of all our lives, and which is so organized and compacted together that no part of it can be isolated from the rest, but every new addition modifies the structure of the whole. No real belief, however trifling and fragmentary it may seem, is ever truly insignificant; it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirms those which resembled it before, and weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts, which may someday explode into overt action, and leave its stamp upon our character for ever.

And no one man's belief is in any case a private matter which concerns himself alone. Our lives our guided by that general conception of the course of things which has been created by society for social purposes. Our words, our phrases, our forms and processes and modes of thought, are common property, fashioned and perfected from age to age; an heirloom which every succeeding generation inherits as a precious deposit and a sacred trust to be handled on to the next one, not unchanged but enlarged and purified, with some clear marks of its proper handiwork. Into this, for good or ill, is woven every belief of every man who has speech of his fellows. A awful privilege, and an awful responsibility, that we should help to create the world in which posterity will live.

In the two supposed cases which have been considered, it has been judged wrong to believe on insufficient evidence, or to nourish belief by suppressing doubts and avoiding investigation. The reason of this judgment is not far to seek: it is that in both these cases the belief held by one man was of great importance to other men. But forasmuch as no belief held by one man, however seemingly trivial the belief, and however obscure the believer, is ever actually insignificant or without its effect on the fate of mankind, we have no choice but to extend our judgment to all cases of belief whatever. Belief, that sacred faculty which prompts the decisions of our will, and knits into harmonious working all the compacted energies of our being, is ours not for ourselves but for humanity. It is rightly used on truths which have been established by long experience and waiting toil, and which have stood in the fierce light of free and fearless questioning. Then it helps to bind men together, and to strengthen and direct their common action. It is desecrated when given

to unproved and unquestioned statements, for the solace and private pleasure of the believer; to add a tinsel splendour to the plain straight road of our life and display a bright mirage beyond it; or even to drown the common sorrows of our kind by a self-deception which allows them not only to cast down, but also to degrade us. Whoso would deserve well of his fellows in this matter will guard the purity of his beliefs with a very fanaticism of jealous care, lest at any time it should rest on an unworthy object, and catch a stain which can never be wiped away.

It is not only the leader of men, statesmen, philosopher, or poet, that owes this bounden duty to mankind. Every rustic who delivers in the village alehouse his slow, infrequent sentences, may help to kill or keep alive the fatal superstitions which clog his race. Every hard-worked wife of an artisan may transmit to her children beliefs which shall knit society together, or rend it in pieces. No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape the universal duty of questioning all that we believe.

It is true that this duty is a hard one, and the doubt which comes out of it is often a very bitter thing. It leaves us bare and powerless where we thought that we were safe and strong. To know all about anything is to know how to deal with it under all circumstances. We feel much happier and more secure when we think we know precisely what to do, no matter what happens, then when we have lost our way and do not know where to turn. And if we have supposed ourselves to know all about anything, and to be capable of doing what is fit in regard to it, we naturally do not like to find that we are really ignorant and powerless, that we have to begin again at the beginning, and try to learn what the thing is and how it is to be dealt with–if indeed anything can be learnt about it. It is the sense of power attached to a sense of knowledge that makes men desirous of believing, and afraid of doubting.

This sense of power is the highest and best of pleasures when the belief on which it is founded is a true belief, and has been fairly earned by investigation. For then we may justly feel that it is common property, and hold good for others as well as for ourselves. Then we may be glad, not that I have learned secrets by which I am safer and stronger, but that we men have got mastery over more of the world; and we shall be strong, not for ourselves but in the name of Man and his strength. But if the belief has been accepted on insufficient evidence, the pleasure is a stolen one. Not only does it deceive ourselves by giving us a sense of power which we do not really possess, but it is sinful, because it is stolen in defiance of our duty to mankind. That duty is to guard ourselves from such beliefs as from pestilence, which may shortly master our own body and then spread to the rest of the town. What would

be thought of one who, for the sake of a sweet fruit, should deliberately run the risk of delivering a plague upon his family and his neighbours?

And, as in other such cases, it is not the risk only which has to be considered; for a bad action is always bad at the time when it is done, no matter what happens afterwards. Every time we let ourselves believe for unworthy reasons, we weaken our powers of self-control, of doubting, of judicially and fairly weighing evidence. We all suffer severely enough from the maintenance and support of false beliefs and the fatally wrong actions which they lead to, and the evil born when one such belief is entertained is great and wide. But a greater and wider evil arises when the credulous character is maintained and supported, when a habit of believing for unworthy reasons is fostered and made permanent. If I steal money from any person, there may be no harm done from the mere transfer of possession; he may not feel the loss, or it may prevent him from using the money badly. But I cannot help doing this great wrong towards Man, that I make myself dishonest. What hurts society is not that it should lose its property, but that it should become a den of thieves, for then it must cease to be society. This is why we ought not to do evil, that good may come; for at any rate this great evil has come, that we have done evil and are made wicked thereby. In like manner, if I let myself believe anything on insufficient evidence, there may be no great harm done by the mere belief; it may be true after all, or I may never have occasion to exhibit it in outward acts. But I cannot help doing this great wrong towards Man, that I make myself credulous. The danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; for then it must sink back into savagery.

The harm which is done by credulity in a man is not confined to the fostering of a credulous character in others, and consequent support of false beliefs. Habitual want of care about what I believe leads to habitual want of care in others about the truth of what is told to me. Men speak the truth of one another when each reveres the truth in his own mind and in the other's mind; but how shall my friend revere the truth in my mind when I myself am careless about it, when I believe thing because I want to believe them, and because they are comforting and pleasant? Will he not learn to cry, "Peace," to me, when there is no peace? By such a course I shall surround myself with a thick atmosphere of falsehood and fraud, and in that I must live. It may matter little to me, in my cloud-castle of sweet illusions and darling lies; but it matters much to Man that I have made my neighbours ready to deceive. The credulous man is father to the liar and the cheat; he lives in the bosom of this his family, and it is no marvel if he should become even as they are.

So closely are our duties knit together, that whoso shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

To sum up: it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call into question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it–the life of that man is one long sin against mankind.

If this judgment seems harsh when applied to those simple souls who have never known better, who have been brought up from the cradle with a horror of doubt, and taught that their eternal welfare depends on what they believe, then it leads to the very serious question, Who hath made Israel to sin?

It may be permitted me to fortify this judgment with the sentence of Milton:

> A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determine, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. (Milton, *Areopagitica*)

And with this famous aphorism of Coleridge:

> He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end loving himself better than all. (Coleridge, *Aids to Reflections*)

Inquiry into the evidence of a doctrine is not to be made once for all, and then taken as finally settled. It is never lawful to stifle a doubt; for either it can be honestly answered by means of the inquiry already made, or else it proves that the inquiry was not complete.

"But," says one, "I am a busy man; I have no time for the long course of study which would be necessary to make me in any degree a competent judge of certain questions, or even able to understand the nature of the arguments."

Then he should have no time to believe ....

3.3 William James

From William James, "The Will to Believe," in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1897).

IN the recently published *Life* by Leslie Stephen of his brother, Fitz-James, there is an account of a school to which the latter went when he was a boy. The teacher, a certain Mr. Guest, used to converse with his pupils in this wise: "Gurney, what is the difference between justification and sanctification?- Stephen, prove the omnipotence of God" etc. In the midst of our Harvard free-thinking and indifference we are prone to imagine that here at your good old orthodox College conversation continues to be somewhat upon this order; and to show you that we at Harvard have not lost all interest in these vital subjects, I have brought with me tonight something like a sermon on justification by faith to read to you, –I mean an essay in justification of faith, a defence of our right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters, in spite of the fact that our merely logical intellect may not have been coerced. 'The Will to Believe,' accordingly, is the title of my paper.

I have long defended to my own students the lawfulness of voluntarily adopted faith; but as soon as they have got well imbued with the logical spirit, they have as a rule refused to admit my contention to be lawful philosophically, even though in point of fact they were personally all the time chock-full of some faith or other themselves. I am all the while, however, so profoundly convinced that my own position is correct, that your invitation has seemed to me a good occasion to make my statements more clear. Perhaps your minds will be more open than those with which I have hitherto had to deal. I will be as little technical as I can, though I must begin by setting up some technical distinctions that will help us in the end.

I

Let us give the name of hypothesis to anything that may be proposed to our belief; and just as the electricians speak of live and dead wires, let us speak of any hypothesis as either live or dead A live hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed. If I ask you to believe in the Mahdi, the notion makes no electric connection with your nature,–it refuses to scintillate with any credibility at all. As an hypothesis it is completely dead. To an Arab, however (even if he be not one of the Mahdi's followers), the hypothesis is among the mind's possibilities: it is alive. This shows that deadness and liveness in an hypothesis are not intrinsic properties, but relations to the individual thinker. They are measured by his willingness to act. The maximum of liveness in hypothesis means willingness

to act irrevocably. Practically, that means belief; but there is some believing tendency wherever there is willingness to act at all.

Next, let us call the decision between two hypotheses an option. Options may be of several kinds. They may be:

- 1, living or dead;
- 2, forced or avoidable;
- 3, momentous or trivial;

and for our purpose we may call an option a genuine option when it of the forced, living, and momentous kind.

1. A living option is one in which both hypotheses are live ones. If I say to you: "Be a theosophist or be a Mohammedan," it is probably a dead option, because for you neither hypothesis is likely to be alive. But if I say: "Be an agnostic or be Christian," it is otherwise: trained as you are, each hypothesis makes some appeal, however small, to your belief.

2. Next, if I say to you: "Choose between going out with your umbrella or without it," I do not offer you a genuine option, for it is not forced. You can easily avoid it by not going out at all. Similarly, if I say, "Either love me or hate me," "Either call my theory true or call it false," your option is avoidable. You may remain indifferent to me, neither loving nor hating, and you may decline to offer any judgment as to my theory. But if I say, "Either accept this truth or go without it," I put on you a forced option, for there is no standing place outside of the alternative. Every dilemma based on a complete logical disjunction, with no possibility of not choosing, is an option of this forced kind.

3. Finally, if I were Dr. Nansen and proposed to you to join my North Pole expedition, your option would be momentous; for this would probably be your only similar opportunity, and your choice now would either exclude you from the North Pole sort of immortality altogether or put at least the chance of it into your hands. He who refuses to embrace a unique opportunity loses the prize as surely as if he tried and failed. Per contra, the option is trivial when the opportunity is not unique, when the stake is insignificant, or when the decision is reversible if it later prove unwise. Such trivial options abound in the scientific life. A chemist finds an hypothesis live enough to spend a year in its verification: he believes in it to that extent. But if his experiments prove inconclusive either way, he is quit for his loss of time, no vital harm being done.

It will facilitate our discussion if we keep all these distinctions well in mind . . . .

III

All this strikes one as healthy, even when expressed, as by Clifford, with somewhat too much of robustious pathos in the voice. Free-will and simple wishing do seem, in the matter of our credences, to be only fifth wheels to the coach. Yet if any one should thereupon assume that intellectual insight is what remains after wish and will and sentimental preference have taken wing, or that pure reason is what then settles our opinions, he would fly quite as directly in the teeth of the facts.

It is only our already dead hypotheses that our willing nature is unable to bring to life again. But what has made them dead for us is for the most part a previous action of our willing nature of an antagonistic kind. When I say 'willing nature,' I do not mean only such deliberate volitions as may have set up habits of belief that we cannot now escape from,–I mean all such factors of belief as fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our caste and set. As a matter of fact we find ourselves believing, we hardly know how or why. Mr. Balfour gives the name of 'authority' to all those influences, born of the intellectual climate, that make hypotheses possible or impossible for us, alive or dead. Here in this room, we all of us believe in molecules and the conservation of energy, in democracy and necessary progress, in Protestant Christianity and the duty of fighting for 'the doctrine of the immortal Monroe,' all for no reasons worthy of the name. We see into these matters with no more inner clearness, and probably with much less, than any disbeliever in them might possess. His unconventionality would probably have some grounds to show for its conclusions; but for us, not insight, but the prestige of the opinions, is what makes the spark shoot from them and light up our sleeping magazines of faith. Our reason is quite satisfied, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand of us, if it can find a few arguments that will do to recite in case our credulity is criticised by some one else. Our faith is faith in some one else's faith, and in the greatest matters this is most the case. Our belief in truth itself, for instance, that there is a truth, and that our minds and it are made for each other,–what is it but a passionate affirmation of desire, in which our social system backs us up? We want to have a truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better and better position towards it; and on this line we agree to fight out our thinking lives. But if a pyrrhonistic sceptic asks us how we know all this, can our logic find a reply? No! certainly it cannot. It is just one volition against another,–we willing to

go in for life upon a trust or assumption which he, for his part, does not care to make.

As a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use. Clifford's cosmic emotions find no use for Christian feelings. Huxley belabors the bishops because there is no use for sacerdotalism in his scheme of life. Newman, on the contrary, goes over to Romanism, and finds all sorts of reasons good for staying there, because a priestly system is for him an organic need and delight. Why do so few 'scientists' even look at the evidence for telepathy, so called? Because they think, as a leading biologist, now dead, once said to me, that even if such a thing were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it suppressed and concealed. It would undo the uniformity of Nature and all sorts of other things without which scientists cannot carry on their pursuits. But if this very man had been shown something which as a scientist he might do with telepathy, he might not only have examined the evidence, but even have found it good enough. This very law which the logicians would impose upon us–if I may give the name of logicians to those who would rule out our willing nature here–is based on nothing but their own natural wish to exclude all elements for which they, in their professional quality of logicians, can find no use.

Evidently, then, our non-intellectual nature does influence our convictions. There are passional tendencies and volitions which run before and others which come after belief, and it is only the latter that are too late for the fair; and they are not too late when the previous passional work has been already in their own direction. Pascal's argument, instead of being powerless, then seems a regular clincher, and is the last stroke needed to make our faith in masses and holy water complete. The state of things is evidently far from simple; and pure insight and logic, whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds.

IV

OUR next duty, having recognized this mixed-up state of affairs, is to ask whether it be simply reprehensible and pathological, or whether, on the contrary, we must treat it as a normal element in making up our minds. The thesis I defend is, briefly stated, this: Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision,-just like deciding yes or no,–and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth. The thesis thus abstractly expressed will, I trust, soon become quite clear. But I must first indulge in a bit more of preliminary work ....

VII

ONE more point, small but important, and our preliminaries are done. There are two ways of looking at our duty in the matter of opinion,–ways entirely different, and yet ways about whose difference the theory of knowledge seems hitherto to have shown very little concern. We must know the truth; and we must avoid error,–these are our first and great commandments as would-be knowers; but they are not two ways of stating an identical commandment, they are two separable laws. Although it may indeed happen that when we believe the truth A, we escape as an incidental consequence from believing the falsehood B, it hardly ever happens that by merely disbelieving B we necessarily believe A. We may in escaping B fall into believing other falsehoods, C or D, just as bad as B; or we may escape B by not believing anything at all, not even A.

Believe truth! Shun error!-these, we see, are two materially different laws; and by choosing between them we may end by coloring differently our whole intellectual life. We may regard the chase for truth as paramount, and the avoidance of error as secondary; or we may, on the other hand, treat the avoidance of error as more imperative, and let truth take its chance. Clifford, in the instructive passage which I have quoted, exhorts us to the latter course. Believe nothing, he tells us, keep your mind in suspense forever, rather than by closing it on insufficient evidence incur the awful risk of believing lies. You, on the other hand, may think that the risk of being in error is a very small matter when compared with the blessings of real knowledge, and be ready to be duped many times in your investigation rather than postpone indefinitely the chance of guessing true. I myself find it impossible to go with Clifford. We must remember that these feelings of our duty about either truth or error are in any case only expressions of our passional life. Biologically considered, our minds are as ready to grind out falsehood as veracity, and he who says, "Better go without belief forever than believe a lie!" merely shows his own preponderant private horror of becoming a dupe. He may be critical of many of his desires and fears, but this fear he slavishly obeys. He cannot imagine any one questioning its binding force. For my own part, I have also a horror of being duped; but I can believe that worse things than being doped may happen to a man in this world: so Clifford's exhortation has to my ears a thoroughly fantastic sound. It is like a general informing his soldiers that it is better to keep out of battle forever than to risk a single wound. Not so are victories either over enemies or over nature gained. Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than

this excessive nervousness on their behalf. At any rate, it seems the fittest thing for the empiricist philosopher ....

X

In truths dependent on our personal action, then, faith based on desire is certainly a lawful and possibly an indispensable thing.

But now, it will be said, these are all childish human cases, and have nothing to do with great cosmic matters, like the question of religious faith. Let us then pass on to that. Religions differ so much in their accidents that in discussing the religious question we must make it very generic and broad. What then do we now mean by the religious hypothesis? Science says things are; morality says some things are better than other things; and religion says essentially two things.

First, she says that the best things are the more eternal things, the overlapping things, the things in the universe that throw the last stone, so to speak, and say the final word. "Perfection is eternal,"- this phrase of Charles Secretan seems a good way of putting this first affirmation of religion, an affirmation which obviously cannot yet be verified scientifically at all.

The second affirmation of religion is that we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true.

Now, let us consider what the logical elements of this situation are in case the religious hypothesis in both its branches be really true. (Of course, we must admit that possibility at the outset. If we are to discuss the question at all, it must involve a living option. If for any of you religion be a hypothesis that cannot, by any living possibility be true, then you need go no farther. I speak to the 'saving remnant' alone.) So proceeding, we see, first that religion offers itself as a momentous option. We are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief, and to lose by our nonbelief, a certain vital good. Secondly, religion is a forced option, so far as that good goes. We cannot escape the issue by remaining sceptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way if religion be untrue, we lose the good, if it be true, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve. It is as if a man should hesitate indefinitely to ask a certain woman to marry him because he was not perfectly sure that she would prove an angel after he brought her home. Would he not cut himself off from that particular angel-possibility as decisively as if he went and married some one else? Scepticism, then, is not avoidance of option; it is option of a certain particular kind of risk. Better risk loss of truth than chance of error,-that is your faith-vetoer's exact position. He is actively playing his stake as much as the believer is; he is backing the field against the religious hypothesis, just as the believer is backing the religious hypothesis against the field. To preach scepticism to us as a duty until 'sufficient evidence' for

religion be found, is tantamount therefore to telling us, when in presence of the religious hypothesis, that to yield to our fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true. It is not intellect against all passions, then; it is only intellect with one passion laying down its law. And by what, forsooth, is the supreme wisdom of this passion warranted? Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear? I, for one, can see no proof; and I simply refuse obedience to the scientist's command to imitate his kind of option, in a case where my own stake is important enough to give me the right to choose my own form of risk. If religion be true and the evidence for it be still insufficient, I do not wish, by putting your extinguisher upon my nature (which feels to me as if it had after all some business in this matter), to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side,–that chance depending, of course, on my willingness to run the risk of acting as if my passional need of taking the world religiously might be prophetic and right ....

3.4 Blaise Pascal

From Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. W. F. Trotter (E. P. Dutton & Co., 1958).

Infinite–nothing.–Our soul is cast into a body, where it finds number, time, dimension. Thereupon it reasons, and calls this nature, necessity, and can believe nothing else.

Unity joined to infinity adds nothing to it, no more than one foot to an infinite measure. The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite, and becomes a pure nothing. So our spirit before God, so our justice before divine justice. There is not so great a disproportion between our justice and that of God, as between unity and infinity.

The justice of God must be vast like His compassion. Now justice to the outcast is less vast, and ought less to offend our feelings than mercy towards the elect.

We know that there is an infinite, and are ignorant of its nature. As we know it to be false that numbers are finite, it is therefore true that there is an infinity in number. But we do not know what it is. It is false that it is even, it is false that it is odd; for the addition of a unit can make no change in its nature. Yet it is a number, and every number is odd or even (this is certainly true of every finite number). So we may well know that there is a God without knowing what He is. Is there not one substantial truth, seeing there are so many things which are not the truth itself?

We know then the existence and nature of the finite, because we also are finite and have extension. We know the existence of the infinite, and are ignorant of its nature, because it has extension like us, but not limits like us. But we know neither the existence nor the nature of God, because He has neither extension nor limits.

But by faith we know His existence; in glory we shall know His nature. Now, I have already shown that we may well know the existence of a thing, without knowing its nature.

Let us now speak according to natural lights.

If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is. This being so, who will dare to undertake the decision of the question? Not we, who have no affinity to Him.

Who then will blame Christians for not being able to give a reason for their belief, since they profess a religion for which they cannot give a reason? They declare, in expounding it to the world, that it is a foolishness, stultitiam; and then you complain that they do not prove it! If they proved it, they would not keep their word; it is in lacking proofs, that they are not lacking in sense. "Yes, but although this excuses those who offer it as such, and takes away from them the blame of putting it forward without reason, it does not excuse those who receive it." Let us then examine this point, and say, "God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.

Do not then reprove for error those who have made a choice; for you know nothing about it. "No, but I blame them for having made, not this choice, but a choice; for again both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all."

Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without

hesitation that He is.–"That is very fine. Yes, I must wager; but I may perhaps wager too much."–Let us see. Since there is an equal risk of gain and of loss, if you had only to gain two lives, instead of one, you might still wager. But if there were three lives to gain, you would have to play (since you are under the necessity of playing), and you would be imprudent, when you are forced to play, not to chance your life to gain three at a game where there is an equal risk of loss and gain. But there is an eternity of life and happiness. And this being so, if there were an infinity of chances, of which one only would be for you, you would still be right in wagering one to win two, and you would act stupidly, being obliged to play, by refusing to stake one life against three at a game in which out of an infinity of chances there is one for you, if there were an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain. But there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain, a chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite. It is all divided; wherever the infinite is and there is not an infinity of chances of loss against that of gain, there is no time to hesitate, you must give all. And thus, when one is forced to play, he must renounce reason to preserve his life, rather than risk it for infinite gain, as likely to happen as the loss of nothingness.

For it is no use to say it is uncertain if we will gain, and it is certain that we risk, and that the infinite distance between the certainty of what is staked and the uncertainty of what will be gained, equals the finite good which is certainly staked against the uncertain infinite. It is not so, as every player stakes a certainty to gain an uncertainty, and yet he stakes a finite certainty to gain a finite uncertainty, without transgressing against reason. There is not an infinite distance between the certainty staked and the uncertainty of the gain; that is untrue. In truth, there is an infinity between the certainty of gain and the certainty of loss. But the uncertainty of the gain is proportioned to the certainty of the stake according to the proportion of the chances of gain and loss. Hence it comes that, if there are as many risks on one side as on the other, the course is to play even; and then the certainty of the stake is equal to the uncertainty of the gain, so far is it from fact that there is an infinite distance between them. And so our proposition is of infinite force, when there is the finite to stake in a game where there are equal risks of gain and of loss, and the infinite to gain. This is demonstrable; and if men are capable of any truths, this is one.

"I confess it, I admit it. But, still, is there no means of seeing the faces of the cards?"–Yes, Scripture and the rest, etc. "Yes, but I have my hands tied and my mouth closed; I am forced to wager, and am not free. I am not released, and am so made that I cannot believe. What, then, would you have me do?"

True. But at least learn your inability to believe, since reason brings you to this, and yet you cannot believe. Endeavour then to convince yourself, not by increase of proofs of God, but by the abatement of your passions. You would like to attain faith, and do not know the way; you would like to cure yourself of unbelief, and ask the remedy for it. Learn of those who have been bound like you, and who now stake all their possessions. These are people who know the way which you would follow, and who are cured of an ill of which you would be cured. Follow the way by which they began; by acting as if they believed, taking the holy water, having masses said, etc. Even this will naturally make you believe, and deaden your acuteness.–"But this is what I am afraid of."–And why? What have you to lose?

But to show you that this leads you there, it is this which will lessen the passions, which are your stumbling-blocks.

The end of this discourse.–Now, what harm will befall you in taking this side? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, generous, a sincere friend, truthful. Certainly you will not have those poisonous pleasures, glory and luxury; but will you not have others? I will tell you that you will thereby gain in this life, and that, at each step you take on this road, you will see so great certainty of gain, so much nothingness in what you risk, that you will at last recognise that you have wagered for something certain and infinite, for which you have given nothing.

"Ah! This discourse transports me, charms me," etc.

If this discourse pleases you and seems impressive, know that it is made by a man who has knelt, both before and after it, in prayer to that Being, infinite and without parts, before whom he lays all he has, for you also to lay before Him all you have for your own good and for His glory, that so strength may be given to lowliness ....

3.5 Questions

1. Is there a danger in completely removing reason from the scope of religious belief? Think of some recent examples of religious belief that you would consider irrational.

2. Define strong rationalism. How is Clifford's position self-defeating?

3. What is fideism?

4. Are there any other objections that you can find to Pascal's Wager? How could Pascal respond?

Chapter 4

The Attributes of God

One of the most important topics in the philosophy of religion is the existence of God, which the text covers in chapters 5 and 6. It is important to understand, however, this chapter precedes those. Before anyone can enter into a debate about the existence of something, they must decide what that thing would be like if it did exist. Both the person who affirms the existence of x and the one that denies the exist of x must have some idea of what x is like (this is a key component of Anselm's famous argument for the existence of God, which we will see later). So, the fundamental issue is not the existence of God, but the attributes of God.

So, what do we mean by 'God?' In other words, just what is our conception of God? Here is a list of some of the attributes that have been associated with God in the past:

Omnipotent God is all-powerful.

Omniscient God is all-knowing.

Omnibenevolent God is perfectly good.

Simple God is identical to his attributes.

Eternal God exists independently of time.

Everlasting God exists for all time.

Necessary It is impossible that God not exist.

Incorporeal God is not a physical being.

Omnipresent God is everywhere.

Agent God acts for His own purposes.

Creator The world was caused to exist by God.

Immutable God cannot change.

Impassible God cannot suffer or feel pain.

Presumably, these are not the only qualities that have been attributed to God. Consider the definitions that I have offered to be starting points; you may find it necessary to modify them as you consider their implications. Some of them, like Divine simplicity (This is the view God is not omniscient, omnipotent, etc., instead, God is omniscience, omnipotence, etc. In other words, there is not distinction between God and the attributes of God) and impassibility, were stressed more in past centuries than they are now. Others, like immutability and omniscience, are focal points of current theological controversies.

In philosophical jargon, to say that God is necessary is to say that God exists in all possible worlds. A possible world is simply a way the world could have been. If God exists in all possible worlds, then any way the world could have been includes God. There is no way the world could have been that does not include the existence of God. In other words, it is impossible that God not exist.[1]

Omnipotence is one of the attributes of God according to classical theism. If God is omnipotent, then it follows that God can do anything. There are certain things, however, that seem to be impossible for any being to do; creating a square circle is a popular example. So, if God cannot do these things, then how can he be omnipotent?

Thomas Aquinas maintained that the word 'anything' in the definition of omnipotence refers only to those things whose descriptions are not self-contradictory. If a being is unable to do something that is not self-contradictory, then that shows that the being lacks power to a certain extent. If the being cannot do something that is self-contradictory; that does not result from a lack of power, but from the self-contradictory nature of the thing that is to be done. God's inability to make square circles does not imply anything about God, but instead says something about square circles.

An interesting twist to this problem is the old paradox concerning the stone that is too heavy for an omnipotent being to lift. Can God create such

[1] If something exists, but does not exist necessarily, that thing is said to be a contingent being. You and I are both contingent, there are many ways that the world could have been that does not include our existence.

a thing? If not, then there is something that he cannot do (create the stone). If so, then there is something that he cannot do (lift the stone). He either can create it or cannot. Either way, he cannot do something, so God cannot be omnipotent.

This seems to pose a greater problem for omnipotence than the square circle. There is nothing self-contradictory about a being creating something so heavy that the being cannot lift it. Human beings do it all the time. Even I, with my limited carpentry skills, can nail enough lumber together to make something so heavy that I cannot lift it.

This example, however, fails to show that the stone that God can't lift is not self-contradictory. It only shows that there is no contradiction in asserting that there is something that Randy Ridenour can't lift. This is no surprise, however, since I am not omnipotent. So, if God is also not omnipotent, then it follows that there could be such a stone. Therefore, God is not omnipotent. Notice that the conclusion that God is not omnipotent only follows on the assumption that God is not omnipotent. The argument simply begs the question. In order to use the stone to prove that God is not omnipotent, one would have to show that it is not self-contradictory on the assumption that God is omnipotent.

If God is omnipotent, then the stone is a thing that cannot be lifted by a being that has the power to lift anything. The phrase "a thing that cannot be lifted by a being that can lift anything" is clearly self-contradictory. So, on the assumption that God is omnipotent, then the stone is no different from the square circle.

In the end, it is not hard to understand why God's inability to create such a stone is not sufficient to show that he is not omnipotent. Even if one grants that God cannot create the stone, then what power does God lack? God can still create any stone of any size and weight, and he can still lift any stone of any size and weight. So, even if God cannot create a stone so heavy that even he cannot lift it, he is still omnipotent with respect to creating and lifting stones.

Most theologians and philosophers of religion accept a modified account of omnipotence. Omnipotence is not the ability to do anything at all, but anything that is logically possible. There are some other things that are commonly believed to be impossible for God to do. For instance, God cannot sin or act immorally because this is inconsistent with His nature. The inability to do such things does not seem to limit God in any significant way.

Omniscience is the quality of knowing everything. Presumably, if God is omniscient, then God believes all truths and no falsehoods. The most

important objection to the possibility of an omniscient being is the supposed incompatibility between omniscience and human free will.

The kind of free will that is said to be incompatible is libertarian free will; in this sense, an action is free if and only if it is within the agent's power to perform that action and it is also within the agent's power to refrain from performing that action. So, if your taking this course was a free action, then it was within your power to take it, but also within your power to not take it. God, being omniscient, has full knowledge of all events, past, present, and future. God, then, from the beginning of time, knew that you would take this course. If God knew that you would take this course, then God believed that you would take this course. If you had not taken the course, then God's belief would have been false. So, if it was within your power to not take the course, then it was within your power to make God's belief false. It is impossible that it be within your power to make God's belief false, so it is also impossible that it be within your power to not take the course. If God foreknew that you would take the course, your action could not have been free.

Here is the argument:

1. I have free will only if it is possible for me to do otherwise than I in fact do.
2. God, in the past, knows what I will do in the future.
3. Since God knows what I will do, God believes that I will do it.
4. It is impossible for God's beliefs to be false.
5. It is impossible to change the past.
6. If I were to do otherwise, then either I would make God's belief false, or change God's belief in the past.
7. Therefore, if it were possible for me to do otherwise, it would be possible to either change the past or cause God's belief to be false.
8. We can neither change the past nor cause God's belief to be false.

$\therefore$ It is impossible for me to do otherwise, and I am not free.

There are several different perspectives on the foreknowledge of God. The first is called theological determinism. The theological determinist believes that God foreknows because God foreordains. God knew that you would take this course, because God caused it to be so. Theological determinist maintains foreknowledge, but denies that humans have libertarian free will. This is a position commonly associated with contemporary Calvinism.

The second is Molinism, named for Luis de Molina (1535-1600) According to Molina, God has three different kinds of knowledge. God's natural knowledge is His knowledge of all possibilities, including what any possible person would freely do in every possible circumstance. God's free knowledge is the knowledge of things that result from God's free choices, including the choice to create certain individuals. Middle knowledge is a combination of the two. It is God's knowledge of what the people that he has chosen to create would freely do in the circumstances that he has chosen to bring about.

Another perspective is process theology, associated with the philosophers and theologians Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. According to process theology, God and the world are interdependent. Humans have freedom in the libertarian sense, and God is not omniscient. God has no coercive power, only persuasive power. God cannot force anyone to do anything, but only persuade them.

Openness theology is a perspective that is growing more popular currently. According to openness theology, God does not know with certainty what humans will freely do. God can make extremely good, but fallible, judgments about what we will do. Since we are free, however, God's beliefs about the future could be false.

Others have tried to maintain that there is no conflict between ordinary foreknowledge and human free will. An important solution to the problem was proposed by Boethius, a Roman philosopher in the earth 6th century. Boethius maintained that God exists independently of time. From God's perspective, then, there is no past, present, or future. God experiences everything at once. Therefore, there God does not really have foreknowledge, but still knows everything. Boethius' solution depends on the coherence of a timeless being, a topic discussed in the text.

As you can see, the foreknowledge of God is an complex but fascinating topic. This particular topic is currently receiving much attention in both the philosophical and theological literature.

4.1 Boethius

From Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. R. James (Ellion Stock, 1897).

Then said I: "But now I am once more perplexed by a problem yet more difficult."

"And what is that?" said she; "yet, in truth, I can guess what it is that troubles you."

"It seems," said I, "too much of a paradox and a contradiction that God should know all things, and yet there should be free will. For if God foresees everything, and can in no wise be deceived, that which providence foresees to be about to happen must necessarily come to pass. Wherefore, if from eternity He foreknows not only what men will do, but also their designs and purposes, there can be no freedom of the will, seeing that nothing can be done, nor can any sort of purpose be entertained, save such as a Divine providence, incapable of being deceived, has perceived beforehand. For if the issues can be turned aside to some other end than that foreseen by providence, there will not then be any sure foreknowledge of the future, but uncertain conjecture instead, and to think this of God I deem impiety."

"Moreover, I do not approve the reasoning by which some think to solve this puzzle. For they say that it is not because God has foreseen the coming of an event that therefore it is sure to come to pass, but, conversely, because something is about to come to pass, it cannot be hidden from Divine providence; and accordingly the necessity passes to the opposite side, and it is not that what is foreseen must necessarily come to pass, but that what is about to come to pass must necessarily be foreseen. But this is just as if the matter in debate were, which is cause and which effect–whether foreknowledge of the future cause of the necessity, or the necessity of the future of the foreknowledge. But we need not be at the pains of demonstrating that, whatsoever be the order of the causal sequence, the occurrence of things foreseen is necessary, even though the foreknowledge of future events does not in itself impose upon them the necessity of their occurrence. For example, if a man be seated, the supposition of his being seated is necessarily true; and, conversely, if the supposition of his being seated is true, because he is really seated, he must necessarily be sitting. So, in either case, there is some necessity involved–in this latter case, the necessity of the fact; in the former, of the truth of the statement. But in both cases the sitter is not therefore seated because the opinion is true, but rather the opinion is true because antecedently he was sitting as a matter of fact. Thus, though the cause of the truth of the opinion comes from the other side,[P] yet there is a necessity on both sides alike. We can obviously reason similarly in the case of providence and the future. Even if future events are foreseen because they are about to happen, and do not come to pass because they are foreseen, still, all the same, there is a necessity, both that they should be foreseen by God as about to come to pass, and that when they are foreseen they should happen, and this is sufficient for the destruction of free will. However, it is preposterous to speak of the occurrence of events in time as the cause of eternal foreknowledge. And yet if we believe that God foresees future events because they are about to come to pass, what is it but

to think that the occurrence of events is the cause of His supreme providence? Further, just as when I know that anything is, that thing necessarily is, so when I know that anything will be, it will necessarily be. It follows, then, that things foreknown come to pass inevitably."

"Lastly, to think of a thing as being in any way other than what it is, is not only not knowledge, but it is false opinion widely different from the truth of knowledge. Consequently, if anything is about to be, and yet its occurrence is not certain and necessary, how can anyone foreknow that it will occur? For just as knowledge itself is free from all admixture of falsity, so any conception drawn from knowledge cannot be other than as it is conceived. For this, indeed, is the cause why knowledge is free from falsehood, because of necessity each thing must correspond exactly with the knowledge which grasps its nature. In what way, then, are we to suppose that God foreknows these uncertainties as about to come to pass? For if He thinks of events which possibly may not happen at all as inevitably destined to come to pass, He is deceived; and this it is not only impious to believe, but even so much as to express in words. If, on the other hand, He sees them in the future as they are in such a sense as to know that they may equally come to pass or not, what sort of foreknowledge is this which comprehends nothing certain nor fixed? What better is this than the absurd vaticination of Teiresias?"

> 'Whate'er I say
> Shall either come to pass–or not.'

"In that case, too, in what would Divine providence surpass human opinion if it holds for uncertain things the occurrence of which is uncertain, even as men do? But if at that perfectly sure Fountain-head of all things no shadow of uncertainty can possibly be found, then the occurrence of those things which He has surely foreknown as coming is certain. Wherefore there can be no freedom in human actions and designs; but the Divine mind, which foresees all things without possibility of mistake, ties and binds them down to one only issue. But this admission once made, what an upset of human affairs manifestly ensues! Vainly are rewards and punishments proposed for the good and bad, since no free and voluntary motion of the will has deserved either one or the other; nay, the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous, which is now esteemed the perfection of justice, will seem the most flagrant injustice, since men are determined either way not by their own proper volition, but by the necessity of what must surely be. And therefore neither virtue nor vice is anything, but rather good and ill desert are confounded together without distinction. Moreover, seeing that the whole course of events

is deduced from providence, and nothing is left free to human design, it comes to pass that our vices also are referred to the Author of all good–a thought than which none more abominable can possibly be conceived. Again, no ground is left for hope or prayer, since how can we hope for blessings, or pray for mercy, when every object of desire depends upon the links of an unalterable chain of causation? Gone, then, is the one means of intercourse between God and man–the communion of hope and prayer–if it be true that we ever earn the inestimable recompense of the Divine favour at the price of a due humility; for this is the one way whereby men seem able to hold communion with God, and are joined to that unapproachable light by the very act of supplication, even before they obtain their petitions. Then, since these things can scarcely be believed to have any efficacy, if the necessity of future events be admitted, what means will there be whereby we may be brought near and cleave to Him who is the supreme Head of all? Wherefore it needs must be that the human race, even as thou didst erstwhile declare in song, parted and dissevered from its Source, should fall to ruin." ...

4.2 Augustine

From St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Albert C. Outler (Westminster Press, 1955).

Chapter XII

How, then, shall I respond to him who asks, "What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?" I do not answer, as a certain one is reported to have done facetiously (shrugging off the force of the question). "He was preparing hell," he said, "for those who pry too deep." It is one thing to see the answer; it is another to laugh at the questioner–and for myself I do not answer these things thus. More willingly would I have answered, "I do not know what I do not know," than cause one who asked a deep question to be ridiculed–and by such tactics gain praise for a worthless answer.

Rather, I say that thou, our God, art the Creator of every creature. And if in the term "heaven and earth" every creature is included, I make bold to say further: "Before God made heaven and earth, he did not make anything at all. For if he did, what did he make unless it were a creature?" I do indeed wish that I knew all that I desire to know to my profit as surely as I know that no creature was made before any creature was made.

Chapter XIII

But if the roving thought of someone should wander over the images of past time, and wonder that thou, the Almighty God, the All-creating and All-sustaining, the Architect of heaven and earth, didst for ages unnumbered abstain from so great a work before thou didst actually do it, let him awake and consider that he wonders at illusions. For in what temporal medium could the unnumbered ages that thou didst not make pass by, since thou art the Author and Creator of all the ages? Or what periods of time would those be that were not made by thee? Or how could they have already passed away if they had not already been? Since, therefore, thou art the Creator of all times, if there was any time before thou madest heaven and earth, why is it said that thou wast abstaining from working? For thou madest that very time itself, and periods could not pass by before thou madest the whole temporal procession. But if there was no time before heaven and earth, how, then, can it be asked, "What wast thou doing then?" For there was no "then" when there was no time.

Nor dost thou precede any given period of time by another period of time. Else thou wouldst not precede all periods of time. In the eminence of thy ever-present eternity, thou precedest all times past, and extendest beyond all future times, for they are still to come–and when they have come, they will be past. But "Thou art always the Selfsame and thy years shall have no end." Thy years neither go nor come; but ours both go and come in order that all separate moments may come to pass. All thy years stand together as one, since they are abiding. Nor do thy years past exclude the years to come because thy years do not pass away. All these years of ours shall be with thee, when all of them shall have ceased to be. Thy years are but a day, and thy day is not recurrent, but always today. Thy "today" yields not to tomorrow and does not follow yesterday. Thy "today" is eternity. Therefore, thou didst generate the Coeternal, to whom thou didst say, "This day I have begotten thee." Thou madest all time and before all times thou art, and there was never a time when there was no time.

Chapter XIV

There was no time, therefore, when thou hadst not made anything, because thou hadst made time itself. And there are no times that are coeternal with thee, because thou dost abide forever; but if times should abide, they would not be times.

For what is time? Who can easily and briefly explain it? Who can even comprehend it in thought or put the answer into words? Yet is it not true that in conversation we refer to nothing more familiarly or knowingly than time? And surely we understand it when we speak of it; we understand it also when we hear another speak of it.

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know. Yet I say with confidence that I know that if nothing passed away, there would be no past time; and if nothing were still coming, there would be no future time; and if there were nothing at all, there would be no present time.

But, then, how is it that there are the two times, past and future, when even the past is now no longer and the future is now not yet? But if the present were always present, and did not pass into past time, it obviously would not be time but eternity. If, then, time present–if it be time–comes into existence only because it passes into time past, how can we say that even this is, since the cause of its being is that it will cease to be? Thus, can we not truly say that time is only as it tends toward nonbeing?

4.3 Questions

1. Can there be more than one omnipotent being? Why or why not?
2. Can God change the past?
3. Does God change? If not, then does God have feelings?
4. Which of the attributes of God listed above are most important, in your opinion? Are there any that are not crucial to your understanding of God?
5. What does it mean to say that God is a necessary being?
6. Explain, in your own words, the apparent conflict between foreknowledge and free will.
7. Explain your own position concerning God's foreknowledge and free will. What are the potential weaknesses of your position?
8. Which is most important to you, God's foreknowledge or free will? If you had to deny one, which would it be? Why?
9. Explain the distinction between eternal and everlasting.

Chapter 5

Arguments for the Existence of God

There are several important arguments for the existence of God. Each has its own peculiar strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand that criticizing a particular argument for the existence of God is not the same as criticizing belief in the existence of God. People believe many good things for bad reasons. Do not be surprised if you find some of these arguments to be less persuasive than others. It is important to know the objections that have been made to each argument, and the responses that can be made to those objections. Even the best argument has objections that must be addressed.

5.1 The Ontological Argument

The ontological argument was introduced by the medieval theologian Anselm (1033-1109). According to Anselm, mere belief is not enough. One is obligated to show that one's beliefs are rational, there is therefore no conflict between faith and reason. The person who chooses to Not support their faith using reason is guilty of intellectual laziness. Reason can show that Christianity is consistent and that its major claims are true.

The ontological argument is found in Ch 2 of Anselm's work The Proslogium. It is one of the most famous arguments in history, and is still very controversial. It has been accepted by many important theistic thinkers, but also rejected by many, both theists and atheists. It is an audacious argument; if it is sound, then atheism is not only false, but logically impossible. Here, I present it as closely as possible to Anselm's original formulation:

1. God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
2. God exists as a concept in our minds
3. God might exist in reality
4. Either God exists as a concept alone or also in reality
5. That which exists in reality is greater than it would be had it existed as a concept alone.
6. Assume that God exists only as a concept
7. We can conceive of God existing in reality.
8. Then we can conceive of something greater than God.
9. We can conceive of something greater than that than which nothing greater can be conceived, a contradiction.
10. Therefore, it is false that God exists only as a concept.

∴ God also exists in reality.

An argument of this form is called a reductio ad absurdum, Latin for "reduction to absurdity." Here, one assumes that the desired conclusion is false, then shows that the assumption leads to a contradiction. Anything that leads to a contradiction must itself be false, so this suffices to show that the desired conclusion must be true.

The first, third, and fifth premises are the most important. The argument succeeds if these premises are true. The first person to object to this argument was a monk named Gaunilo. He claimed that the argument was invalid. To show that an argument is invalid, one shows that an argument of that form can have true premises and a false conclusion. Gaunilo claimed that the argument could be used to prove that the greatest conceivable island exists, although we know that this is false. There are two responses available to Anselm. The first is that, after making the substitution, premise 9 would read "We can conceive of something greater than the island than which none greater can be conceived, a contradiction." This is no contradiction however, there may be many things greater than the greatest island (the greatest human being or the greatest moral agent). The second response is this: is the greatest island possible? There are many distinct differences between God and islands. An important one is that God is an infinite being, but islands are finite. Can a finite thing have unlimited perfection? For any finite object, one could always conceive of it being greater. This response denies that premise 3 is true once Gaunilo makes his substitution.

The second important objection comes from Kant. Essentially, Kant objected that premise 5 in Anselm's argument is false. According to Kant,

existence is not a property that things have, but Anselm's argument assumes that it is. Anselm treats existence as a property that makes a thing greater. If it is not a property, then it can't be a great-making property. Existence is instead a presupposition of an object's having any properties whatsoever. This issue has not been settled in contemporary philosophy; there is some reason to treat existence as a property, but there is also reason to deny that existence is a property. Nevertheless, here is a version of the argument that does not treat existence as a property:

1. God is a maximally perfect being.
2. Maximal perfection requires necessary existence.
3. It is possible that God exists.

$\therefore$ Therefore, God exists.

God, by definition, is maximally perfect. A being that must exist in any possible circumstances seems more perfect than one that exists in some but not in others. The first is not dependent on anything for existence, but the latter is dependent on other things for its existence. If this is so, then either God exists in all possible circumstances, or in none. The third premise asserts that there is some possible circumstance in which God exists. So, it cannot be the case that God exists in no possible circumstance, and must therefore exist in all. This includes existence in the actual world.

The primary weakness of this argument is the third premise. If a person denies that this premise is true, it will be extremely difficult to prove it to them. Ordinarily, the possibility of something is demonstrated by showing an instance of that thing. What can be shown in this case?

5.2 The Cosmological Argument

The second argument for the existence of God is the cosmological argument. The cosmological argument is really a style of argument, rather than a single argument itself. Cosmological arguments assert that the world has a particular feature, and attempt to prove that the only possible explanation for this feature is the existence of God.

The most famous proponent of the cosmological argument is Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Aquinas had five ways of proving God's existence, which are essentially five different cosmological arguments. All of these argue that the existence of God is required to explain certain self-evident features of the world: motion, causation, the existence of contingent beings, gradation of

value, and order in the world. Aquinas' argument have, for the most part, either been rejected or modified to overcome certain weaknesses. As an example, consider Aquinas' third argument:

1. Every existing thing is contingent, i.e., might not have existed.
2. Every contingent thing requires a cause to exist.
3. Every contingent thing, at some point, did not exist.
4. There was a time, when no contingent beings existed.

∴ Therefore, a necessary being exists, and caused contingent beings to exist.

This argument suffers from a fatal logical flaw. First, the truth of the third premise is questionable. Must it be the case that, for any contingent thing, there must be a time during which it does not exist? That doesn't follow from the definition of contingency. A contingent thing is one that might not have existed, this does not imply that it did not exist at some point in time. Even if we grant that premise, however, the fourth premise does not follow. Even if there is a time during which each contingent thing does not exist, it does not follow that there is a time during which no contingent things exist. Imagine that there have always been contingent beings, which give rise to other contingent beings then pass from existence. In this scenario, each contingent thing exists for some finite period of time, but there is no time during which there are no contingent beings.

Consider this contemporary formulation of the argument. One might object that Aquinas has failed to show that there was a time that no contingent beings existed. Therefore, the series of contingent beings might go back in time to infinity. This argument is an attempt to show that even an infinite series of beings requires the existence of God.

1. If something exists, its existence is logically necessary (and hence self-explanatory) or some other being causes it to exist.
2. A contingent being's existence isn't necessary.
3. A contingent being is caused to exist by some other being.
4. Either the series of contingent beings has a first member or it doesn't
5. If the series has a first member, then a necessary being exists and causes it.
6. If the series of contingent beings doesn't have a first member, a necessary being exists and causes the whole series.
7. If contingent beings exist, a necessary being exists which causes them.

8. Contingent beings exist.

∴ Therefore, A necessary being exists and causes contingent beings to exist.

This argument attempts to show that the existence of contingent beings can only be explained by the existence of God. Since God exists necessarily, there is no need to explain why God exists. God's existence is self-explanatory.

Science can never be used to explain why something exists rather than nothing at all. Scientific explanations are always in terms of existing entities and the forces that operate on those entities. Science can never explain the existence of something without presupposing the existence of something else. The argument above, if successful, shows that the only explanation for the existence of the world is God.

Another currently popular form of the cosmological argument is the kalam cosmological argument discussed in the text (kalam is an Arabic word which can be translated as 'reason' and is roughly equivalent to logos in Greek).

5.3 The Teleological Argument

The teleological argument is also called the argument from design. It was perhaps the most popular argument for the existence of God in the 18th century, and is still popular today. There are many versions, some of which are better than others.

Here is the basic argument:

1. Clocks, poems, computers, and so on, exhibit apparent design and are produced by minds.
2. The world exhibits apparent design.

∴ The world was probably also produced by a mind.

The first version is an argument from analogy. Arguments from analogy are very common and are used often in ordinary life. Imagine that you are pondering buying a used 1997 Ford Escort. You only want to buy the car if it will be reliable. So, you compare it to other vehicles like it, presumably other 1997 Ford Escorts. If they were reliable cars, then you are justified in concluding that yours will probably also be reliable.

This argument will be strong if two conditions are met. First, there must be few known instances of 1997 Ford Escorts that are unreliable. The more instances of unreliable Escorts that you know of, the weaker the argument

becomes. Second, there must be no significant relevant dissimilarities between the cars that you are using as evidence and the one you are planning to buy. Color differences do not weaken the argument, because color is probably irrelevant to mechanical reliability. If there is a significant difference in the maintenance history of the cars, then the argument becomes weaker.

So, does the teleological argument meet these conditions? Is there a case of something that has apparent design that we know was not actually designed? Are there significant relevant dissimilarities between the world and clocks, poems, and computers?

First, there is no case of apparent design that we know was not caused by a mind. Consider again the kissing camels in Colorado Springs. How do we know that this particular rock formation was not caused by a mind? In order to know that, we must first know that God does not exist. Lacking any proof for the nonexistence of God, however, for any instance of apparent design, we don't know that an intelligent mind (God) didn't create it.

Second, it is conceded that dissimilarities do exist between the world and other things that have apparent design. The world isn't much like a clock. But clocks aren't much like buildings or poems, or symphonies. But all of these things are products of intelligent design. The dissimilarity of the world to a machine may be nothing more than the dissimilarity of machines to poems. There seem to be two major dissimilarities between the world and a clock. The first is size; the world is much bigger than a clock. Is this a relevant dissimilarity? It would be if the argument concluded that the world was made by the same kind of thing, a human, that created the clock. The argument does not attempt to prove this, of course, so it is far from clear that size is a relevant dissimilarity. The second dissimilarity is complexity. The world is far more complex than anything that we have created. Again, it is not clear that this is a relevant dissimilarity. The complexity of a system is the primary reason that we believe that the system must have been designed in the first place. To say that the argument fails because the world is much more complex than clocks and computers is to say that that the more complex a thing becomes, the less likely it is to have been designed.

Even if the argument fails as an argument from analogy, there are other versions to consider. The second version is an inference to the best explanation. This is also a type of reasoning that is used often. Here, there is a state of affairs or situation that needs explained. We simply consider all of the possible explanations, then choose the one that is most plausible.

Consider this example: I wake up one morning extremely ill. I want to know what has caused my discomfort, so I consider all of the competing hypotheses. Here are three: witchcraft, stomach cancer, or a bad piece of sushi

that I at the evening before. Since the first two are less plausible, I'm entitled to adopt the third and conclude that the fish probably caused by indigestion. The strength of such an argument depends on the lack of other plausible alternatives to the winning hypothesis.

In the case of the teleological argument, the state of affairs that requires explanation is the apparent design of the world. One hypothesis is that the world was actually designed by a mind. What are the alternatives to the design hypothesis? The two most common are these:

1. The appearance of design is ultimately due to chance.

2. The appearance of design is caused by processes of evolution.

The first alternative says that all these apparently organized systems are really just a few basic particles and forces obeying some basic laws. That the world has these particles and forces is just a brute fact and has no further explanation. This is really no explanation, it ultimately claims that there is no explanation.

There is a problem with the second also. Evolutionary theory, since it is a biological theory, is too limited in scope to explain all instances of apparent design. Also, the processes that are considered part of evolutionary theory are part of the pattern of apparent design to be explained. One cannot explain a thing by appealing to part of that same thing. So, the only alternative to the theistic explanation may be that there is no explanation at all.

The third version of the teleological argument is a probability argument. Again, there are several types of probability arguments. One is discussed in the text. Here is another. The probability of a hypothesis is a function of the prior probability of the hypothesis and its predictive power. The prior probability is simply is initial plausibility. How likely is it, before the evidence is gathered, that the hypothesis is true? The predictive power is the likelihood of the evidence if the hypothesis were true. It is assessed by asking this question: how likely is it that, if the hypothesis were true, we would have found that particular body of evidence.

In the example of the illness. The bad fish hypothesis has both the highest prior probability and the highest predictive power. It is not always the case that one hypothesis wins on both counts. When this is the case, predictive power is much more important than prior probability.

In this case, there are really only two hypotheses: 1) An intelligent and powerful mind is the cause of apparent design, and 2) No supernatural reality underlies natural processes. It is impossible to determine their relative prior

probabilities, but no reason to believe that either is much lower than the other. With respect to apparent design, however, the first is clearly the stronger hypothesis. How likely is that the world would appear to be designed if there were no designer? Intuitively, it is not very likely. How likely is that the world would appear to be designed if there were in fact a designer? That seems very likely indeed.

The cosmological and teleological arguments are powerful, but not completely persuasive. This is because they depend upon a principle called the principle of sufficient reason, which says that every fact has an explanation. Unfortunately, this principle is false. It is not the case that everything has an explanation. These arguments, if successful, then show that either there is no explanation for the world, or a Designer exists.

So, there has been some reason to reject every argument for the existence of God that has been considered so far. This is not to say that these arguments have no value. If anything, there value is in demonstrating the rationality of religious belief. Even if a person denies that the premises of the arguments are true, it must be granted that it is rational to believe them. If it is rational to believe the premises, and the premises entail the conclusion, it must also be rational to believe the conclusion. Therefore, although the arguments fail to conclusively prove the existence of God, they do demonstrate the rationality of believing in the existence of God.

5.4 St. Anselm and Gaunilo

From St. Anselm, *Proslogion*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago: Open Court, 1903).

Chapter II

Truly there is a God, although the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

And so, Lord, do thou, who dost give understanding to faith, give me, so far as thou knowest it to be profitable, to understand that thou art as we believe; and that thou art that which we believe. And indeed, we believe that thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. Or is there no such nature, since the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God? (Psalms xiv. 1). But, at any rate, this very fool, when he hears of this being of which I speak - a being than which nothing greater can be conceived - understands

what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding; although he does not understand it to exist.

For, it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding, and another to understand that the object exists. When a painter first conceives of what he will afterwards perform, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand it to be, because he has not yet performed it. But after he has made the painting, he both has it in his understanding, and he understands that it exists, because he has made it.

Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.

Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.

Chapter III

God cannot be conceived not to exist. — God is that, than which nothing greater can be conceived. — That which can be conceived not to exist is not God.

And it assuredly exists so truly, that it cannot be conceived not to exist. For, it is possible to conceive of a being which cannot be conceived not to exist; and this is greater than one which can be conceived not to exist. Hence, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, can be conceived not to exist, it is not that, than which nothing greater can be conceived. But this is an irreconcilable contradiction. There is, then, so truly a being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist;. and this being thou art, O Lord, our God.

So truly, therefore, dost thou exist, O Lord, my God, that thou canst not be conceived not to exist; and rightly. For, if a mind could conceive of a being better than thee, the creature would rise above the Creator; and this is most absurd. And, indeed, whatever else there is, except thee alone, can be conceived not to exist. To thee alone, therefore, it belongs to exist more

truly than all other beings, and hence in a higher degree than all others. For, whatever else exists does not exist so truly, and hence in a less degree it belongs to it to exist. Why, then, has the fool said in his heart, there is no God (Psalms xiv. 1), since it is so evident, to a rational mind, that thou dost exist in the highest degree of all? Why, except that he is dull and a fool?

Chapter IV

How the fool has said in his heart what cannot be conceived. - A thing may be conceived in two ways: (1) when the word signifying it is conceived; (2) when the thing itself is understood As far as the word goes, God can be conceived not to exist; in reality he cannot.

But how has the fool said in his heart what he could not conceive; or how is it that he could not conceive what he said in his heart? since it is the same to say in the heart, and to conceive.

But, if really, nay, since really, he both conceived, because he said in his heart; and did not say in his heart, because he could not conceive; there is more than one way in which a thing is said in the heart or conceived. For, in one sense, an object is conceived, when the word signifying it is conceived; and in another, when the very entity, which the object is, is understood.

In the former sense, then, God can be conceived not to exist; but in the latter, not at all. For no one who understands what fire and water are can conceive fire to be water, in accordance with the nature of the facts themselves, although this is possible according to the words. So, then, no one who understands what God is can conceive that God does not exist; although he says these words in his heart, either without any or with some foreign, signification. For, God is that than which a greater cannot be conceived. And he who thoroughly understands this, assuredly understands that this being so truly exists, that not even in concept can it be non-existent. Therefore, he who understands that God so exists, cannot conceive that he does not exist.

I thank thee, gracious Lord, I thank thee; because what I formerly believed by thy bounty, I now so understand by thine illumination, that if I were unwilling to believe that thou dost exist, I should not be able not to understand this to be true.

Chapter V

God is whatever it is better to be than not to be; and he, as the only self-existent being, creates all things from nothing.

What art thou, then, Lord God, than whom nothing greater can be conceived? But what art thou, except that which, as the highest of all beings, alone exists through itself, and creates all other things from nothing? For, whatever is not this is less than a thing which can be conceived of. But this cannot be conceived of thee. What good, therefore, does the supreme Good lack, through which every good is? Therefore, thou art just, truthful, blessed, and whatever it is better to be than not to be. For it is better to be just than not just; better to be blessed than not blessed.

Gaunilo — In Behalf of the Fool

. . . . . If a man should try to prove to me by such reasoning that this island truly exists, and that its existence should no longer be doubted, either I should believe that he was jesting, or I know not which I ought to regard as the greater fool: myself, supposing that I should allow this proof; or him, if he should suppose that he had established with any certainty the existence of this island. For he ought to show first that the hypothetical excellence of this island exists as a real and indubitable fact, and in no wise as any unreal object, or one whose existence is uncertain, in my understanding . . . .

Anselm's Response

It was a fool against whom the argument of my Proslogium was directed. Seeing, however, that the author of these objections is by no means a fool, and is a Catholic, speaking in behalf of the fool, I think it sufficient that I answer the Catholic . . . .

But, you say, it is as if one should suppose an island in the ocean, which surpasses all lands in its fertility, and which, because of the difficulty, or the impossibility, of discovering what does not exist, is called a lost island; and should say that there can no doubt that this island truly exists in reality, for this reason, that one who hears it described easily understands what he hears.

Now I promise confidently that if any man shall devise anything existing either in reality or in concept alone (except that than which a greater be conceived) to which he can adapt the sequence of my reasoning, I will discover that thing, and will give him his lost island, not to be lost again.

But it now appears that this being than which a greater is inconceivable cannot be conceived not to be, because it exists on so assured a ground of truth; for otherwise it would not exist at all.

Hence, if any one says that he conceives this being not to exist, I say that at the time when he conceives of this either he conceives of a being than

which a greater is inconceivable, or he does not conceive at all. If he does not conceive, he does not conceive of the non-existence of that of which he does not conceive. But if he does conceive, he certainly conceives of a being which cannot be even conceived not to exist. For if it could be conceived not to exist, it could be conceived to have a beginning and an end. But this is impossible.

He, then, who conceives of this being conceives of a being which cannot be even conceived not to exist; but he who conceives of this being does not conceive that it does not exist; else he conceives what is inconceivable. The non-existence, then, of that than which a greater cannot be conceived is inconceivable ....

I believe that I have shown by an argument which is not weak, but sufficiently cogent, that in my former book I proved the real existence of a being than which a greater cannot be conceived; and I believe that this argument cannot be invalidated by the validity of any objection. For so great force does the signification of this reasoning contain in itself, that this being which is the subject of discussion, is of necessity, from the very fact that it is understood or conceived, proved also to exist in reality, and to be whatever we should believe of the divine substance.

For we attribute to the divine substance anything of which it can be conceived that it is better to be than not to be that thing. For example: it is better to be eternal than not eternal; good, than not good; nay, goodness itself, than not goodness itself. But it cannot be that anything of this nature is not a property of the being than which a greater is inconceivable. Hence, the being than which a greater is inconceivable must be whatever should be attributed to the divine essence.

I thank you for your kindness both in your blame and in your praise for my book. For since you have commended so generously those parts of it which seem to you worthy of acceptance, it is quite evident that you have criticised in no unkind spirit those parts of it which seemed to you weak.

5.5 St. Thomas Aquinas

From St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Domincan Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

Whether the Existence of God Is Self-Evident?

Objection 1

It seems that the existence of God is self-evident. Now those things are said to be self-evident to us the knowledge of which is naturally implanted in us, as we can see in regard to first principles. But as Damascene says (De Fide Orth. i, 1,3), "the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in all." Therefore the existence of God is self-evident.

Objection 2

Further, those things are said to be self-evident which are known as soon as the terms are known, which the Philosopher (1 Poster. iii) says is true of the first principles of demonstration. Thus, when the nature of a whole and of a part is known, it is at once recognized that every whole is greater than its part. But as soon as the signification of the word "God" is understood, it is at once seen that God exists. For by this word is signified that thing than which nothing greater can be conceived. But that which exists actually and mentally is greater than that which exists only mentally. Therefore, since as soon as the word "God" is understood it exists mentally, it also follows that it exists actually. Therefore the proposition "God exists" is self-evident.

Objection 3

Further, the existence of truth is self-evident. For whoever denies the existence of truth grants that truth does not exist: and, if truth does not exist, then the proposition "Truth does not exist" is true: and if there is anything true, there must be truth. But God is truth itself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) Therefore "God exists" is self-evident.

On the contrary

No one can mentally admit the opposite of what is self-evident; as the Philosopher (Metaph. iv, lect. vi) states concerning the first principles of demonstration. But the opposite of the proposition "God is" can be mentally admitted: "The fool said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 52:1). Therefore, that God exists is not self-evident.

I answer that, A thing can be self-evident in either of two ways: on the one hand, self-evident in itself, though not to us; on the other, self-evident in itself, and to us. A proposition is self-evident because the predicate is included in the essence of the subject, as "Man is an animal," for animal is

contained in the essence of man. If, therefore the essence of the predicate and subject be known to all, the proposition will be self-evident to all; as is clear with regard to the first principles of demonstration, the terms of which are common things that no one is ignorant of, such as being and non-being, whole and part, and such like. If, however, there are some to whom the essence of the predicate and subject is unknown, the proposition will be self-evident in itself, but not to those who do not know the meaning of the predicate and subject of the proposition. Therefore, it happens, as Boethius says (Hebdom., the title of which is: "Whether all that is, is good"), "that there are some mental concepts self-evident only to the learned, as that incorporeal substances are not in space." Therefore I say that this proposition, "God exists," of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown (Q. 3, Art. 4). Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature–namely, by effects.

Reply to Objection 1

To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature, inasmuch as God is man's beatitude. For man naturally desires happiness, and what is naturally desired by man must be naturally known to him. This, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching; for many there are who imagine that man's perfect good which is happiness, consists in riches, and others in pleasures, and others in something else.

Reply to Objection 2

Perhaps not everyone who hears this word "God" understands it to signify something than which nothing greater can be thought, seeing that some have believed God to be a body. Yet, granted that everyone understands that by this word "God" is signified something than which nothing greater can be thought, nevertheless, it does not therefore follow that he understands that what the word signifies exists actually, but only that it exists mentally. Nor can it be argued that it actually exists, unless it be admitted that there actually exists something than which nothing greater can be thought; and this precisely is not admitted by those who hold that God does not exist.

Reply to Objection 3

The existence of truth in general is self-evident but the existence of a Primal Truth is not self-evident to us.

Whether It Can Be Demonstrated That God Exists

Objection 1

It seems that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated. For it is an article of faith that God exists. But what is of faith cannot be demonstrated, because a demonstration produces scientific knowledge; whereas faith is of the unseen (Heb. 11:1). Therefore it cannot be demonstrated that God exists.

Objection 2

Further, the essence is the middle term of demonstration. But we cannot know in what God's essence consists, but solely in what it does not consist; as Damascene says (De Fide Orth. i, 4). Therefore we cannot demonstrate that God exists.

Objection 3

Further, if the existence of God were demonstrated, this could only be from His effects. But His effects are not proportionate to Him, since He is infinite and His effects are finite; and between the finite and infinite there is no proportion. Therefore, since a cause cannot be demonstrated by an effect not proportionate to it, it seems that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated.

On the contrary

The Apostle says: "The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20). But this would not be unless the existence of God could be demonstrated through the things that are made; for the first thing we must know of anything is whether it exists.

I answer that, Demonstration can be made in two ways: One is through the cause, and is called a priori, and this is to argue from what is prior absolutely. The other is through the effect, and is called a demonstration a posteriori; this is to argue from what is prior relatively only to us. When an effect is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since

every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us.

Reply to Objection 1

The existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent a man, who cannot grasp a proof, accepting, as a matter of faith, something which in itself is capable of being scientifically known and demonstrated.

Reply to Objection 2

When the existence of a cause is demonstrated from an effect, this effect takes the place of the definition of the cause in proof of the cause's existence. This is especially the case in regard to God, because, in order to prove the existence of anything, it is necessary to accept as a middle term the meaning of the word, and not its essence, for the question of its essence follows on the question of its existence. Now the names given to God are derived from His effects; consequently, in demonstrating the existence of God from His effects, we may take for the middle term the meaning of the word "God".

Reply to Objection 3

From effects not proportionate to the cause no perfect knowledge of that cause can be obtained. Yet from every effect the existence of the cause can be clearly demonstrated, and so we can demonstrate the existence of God from His effects; though from them we cannot perfectly know God as He is in His essence.

Whether God Exists

Objection 1

It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist.

Objection 2

Further, it is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many. But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing God did not exist. For all natural things can be reduced to one principle which is nature; and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle which is human reason, or will. Therefore there is no need to suppose God's existence.

On the contrary

It is said in the person of God: "I am Who am." (Ex. 3:14)

I answer that, The existence of God can be proved in five ways.

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in

efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence–which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But more and less are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

Reply to Objection 1

As Augustine says (Enchiridion xi): "Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil." This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good.

Reply to Objection 2

Since nature works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by nature must needs be traced back to God, as to its first cause. So also whatever is done voluntarily must also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will, since these can change or fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as was shown in the body of the Article.

5.6 William Paley

From William Paley, *Natural Theology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1847).

Chapter I — State of the Argument

In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever: nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer which I had before

given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? why is it not as admissible in the second case, as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it. To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts, and of their offices, all tending to one result:– We see a cylindrical box containing a coiled elastic spring, which, by its endeavour to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought for the sake of flexure), communicating the action of the spring from the box to the fusee. We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which catch in, and apply to, each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer; and at the same time, by the size and shape of those wheels, so regulating that motion, as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time. We take notice that the wheels are made of brass in order to keep them from rust; the springs of steel, no other metal being so elastic; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work, but in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not be seen without opening the case. This mechanism being observed (it requires indeed an examination of the instrument, and perhaps some previous knowledge of the subject, to perceive and understand it; but being once, as we have said, observed and understood), the inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker: that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

I. Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed; all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and, to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions

of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, if he be unseen and unknown, but raises no doubt in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

II. Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to show with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

III. Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts, concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case; if by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or the connexion by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts which might be spared, without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment,– these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

IV. Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for, by being told that it was one out of possible combinations of material forms; that whatever he had found in the place where he found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other; and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited, viz. of the works of a watch, as well as a different structure.

V. Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had disposed the parts

of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watch-maker.

VI. Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so:

VII. And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of metallicnature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order, according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the law does nothing; is nothing. The expression, "the law of metallic nature," may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear; but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him, such as "the law of vegetable nature," "the law of animal nature," or indeed as "the law of nature" in general, when assigned as the cause of phenomena, in exclusion of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

VIII. Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument: he knows the utility of the end: he knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These points being known, his ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little, need not beget a distrust of that which he does know ....

Chapter VI — The Argument Cumulative

Were there no example in the world, of contrivance, except that of the eye, it would be alone sufficient to support the conclusion which we draw from it, as to the necessity of an intelligent Creator. It could never be got rid of; because it could not be accounted for by any other supposition, which did not contradict all the principles we possess of knowledge; the principles, according to which, things do, as often as they can be brought to the test of experience, turn out to be true or false. Its coats and humours, constructed, as the lenses of a telescope are constructed, for the refraction of rays of light to a point, which forms the proper action of the organ; the provision in its muscular tendons for turning its pupil to the object, similar to that which is given to the telescope by screws, and upon which power of direction in the eye, the exercise of its office as an optical instrument depends; the further provision for its defence,

for its constant lubricity and moisture, which we see in its socket and its lids, in its gland for the secretion of the matter of tears, its outlet or communication with the nose for carrying off the liquid after the eye is washed with it; these provisions compose altogether an apparatus, a system of parts, a preparation of means, so manifest in their design, so exquisite in their contrivance, so successful in their issue, so precious, and so infinitely beneficial in their use, as, in my opinion, to bear down all doubt that can be raised upon the subject. And what I wish, under the title of the present chapter, to observe is, that if other parts of nature were inaccessible to our inquiries, or even if other parts of nature presented nothing to our examination but disorder and confusion, the validity of this example would remain the same. If there were but one watch in the world, it would not be less certain that it had a maker. If we had never in our lives seen any but one single kind of hydraulic machine, yet, if of that one kind we understood the mechanism and use, we should be as perfectly assured that it proceeded from the hand, and thought, and skill of a workman, as if we visited a museum of the arts, and saw collected there twenty different kinds of machines for drawing water, or a thousand different kinds for other purposes. Of this point, each machine is a proof, independently of all the rest. So it is with the evidences of a Divine agency. The proof is not a conclusion which lies at the end of a chain of reasoning, of which chain each instance of contrivance is only a link, and of which, if one link fail, the whole falls; but it is an argument separately supplied by every separate example. An error in stating an example, affects only that example. The argument is cumulative, in the fullest sense of that term. The eye proves it without the ear; the ear without the eye. The proof in each example is complete; for when the design of the part, and the conduciveness of its structure to that design is shown, the mind may set itself at rest; no future consideration can detract any thing from the force of the example.

5.7 David Hume

From David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (London: Robinson, 1779).

Not to lose any time in circumlocutions, said CLEANTHES, addressing himself to DEMEA, much less in replying to the pious declamations of PHILO; I shall briefly explain how I conceive this matter. Look round the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: You will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human senses and fac-

ulties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which ravishes into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human designs, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since, therefore, the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed. By this argument a posteriori, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence.

I shall be so free, CLEANTHES, said DEMEA, as to tell you, that from the beginning, I could not approve of your conclusion concerning the similarity of the Deity to men; still less can I approve of the mediums by which you endeavour to establish it. What! No demonstration of the Being of God! No abstract arguments! No proofs a priori! Are these, which have hitherto been so much insisted on by philosophers, all fallacy, all sophism? Can we reach no further in this subject than experience and probability? I will not say that this is betraying the cause of a Deity: But surely, by this affected candour, you give advantages to Atheists, which they never could obtain by the mere dint of argument and reasoning.

What I chiefly scruple in this subject, said PHILO, is not so much that all religious arguments are by CLEANTHES reduced to experience, as that they appear not to be even the most certain and irrefragable of that inferior kind. That a stone will fall, that fire will burn, that the earth has solidity, we have observed a thousand and a thousand times; and when any new instance of this nature is presented, we draw without hesitation the accustomed inference. The exact similarity of the cases gives us a perfect assurance of a similar event; and a stronger evidence is never desired nor sought after. But wherever you depart, in the least, from the similarity of the cases, you diminish proportionably the evidence; and may at last bring it to a very weak analogy, which is confessedly liable to error and uncertainty. After having experienced the circulation of the blood in human creatures, we make no doubt that it takes place in TITIUS and MAEVIUS. But from its circulation in frogs and fishes, it is only a presumption, though a strong one, from analogy, that it takes place in men and other animals. The analogical reasoning is much weaker, when we infer the circulation of the sap in vegetables from our experience that the blood circulates in animals; and those, who hastily followed that imperfect analogy, are found, by more accurate experiments, to have been mistaken.

If we see a house, CLEANTHES, we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder; because this is precisely that species of effect which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause; and how that pretension will be received in the world, I leave you to consider.

It would surely be very ill received, replied CLEANTHES; and I should be deservedly blamed and detested, did I allow, that the proofs of a Deity amounted to no more than a guess or conjecture. But is the whole adjustment of means to ends in a house and in the universe so slight a resemblance? The economy of final causes? The order, proportion, and arrangement of every part? Steps of a stair are plainly contrived, that human legs may use them in mounting; and this inference is certain and infallible. Human legs are also contrived for walking and mounting; and this inference, I allow, is not altogether so certain, because of the dissimilarity which you remark; but does it, therefore, deserve the name only of presumption or conjecture?

Good God! cried DEMEA, interrupting him, where are we? Zealous defenders of religion allow, that the proofs of a Deity fall short of perfect evidence! And you, PHILO, on whose assistance I depended in proving the adorable mysteriousness of the Divine Nature, do you assent to all these extravagant opinions of CLEANTHES? For what other name can I give them? or, why spare my censure, when such principles are advanced, supported by such an authority, before so young a man as PAMPHILUS?

You seem not to apprehend, replied PHILO, that I argue with CLEANTHES in his own way; and, by showing him the dangerous consequences of his tenets, hope at last to reduce him to our opinion. But what sticks most with you, I observe, is the representation which CLEANTHES has made of the argument a posteriori; and finding that that argument is likely to escape your hold and vanish into air, you think it so disguised, that you can scarcely believe it to be set in its true light. Now, however much I may dissent, in other respects, from the dangerous principles of CLEANTHES, I must allow that he has fairly represented that argument; and I shall endeavour so to state the matter to you, that you will entertain no further scruples with regard to it.

Were a man to abstract from every thing which he knows or has seen, he would be altogether incapable, merely from his own ideas, to determine what kind of scene the universe must be, or to give the preference to one state or

situation of things above another. For as nothing which he clearly conceives could be esteemed impossible or implying a contradiction, every chimera of his fancy would be upon an equal footing; nor could he assign any just reason why he adheres to one idea or system, and rejects the others which are equally possible.

Again; after he opens his eyes, and contemplates the world as it really is, it would be impossible for him at first to assign the cause of any one event, much less of the whole of things, or of the universe. He might set his fancy a rambling; and she might bring him in an infinite variety of reports and representations. These would all be possible; but being all equally possible, he would never of himself give a satisfactory account for his preferring one of them to the rest. Experience alone can point out to him the true cause of any phenomenon.

Now, according to this method of reasoning, DEMEA, it follows, (and is, indeed, tacitly allowed by CLEANTHES himself,) that order, arrangement, or the adjustment of final causes, is not of itself any proof of design; but only so far as it has been experienced to proceed from that principle. For aught we can know a priori, matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as mind does; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving, that the several elements, from an internal unknown cause, may fall into the most exquisite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas, in the great universal mind, from a like internal unknown cause, fall into that arrangement. The equal possibility of both these suppositions is allowed. But, by experience, we find, (according to CLEANTHES), that there is a difference between them. Throw several pieces of steel together, without shape or form; they will never arrange themselves so as to compose a watch. Stone, and mortar, and wood, without an architect, never erect a house. But the ideas in a human mind, we see, by an unknown, inexplicable economy, arrange themselves so as to form the plan of a watch or house. Experience, therefore, proves, that there is an original principle of order in mind, not in matter. From similar effects we infer similar causes. The adjustment of means to ends is alike in the universe, as in a machine of human contrivance. The causes, therefore, must be resembling.

I was from the beginning scandalised, I must own, with this resemblance, which is asserted, between the Deity and human creatures; and must conceive it to imply such a degradation of the Supreme Being as no sound Theist could endure. With your assistance, therefore, DEMEA, I shall endeavour to defend what you justly call the adorable mysteriousness of the Divine Nature, and shall refute this reasoning of CLEANTHES, provided he allows that I have made a fair representation of it.

When CLEANTHES had assented, PHILO, after a short pause, proceeded in the following manner.

That all inferences, CLEANTHES, concerning fact, are founded on experience; and that all experimental reasonings are founded on the supposition that similar causes prove similar effects, and similar effects similar causes; I shall not at present much dispute with you. But observe, I entreat you, with what extreme caution all just reasoners proceed in the transferring of experiments to similar cases. Unless the cases be exactly similar, they repose no perfect confidence in applying their past observation to any particular phenomenon. Every alteration of circumstances occasions a doubt concerning the event; and it requires new experiments to prove certainly, that the new circumstances are of no moment or importance. A change in bulk, situation, arrangement, age, disposition of the air, or surrounding bodies; any of these particulars may be attended with the most unexpected consequences: And unless the objects be quite familiar to us, it is the highest temerity to expect with assurance, after any of these changes, an event similar to that which before fell under our observation. The slow and deliberate steps of philosophers here, if any where, are distinguished from the precipitate march of the vulgar, who, hurried on by the smallest similitude, are incapable of all discernment or consideration.

But can you think, CLEANTHES, that your usual phlegm and philosophy have been preserved in so wide a step as you have taken, when you compared to the universe houses, ships, furniture, machines, and, from their similarity in some circumstances, inferred a similarity in their causes? Thought, design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily observation. It is an active cause, by which some particular parts of nature, we find, produce alterations on other parts. But can a conclusion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? Does not the great disproportion bar all comparison and inference? From observing the growth of a hair, can we learn any thing concerning the generation of a man? Would the manner of a leaf's blowing, even though perfectly known, afford us any instruction concerning the vegetation of a tree?

But, allowing that we were to take the operations of one part of nature upon another, for the foundation of our judgement concerning the origin of the whole, (which never can be admitted,) yet why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle, as the reason and design of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call thought, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe?

Our partiality in our own favour does indeed present it on all occasions; but sound philosophy ought carefully to guard against so natural an illusion.

So far from admitting, continued PHILO, that the operations of a part can afford us any just conclusion concerning the origin of the whole, I will not allow any one part to form a rule for another part, if the latter be very remote from the former. Is there any reasonable ground to conclude, that the inhabitants of other planets possess thought, intelligence, reason, or any thing similar to these faculties in men? When nature has so extremely diversified her manner of operation in this small globe, can we imagine that she incessantly copies herself throughout so immense a universe? And if thought, as we may well suppose, be confined merely to this narrow corner, and has even there so limited a sphere of action, with what propriety can we assign it for the original cause of all things? The narrow views of a peasant, who makes his domestic economy the rule for the government of kingdoms, is in comparison a pardonable sophism.

But were we ever so much assured, that a thought and reason, resembling the human, were to be found throughout the whole universe, and were its activity elsewhere vastly greater and more commanding than it appears in this globe; yet I cannot see, why the operations of a world constituted, arranged, adjusted, can with any propriety be extended to a world which is in its embryo state, and is advancing towards that constitution and arrangement. By observation, we know somewhat of the economy, action, and nourishment of a finished animal; but we must transfer with great caution that observation to the growth of a foetus in the womb, and still more to the formation of an animalcule in the loins of its male parent. Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, possesses an infinite number of springs and principles, which incessantly discover themselves on every change of her position and situation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe, we cannot, without the utmost temerity, pretend to determine.

A very small part of this great system, during a very short time, is very imperfectly discovered to us; and do we thence pronounce decisively concerning the origin of the whole?

Admirable conclusion! Stone, wood, brick, iron, brass, have not, at this time, in this minute globe of earth, an order or arrangement without human art and contrivance; therefore the universe could not originally attain its order and arrangement, without something similar to human art. But is a part of nature a rule for another part very wide of the former? Is it a rule for the whole? Is a very small part a rule for the universe? Is nature in one situation, a certain rule for nature in another situation vastly different from the former?

And can you blame me, CLEANTHES, if I here imitate the prudent reserve of SIMONIDES, who, according to the noted story, being asked by HIERO, What God was? desired a day to think of it, and then two days more; and after that manner continually prolonged the term, without ever bringing in his definition or description? Could you even blame me, if I had answered at first, that I did not know, and was sensible that this subject lay vastly beyond the reach of my faculties? You might cry out sceptic and railler, as much as you pleased: but having found, in so many other subjects much more familiar, the imperfections and even contradictions of human reason, I never should expect any success from its feeble conjectures, in a subject so sublime, and so remote from the sphere of our observation. When two species of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can infer, by custom, the existence of one wherever I see the existence of the other; and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a serious countenance, that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art like the human, because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient, surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance...

PHILO was proceeding in this vehement manner, somewhat between jest and earnest, as it appeared to me, when he observed some signs of impatience in CLEANTHES, and then immediately stopped short. What I had to suggest, said CLEANTHES, is only that you would not abuse terms, or make use of popular expressions to subvert philosophical reasonings. You know, that the vulgar often distinguish reason from experience, even where the question relates only to matter of fact and existence; though it is found, where that reason is properly analysed, that it is nothing but a species of experience. To prove by experience the origin of the universe from mind, is not more contrary to common speech, than to prove the motion of the earth from the same principle. And a caviller might raise all the same objections to the Copernican system, which you have urged against my reasonings. Have you other earths, might he say, which you have seen to move? Have... Yes! cried PHILO, interrupting him, we have other earths. Is not the moon another earth, which we see to turn round its centre? Is not Venus another earth, where we observe the same phenomenon? Are not the revolutions of the sun also a confirmation, from analogy, of the same theory? All the planets, are they not earths, which revolve about the sun? Are not the satellites moons, which move round Jupiter and Saturn, and along with these primary planets

round the sun? These analogies and resemblances, with others which I have not mentioned, are the sole proofs of the COPERNICAN system; and to you it belongs to consider, whether you have any analogies of the same kind to support your theory.

In reality, CLEANTHES, continued he, the modern system of astronomy is now so much received by all inquirers, and has become so essential a part even of our earliest education, that we are not commonly very scrupulous in examining the reasons upon which it is founded. It is now become a matter of mere curiosity to study the first writers on that subject, who had the full force of prejudice to encounter, and were obliged to turn their arguments on every side in order to render them popular and convincing. But if we peruse GALILEO's famous Dialogues concerning the system of the world, we shall find, that that great genius, one of the sublimest that ever existed, first bent all his endeavours to prove, that there was no foundation for the distinction commonly made between elementary and celestial substances. The schools, proceeding from the illusions of sense, had carried this distinction very far; and had established the latter substances to be ingenerable, incorruptible, unalterable, impassable; and had assigned all the opposite qualities to the former. But GALILEO, beginning with the moon, proved its similarity in every particular to the earth; its convex figure, its natural darkness when not illuminated, its density, its distinction into solid and liquid, the variations of its phases, the mutual illuminations of the earth and moon, their mutual eclipses, the inequalities of the lunar surface, etc. After many instances of this kind, with regard to all the planets, men plainly saw that these bodies became proper objects of experience; and that the similarity of their nature enabled us to extend the same arguments and phenomena from one to the other.

In this cautious proceeding of the astronomers, you may read your own condemnation, CLEANTHES; or rather may see, that the subject in which you are engaged exceeds all human reason and inquiry. Can you pretend to show any such similarity between the fabric of a house, and the generation of a universe? Have you ever seen nature in any such situation as resembles the first arrangement of the elements? Have worlds ever been formed under your eye; and have you had leisure to observe the whole progress of the phenomenon, from the first appearance of order to its final consummation? If you have, then cite your experience, and deliver your theory.

5.8 Questions

1. Read the sections on the moral argument and the probabilistic teleological argument in the text. What, in your opinion, are the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments?

2. Which of the arguments do you consider the best? Which do you consider to be the worst? Why?

3. Compare the traditional versions of the ontological and cosmological arguments to their contemporary rivals. What are the important differences? What effects do these differences have on the success of the arguments?

4. What is the principle of sufficient reason? What is your opinion concerning its truth value? Defend your answer.

5. In your opinion, can the existence of God be proved conclusively using a philosophical argument? Why or why not?

6. If the existence of God cannot be proved using philosophical arguments, then is there any use for such arguments? Explain your answer.

Chapter 6

Evil and Suffering

The problem of evil is the most serious argument against the existence of God, and theists are gravely mistaken in underestimating its force. The problem is simply this: the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent God seems inconsistent with the existence of evil. The argument proceeds as follows:

1. If God is omnipotent, then God is able to prevent every instance of evil.
2. If God is omniscient, then God knows when every instance of evil will occur.
3. If God is omnibenevolent, then God wants to prevent every instance of evil.
4. If God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, then evil will not exist.
5. Evil exists.

$\therefore$ An omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God does not exist.

The argument appears to be valid, given the plausible assumption that a being that wants do something, knows how to do it, and has the power to do it, will in fact perform the action. Note that the argument does not conclude that some very great being, or even a greatest possible being, does not exist. It only concludes that such a being cannot be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent.

The fifth premise is intuitively true, although it has been denied by various groups throughout history (The Church of Christ, Scientist, is an example). The existence of evil in the world appears to be an empirical fact. It is useful to distinguish between two kinds of evil for our purposes: moral and natural.

Moral evil is the pain, suffering, etc. that is caused by the action of a person (these persons need not be human), and for which persons are held morally responsible. Natural evil is the pain, suffering, etc. for which persons cannot be held responsible. There are so many examples of each kind of evil, that their existence seems relatively non-controversial.

Some theists have tried to escape the problem of evil by denying that God has one or more of these qualities, most theists, however, are unwilling to do this. Their task, then, is to show that the argument has at least one false premise. Most of these objections have focused on the third premise. A successful objection of this type must show that there are some evils which an omnibenevolent being would not necessarily want to prevent. Here are some objections that have been made in the past.

1. There can be no good without evil. This is a common objection, but one that, upon reflection, is likely to be rejected even by the theist. Consider the Christian who believes that God created the world, and that before creation, nothing existed except for God. It must be the case that good existed then without any evil at all.

2. The soul-building defense. This defense claims that evil is useful for the spiritual and moral growth of humans. In fact, there is some plausibility to this claim, although the defense may fail to explain acts of horrendous evil that seem to have no such benefit.

3. The greater goods defense. The goal of this defense is to show that there are certain goods that require the existence of evil, and the world is better with these goods and the evil than it would be without either. The defense must show 4 things. 1) There is some evil that is entailed by some good. 2) The evil is outweighed by the good. 3) The good is not attainable without the evil. Finally, 4) There is no alternative good that does not entail the evil.

The theist is obligated to provide some idea of what such goods are. Some examples are compassion, charity, and forgiveness. It appears that a compassionate act requires the existence of suffering. The critic might respond that such an act does not require actual suffering, but only perceived suffering. The theist can reply that a certain kind of compassionate act truly does require evil. Without evil, it would be impossible to act compassionately in an intelligent, informed manner. Such acts might have more moral worth than acts based on a misunderstanding of the facts. This defense, however, might be unable to explain the large degree of suffering that exists in the world.

4. The free will defense. Another good that is often considered is the free will of moral agents. This defense claims that God is limited in a certain way.

God's actions must be limited if people are to act freely. Freedom of action entails at least the possibility of evil.

It does seem that moral freedom requires the possibility of evil action. If God chooses to create free individuals, then the world will be at least partly determined by those individuals. This means that God's control of the world is limited in certain ways. If my choice to either lie or tell the truth is to be truly free, then God cannot make the world so that I cannot ever lie. Although this defense seems promising, it is incompatible with many forms of theism. This defense also cannot account for the existence of natural evil.

Greater good defenses all have something in common, they all claim that a world with some evil and certain goods is better than a world with no evil at all. A possible response (and a very plausible one) is that God could have created a better world than this. Both parties to the dispute seem to assume that God should be obligated to act for the best.

It seems plausible that a perfectly good creator should be required to make the best of all possible worlds. If this is so, the atheist could claim that there are better worlds than this. God, being obligated to create the best, would have created one of those worlds. Since the actual world is not one of those, God does not exist.

The theist can respond by questioning the notion of a best possible world. We have seen ways that a world with some evil might be better than a world with no evil. Presumably, there are an infinite number of possible worlds. God could have created any one of those possible worlds.

If there is an infinite number of possible worlds, and the world with no evil is not the best, then it seems that, for any given world, there will be a better one. God could have always created something else, another beautiful type of flower, for example. The world with the flower would be better than the one without it. Then, God could have created still another flower, then another, ad infinitum. There would be an infinite number of possible worlds, with none being the best.

If there is no best possible world, God cannot be obligated to create it. The atheist could respond, however, that God surely should have created a world with less evil than the actual world. Couldn't God simply be obligated to created a better world than this? If for any world that God could have created, there is a better one; the obligation to create a better one becomes meaningless. It seems meaningless to claim that someone has an obligation, when that obligation is impossible to fulfill. In that sense, God is not obligated to create a better world.

God, being perfectly good, does seem to be obligated to treat people fairly, with justice. If the atheist can show that this obligation is not met in the

actual world, then the problem will still be unresolved. It does seem that people aren't treated with justice in the actual world. People do not seem to get what they deserve. Immoral people prosper, while innocent, moral people suffer miserably. If theism is correct, however, then injustices that are incurred in this world are corrected in another. This might soften the force of the argument from evil.

These responses are certainly successful for refuting the logical problem of evil. That is the claim that the existence of God is absolutely incompatible with the existence of any evil whatsoever. The evidential problem of evil is a different issue. Here, the claim is that the presence of the evil in the world presents some evidence for the nonexistence of God. The more evil that there is, the more evidence is available. The person giving this argument will generally claim that the actual amount of evil in the world presents overwhelming evidence against the existence of God.

Are the theistic responses to the problem of evil adequate? The answer to this question ultimately depends on three things: 1) the strength of the arguments for God's existence. 2) the strength of the claim that if God had reasons for permitting evil, then the theist would know them, and 3) the plausibility of the reasons that the theist has offered. Once again, the success of the argument depends largely upon the intuitions of those hearing it.

6.1 Dostoevsky

From Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1912).

"I MUST make one confession" Ivan began. "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbours. It's just one's neighbours, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love those at a distance. I once read somewhere of John the Merciful, a saint, that when a hungry, frozen beggar came to him, he took him into his bed, held him in his arms, and began breathing into his mouth, which was putrid and loathsome from some awful disease. I am convinced that he did that from 'self-laceration,' from the self-laceration of falsity, for the sake of the charity imposed by duty, as a penance laid on him. For anyone to love a man, he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone."

"Father Zossima has talked of that more than once," observed Alyosha; "he, too, said that the face of a man often hinders many people not practised in love, from loving him. But yet there's a great deal of love in mankind, and almost Christ-like love. I know that myself, Ivan."

"Well, I know nothing of it so far, and can't understand it, and the innumerable mass of mankind are with me there. The question is, whether that's due to men's bad qualities or whether it's inherent in their nature. To my thinking, Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth. He was God. But we are not gods. Suppose I, for instance, suffer intensely. Another can never know how much I suffer, because he is another and not I. And what's more, a man is rarely ready to admit another's suffering (as though it were a distinction). Why won't he admit it, do you think? Because I smell unpleasant, because I have a stupid face, because I once trod on his foot. Besides, there is suffering and suffering; degrading, humiliating suffering such as humbles me- hunger, for instance- my benefactor will perhaps allow me; but when you come to higher suffering- for an idea, for instance- he will very rarely admit that, perhaps because my face strikes him as not at all what he fancies a man should have who suffers for an idea. And so he deprives me instantly of his favour, and not at all from badness of heart. Beggars, especially genteel beggars, ought never to show themselves, but to ask for charity through the newspapers. One can love one's neighbours in the abstract, or even at a distance, but at close quarters it's almost impossible. If it were as on the stage, in the ballet, where if beggars come in, they wear silken rags and tattered lace and beg for alms dancing gracefully, then one might like looking at them. But even then we should not love them. But enough of that. I simply wanted to show you my point of view. I meant to speak of the suffering of mankind generally, but we had better confine ourselves to the sufferings of the children. That reduces the scope of my argument to a tenth of what it would be. Still we'd better keep to the children, though it does weaken my case. But, in the first place, children can be loved even at close quarters, even when they are dirty, even when they are ugly (I fancy, though, children never are ugly). The second reason why I won't speak of grown-up people is that, besides being disgusting and unworthy of love, they have a compensation- they've eaten the apple and know good and evil, and they have become 'like gods.' They go on eating it still. But the children haven't eaten anything, and are so far innocent. Are you fond of children, Alyosha? I know you are, and you will understand why I prefer to speak of them. If they, too, suffer horribly on earth, they must suffer for their fathers' sins, they must be punished for their fathers, who have eaten the apple; but that reasoning is of the other world and is incomprehensible for the heart of man here on earth. The innocent must not suffer for another's sins, and especially such innocents! You may be surprised at me, Alyosha, but I am awfully fond of children, too. And observe, cruel people, the violent, the rapacious, the Karamazovs are sometimes very fond of children. Children while they are quite little- up to seven, for instance-

are so remote from grown-up people they are different creatures, as it were, of a different species. I knew a criminal in prison who had, in the course of his career as a burglar, murdered whole families, including several children. But when he was in prison, he had a strange affection for them. He spent all his time at his window, watching the children playing in the prison yard. He trained one little boy to come up to his window and made great friends with him.... You don't know why I am telling you all this, Alyosha? My head aches and I am sad."

"You speak with a strange air," observed Alyosha uneasily, "as though you were not quite yourself."

"By the way, a Bulgarian I met lately in Moscow," Ivan went on, seeming not to hear his brother's words, "told me about the crimes committed by Turks and Circassians in all parts of Bulgaria through fear of a general rising of the Slavs. They burn villages, murder, outrage women and children, they nail their prisoners by the ears to the fences, leave them so till morning, and in the morning they hang them- all sorts of things you can't imagine. People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that's a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel. The tiger only tears and gnaws, that's all he can do. He would never think of nailing people by the ears, even if he were able to do it. These Turks took a pleasure in torturing children, -too; cutting the unborn child from the mothers womb, and tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes. Doing it before the mothers' eyes was what gave zest to the amusement. Here is another scene that I thought very interesting. Imagine a trembling mother with her baby in her arms, a circle of invading Turks around her. They've planned a diversion: they pet the baby, laugh to make it laugh. They succeed, the baby laughs. At that moment a Turk points a pistol four inches from the baby's face. The baby laughs with glee, holds out its little hands to the pistol, and he pulls the trigger in the baby's face and blows out its brains. Artistic, wasn't it? By the way, Turks are particularly fond of sweet things, they say."

"Brother, what are you driving at?" asked Alyosha.

"I think if the devil doesn't exist, but man has created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness."

"Just as he did God, then?" observed Alyosha.

"'It's wonderful how you can turn words,' as Polonius says in Hamlet," laughed Ivan. "You turn my words against me. Well, I am glad. Yours must be a fine God, if man created Him in his image and likeness. You asked just now what I was driving at. You see, I am fond of collecting certain facts, and, would you believe, I even copy anecdotes of a certain sort from newspapers

and books, and I've already got a fine collection. The Turks, of course, have gone into it, but they are foreigners. I have specimens from home that are even better than the Turks. You know we prefer beating- rods and scourges- that's our national institution. Nailing ears is unthinkable for us, for we are, after all, Europeans. But the rod and the scourge we have always with us and they cannot be taken from us. Abroad now they scarcely do any beating. Manners are more humane, or laws have been passed, so that they don't dare to flog men now. But they make up for it in another way just as national as ours. And so national that it would be practically impossible among us, though I believe we are being inoculated with it, since the religious movement began in our aristocracy. I have a charming pamphlet, translated from the French, describing how, quite recently, five years ago, a murderer, Richard, was executed- a young man, I believe, of three and twenty, who repented and was converted to the Christian faith at the very scaffold. This Richard was an illegitimate child who was given as a child of six by his parents to some shepherds on the Swiss mountains. They brought him up to work for them. He grew up like a little wild beast among them. The shepherds taught him nothing, and scarcely fed or clothed him, but sent him out at seven to herd the flock in cold and wet, and no one hesitated or scrupled to treat him so. Quite the contrary, they thought they had every right, for Richard had been given to them as a chattel, and they did not even see the necessity of feeding him. Richard himself describes how in those years, like the Prodigal Son in the Gospel, he longed to eat of the mash given to the pigs, which were fattened for sale. But they wouldn't even give that, and beat him when he stole from the pigs. And that was how he spent all his childhood and his youth, till he grew up and was strong enough to go away and be a thief. The savage began to earn his living as a day labourer in Geneva. He drank what he earned, he lived like a brute, and finished by killing and robbing an old man. He was caught, tried, and condemned to death. They are not sentimentalists there. And in prison he was immediately surrounded by pastors, members of Christian brotherhoods, philanthropic ladies, and the like. They taught him to read and write in prison, and expounded the Gospel to him. They exhorted him, worked upon him, drummed at him incessantly, till at last he solemnly confessed his crime. He was converted. He wrote to the court himself that he was a monster, but that in the end God had vouchsafed him light and shown grace. All Geneva was in excitement about him- all philanthropic and religious Geneva. All the aristocratic and well-bred society of the town rushed to the prison, kissed Richard and embraced him; 'You are our brother, you have found grace.' And Richard does nothing but weep with emotion, 'Yes, I've found grace! All my youth and childhood I was glad of pigs' food, but

now even I have found grace. I am dying in the Lord.' 'Yes, Richard, die in the Lord; you have shed blood and must die. Though it's not your fault that you knew not the Lord, when you coveted the pigs' food and were beaten for stealing it (which was very wrong of you, for stealing is forbidden); but you've shed blood and you must die.'And on the last day, Richard, perfectly limp, did nothing but cry and repeat every minute: 'This is my happiest day. I am going to the Lord.' 'Yes,' cry the pastors and the judges and philanthropic ladies. 'This is the happiest day of your life, for you are going to the Lord!' They all walk or drive to the scaffold in procession behind the prison van. At the scaffold they call to Richard: 'Die, brother, die in the Lord, for even thou hast found grace!' And so, covered with his brothers' kisses, Richard is dragged on to the scaffold, and led to the guillotine. And they chopped off his head in brotherly fashion, because he had found grace. Yes, that's characteristic. That pamphlet is translated into Russian by some Russian philanthropists of aristocratic rank and evangelical aspirations, and has been distributed gratis for the enlightenment of the people. The case of Richard is interesting because it's national. Though to us it's absurd to cut off a man's head, because he has become our brother and has found grace, yet we have our own speciality, which is all but worse. Our historical pastime is the direct satisfaction of inflicting pain. There are lines in Nekrassov describing how a peasant lashes a horse on the eyes, 'on its meek eyes,' everyone must have seen it. It's peculiarly Russian. He describes how a feeble little nag has foundered under too heavy a load and cannot move. The peasant beats it, beats it savagely, beats it at last not knowing what he is doing in the intoxication of cruelty, thrashes it mercilessly over and over again. 'However weak you are, you must pull, if you die for it.' The nag strains, and then he begins lashing the poor defenceless creature on its weeping, on its 'meek eyes.' The frantic beast tugs and draws the load, trembling all over, gasping for breath, moving sideways, with a sort of unnatural spasmodic action- it's awful in Nekrassov. But that only a horse, and God has horses to be beaten. So the Tatars have taught us, and they left us the knout as a remembrance of it. But men, too, can be beaten. A well-educated, cultured gentleman and his wife beat their own child with a birch-rod, a girl of seven. I have an exact account of it. The papa was glad that the birch was covered with twigs. 'It stings more,' said he, and so be began stinging his daughter. I know for a fact there are people who at every blow are worked up to sensuality, to literal sensuality, which increases progressively at every blow they inflict. They beat for a minute, for five minutes, for ten minutes, more often and more savagely. The child screams. At last the child cannot scream, it gasps, 'Daddy daddy!' By some diabolical unseemly chance the case was brought into court. A counsel is engaged. The Russian people

have long called a barrister 'a conscience for hire.' The counsel protests in his client's defence. 'It's such a simple thing,' he says, 'an everyday domestic event. A father corrects his child. To our shame be it said, it is brought into court.' The jury, convinced by him, give a favourable verdict. The public roars with delight that the torturer is acquitted. Ah, pity I wasn't there! I would have proposed to raise a subscription in his honour! Charming pictures."

"But I've still better things about children. I've collected a great, great deal about Russian children, Alyosha. There was a little girl of five who was hated by her father and mother, 'most worthy and respectable people, of good education and breeding.' You see, I must repeat again, it is a peculiar characteristic of many people, this love of torturing children, and children only. To all other types of humanity these torturers behave mildly and benevolently, like cultivated and humane Europeans; but they are very fond of tormenting children, even fond of children themselves in that sense. it's just their defencelessness that tempts the tormentor, just the angelic confidence of the child who has no refuge and no appeal, that sets his vile blood on fire. In every man, of course, a demon lies hidden- the demon of rage, the demon of lustful heat at the screams of the tortured victim, the demon of lawlessness let off the chain, the demon of diseases that follow on vice, gout, kidney disease, and so on."

"This poor child of five was subjected to every possible torture by those cultivated parents. They beat her, thrashed her, kicked her for no reason till her body was one bruise. Then, they went to greater refinements of cruelty- shut her up all night in the cold and frost in a privy, and because she didn't ask to be taken up at night (as though a child of five sleeping its angelic, sound sleep could be trained to wake and ask), they smeared her face and filled her mouth with excrement, and it was her mother, her mother did this. And that mother could sleep, hearing the poor child's groans! Can you understand why a little creature, who can't even understand what's done to her, should beat her little aching heart with her tiny fist in the dark and the cold, and weep her meek unresentful tears to dear, kind God to protect her? Do you understand that, friend and brother, you pious and humble novice? Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted? Without it, I am told, man could not have existed on earth, for he could not have known good and evil. Why should he know that diabolical good and evil when it costs so much? Why, the whole world of knowledge is not worth that child's prayer to dear, kind God'! I say nothing of the sufferings of grown-up people, they have eaten the apple, damn them, and the devil take them all! But these little ones! I am making you suffer, Alyosha, you are not yourself. I'll leave off if you like."

"Nevermind. I want to suffer too," muttered Alyosha.

"One picture, only one more, because it's so curious, so characteristic, and I have only just read it in some collection of Russian antiquities. I've forgotten the name. I must look it up. It was in the darkest days of serfdom at the beginning of the century, and long live the Liberator of the People! There was in those days a general of aristocratic connections, the owner of great estates, one of those men- somewhat exceptional, I believe, even then- who, retiring from the service into a life of leisure, are convinced that they've earned absolute power over the lives of their subjects. There were such men then. So our general, settled on his property of two thousand souls, lives in pomp, and domineers over his poor neighbours as though they were dependents and buffoons. He has kennels of hundreds of hounds and nearly a hundred dog-boys- all mounted, and in uniform. One day a serf-boy, a little child of eight, threw a stone in play and hurt the paw of the general's favourite hound. 'Why is my favourite dog lame?' He is told that the boy threw a stone that hurt the dog's paw. 'So you did it.' The general looked the child up and down. 'Take him.' He was taken- taken from his mother and kept shut up all night. Early that morning the general comes out on horseback, with the hounds, his dependents, dog-boys, and huntsmen, all mounted around him in full hunting parade. The servants are summoned for their edification, and in front of them all stands the mother of the child. The child is brought from the lock-up. It's a gloomy, cold, foggy, autumn day, a capital day for hunting. The general orders the child to be undressed; the child is stripped naked. He shivers, numb with terror, not daring to cry.... 'Make him run,' commands the general. 'Run! run!' shout the dog-boys. The boy runs.... 'At him!' yells the general, and he sets the whole pack of hounds on the child. The hounds catch him, and tear him to pieces before his mother's eyes!... I believe the general was afterwards declared incapable of administering his estates. Well- what did he deserve? To be shot? To be shot for the satisfaction of our moral feelings? Speak, Alyosha!"

"To be shot," murmured Alyosha, lifting his eyes to Ivan with a pale, twisted smile.

"Bravo!" cried Ivan delighted. "If even you say so... You're a pretty monk! So there is a little devil sitting in your heart, Alyosha Karamazov!"

"What I said was absurd, but"

"That's just the point, that 'but'!" cried Ivan. "Let me tell you, novice, that the absurd is only too necessary on earth. The world stands on absurdities, and perhaps nothing would have come to pass in it without them. We know what we know!"

"What do you know?"

"I understand nothing," Ivan went on, as though in delirium. "I don't want to understand anything now. I want to stick to the fact. I made up my mind long ago not to understand. If I try to understand anything, I shall be false to the fact, and I have determined to stick to the fact."

"Why are you trying me?" Alyosha cried, with sudden distress. "Will you say what you mean at last?"

"Of course, I will; that's what I've been leading up to. You are dear to me, I don't want to let you go, and I won't give you up to your Zossima."

Ivan for a minute was silent, his face became all at once very sad.

"Listen! I took the case of children only to make my case clearer. Of the other tears of humanity with which the earth is soaked from its crust to its centre, I will say nothing. I have narrowed my subject on purpose. I am a bug, and I recognise in all humility that I cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. Men are themselves to blame, I suppose; they were given paradise, they wanted freedom, and stole fire from heaven, though they knew they would become unhappy, so there is no need to pity them. With my pitiful, earthly, Euclidian understanding, all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty; that cause follows effect, simply and directly; that everything flows and finds its level- but that's only Euclidian nonsense, I know that, and I can't consent to live by it! What comfort is it to me that there are none guilty and that cause follows effect simply and directly, and that I know it?- I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. I have believed in it. I want to see it, and if I am dead by then, let me rise again, for if it all happens without me, it will be too unfair. Surely I haven't suffered simply that I, my crimes and my sufferings, may manure the soil of the future harmony for somebody else. I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion and the victim rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for. All the religions of the world are built on this longing, and I am a believer. But then there are the children, and what am I to do about them? That's a question I can't answer. For the hundredth time I repeat, there are numbers of questions, but I've only taken the children, because in their case what I mean is so unanswerably clear. Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. And if it is really true that they must share responsibility

for all their fathers' crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension. Some jester will say, perhaps, that the child would have grown up and have sinned, but you see he didn't grow up, he was torn to pieces by the dogs, at eight years old. Oh, Alyosha, I am not blaspheming! I understand, of course, what an upheaval of the universe it will be when everything in heaven and earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived cries aloud: 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed.' When the mother embraces the fiend who threw her child to the dogs, and all three cry aloud with tears, 'Thou art just, O Lord!' then, of course, the crown of knowledge will be reached and all will be made clear. But what pulls me up here is that I can't accept that harmony. And while I am on earth, I make haste to take my own measures. You see, Alyosha, perhaps it really may happen that if I live to that moment, or rise again to see it, I, too, perhaps, may cry aloud with the rest, looking at the mother embracing the child's torturer, 'Thou art just, O Lord!' but I don't want to cry aloud then. While there is still time, I hasten to protect myself, and so I renounce the higher harmony altogether. It's not worth the tears of that one tortured child who beat itself on the breast with its little fist and prayed in its stinking outhouse, with its unexpiated tears to 'dear, kind God'! It's not worth it, because those tears are unatoned for. They must be atoned for, or there can be no harmony. But how? How are you going to atone for them? Is it possible? By their being avenged? But what do I care for avenging them? What do I care for a hell for oppressors? What good can hell do, since those children have already been tortured? And what becomes of harmony, if there is hell? I want to forgive. I want to embrace. I don't want more suffering. And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price. I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive; she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony? Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left with the unavenged suffering. I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, even if I were wrong. Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing.

It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return him the ticket."

"That's rebellion," murmered Alyosha, looking down.

"Rebellion? I am sorry you call it that," said Ivan earnestly. "One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live. Tell me yourself, I challenge your answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature- that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance- and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth."

"No, I wouldn't consent," said Alyosha softly.

"And can you admit the idea that men for whom you are building it would agree to accept their happiness on the foundation of the unexpiated blood of a little victim? And accepting it would remain happy for ever?"

"No, I can't admit it. Brother," said Alyosha suddenly, with flashing eyes, "you said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a Being and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything. You have forgotten Him, and on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they cry aloud, 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!"'

"Ah! the One without sin and His blood! No, I have not forgotten Him; on the contrary I've been wondering all the time how it was you did not bring Him in before, for usually all arguments on your side put Him in the foreground. Do you know, Alyosha- don't laugh I made a poem about a year ago. If you can waste another ten minutes on me, I'll tell it to you."

"You wrote a poem?"

"Oh, no, I didn't write it," laughed Ivan, and I've never written two lines of poetry in my life. But I made up this poem in prose and I remembered it. I was carried away when I made it up. You will be my first reader- that is listener. Why should an author forego even one listener?" smiled Ivan. "Shall I tell it to you?"

"I am all attention." said Alyosha.

"My poem is called The Grand Inquisitor; it's a ridiculous thing, but I want to tell it to you ...."

6.2 Augustine

From St. Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, trans. J. F. Shaw (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883).

Chapter X—The Supremely Good Creator Made All Things Good

By the Trinity, thus supremely and equally and unchangeably good, all things were created; and these are not supremely and equally and unchangeably good, but yet they are, good, even taken separately. Taken as a whole, however, they are very good, because their ensemble constitutes the universe in all its wonderful order and beauty.

Chapter XI—What Is Called Evil In The Universe Is But The Absence Of Good

And in the universe, even that which is called evil, when it is regulated and put in its own place, only enhances our admiration of the good; for we enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the evil. For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil. For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good? In the bodies of animals, disease and wounds mean nothing but the absence of health; for when a cure is effected, that does not mean that the evils which were present—namely, the diseases and wounds—go away from the body and dwell elsewhere: they altogether cease to exist; for the wound or disease is not a substance, but a defect in the fleshly substance, the flesh itself being a substance, and therefore something good, of which those evils—that is, privations of the good which we call health—are accidents. Just in the same way, what are called vices in the soul are nothing but privations of natural good. And when they are cured, they are not transferred elsewhere: when they cease to exist in the healthy soul, they cannot exist anywhere else.

Chapter XII—All Beings Were Made Good, But Not Being Made Perfectly Good, Are Liable To Corruption

All things that exist, therefore, seeing that the Creator of them all is supremely good, are themselves good. But because they are not, like their Creator, supremely and unchangeably good, their good may be diminished and increased. But for good to be diminished is an evil, although, however much

it may be diminished, it is necessary, if the being is to continue, that some good should remain to constitute the being. For however small or of whatever kind the being may be, the good which makes it a being cannot be destroyed without destroying the being itself. An uncorrupted nature is justly held in esteem. But if, still further, it be incorruptible, it is undoubtedly considered of still higher value. When it is corrupted, however, its corruption is an evil, because it is deprived of some sort of good. For if it be deprived of no good, it receives no injury; but it does receive injury, therefore it is deprived of good. Therefore, so long as a being is in process of corruption, there is in it some good of which it is being deprived; and if a part of the being should remain which cannot be corrupted, this will certainly be an incorruptible being, and accordingly the process of corruption will result in the manifestation of this great good. But if it do not cease to be corrupted, neither can it cease to possess good of which corruption may deprive it. But if it should be thoroughly and completely consumed by corruption, there will then be no good left, because there will be no being. Wherefore corruption can consume the good only by consuming the being. Every being, therefore, is a good; a great good, if it can not be corrupted; a little good, if it can: but in any case, only the foolish or ignorant will deny that it is a good. And if it be wholly consumed by corruption, then the corruption itself must cease to exist, as there is no being left in which it can dwell.

6.3 Questions

1. From a ministerial point of view, is the problem of evil a serious problem? Why?

2. Explain the difference between the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem.

3. What is the difference between a defense and a theodicy?

4. Which do you consider to be the best of the theistic responses to the problem of evil? Why?

5. Is it possible for God to create a world containing free people who never do anything evil?

Chapter 7

Reformed Epistemology and Religious Language

Reformed epistemology is a relatively new movement in philosophy. The name is derived from the similarity of certain ideas in reformed epistemology to those found in the writings of Reformation thinkers, especially John Calvin. This does not mean that reformed epistemology is a Calvinist position, however. In fact, as a theory of knowledge, it need not be committed to theism. Nonetheless, the early proponents of reformed epistemology adopted it for the purpose of defending religious belief.

Reformed epistemology is primarily an attack of evidentialism. If you remember, evidentialism is the view that one ought to believe only what one can prove with evidence. If both the arguments for the existence of God and the arguments against the existence of God are inconclusive, then evidentialism would require that one become an agnostic about the matter.

Evidentialism is closely associated to a theory of epistemology called strong foundationalism. In order for a belief to count as knowledge, that belief must be justified. If you claim to believe that a particular person will win the next presidential election, but have absolutely no reason to believe so, you really cannot claim to know who will win. This is so, even if your belief turns out to be true. In that case, you were simply lucky, but you did not know.

Most of our beliefs are justified in terms of other beliefs that we have. Why do you believe this person will win? You respond that he will run, and that more people like him than like his competitors. These are things that you believe about this potential candidate. If all beliefs must be justified in terms of other beliefs, then it will turn out that there are no justified beliefs, and therefore, no knowledge. This is so, because the chain of justification must

do one of three things. It either circles back on itself, goes on to infinity, or ends in an unjustified belief. Regardless which one of these occurs, there is ultimately no justified belief.

The strong foundationalist thinks that there are some beliefs are not justified in terms of other beliefs. These are called basic beliefs. They are justified, but they justify themselves. An example is the belief that triangles have three sides. You don't really need to offer evidence for this. Given what the words mean, this belief cannot possibly be false. It is what we call an analytic truth. Other basic beliefs include beliefs about your own mental states, such as the belief that it seems to you that there is a book in front of you. Notice what these beliefs have in common: they cannot possibly be false. You cannot be wrong about triangles having three sides, nor about the way things seem to you to be. You can be mistaken about the way they actually are, but not about the way they seem to be.

So, strong foundationalism is the position that all justified beliefs must meet one of two conditions. They must either be basic beliefs, or entailed by basic beliefs. A belief is entailed by another belief if the truth of the second guarantees the truth of the first. As you would guess, strong foundationalism fails. First, it fails to meet its own standard, in much the same way that Clifford's evidentialism in chapter 3 failed to meet its own standard. The thesis of strong foundationalism is not itself a basic belief. It is not an analytic truth, nor is it a belief about first-person mental states. It is also not derivable from any basic beliefs. Therefore, if it is true, one could never be justified in believing it. This is what philosophers call self-referentially incoherent.

The second reason it fails is that most of the things that we believe we know, if strong foundationalism is true, are unjustified. Therefore, it conflicts with our intuitions about the scope of our knowledge. For instance, the belief that there is a book in front of you is not justified, because it is neither basic nor entailed by a basic belief. The belief that it seems to you that there is a book in front of you is basic, but that belief can be true while the belief about the book actually being in front of is false. In fact, you probably don't believe that it seems to you that there is a book there, you just believe that there is a book there!

The reformed epistemologists reply that surely, if it seems to you that there is a book in front of you, you are justified in believing that there is a book in front of you. The sense experience justifies the belief in the book. Foundationalism must widen the range of basic beliefs. Alvin Plantinga calls such beliefs "Properly basic beliefs."

Now, could the belief in the existence of God be a properly basic belief? How do most people come to believe in God? Maybe they have a particular

experience, like seeing the night sky from the top of a mountain, and find themselves believing that there is a higher power. If so, this is much like your having a particular experience, and finding yourself believing that there is a book there. If the latter is justified, should the former also not be justified?

In fact, the beliefs that are produced by sense experience are ordinarily justified, providing you have no reason to doubt the reliability of your sense experience. Calvin believed that there was a sense that produced belief in existence of God, that he called the sensus divinitatus. If God created us and wanted us to know him, then it seems likely that he would have given us some means of doing so. So, if God exists, then the belief in the existence of God is very likely justified.

What does this mean for the rationality of religious belief? It means that religious belief does not require arguments to be rational. I do not have to give an account for my belief in the tree in my backyard. I see a tree, and I believe there is one there. Likewise, the person who experiences God does not have to give an account of his belief in order for that belief to be justified.

Reformed epistemology is controversial, and has several potential weaknesses. Ordinarily, other people failing to have the same experience I have weakens the justification of the belief produced by that experience. Many people fail to have religious experiences, while others have experiences that are quite different from my own.

Another objection is that reformed epistemology justifies too much. What about the religious beliefs of the people who followed Jim Jones to Guyana, or those of the members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan? Are those beliefs justified? If not, then what is the difference between those beliefs and Christian beliefs?

Religious Language

Most of the terms that we use when speaking about God are simply words that we use to with reference to ordinary, everyday objects. We say that God is good, and that our neighbors are good. We say that God is just and that the Supreme Court's decision was just. We say that God is powerful, and that the jaws of a snapping turtle are powerful. Does God have these qualities in the same sense as these other things, or in a different sense? If a different sense, then what does it really mean to say that God is good, just, or powerful?

When words are used in the same sense, they are said to be univocal. Words that are used in different senses (such as when my nephew says "That's bad" when he thinks something is good, and my wife who tells me "That would be a bad thing to do.") are said to be equivocal.

Many would reject that 'good' is used univocally of both God and the neighbors, no matter how good the neighbors are. This is because God is an

infinite being and the neighbors are finite creatures. Many would also reject that the term is used equivocally, because it would be hard to how we could have any understanding of God's goodness.

The middle position proposed by Aquinas is that ordinary terms are used analogically with respect to God. There is a similarity between God's goodness and that of a human, but there is also a difference. Aquinas' theory is complex, and has some supporters and many detractors. It's not clear that the theory of analogy helps us to understand anything about God. If the terms are used analogically, then one knows that God's goodness is both similar to and different from human goodness. This does not aid our understanding, however, unless we know exactly how they are similar and how they are different. If we knew that, we could just invent a new word and use it for the goodness of God.

Even theists would concede that, in many cases, it is not precisely clear what religious terms mean nor how they get their meaning. Many philosophers in the twentieth century maintained something much stronger, though. They argued that religious language is completely and utterly meaningless. These philosophers were called logical positivists.

The key principle of logical positivism was the verifiability principle. It said that every meaningful statement is either analytic (that is, true by definition) or verifiable by sense experience. So, the statement "Triangles have three sides" is meaningful, since it is true by definition. The statement "It is now 95 degrees outside" is also meaningful since it is verifiable by sense experience. The statement "God is merciful" is neither true by definition nor verifiable by sense experience, and therefore is meaningless.

Logical positivism is no longer a major movement in philosophy. This is primarily because the verifiability principle suffered the same fate as strong foundationalism and Clifford's evidentialism. The verifiability principle itself is neither analytic nor verifiable by sense experience. Therefore, if it is true, then it is meaningless.

The spirit behind the principle has not disappeared, however, because there is something intuitively right about it. Whenever a person makes a factual claim, it seems right that they should be able to describe the conditions under which someone else could verify it. Even more important are the conditions under which someone could falsify it. Otherwise, what way do we have of testing the claim?

The statement "It is now 95 degrees outside" seems falsifiable. If a pan of water that is left outside freezes, it cannot be 95 degrees. So is the statement "God exists" falsifiable? Consider Antony Flew's use of John Wisdom's example that is presented in the text. The believer in the gardener has effectively

ruled out any case that would falsify his belief. In what way does the belief still have any meaning?

This objection to the meaningfulness of religious language has also fallen out of favor. If religious belief is meaningless because it is not falsifiable, then there is nothing that is meaningful. No statement is falsifiable. This is so because it is impossible to test a statement by itself. Every test will assume a great deal of background beliefs. Placing the pan of water outside assumes that many beliefs concerning the molecular structure of water and current theories of physics are true. If the test fails, it may be because at least one of the background beliefs was false.

In his later works, Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that language should be analyzed in terms of its social function. When people use language, according to Wittgenstein, they are engaging in what he called a "language-game" which has its own rules that govern meaning and use. The language-game cannot be criticized from without, because that would be using a different set of rules.

There are many domains of human discourse and linguistic activity, including religion, science, comedy, etc. Each one has its own function or functions. Some who are in the philosophical tradition of Wittgenstein argue that it is impossible to use one kind of discourse to perform the function associated with another kind. The function of scientific discourse is to describe reality, while the function of religious discourse is to provide comfort, hope, etc. If so, then religious claims cannot be said to describe reality.

But why is scientific discourse privileged in this way? When I say that there are three people in my family, I'm not speaking scientifically. I do take myself to be describing reality. Certainly, religious believers take themselves to be describing reality as much as scientists do. It may be a different aspect of reality, but we take it to be no less real.

In the end, it's not clear that there is any special problem that is peculiar to religious language. If we do not understand how religious language gets its meaning, it is because we don't understand how language in general gets its meaning. William of Occam (1285-1349) maintained that ordinary terms used in religious discourse had neither equivocal nor analogical meaning. To say that God is powerful and that an Olympic weightlifter is powerful is to use 'powerful' in the same way. It means that they both have the ability to do things. God can do much more, but that does not seem to require a different meaning of the word.

7.1 St. Thomas Aquinas

From St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Domincan Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

Article 1. Whether a name can be given to God?

Objection 1

It seems that no name can be given to God. For Dionysius says (Div. Nom. i) that, "Of Him there is neither name, nor can one be found of Him;" and it is written: "What is His name, and what is the name of His Son, if thou knowest?" (Proverbs 30:4).

Objection 2

Further, every name is either abstract or concrete. But concrete names do not belong to God, since He is simple, nor do abstract names belong to Him, forasmuch as they do not signify any perfect subsisting thing. Therefore no name can be said of God.

Objection 3

Further, nouns are taken to signify substance with quality; verbs and participles signify substance with time; pronouns the same with demonstration or relation. But none of these can be applied to God, for He has no quality, nor accident, nor time; moreover, He cannot be felt, so as to be pointed out; nor can He be described by relation, inasmuch as relations serve to recall a thing mentioned before by nouns, participles, or demonstrative pronouns. Therefore God cannot in any way be named by us.

On the contrary, It is written (Exodus 15:3): "The Lord is a man of war, Almighty is His name."

I answer that, Since according to the Philosopher (Peri Herm. i), words are signs of ideas, and ideas the similitude of things, it is evident that words relate to the meaning of things signified through the medium of the intellectual conception. It follows therefore that we can give a name to anything in as far as we can understand it. Now it was shown above (12, 11, 12) that in this life we cannot see the essence of God; but we know God from creatures as their principle, and also by way of excellence and remotion. In this way therefore He can be named by us from creatures, yet not so that the name which signifies Him expresses the divine essence in itself. Thus the name "man" expresses the

essence of man in himself, since it signifies the definition of man by manifesting his essence; for the idea expressed by the name is the definition.

Reply to Objection 1. The reason why God has no name, or is said to be above being named, is because His essence is above all that we understand about God, and signify in word.

Reply to Objection 2. Because we know and name God from creatures, the names we attribute to God signify what belongs to material creatures, of which the knowledge is natural to us. And because in creatures of this kind what is perfect and subsistent is compound; whereas their form is not a complete subsisting thing, but rather is that whereby a thing is; hence it follows that all names used by us to signify a complete subsisting thing must have a concrete meaning as applicable to compound things; whereas names given to signify simple forms, signify a thing not as subsisting, but as that whereby a thing is; as, for instance, whiteness signifies that whereby a thing is white. And as God is simple, and subsisting, we attribute to Him abstract names to signify His simplicity, and concrete names to signify His substance and perfection, although both these kinds of names fail to express His mode of being, forasmuch as our intellect does not know Him in this life as He is.

Reply to Objection 3. To signify substance with quality is to signify the "suppositum" with a nature or determined form in which it subsists. Hence, as some things are said of God in a concrete sense, to signify His subsistence and perfection, so likewise nouns are applied to God signifying substance with quality. Further, verbs and participles which signify time, are applied to Him because His eternity includes all time. For as we can apprehend and signify simple subsistences only by way of compound things, so we can understand and express simple eternity only by way of temporal things, because our intellect has a natural affinity to compound and temporal things. But demonstrative pronouns are applied to God as describing what is understood, not what is sensed. For we can only describe Him as far as we understand Him. Thus, according as nouns, participles and demonstrative pronouns are applicable to God, so far can He be signified by relative pronouns.

Article 2. Whether any name can be applied to God substantially?

Objection 1

It seems that no name can be applied to God substantially. For Damascene says (De Fide Orth. i, 9): "Everything said of God signifies not His substance,

but rather shows forth what He is not; or expresses some relation, or something following from His nature or operation."

Objection 2

Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. i): "You will find a chorus of holy doctors addressed to the end of distinguishing clearly and praiseworthily the divine processions in the denomination of God." Thus the names applied by the holy doctors in praising God are distinguished according to the divine processions themselves. But what expresses the procession of anything, does not signify its essence. Therefore the names applied to God are not said of Him substantially.

Objection 3

Further, a thing is named by us according as we understand it. But God is not understood by us in this life in His substance. Therefore neither is any name we can use applied substantially to God.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. vi): "The being of God is the being strong, or the being wise, or whatever else we may say of that simplicity whereby His substance is signified." Therefore all names of this kind signify the divine substance.

I answer that, Negative names applied to God, or signifying His relation to creatures manifestly do not at all signify His substance, but rather express the distance of the creature from Him, or His relation to something else, or rather, the relation of creatures to Himself.

But as regards absolute and affirmative names of God, as "good," "wise," and the like, various and many opinions have been given. For some have said that all such names, although they are applied to God affirmatively, nevertheless have been brought into use more to express some remotion from God, rather than to express anything that exists positively in Him. Hence they assert that when we say that God lives, we mean that God is not like an inanimate thing; and the same in like manner applies to other names; and this was taught by Rabbi Moses. Others say that these names applied to God signify His relationship towards creatures: thus in the words, "God is good," we mean, God is the cause of goodness in things; and the same rule applies to other names.

Both of these opinions, however, seem to be untrue for three reasons.

First because in neither of them can a reason be assigned why some names more than others are applied to God. For He is assuredly the cause of bodies in the same way as He is the cause of good things; therefore if the words "God

is good," signified no more than, "God is the cause of good things," it might in like manner be said that God is a body, inasmuch as He is the cause of bodies. So also to say that He is a body implies that He is not a mere potentiality, as is primary matter.

Secondly, because it would follow that all names applied to God would be said of Him by way of being taken in a secondary sense, as healthy is secondarily said of medicine, forasmuch as it signifies only the cause of the health in the animal which primarily is called healthy.

Thirdly, because this is against the intention of those who speak of God. For in saying that God lives, they assuredly mean more than to say the He is the cause of our life, or that He differs from inanimate bodies.

Therefore we must hold a different doctrine–viz. that these names signify the divine substance, and are predicated substantially of God, although they fall short of a full representation of Him. Which is proved thus. For these names express God, so far as our intellects know Him. Now since our intellect knows God from creatures, it knows Him as far as creatures represent Him. Now it is shown above (Question 4, Article 2) that God prepossesses in Himself all the perfections of creatures, being Himself simply and universally perfect. Hence every creature represents Him, and is like Him so far as it possesses some perfection; yet it represents Him not as something of the same species or genus, but as the excelling principle of whose form the effects fall short, although they derive some kind of likeness thereto, even as the forms of inferior bodies represent the power of the sun. This was explained above (Question 4, Article 3), in treating of the divine perfection. Therefore the aforesaid names signify the divine substance, but in an imperfect manner, even as creatures represent it imperfectly. So when we say, "God is good," the meaning is not, "God is the cause of goodness," or "God is not evil"; but the meaning is, "Whatever good we attribute to creatures, pre-exists in God," and in a more excellent and higher way. Hence it does not follow that God is good, because He causes goodness; but rather, on the contrary, He causes goodness in things because He is good; according to what Augustine says (De Doctr. Christ. i, 32), "Because He is good, we are."

Reply to Objection 1. Damascene says that these names do not signify what God is, forasmuch as by none of these names is perfectly expressed what He is; but each one signifies Him in an imperfect manner, even as creatures represent Him imperfectly.

Reply to Objection 2. In the significance of names, that from which the name is derived is different sometimes from what it is intended to signify, as for instance, this name "stone" [lapis] is imposed from the fact that it hurts the foot [loedit pedem], but it is not imposed to signify that which hurts the

foot, but rather to signify a certain kind of body; otherwise everything that hurts the foot would be a stone [This refers to the Latin etymology of the word "lapis" which has no place in English]. So we must say that these kinds of divine names are imposed from the divine processions; for as according to the diverse processions of their perfections, creatures are the representations of God, although in an imperfect manner; so likewise our intellect knows and names God according to each kind of procession; but nevertheless these names are not imposed to signify the procession themselves, as if when we say "God lives," the sense were, "life proceeds from Him"; but to signify the principle itself of things, in so far as life pre-exists in Him, although it pre-exists in Him in a more eminent way than can be understood or signified.

Reply to Objection 3. We cannot know the essence of God in this life, as He really is in Himself; but we know Him accordingly as He is represented in the perfections of creatures; and thus the names imposed by us signify Him in that manner only.

Article 3. Whether any name can be applied to God in its literal sense?

Objection 1

It seems that no name is applied literally to God. For all names which we apply to God are taken from creatures; as was explained above (Article 1). But the names of creatures are applied to God metaphorically, as when we say, God is a stone, or a lion, or the like. Therefore names are applied to God in a metaphorical sense.

Objection 2

Further, no name can be applied literally to anything if it should be withheld from it rather than given to it. But all such names as "good," "wise," and the like are more truly withheld from God than given to Him; as appears from Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. ii). Therefore none of these names belong to God in their literal sense.

Objection 3

Further, corporeal names are applied to God in a metaphorical sense only; since He is incorporeal. But all such names imply some kind of corporeal condition; for their meaning is bound up with time and composition and

like corporeal conditions. Therefore all these names are applied to God in a metaphorical sense.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, Ambrose says (De Fide ii), "Some names there are which express evidently the property of the divinity, and some which express the clear truth of the divine majesty, but others there are which are applied to God metaphorically by way of similitude." Therefore not all names are applied to God in a metaphorical sense, but there are some which are said of Him in their literal sense.

I answer that, According to the preceding article, our knowledge of God is derived from the perfections which flow from Him to creatures, which perfections are in God in a more eminent way than in creatures. Now our intellect apprehends them as they are in creatures, and as it apprehends them it signifies them by names. Therefore as to the names applied to God–viz. the perfections which they signify, such as goodness, life and the like, and their mode of signification. As regards what is signified by these names, they belong properly to God, and more properly than they belong to creatures, and are applied primarily to Him. But as regards their mode of signification, they do not properly and strictly apply to God; for their mode of signification applies to creatures.

Reply to Objection 1. There are some names which signify these perfections flowing from God to creatures in such a way that the imperfect way in which creatures receive the divine perfection is part of the very signification of the name itself as "stone" signifies a material being, and names of this kind can be applied to God only in a metaphorical sense. Other names, however, express these perfections absolutely, without any such mode of participation being part of their signification as the words "being," "good," "living," and the like, and such names can be literally applied to God.

Reply to Objection 2. Such names as these, as Dionysius shows, are denied of God for the reason that what the name signifies does not belong to Him in the ordinary sense of its signification, but in a more eminent way. Hence Dionysius says also that God is above all substance and all life.

Reply to Objection 3. These names which are applied to God literally imply corporeal conditions not in the thing signified, but as regards their mode of signification; whereas those which are applied to God metaphorically imply and mean a corporeal condition in the thing signified.

Article 4. Whether names applied to God are synonymous?

Objection 1

It seems that these names applied to God are synonymous names. For synonymous names are those which mean exactly the same. But these names applied to God mean entirely the same thing in God; for the goodness of God is His essence, and likewise it is His wisdom. Therefore these names are entirely synonymous.

Objection 2

Further, if it be said these names signify one and the same thing in reality, but differ in idea, it can be objected that an idea to which no reality corresponds is a vain notion. Therefore if these ideas are many, and the thing is one, it seems also that all these ideas are vain notions.

Objection 3

Further, a thing which is one in reality and in idea, is more one than what is one in reality and many in idea. But God is supremely one. Therefore it seems that He is not one in reality and many in idea; and thus the names applied to God do not signify different ideas; and thus they are synonymous.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, All synonyms united with each other are redundant, as when we say, "vesture clothing." Therefore if all names applied to God are synonymous, we cannot properly say "good God" or the like, and yet it is written, "O most mighty, great and powerful, the Lord of hosts is Thy name" (Jeremiah 32:18).

I answer that, These names spoken of God are not synonymous. This would be easy to understand, if we said that these names are used to remove, or to express the relation of cause to creatures; for thus it would follow that there are different ideas as regards the diverse things denied of God, or as regards diverse effects connoted. But even according to what was said above (Article 2), that these names signify the divine substance, although in an imperfect manner, it is also clear from what has been said (1,2) that they have diverse meanings. For the idea signified by the name is the conception in the intellect of the thing signified by the name. But our intellect, since it knows God from creatures, in order to understand God, forms conceptions proportional to the perfections flowing from God to creatures, which perfections pre-

exist in God unitedly and simply, whereas in creatures they are received and divided and multiplied. As therefore, to the different perfections of creatures, there corresponds one simple principle represented by different perfections of creatures in a various and manifold manner, so also to the various and multiplied conceptions of our intellect, there corresponds one altogether simple principle, according to these conceptions, imperfectly understood. Therefore although the names applied to God signify one thing, still because they signify that under many and different aspects, they are not synonymous.

Thus appears the solution of the First Objection, since synonymous terms signify one thing under one aspect; for words which signify different aspects of one things, do not signify primarily and absolutely one thing; because the term only signifies the thing through the medium of the intellectual conception, as was said above.

Reply to Objection 2. The many aspects of these names are not empty and vain, for there corresponds to all of them one simple reality represented by them in a manifold and imperfect manner.

Reply to Objection 3. The perfect unity of God requires that what are manifold and divided in others should exist in Him simply and unitedly. Thus it comes about that He is one in reality, and yet multiple in idea, because our intellect apprehends Him in a manifold manner, as things represent Him.

Article 5. Whether what is said of God and of creatures is univocally predicated of them?

Objection 1

It seems that the things attributed to God and creatures are univocal. For every equivocal term is reduced to the univocal, as many are reduced to one; for if the name "dog" be said equivocally of the barking dog, and of the dogfish, it must be said of some univocally–viz. of all barking dogs; otherwise we proceed to infinitude. Now there are some univocal agents which agree with their effects in name and definition, as man generates man; and there are some agents which are equivocal, as the sun which causes heat, although the sun is hot only in an equivocal sense. Therefore it seems that the first agent to which all other agents are reduced, is an univocal agent: and thus what is said of God and creatures, is predicated univocally.

Objection 2

Further, there is no similitude among equivocal things. Therefore as creatures have a certain likeness to God, according to the word of Genesis (Genesis

1:26), "Let us make man to our image and likeness," it seems that something can be said of God and creatures univocally.

Objection 3

Further, measure is homogeneous with the thing measured. But God is the first measure of all beings. Therefore God is homogeneous with creatures; and thus a word may be applied univocally to God and to creatures.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, whatever is predicated of various things under the same name but not in the same sense, is predicated equivocally. But no name belongs to God in the same sense that it belongs to creatures; for instance, wisdom in creatures is a quality, but not in God. Now a different genus changes an essence, since the genus is part of the definition; and the same applies to other things. Therefore whatever is said of God and of creatures is predicated equivocally.

Further, God is more distant from creatures than any creatures are from each other. But the distance of some creatures 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; and so only equivocal predication can be applied to them.

I answer that, Univocal predication is impossible between God and creatures. The reason of this is that every effect which is not an adequate result of the power of the efficient cause, receives the similitude of the agent not in its full degree, but in a measure that falls short, so that what is divided and multiplied in the effects resides in the agent simply, and in the same manner; as for example the sun by exercise of its one power produces manifold and various forms in all inferior things. In the same way, as said in the preceding article, all perfections existing in creatures divided and multiplied, pre-exist in God unitedly. Thus when any term expressing perfection is applied to a creature, it signifies that perfection distinct in idea from other perfections; as, for instance, by the term "wise" applied to man, we signify some perfection distinct from a man's essence, and distinct from his power and existence, and from all similar things; whereas when we apply to it God, we do not mean to signify anything distinct from His essence, or power, or existence. Thus also this term "wise" applied to man in some degree circumscribes and comprehends the thing signified; whereas this is not the case when it is applied to God; but it leaves the thing signified as incomprehended, and as exceeding

the signification of the name. Hence it is evident that this term "wise" is not applied in the same way to God and to man. The same rule applies to other terms. Hence no name is predicated univocally of God and of creatures.

Neither, on the other hand, are names applied to God and creatures in a purely equivocal sense, as some have said. Because if that were so, it follows that from creatures nothing could be known or demonstrated about God at all; for the reasoning would always be exposed to the fallacy of equivocation. Such a view is against the philosophers, who proved many things about God, and also against what the Apostle says: "The invisible things of God are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20). Therefore it must be said that these names are said of God and creatures in an analogous sense, i.e. according to proportion.

Now names are thus used in two ways: either according as many things are proportionate to one, thus for example "healthy" predicated of medicine and urine in relation and in proportion to health of a body, of which the former is the sign and the latter the cause: or according as one thing is proportionate to another, thus "healthy" is said of medicine and animal, since medicine is the cause of health in the animal body. And in this way some things are said of God and creatures analogically, and not in a purely equivocal nor in a purely univocal sense. For we can name God only from creatures (1). Thus whatever is said of God and creatures, is said according to the relation of a creature to God as its principle and cause, wherein all perfections of things pre-exist excellently. Now this mode of community of idea is a mean between pure equivocation and simple univocation. For in analogies the idea is not, as it is in univocals, one and the same, yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals; but a term which is thus used in a multiple sense signifies various proportions to some one thing; thus "healthy" applied to urine signifies the sign of animal health, and applied to medicine signifies the cause of the same health.

Reply to Objection 1. Although equivocal predications must be reduced to univocal, still in actions, the non-univocal agent must precede the univocal agent. For the non-univocal agent is the universal cause of the whole species, as for instance the sun is the cause of the generation of all men; whereas the univocal agent is not the universal efficient cause of the whole species (otherwise it would be the cause of itself, since it is contained in the species), but is a particular cause of this individual which it places under the species by way of participation. Therefore the universal cause of the whole species is not an univocal agent; and the universal cause comes before the particular cause. But this universal agent, whilst it is not univocal, nevertheless is not altogether equivocal, otherwise it could not produce its own likeness, but rather it is to

be called an analogical agent, as all univocal predications are reduced to one first non-univocal analogical predication, which is being.

Reply to Objection 2. The likeness of the creature to God is imperfect, for it does not represent one and the same generic thing (4, 3).

Reply to Objection 3. God is not the measure proportioned to things measured; hence it is not necessary that God and creatures should be in the same genus.

The arguments adduced in the contrary sense prove indeed that these names are not predicated univocally of God and creatures; yet they do not prove that they are predicated equivocally.

Article 6. Whether names predicated of God are predicated primarily of creatures?

Objection 1

It seems that names are predicated primarily of creatures rather than of God. For we name anything accordingly as we know it, since "names", as the Philosopher says, "are signs of ideas." But we know creatures before we know God. Therefore the names imposed by us are predicated primarily of creatures rather than of God.

Objection 2

Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. i): "We name God from creatures." But names transferred from creatures to God, are said primarily of creatures rather than of God, as "lion," "stone," and the like. Therefore all names applied to God and creatures are applied primarily to creatures rather than to God.

Objection 3

Further, all names equally applied to God and creatures, are applied to God as the cause of all creatures, as Dionysius says (De Mystica Theol.). But what is applied to anything through its cause, is applied to it secondarily, for "healthy" is primarily predicated of animal rather than of medicine, which is the cause of health. Therefore these names are said primarily of creatures rather than of God.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, It is written, "I bow my knees to the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-

15); and the same applies to the other names applied to God and creatures. Therefore these names are applied primarily to God rather than to creatures.

I answer that, In names predicated of many in an analogical sense, all are predicated because they have reference to some one thing; and this one thing must be placed in the definition of them all. And since that expressed by the name is the definition, as the Philosopher says (Metaph. iv), such a name must be applied primarily to that which is put in the definition of such other things, and secondarily to these others according as they approach more or less to that first. Thus, for instance, "healthy" applied to animals comes into the definition of "healthy" applied to medicine, which is called healthy as being the cause of health in the animal; and also into the definition of "healthy" which is applied to urine, which is called healthy in so far as it is the sign of the animal's health. Thus all names applied metaphorically to God, are applied to creatures primarily rather than to God, because when said of God they mean only similitudes to such creatures. For as "smiling" applied to a field means only that the field in the beauty of its flowering is like the beauty of the human smile by proportionate likeness, so the name of "lion" applied to God means only that God manifests strength in His works, as a lion in his. Thus it is clear that applied to God the signification of names can be defined only from what is said of creatures. But to other names not applied to God in a metaphorical sense, the same rule would apply if they were spoken of God as the cause only, as some have supposed. For when it is said, "God is good," it would then only mean "God is the cause of the creature's goodness"; thus the term good applied to God would included in its meaning the creature's goodness. Hence "good" would apply primarily to creatures rather than to God. But as was shown above (Article 2), these names are applied to God not as the cause only, but also essentially. For the words, "God is good," or "wise," signify not only that He is the cause of wisdom or goodness, but that these exist in Him in a more excellent way. Hence as regards what the name signifies, these names are applied primarily to God rather than to creatures, because these perfections flow from God to creatures; but as regards the imposition of the names, they are primarily applied by us to creatures which we know first. Hence they have a mode of signification which belongs to creatures, as said above (Article 3).

Reply to Objection 1. This objection refers to the imposition of the name.

Reply to Objection 2. The same rule does not apply to metaphorical and to other names, as said above.

Reply to Objection 3. This objection would be valid if these names were applied to God only as cause, and not also essentially, for instance as "healthy" is applied to medicine.

Article 7. Whether names which imply relation to creatures are predicated of God temporally?

Objection 1

It seems that names which imply relation to creatures are not predicated of God temporally. For all such names signify the divine substance, as is universally held. Hence also Ambrose (De Fide i) that this name "Lord" is the name of power, which is the divine substance; and "Creator" signifies the action of God, which is His essence. Now the divine substance is not temporal, but eternal. Therefore these names are not applied to God temporally, but eternally.

Objection 2

Further, that to which something applies temporally can be described as made; for what is white temporally is made white. But to make does no apply to God. Therefore nothing can be predicated of God temporally.

Objection 3

Further, if any names are applied to God temporally as implying relation to creatures, the same rule holds good of all things that imply relation to creatures. But some names are spoken of God implying relation of God to creatures from eternity; for from eternity He knew and loved the creature, according to the word: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Therefore also other names implying relation to creatures, as "Lord" and "Creator," are applied to God from eternity.

Objection 4

Further, names of this kind signify relation. Therefore that relation must be something in God, or in the creature only. But it cannot be that it is something in the creature only, for in that case God would be called "Lord" from the opposite relation which is in creatures; and nothing is named from its opposite. Therefore the relation must be something in God also. But nothing temporal can be in God, for He is above time. Therefore these names are not applied to God temporally.

Objection 5

Further, a thing is called relative from relation; for instance lord from lordship, as white from whiteness. Therefore if the relation of lordship is not really in God, but only in idea, it follows that God is not really Lord, which is plainly false.

Objection 6

Further, in relative things which are not simultaneous in nature, one can exist without the other; as a thing knowable can exist without the knowledge of it, as the Philosopher says (Praedic. v). But relative things which are said of God and creatures are not simultaneous in nature. Therefore a relation can be predicated of God to the creature even without the existence of the creature; and thus these names "Lord" and "Creator" are predicated of God from eternity, and not temporally.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. v) that this relative appellation "Lord" is applied to God temporally.

I answer that, The names which import relation to creatures are applied to God temporally, and not from eternity.

To see this we must learn that some have said that relation is not a reality, but only an idea. But this is plainly seen to be false from the very fact that things themselves have a mutual natural order and habitude. Nevertheless it is necessary to know that since relation has two extremes, it happens in three ways that a relation is real or logical. Sometimes from both extremes it is an idea only, as when mutual order or habitude can only go between things in the apprehension of reason; as when we say a thing "the same as itself." For reason apprehending one thing twice regards it as two; thus it apprehends a certain habitude of a thing to itself. And the same applies to relations between "being" and "non-being" formed by reason, apprehending "non-being" as an extreme. The same is true of relations that follow upon an act of reason, as genus and species, and the like.

Now there are other relations which are realities as regards both extremes, as when for instance a habitude exists between two things according to some reality that belongs to both; as is clear of all relations, consequent upon quantity; as great and small, double and half, and the like; for quantity exists in both extremes: and the same applies to relations consequent upon action and passion, as motive power and the movable thing, father and son, and the like.

Again, sometimes a relation in one extreme may be a reality, while in the other extreme it is an idea only; and this happens whenever two extremes are not of one order; as sense and science refer respectively to sensible things and to intellectual things; which, inasmuch as they are realities existing in nature, are outside the order of sensible and intellectual existence. Therefore in science and in sense a real relation exists, because they are ordered either to the knowledge or to the sensible perception of things; whereas the things looked at in themselves are outside this order, and hence in them there is no real relation to science and sense, but only in idea, inasmuch as the intellect apprehends them as terms of the relations of science and sense. Hence the Philosopher says (Metaph. v) that they are called relative, not forasmuch as they are related to other things, but as others are related to them. Likewise for instance, "on the right" is not applied to a column, unless it stands as regards an animal on the right side; which relation is not really in the column, but in the animal.

Since therefore God is outside the whole order of creation, and all creatures are ordered to Him, and not conversely, it is manifest that creatures are really related to God Himself; whereas in God there is no real relation to creatures, but a relation only in idea, inasmuch as creatures are referred to Him. Thus there is nothing to prevent these names which import relation to the creature from being predicated of God temporally, not by reason of any change in Him, but by reason of the change of the creature; as a column is on the right of an animal, without change in itself, but by change in the animal.

Reply to Objection 1. Some relative names are imposed to signify the relative habitudes themselves, as "master" and "servant," "father," and "son," and the like, and these relatives are called predicamental [secundum esse]. But others are imposed to signify the things from which ensue certain habitudes, as the mover and the thing moved, the head and the thing that has a head, and the like: and these relatives are called transcendental [secundum dici]. Thus, there is the same two-fold difference in divine names. For some signify the habitude itself to the creature, as "Lord," and these do not signify the divine substance directly, but indirectly, in so far as they presuppose the divine substance; as dominion presupposes power, which is the divine substance. Others signify the divine essence directly, and consequently the corresponding habitudes, as "Saviour," "Creator," and suchlike; and these signify the action of God, which is His essence. Yet both names are said of God temporarily so far as they imply a habitude either principally or consequently, but not as signifying the essence, either directly or indirectly.

Reply to Objection 2. As relations applied to God temporally are only in God in our idea, so, "to become" or "to be made" are applied to God only

in idea, with no change in Him, as for instance when we say, "Lord, Thou art become [Douay: 'hast been'] our refuge" (Psalm 89:1).

Reply to Objection 3. The operation of the intellect and the will is in the operator, therefore names signifying relations following upon the action of the intellect or will, are applied to God from eternity; whereas those following upon the actions proceeding according to our mode of thinking to external effects are applied to God temporally, as "Saviour," "Creator," and the like.

Reply to Objection 4. Relations signified by these names which are applied to God temporally, are in God only in idea; but the opposite relations in creatures are real. Nor is it incongruous that God should be denominated from relations really existing in the thing, yet so that the opposite relations in God should also be understood by us at the same time; in the sense that God is spoken of relatively to the creature, inasmuch as the creature is related to Him: thus the Philosopher says (Metaph. v) that the object is said to be knowable relatively because knowledge relates to it.

Reply to Objection 5. Since God is related to the creature for the reason that the creature is related to Him: and since the relation of subjection is real in the creature, it follows that God is Lord not in idea only, but in reality; for He is called Lord according to the manner in which the creature is subject to Him.

Reply to Objection 6. To know whether relations are simultaneous by nature or otherwise, it is not necessary by nature or otherwise of things to which they belong but the meaning of the relations themselves. For if one in its idea includes another, and vice versa, then they are simultaneous by nature: as double and half, father and son, and the like. But if one in its idea includes another, and not vice versa, they are not simultaneous by nature. This applies to science and its object; for the object knowable is considered as a potentiality, and the science as a habit, or as an act. Hence the knowable object in its mode of signification exists before science, but if the same object is considered in act, then it is simultaneous with science in act; for the object known is nothing as such unless it is known. Thus, though God is prior to the creature, still because the signification of Lord includes the idea of a servant and vice versa, these two relative terms, "Lord" and "servant," are simultaneous by nature. Hence, God was not "Lord" until He had a creature subject to Himself.

Article 8. Whether this name "God" is a name of the nature?

Objection 1

It seems that this name, "God," is not a name of the nature. For Damascene says (De Fide Orth. 1) that "God Theos is so called from the theein [which means to care of] and to cherish all things; or from the aithein, that is to burn, for our God is a fire consuming all malice; or from theasthai, which means to consider all things." But all these names belong to operation. Therefore this name "God" signifies His operation and not His nature.

Objection 2

Further, a thing is named by us as we know it. But the divine nature is unknown to us. Therefore this name "God" does not signify the divine nature.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, Ambrose says (De Fide i) that "God" is a name of the nature.

I answer that, Whence a name is imposed, and what the name signifies are not always the same thing. For as we know substance from its properties and operations, so we name substance sometimes for its operation, or its property; e.g. we name the substance of a stone from its act, as for instance that it hurts the foot [loedit pedem]; but still this name is not meant to signify the particular action, but the stone's substance. The things, on the other hand, known to us in themselves, such as heat, cold, whiteness and the like, are not named from other things. Hence as regards such things the meaning of the name and its source are the same.

Because therefore God is not known to us in His nature, but is made known to us from His operations or effects, we name Him from these, as said in 1; hence this name "God" is a name of operation so far as relates to the source of its meaning. For this name is imposed from His universal providence over all things; since all who speak of God intend to name God as exercising providence over all; hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. ii), "The Deity watches over all with perfect providence and goodness." But taken from this operation, this name "God" is imposed to signify the divine nature.

Reply to Objection 1. All that Damascene says refers to providence; which is the source of the signification of the name "God."

Reply to Objection 2. We can name a thing according to the knowledge we have of its nature from its properties and effects. Hence because we can know what stone is in itself from its property, this name "stone" signifies the

nature of the stone itself; for it signifies the definition of stone, by which we know what it is, for the idea which the name signifies is the definition, as is said in Metaph. iv. Now from the divine effects we cannot know the divine nature in itself, so as to know what it is; but only by way of eminence, and by way of causality, and of negation as stated above (Question 12, Article 12). Thus the name "God" signifies the divine nature, for this name was imposed to signify something existing above all things, the principle of all things and removed from all things; for those who name God intend to signify all this.

Article 9. Whether this name "God" is communicable?

Objection 1

It seems that this name "God" is communicable. For whosoever shares in the thing signified by a name shares in the name itself. But this name "God" signifies the divine nature, which is communicable to others, according to the words, "He hath given us great [Vulgate: 'most great'] and precious promises, that by these we [Vulgate: 'ye'] may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Therefore this name "God" can be communicated to others.

Objection 2

Further, only proper names are not communicable. Now this name "God" is not a proper, but an appellative noun; which appears from the fact that it has a plural, according to the text, "I have said, You are gods" (Psalm 81:6). Therefore this name "God" is communicable.

Objection 3

Further, this name "God" comes from operation, as explained. But other names given to God from His operations or effects are communicable; as "good," "wise," and the like. Therefore this name "God" is communicable.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, It is written: "They gave the incommunicable name to wood and stones" (Wisdom 14:21), in reference to the divine name. Therefore this name "God" is incommunicable.

I answer that, A name is communicable in two ways: properly, and by similitude. It is properly communicable in the sense that its whole signification can be given to many; by similitude it is communicable according to

some part of the signification of the name. For instance this name "lion" is properly communicable to all things of the same nature as "lion"; by similitude it is communicable to those who participate in the nature of a lion, as for instance by courage, or strength, and those who thus participate are called lions metaphorically. To know, however, what names are properly communicable, we must consider that every form existing in the singular subject, by which it is individualized, is common to many either in reality, or in idea; as human nature is common to many in reality, and in idea; whereas the nature of the sun is not common to many in reality, but only in idea; for the nature of the sun can be understood as existing in many subjects; and the reason is because the mind understands the nature of every species by abstraction from the singular. Hence to be in one singular subject or in many is outside the idea of the nature of the species. So, given the idea of a species, it can be understood as existing in many. But the singular, from the fact that it is singular, is divided off from all others. Hence every name imposed to signify any singular thing is incommunicable both in reality and idea; for the plurality of this individual thing cannot be; nor can it be conceived in idea. Hence no name signifying any individual thing is properly communicable to many, but only by way of similitude; as for instance a person can be called "Achilles" metaphorically, forasmuch as he may possess something of the properties of Achilles, such as strength. On the other hand, forms which are individualized not by any "suppositum," but by and of themselves, as being subsisting forms, if understood as they are in themselves, could not be communicable either in reality or in idea; but only perhaps by way of similitude, as was said of individuals. Forasmuch as we are unable to understand simple self-subsisting forms as they really are, we understand them as compound things having forms in matter; therefore, as was said in the first article, we give them concrete names signifying a nature existing in some "suppositum." Hence, so far as concerns images, the same rules apply to names we impose to signify the nature of compound things as to names given to us to signify simple subsisting natures.

Since, then, this name "God" is given to signify the divine nature as stated above (Article 8), and since the divine nature cannot be multiplied as shown above (Question 11, Article 3), it follows that this name "God" is incommunicable in reality, but communicable in opinion; just in the same way as this name "sun" would be communicable according to the opinion of those who say there are many suns. Therefore, it is written: "You served them who by nature are not gods," (Galatians 4:8), and a gloss adds, "Gods not in nature, but in human opinion." Nevertheless this name "God" is communicable, not in its whole signification, but in some part of it by way of similitude; so that

those are called gods who share in divinity by likeness, according to the text, "I have said, You are gods" (Psalm 81:6).

But if any name were given to signify God not as to His nature but as to His "suppositum," accordingly as He is considered as "this something," that name would be absolutely incommunicable; as, for instance, perhaps the Tetragrammaton among the Hebrew; and this is like giving a name to the sun as signifying this individual thing.

Reply to Objection 1. The divine nature is only communicable according to the participation of some similitude.

Reply to Objection 2. This name "God" is an appellative name, and not a proper name, for it signifies the divine nature in the possessor; although God Himself in reality is neither universal nor particular. For names do not follow upon the mode of being in things, but upon the mode of being as it is in our mind. And yet it is incommunicable according to the truth of the thing, as was said above concerning the name "sun."

Reply to Objection 3. These names "good," "wise," and the like, are imposed from the perfections proceeding from God to creatures; but they do not signify the divine nature, but rather signify the perfections themselves absolutely; and therefore they are in truth communicable to many. But this name "God" is given to God from His own proper operation, which we experience continually, to signify the divine nature.

Article 10. Whether this name "God" is applied to God univocally by nature, by participation, and according to opinion?

Objection 1

It seems that this name "God" is applied to God univocally by nature, by participation, and according to opinion. For where a diverse signification exists, there is no contradiction of affirmation and negation; for equivocation prevents contradiction. But a Catholic who says: "An idol is not God," contradicts a pagan who says: "An idol is God." Therefore GOD in both senses is spoken of univocally.

Objection 2

Further, as an idol is God in opinion, and not in truth, so the enjoyment of carnal pleasures is called happiness in opinion, and not in truth. But this name "beatitude" is applied univocally to this supposed happiness, and also

to true happiness. Therefore also this name "God" is applied univocally to the true God, and to God also in opinion.

Objection 3

Further, names are called univocal because they contain one idea. Now when a Catholic says: "There is one God," he understands by the name God an omnipotent being, and one venerated above all; while the heathen understands the same when he says: "An idol is God." Therefore this name "God" is applied univocally to both.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, The idea in the intellect is the likeness of what is in the thing as is said in Peri Herm. i. But the word "animal" applied to a true animal, and to a picture of one, is equivocal. Therefore this name "God" applied to the true God and to God in opinion is applied equivocally.

Further, No one can signify what he does not know. But the heathen does not know the divine nature. So when he says an idol is God, he does not signify the true Deity. On the other hand, A Catholic signifies the true Deity when he says that there is one God. Therefore this name "God" is not applied univocally, but equivocally to the true God, and to God according to opinion.

I answer that, This name "God" in the three aforesaid significations is taken neither univocally nor equivocally, but analogically. This is apparent from this reason: Univocal terms mean absolutely the same thing, but equivocal terms absolutely different; whereas in analogical terms a word taken in one signification must be placed in the definition of the same word taken in other senses; as, for instance, "being" which is applied to "substance" is placed in the definition of being as applied to "accident"; and "healthy" applied to animal is placed in the definition of healthy as applied to urine and medicine. For urine is the sign of health in the animal, and medicine is the cause of health.

The same applies to the question at issue. For this name "God," as signifying the true God, includes the idea of God when it is used to denote God in opinion, or participation. For when we name anyone god by participation, we understand by the name of god some likeness of the true God. Likewise, when we call an idol god, by this name god we understand and signify something which men think is God; thus it is manifest that the name has different meanings, but that one of them is comprised in the other significations. Hence it is manifestly said analogically.

Reply to Objection 1. The multiplication of names does not depend on the predication of the name, but on the signification: for this name "man," of whomsoever it is predicated, whether truly or falsely, is predicated in one sense. But it would be multiplied if by the name "man" we meant to signify different things; for instance, if one meant to signify by this name "man" what man really is, and another meant to signify by the same name a stone, or something else. Hence it is evident that a Catholic saying that an idol is not God contradicts the pagan asserting that it is God; because each of them uses this name GOD to signify the true God. For when the pagan says an idol is God, he does not use this name as meaning God in opinion, for he would then speak the truth, as also Catholics sometimes use the name in the sense, as in the Psalm, "All the gods of the Gentiles are demons" (Psalm 95:5).

The same remark applies to the Second and Third Objections. For these reasons proceed from the different predication of the name, and not from its various significations.

Reply to Objection 4. The term "animal" applied to a true and a pictured animal is not purely equivocal; for the Philosopher takes equivocal names in a large sense, including analogous names; because also being, which is predicated analogically, is sometimes said to be predicated equivocally of different predicaments.

Reply to Objection 5. Neither a Catholic nor a pagan knows the very nature of God as it is in itself; but each one knows it according to some idea of causality, or excellence, or remotion (12, 12). So a pagan can take this name "God" in the same way when he says an idol is God, as the Catholic does in saying an idol is not God. But if anyone should be quite ignorant of God altogether, he could not even name Him, unless, perhaps, as we use names the meaning of which we know not.

Article 11. Whether this name, HE WHO IS, is the most proper name of God?

Objection 1

It seems that this name HE WHO IS is not the most proper name of God. For this name "God" is an incommunicable name. But this name HE WHO IS, is not an incommunicable name. Therefore this name HE WHO IS is not the most proper name of God.

Objection 2

Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iii) that "the name of good excellently manifests all the processions of God." But it especially belongs to God to be the universal principle of all things. Therefore this name "good" is supremely proper to God, and not this name HE WHO IS.

Objection 3

Further, every divine name seems to imply relation to creatures, for God is known to us only through creatures. But this name HE WHO IS imports no relation to creatures. Therefore this name HE WHO IS is not the most applicable to God.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, It is written that when Moses asked, "If they should say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them?" The Lord answered him, "Thus shalt thou say to them, HE WHO IS hath sent me to you" (Exodus 3:13-14). Therefore this name HE WHO IS most properly belongs to God.

I answer that, This name HE WHO IS is most properly applied to God, for three reasons:

First, because of its signification. For it does not signify form, but simply existence itself. Hence since the existence of God is His essence itself, which can be said of no other (3, 4), it is clear that among other names this one specially denominates God, for everything is denominated by its form.

Secondly, on account of its universality. For all other names are either less universal, or, if convertible with it, add something above it at least in idea; hence in a certain way they inform and determine it. Now our intellect cannot know the essence of God itself in this life, as it is in itself, but whatever mode it applies in determining what it understands about God, it falls short of the mode of what God is in Himself. Therefore the less determinate the names are, and the more universal and absolute they are, the more properly they are applied to God. Hence Damascene says (De Fide Orth. i) that, "HE WHO IS, is the principal of all names applied to God; for comprehending all in itself, it contains existence itself as an infinite and indeterminate sea of substance." Now by any other name some mode of substance is determined, whereas this name HE WHO IS, determines no mode of being, but is indeterminate to all; and therefore it denominates the "infinite ocean of substance."

Thirdly, from its consignification, for it signifies present existence; and this above all properly applies to God, whose existence knows not past or future, as Augustine says (De Trin. v).

Reply to Objection 1. This name HE WHO IS is the name of God more properly than this name "God," as regards its source, namely, existence; and as regards the mode of signification and consignification, as said above. But as regards the object intended by the name, this name "God" is more proper, as it is imposed to signify the divine nature; and still more proper is the Tetragrammaton, imposed to signify the substance of God itself, incommunicable and, if one may so speak, singular.

Reply to Objection 2. This name "good" is the principal name of God in so far as He is a cause, but not absolutely; for existence considered absolutely comes before the idea of cause.

Reply to Objection 3. It is not necessary that all the divine names should import relation to creatures, but it suffices that they be imposed from some perfections flowing from God to creatures. Among these the first is existence, from which comes this name, HE WHO IS.

Article 12. Whether affirmative propositions can be formed about God?

Objection 1

It seems that affirmative propositions cannot be formed about God. For Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. ii) that "negations about God are true; but affirmations are vague."

Objection 2

Further, Boethius says (De Trin. ii) that "a simple form cannot be a subject." But God is the most absolutely simple form, as shown (3): therefore He cannot be a subject. But everything about which an affirmative proposition is made is taken as a subject. Therefore an affirmative proposition cannot be formed about God.

Objection 3

Further, every intellect is false which understands a thing otherwise than as it is. But God has existence without any composition as shown above (Question 3, Article 7). Therefore since every affirmative intellect understands something

as compound, it follows that a true affirmative proposition about God cannot be made.

On the Contrary

On the contrary, What is of faith cannot be false. But some affirmative propositions are of faith; as that God is Three and One; and that He is omnipotent. Therefore true affirmative propositions can be formed about God.

I answer that, True affirmative propositions can be formed about God. To prove this we must know that in every true affirmative proposition the predicate and the subject signify in some way the same thing in reality, and different things in idea. And this appears to be the case both in propositions which have an accidental predicate, and in those which have an essential predicate. For it is manifest that "man" and "white" are the same in subject, and different in idea; for the idea of man is one thing, and that of whiteness is another. The same applies when I say, "man is an animal"; since the same thing which is man is truly animal; for in the same "suppositum" there is sensible nature by reason of which he is called animal, and the rational nature by reason of which he is called man; hence here again predicate and subject are the same as to "suppositum," but different as to idea. But in propositions where one same thing is predicated of itself, the same rule in some way applies, inasmuch as the intellect draws to the "suppositum" what it places in the subject; and what it places in the predicate it draws to the nature of the form existing in the "suppositum"; according to the saying that "predicates are to be taken formally, and subjects materially." To this diversity in idea corresponds the plurality of predicate and subject, while the intellect signifies the identity of the thing by the composition itself.

God, however, as considered in Himself, is altogether one and simple, yet our intellect knows Him by different conceptions because it cannot see Him as He is in Himself. Nevertheless, although it understands Him under different conceptions, it knows that one and the same simple object corresponds to its conceptions. Therefore the plurality of predicate and subject represents the plurality of idea; and the intellect represents the unity by composition.

Reply to Objection 1. Dionysius says that the affirmations about God are vague or, according to another translation, "incongruous," inasmuch as no name can be applied to God according to its mode of signification.

Reply to Objection 2. Our intellect cannot comprehend simple subsisting forms, as they really are in themselves; but it apprehends them as compound things in which there is something taken as subject and something

that is inherent. Therefore it apprehends the simple form as a subject, and attributes something else to it.

Reply to Objection 3. This proposition, "The intellect understanding anything otherwise than it is, is false," can be taken in two senses, accordingly as this adverb "otherwise" determines the word "understanding" on the part of the thing understood, or on the part of the one who understands. Taken as referring to the thing understood, the proposition is true, and the meaning is: Any intellect which understands that the thing is otherwise than it is, is false. But this does not hold in the present case; because our intellect, when forming a proposition about God, does not affirm that He is composite, but that He is simple. But taken as referring to the one who understands, the proposition is false. For the mode of the intellect in understanding is different from the mode of the thing in its essence. Since it is clear that our intellect understands material things below itself in an immaterial manner; not that it understands them to be immaterial things; but its manner of understanding is immaterial. Likewise, when it understands simple things above itself, it understands them according to its own mode, which is in a composite manner; yet not so as to understand them to be composite things. And thus our intellect is not false in forming composition in its ideas concerning God.

7.2 Questions

1. Why would philosophers be interested in the nature of religious language?
2. Explain what it means for terms to be univocal, equivocal, and analogical.
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Aquinas' theory of analogy?
4. Explain and evaluate the verifiability principle.
5. Explain why falsification fails as a test for meaning.
6. Read the section in the text concerning Alston's view of religious language. For what is he arguing? Is his account successful?

Chapter 8

Miracles

Miracles and miracle accounts are an important component in any religious tradition. Miracles are often cited as evidence for the truth of certain religious claims. To be justified in believing that a religious claim is true because of the occurrence of a miracle, one must be justified in believing that the miracle occurred. This is the issue that has traditionally concerned philosophers of religion. The fundamental philosophical questions concerning miracles are these: What is a miracle? Under what conditions is one justified in believing that an event occurred? Under what conditions is one justified in believing that God has caused an event to occur?

In ordinary discourse, we call many things miracles. Students say that it is a miracle that they passed their Western Civilization class. I see a friend while traveling in Europe, and call it a miracle. These are unlikely events (if the student failed to study for the Civ exam), but is it enough that an event be unlikely to be a miracle?

Maybe it is not the case that all unlikely events are miracle, but surely, you might think, all miracles are unlikely events. This was the position of David Hume, who defined a miracle as a violation of a law of nature. It must be conceded that violations of natural law do not seem to happen often.

How do we come to know that a miracle has happened? In most cases, this is through the testimony of someone else, be it an oral report, the reading of a scriptural account, or some other means. Few of us are eyewitnesses, and at best, receive the information second-hand.

Hume argued that one should never believe that a miracle occurred based on the testimony of another. Since the occurrence of a miracle, according to Hume, is a highly improbable event, it is unlikely that a miracle actually occur. People are mistaken about the facts all the time, however. In fact,

Hume claims, it is much more probable that the miracle did not occur, and the person is either lying or mistaken, than that the report is true. Of course, one should believe what is more likely to be true, so one should believe that the report is false.

Hume's argument is widely regarded as begging the question. Why believe that miracles are unlikely to occur? Presumably, Hume believes this because that is how he defines 'miracle.' A more plausible definition, however, is this: a miracle is an act of God (not in the insurance sense. Apparently, insurance companies only believe that God causes disasters). So, if a miracle is an act of God, why is one not likely to occur? Hume can Hume assume that miracles are unlikely to occur only by assuming that God does not exist. If God does exist, then it is very likely that God will act in the world. There is therefore no reason to automatically discount the report of a miracle.

Even if miracles are unlikely, there is no reason to automatically assume that miracle accounts are false. George Schlesinger recounts this story that was reported in Life Magazine that on March 1, 1950. All 15 members of the church choir in Beatrice, NE, were at least 10 minutes late for a choir rehearsal that began at 7:20. At 7:25, the entire church was destroyed in an explosion. Since none of the choir members were present, all survived. Had any one of them been on time, that person would have died.

Assuming that each person was late one out of every four times (the frequency of tardiness could have well been less than this), the probability that all 15 were late to the scheduled rehearsal is 1/1,073,741,824, or 0.0000000009. This is an incredibly unlikely event.

Almost everyone who knew about this event gained that knowledge from a second-hand source, Life Magazine. Why did no one doubt the news story? If Hume's argument is successful, we should believe that the story is false.

The reason we believe the story is that there are any number of explanations for the occurrence of the event. The entire choir could have been miraculously transported out of the building before the explosion. A vision could have come to all of them warning them to stay away. Instead, they were late for various mundane reasons. In fact, most of the alternative explanations would be much more interesting and entertaining reading. So, if the story were false, how likely is it that the magazine would print it? Not very likely. If it were true, however, it is highly likely that this story would have been printed instead of any of the alternatives.

There are two factors that are important. The first is an assumption that the magazine is reliable. The second is Hume's principle that higher probability events are more likely than lower ones. Should one trust a second-

hand report of a miracle? It depends on what one believes about the reliability of the source.

8.1 Hume on Miracles

From David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1914).

THERE is, in Dr. Tillotson's writings, an argument against the real presence, which is as concise, and elegant, and strong as any argument can possibly be supposed against a doctrine, so little worthy of a serious refutation. It is acknowledged on all hands, says that learned prelate, that the authority, either of the scripture or of tradition, is founded merely in the testimony of the Apostles, who were eye-witnesses to those miracles of our Saviour, by which he proved his divine mission. Our evidence, then, for, the truth of the Christian religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses; because, even in the first authors of our religion, it was no greater; and it is evident it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples; nor can any one rest such confidence in their testimony, as in the immediate object of his senses. But a weaker evidence can never destroy a stronger; and therefore, were the doctrine of the real presence ever so clearly revealed in scripture, it were directly contrary to the rules of just reasoning to give our assent to it. It contradicts sense, though both the scripture and tradition, on which it is supposed to be built, carry not such evidence with them as sense; when they are considered merely as external evidences, and are not brought home to every one's breast, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing is so convenient as a decisive argument of this kind, which must at least silence the most arrogant bigotry and superstition, and free us from their impertinent solicitations. I flatter myself, that I have discovered an argument of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures. For so long, I presume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all history, sacred and profane.

Though experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors. One, who in our climate, should expect better weather in any week of June than in one of December, would reason justly, and conformably to experience; but it is certain, that he may happen, in the event, to find himself mistaken. However, we may observe, that, in such a case, he would have no cause to complain of experience; because it commonly

informs us beforehand of the uncertainty, by that contrariety of events, which we may learn from a diligent observation. All effects follow not with like certainty from their supposed causes. Some events are found, in all countries and all ages, to have been constantly conjoined together: Others are found to have been more variable, and sometimes to disappoint our expectations; so that, in our reasonings concerning matter of fact, there are all imaginable degrees of assurance, from the highest certainty to the lowest species of moral evidence.

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: he weighs the opposite experiments: he considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability. All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance. In all cases, we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence.

To apply these principles to a particular instance; we may observe, that there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators. This species of reasoning, perhaps, one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word. It will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and that all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident, that we ought not to make an exception to this maxim in favour of human testimony, whose connexion with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other. Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree; had not men commonly an inclination to truth and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in

a falsehood: were not these, I say, discovered by experience to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony. A man delirious, or noted for falsehood and villainy, has no manner of authority with us.

And as the evidence, derived from witnesses and human testimony, is founded on past experience, so it varies with the experience, and is regarded either as a proof or a probability, according as the conjunction between any particular kind of report and any kind of object has been found to be constant or variable. There are a number of circumstances to be taken into consideration in all judgements of this kind; and the ultimate standard, by which we determine all disputes, that may arise concerning them, is always derived from experience and observation. Where this experience is not entirely uniform on any side, it is attended with an unavoidable contrariety in our judgements, and with the same opposition and mutual destruction of argument as in every other kind of evidence. We frequently hesitate concerning the reports of others. We balance the opposite circumstances, which cause any doubt or uncertainty; and when we discover a superiority on any side, we incline to it; but still with a diminution of assurance, in proportion to the force of its antagonist.

This contrariety of evidence, in the present case, may be derived from several different causes; from the opposition of contrary testimony; from the character or number of the witnesses; from the manner of their delivering their testimony; or from the union of all these circumstances. We entertain a suspicion concerning any matter of fact, when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations. There are many other particulars of the same kind, which may diminish or destroy the force of any argument, derived from human testimony.

Suppose, for instance, that the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual. The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any connexion, which we perceive à priori, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them. But when the fact attested is such a one as has seldom fallen under our observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences; of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind by the force, which remains. The very same principle of experience, which gives us

a certain degree of assurance in the testimony of witnesses, gives us also, in this case, another degree of assurance against the fact, which they endeavour to establish; from which contradiction there necessarily arises a counterpoize, and mutual destruction of belief and authority.

I should not believe such a story were it told me by Cato, was a proverbial saying in Rome, even during the lifetime of that philosophical patriot. The incredibility of a fact, it was allowed, might invalidate so great an authority.

The Indian prince, who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost, reasoned justly; and it naturally required very strong testimony to engage his assent to facts, that arose from a state of nature, with which he was unacquainted, and which bore so little analogy to those events, of which he had had constant and uniform experience. Though they were not contrary to his experience, they were not conformable to it.

But in order to encrease the probability against the testimony of witnesses, let us suppose, that the fact, which they affirm, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous; and suppose also, that the testimony considered apart and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case, there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.

The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), 'that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous,

than the fact, which it endeavors to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.' When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.

8.2 Questions

1. What do most people mean when they speak of miracles?
2. Could an event still be a miracle even if it had a perfectly good natural explanation? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe every report of a miracle? What is the difference between the reports you believe and the ones that you reject?
4. Why does God act miraculously in some circumstances, but not in others? If he chooses to heal some, then why does he not heal everyone?
5. One reason Hume dismissed most reports of miracles is that they seemed to happen much more often in ancient times than in his day. He took this as merely a sign of an undeveloped culture. Are miracle accounts less prevalent now than in Biblical times? If so, why?
6. Read the discussion in the text concerning the resurrection of Christ. Outline the cases presented in favor of the resurrection and against the resurrection.

Chapter 9

The Afterlife

The hope for a future existence after physical death is as old as the first humans. The oldest statement of belief in post-biblical church history is the Apostle's Creed which closes with an affirmation of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

There are also some philosophical arguments that have been offered in favor of our continued existence. J.E. McTaggart that there were only two ways of destroying the self, annihilation and separation. There are no known instances of annihilation. So, in order to destroy the self, one must break it into parts. There are no parts of the self, however. Therefore, the self is immortal.

The second argument is Kant's moral argument: We have a moral obligation to conform perfectly to the moral law. One can only be morally obligated to do something if it is possible to do that thing. Moral perfection must then be possible. It is not possible in this life. So, the self must survive death.

Another is the argument from divine justice. Justice does not occur in this life. If the universe is just, then there must be an afterlife in which wrongs that occur here are rectified.

Each of these arguments has weaknesses. If we are simply physical beings, then it is possible to break the self into parts. We could be mistaken about our moral obligation to conform perfectly to the moral law. Simply because we feel that we are obligated to moral perfection, does not mean that we actually are so obligated.

Finally, the universe may simply be an unjust place. There is no guarantee (from simply a philosophical perspective) that any wrongs will be righted in the end. So, philosophy cannot prove that there is life after death. It would be

enough, however, if philosophy could simply show that it is possible to survive death.

There are at least two different senses that one could mean by the phrase 'survival of death.' In the weak sense, we pass on our genes to our descendants, we leave our influence behind, we are remembered because of our accomplishments, or we continue to exist as memory in the mind of God.

We survive death in the strong sense if we continue to exist after the death of the body as conscious persons. This is the philosophically interesting sense, and the one with which the text is primarily concerned.

So, is it possible to survive the death of the body? There are four possible answers:

1. No
2. Yes, because the soul is reincarnated.
3. Yes, because the soul is immortal and continues to exist after the death of the body.
4. Yes, because there is bodily resurrection.

The first answer is straightforward and simple. It is even echoed in certain places in Scripture: "All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return." Eccl. 3:20 (NIV) It is not one of the more common religious views, however.

The second answer can be found in many Asian religions. This is the doctrine of reincarnation, the view that after death, we come back to earth to live again in the form of some other thing. These reincarnations are said to be governed by the law of karma, which is essentially a cause-effect relationship between the quality of life that is lived and the kind of live to which one is reborn.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato also wrote in favor of reincarnation. This view of criticized by Tertullian, one of the early church fathers. If reincarnation occurred, Tertullian wrote, it ought to result in approximately the same number of people living at any point in history. The human population has increased, however, as evidenced by the increased cultivation of the land and scarcity of resources.

He also raised these questions: What if more than one soul attaches to one body? If souls leave at different ages, why do they all return at the same age (as newborn infants)? Why say the souls are same if we can't show any

sameness in character or personality? A few have claimed to remember their past lives, why haven't others done so?

Current proponents of reincarnation offer some evidence in favor of past lives. These are certain unexplainable facts like child prodigies, déjà vu, love at first sight, and differences between siblings. There are also purported instances of hypnotic past-life regressions Finally, there are memories of past lives. None of these instances of evidence are particularly convincing.

So, we will concentrate on assessing the remaining two answers, identity of the soul, and the resurrection of the body. There are two relevant philosophical problems. The first is the mind-body problem: What is the relationship between the mind and the body? The second is the problem of personal identity: What is the criterion that makes two person-stages stages of the same person? These two problems are interrelated. How one answers the first affects how one must answer the second.

The mind-body problem is essentially the problem of determining just exactly what the human person is. Are we souls that are associated with bodies, or are we simply physical beings, with nothing that transcends our physical nature? The first position is commonly called dualism, the second is called materialism, or physicalism.

Each position has a particular weakness. Dualism has a notorious problem explaining the causal relationship that exists between the mind and the body. If the mind is not a physical thing, then why does an injury to the body cause pain? How can a mental desire cause the body to move to satisfy that desire? If the two have nothing in common, how can they affect each other?

Some claim that survival with not body is incoherent. Can you imagine existing with no body? Consider this thought experiment. Imagine that you wake up one morning, stagger into the lavatory, and look at your reflection. To your surprise, you see that you have no eyes in your eye sockets. Curious, you saw open your head, and see that you also have no brain. If you can visualize this rather disturbing image, you have imagined yourself seeing without the two most important physical components of your visual perception system.

The next day you again stagger into the lavatory. This time, you see only the reflection of the back wall in the mirror. Now you have imagined having a visual sensation with no body whatsoever.

The materialist also faces a particular problem. This is the problem of consciousness. How can a purely physical system become conscious? This topic is being discussed widely in current philosophy and psychology, but the mystery is yet to be solved.

There are four traditional answers to the problem of personal identity. The first is from John Locke, who maintained that personal identity is determined

by memory. One's identity goes back as far as one's memories. The obvious problem involves very early stages of life and problems with memory loss. Another problem is currently called false-memory syndrome. Not all memories are true memories. Some things that we seem to remember are simply images that have been suggested to us as we heard stories told by friends and family members. So, in order to assess personal identity, we must first be able to distinguish the true memories from the false ones. We probably cannot do this without making some judgments about personal identity. The task is hopelessly circular.

If personal identity is constituted by the identity of the soul, then we have the problem of individuating persons. How do we tell that two people are two distinct persons? We usually do that by observing physical characteristics. Different people have different bodies. If the person is ultimately the soul and not the body, then why couldn't the same soul be attached to different bodies at different times?

The problems may be great for dualism as an explanation for the survival of death, but they may be greater still for materialism. There were some objections in the early church to the resurrection of the body. One objection concerned a person lost at sea, whose body was eaten by various fish. These fish then swam to separate parts of the ocean. The person's body is therefore spread out all over the world? How can that body be resurrected? Another problem concerned a person who was eaten by cannibals. His body then became part of the bodies of each of the cannibals that feasted upon him. How can God decide who gets what at the resurrection? It was eventually decided that these scenarios did not present an omnipotent being a problem that he could not solve. Primarily, it was decided that there was no need for God to recover all or any of the original material. God could accomplish his purposes with an entirely new body.

Current theistic materialists usually postulate a duplicate body that is created at the resurrection. Unfortunately, this is fraught with problems. If God can create one duplicate, he can easily create two. Which one would be you? It cannot be one and not the other, because they both have exactly the same relationship to the original. It also cannot be both. If both are identical to you, then they are identical to each other. This is because identity is a transitive relation, if A=B and B=C, then A=C. Note that identical here means that they are one and the very same person. So the same person then occupies to different bodies. The only option left is that neither one is you. If you do not survive when two duplicates are created, then you should not survive when only one is created. It seems wrong to think that your survival is dependent simply on God's not creating more than one duplicate.

Dualism certainly has its explanatory problems, but it may be the only possible explanation for the survival of death.

9.1 Questions

1. What is the best argument for the possibility of the survival of death?
2. Many conservative theologians have recently argued that there is no concept of a non-physical soul in Scripture. What is your opinion? If so, does that mean that there is no such thing?
3. What is the mind-body problem? Explain and evaluate the solutions that have been proposed.
4. What is the problem of personal identity? Explain and evaluate the solutions that have been proposed.
5. Assess the evidence that has been offered in favor of reincarnation.
6. Another philosophical problem related to personal identity is the problem of moral responsibility? How do you think these two are related?

Chapter 10

Religion and Science

There have been some famous conflicts in history, most notably, the censure and house arrest of Galileo. On the other hand, some of the greatest scientists have been people of deep religious faith. What is the proper relationship between science and religion? This chapter of the text centers around Ian Barbour's four models of the possible relationship between science and religion. According to Barbour, science and religion can exist in a state of conflict, independence, dialogue, or integration. Examples of each model can be found among both those dedicated to scientific thought and those dedicated to religious belief.

Scientific materialism combines the metaphysical view that there is no supernatural component to the world, that is, the physical world is all that exists, with the epistemological position that science is the only source of knowledge. Scientific materialists are likely to view science and religion as being in hopeless conflict. Examples of this view in contemporary science can be found in the writings if Carl Sagan and Richard Dawkins.

Many people of religious faith also consider science and religion to be in conflict. The conflict is thought to be centered on an understanding of the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis. Biology produces much of this conflict, with its theories of the origins of humanity. Physics is sometimes considered to conflict with religion with respect to the age of the earth.

Another view of the relationship between science and religion contends that the two cannot conflict because they have completely different subject areas. Adherents of this view maintain that science and religion are fundamentally independent. We have already touched upon something like this view when discussing Ludwig Wittgenstein's position on religious language.

A contemporary evolutionary biologist who sometimes espouses this view is Stephen Jay Gould.

Barbour's third model is dialogue. On this model, there are certain points at which science and religion can interact in a mutually beneficial way. These points include the exploration of certain questions that lie at the limits of science, such as the events that caused the Big Bang, or the ethical implications of new technology. An example here is Paul Davies, who writes about contemporary physics. Another example is William Lane Craig, a contemporary Christian philosopher of religion.

The final model is integration. This model seeks to combine science and religion into a unified whole. There are not many examples of this model. Current process theology, following Alfred North Whitehead, may be one example.

Neither the conflict nor the independence model appear to be very promising. The danger of the conflict model is that each party automatically assumes that the other is mistaken. Historically, this has led to periods of scientific and intellectual stagnation, such as the early medieval period of Christianity. Interestingly, while science waned in medieval Christianity, it flourished in medieval Islam. As Islam grew increasingly fundamentalist, however, Islamic culture ceased to produce scientific progress.

The danger of the independence model is that neither discipline has the opportunity to be informed by the other. Again, this has dangerous implications. In the past, it was commonly believed that all scientific progress is good. The events of this century have led many to doubt this attitude of optimism concerning science. Many of the recent scientific discoveries have had great implications for human existence, both positive and negative. Science enables us to create atomic weapons, but does not guide us as we seek to use them wisely. Science has recently made it possible to clone human beings, and research using embryonic stem-cells shows great scientific promise. Although we have the technology to do such things, that does not automatically mean that they should be done. This is a point at which religion can certainly aid and inform science.

The prospects for combining science and religion into a unified whole are meager, in my opinion. Although the two have many things in common, they also have many differences. There are aspects of reality to which science cannot speak, and there are many scientific matters on which Scripture is simply silent.

The dialogue model seems the most promising. Of course, this means that there will sometimes be conflict. Any two people or groups of people who are engage in dialogue will sometimes experience conflict. In fact, religion and

science have more in common than is often thought. Scientific materialists are often scornful of religious faith, but science itself is committed to faith. Science rests on certain presuppositions, or things that it cannot prove. An example of a scientific presupposition is the belief that nature is orderly. Science seeks to discover the laws by which nature operates. This assumes, however, that the laws do not change. If the laws of nature, do change, then the scientific method breaks down. If nature is ultimately chaotic, there can be no justification for science.

The scientific materialist has no reason to believe that nature is orderly; the scientific method simply assumes it to be true. The religious believer does not simply assume it, but has a reason to believe it. According to traditional Christian belief, God created the physical world. God is also thought to be a perfectly good being who loves his creation, and wants the best for it. We would expect such a being to create a world that is orderly and not chaotic. So, on the assumption that theism is true, it is rational to investigate the nature of physical reality. It is interesting that the great scientists of the 17th and 18th centuries were people of very deep religious faith.

10.1 Questions

1. Explain Barbour's four models. Which do you believe is best?

2. At what points are science and religion most likely to conflict?

3. The text mentions Augustine's approach, that is, when science and Scripture conflict, the passage should probably not be taken literally. What is your opinion of this approach?

4. Are there any other presuppositions of science? Are these presuppositions justified in a religious belief system or not?

5. Can Christian faith be reconciled with evolutionary theory. Is it possible to believe in evolution and still be a Christian?

6. Recall the Kalam cosmological argument discussed earlier in the term. Which of Barbour's models is this an example of? Explain how this argument assumes a particular relationship between science and religion.

Chapter 11

Religious Diversity

The problem of religious diversity is a relatively new one in today's culture. When I was a child in Copan, Oklahoma, religious diversity was represented by the two churches in town. One was Baptist, and the other was Methodist. Today, with the availability of the Internet, we all have access to very diverse religious systems. Islam is now one of the fastest growing religions throughout the country.

Religious diversity presents its own set of philosophical problems. To address these problems, one must decide what the proper relationship is between different religions. There are three primary positions. These are exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.

The exclusivist believes that there is only one true religion. Other religions may have components that are themselves true, but only one religion is true as a whole. Salvation can only be gained by following the true religion. Adherents of other religions, no matter how faithful, are missing the opportunity for salvation.

Like the exclusivist, the inclusivist believes that there is only one true religion. Unlike the exclusivist, however, the inclusivist believes that the faithful adherent of another religion can achieve salvation.

The pluralist believes that all religions are equally true. That is, there is no one true religion. Exclusivist claims that are made by religious systems are simply false.

Christianity is traditionally exclusivist, as is most of the other major world religions. One can find many examples of inclusivism in contemporary Christian thought. The primary reason for rejecting exclusivism is that exclusivism is thought to be incompatible with a loving God.

This is a problem that all Christian believers have struggled with at some point in time. How can a loving God condemn someone to eternal punishment who has never heard the Gospel? Is the existence of hell incompatible with the existence of a loving God? Some Christians reply that there can be salvation on the basis of general revelation. That is, the knowledge of God that is available to all through the experience of nature.

Even so, there remains this problem: Imagine a person that would have accepted Christ, had that had greater revelation. Presumably, God knows that this person would have chosen Christianity, had they had more information. Should God condemn such a person to eternal punishment? Why would God create someone knowing that they would be condemned?

Christian exclusivists have struggled with this problem. One response that has been offered is that there are some people who would reject Christ no matter what. To say that God should never have created such a person is to say that such a person would have preferred to have never existed. Is there any reason to believe that? So, the damnation of some seems morally justified.

Notice that this does not address the problem above. Some feel that there is no solution to the problem of those who would have accepted Christianity, but are instead faithful adherents of another religion. This has led them to adopt inclusivism. Karl Rahner, a Roman Catholic theologian, is an example of an inclusivist. Of course, the inclusivist will be forced to struggle with certain exclusivist passages of Scripture. In fact, exclusivist claims can be found in the writings of each of the major world religions.

Pluralism is becoming an increasingly common view. The most important pluralist in philosophy of religion is John Hick. The subject matter of religion, according to Hick is ultimate Reality, or simply, the Real. The Real cannot be perceived directly, but only through the framework of one's culture. Given this, Hick maintains, it should be no surprise that there are differences between religions, since there are many differences between various cultures. It is important to understand that, for Hick, it is impossible to know anything about the Real as it is in itself, but only as it is perceived through the culture.

Nevertheless, Hick believes that all religions ultimately have the same conception of salvation. Salvation is personal transformation, a turning from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness

The major objection to Hick's pluralism is that it is inconsistent. He maintains that nothing can be known about ultimate Reality as it is in itself (which in itself is something about ultimate Reality), but then proceeds to discuss the nature of the Real at some length. If it is really the case that nothing can be known, then how can we know that self-transformation is the

nature of salvation? Hick's pluralism, taken to its logical conclusion, should result in skepticism about God.

Exclusivism is being increasingly criticized in contemporary society. It is considered arrogant to maintain that you are right and others wrong. It is considered foolish to maintain your position in the face of disagreement. It is often said to be intolerant of other belief systems. Exclusivism can be arrogant, foolish, and intolerant when it is not based on the evidence. Racial biases are an example of a kind of exclusivism that is unjustified.

The exclusivist that has honestly examined the evidence, however, and found that there is good support for their own position cannot be said to be arrogant, foolish, nor intolerant. Exclusivism is foolish only when it is blind. When a person has honestly sought the truth, and assessed the alternatives fairly, that person should be entitled to believe whatever they feel is best justified by the evidence. Anyone who insists on withholding judgment in the face of disagreement will never believe anything.

11.1 Questions

1. Explain the differences between exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.
2. What are the arguments for and against exclusivism?
3. What would lead one to be an inclusivist?
4. Explain Hick's pluralism. What are his reasons for his view?
5. What is the best argument against Hick's pluralism?
6. Rational exclusivism requires a set of criteria that can be used to judge different religions. Explain and evaluate Yandell's proposed criteria.

Chapter 12

Religious Ethics

Philosophical questions concerning the relationship of God to morality are at least as old as 400 BC, the time of Socrates. There are two related, but different, questions that are easily confused. First, is moral truth dependent or independent of God? Second, is our knowledge of moral truth dependent or independent of God?

The primary problem for religious ethics is expressed in a dilemma commonly called the Euthyphro problem. Euthyphro, in Plato's dialogue of the same name, was a priest who was engaged by Socrates in a discussion of the nature of religious piety. At one point, Euthyphro maintained that piety was doing what the gods love. To this, Socrates asked, "Do the gods love it because it is pious, or is it pious because the gods love it?" Rephrased in terms of religious ethics, the question is this, "Is an action right because God commands it, or does God command it because it is right?" This is seen to be a dilemma because the first option reduces morality to something arbitrary, but the second makes it independent of God.

One of the oldest ethical theories is called the divine command theory. According to the divine command theory, an action is morally obligatory because God has commanded it. An action that is inconsistent with the commands of God is morally impermissible. If neither performing the action nor refraining from it are inconsistent with God's commands, then the action is permissible but not obligatory.

So, according to the divine command theory, moral claims are true simply because God has so commanded. Murder, adultery, stealing, and lying are wrong only because God has commanded that we not perform such actions. Had God not commanded that we refrain from these things, then they would not have been wrong. God can have no moral reason for deciding to command

one thing rather than another, for that would appeal to a moral standard independent of God's commands.

Divine command theory is admittedly attractive from a religious point of view, because it maintains an extremely close dependence of moral truth upon the will of God. How can the divine command theorist respond to the charge that God might have commanded child abuse, and therefore child abuse would have been morally obligatory?

The divine command theorist could respond that God would never have commanded such a thing, but cannot explain why. The automatic response is because child abuse is simply wrong. Notice that this response is not available to the divine command theorist because there are no facts about rightness or wrongness independent of God's commands. To say that God would not have commanded it because it is wrong appeals to such an independent standard.

There are other reasons for the religious believer to reject the divine command theory. The most important is that it reduces God's goodness to something that is trivial. We consider moral goodness to be one of the most important attributes of God. In fact, God's goodness is unfailing, which is surely something that makes God worthy of worship. But, according to the divine command theory, goodness is simply whatever God wants it to be. So, to say that God is always good is to say simply that God always does what he wants. So to say that God is good is to utter a statement that is trivially true.

Robert M. Adams has acknowledged this, and developed what he calls a modified divine command theory. On Adams's theory, the morally right action is something a perfectly good being would command. Since God is a perfectly good being, then the right actions are the ones that he in fact does command. This avoids the arbitrariness charge that the ordinary divine command theory faces, but it is not clear that Adams's account is still a divine command theory. The action is no longer right simply because God commanded it. It is right because it is what a morally perfect being would have commanded, but this requires a way to evaluate the moral status of a being that is independent of the commands of God.

The problem with divine command theories is that they make moral truth dependent on God's will. This gives morality an arbitrary nature, if God has no reason to command one thing or another. Moral truth could be independent of God's will, but not be independent of God. Thomas Aquinas maintained that God has the perfect moral character, and therefore commands those things that are consistent with his character. An action is right, not simply because God commanded it, but because it is consistent with his character.

So, there is something that God looks to in order to know what is right, but God need not look to anything beyond his own character.

What role do God's commands play with respect to morality? One could argue that they are necessary for our knowledge of moral truth. Special revelation (Scripture, for instance) is certainly a way to come to know moral truth. Surely, however, it is not necessary that we be commanded in order to know the rightness or wrongness of an action. Some such knowledge seems innate to humans, and built into the natural order.

12.1 Euthyphro

Euthyphro. Why have you left the Lyceum, Socrates? and what are you doing in the Porch of the King Archon? Surely you cannot be concerned in a suit before the King, like myself?

Socrates. Not in a suit, Euthyphro; impeachment is the word which the Athenians use.

Euthyphro. What ! I suppose that some one has been prosecuting you, for I cannot believe that you are the prosecutor of another.

Socrates Certainly not.

Euthyphro. Then some one else has been prosecuting you?

Socrates Yes.

Euthyphro. And who is he?

Socrates A young man who is little known, Euthyphro; and I hardly know him: his name is Meletus, and he is of the deme of Pitthis. Perhaps you may remember his appearance; he has a beak, and long straight hair, and a beard which is ill grown.

Euthyphro. No, I do not remember him, Socrates. But what is the charge which he brings against you?

Socrates What is the charge? Well, a very serious charge, which shows a good deal of character in the young man, and for which he is certainly not to be despised. He says he knows how the youth are corrupted and who are their corruptors. I fancy that he must be a wise man, and seeing that I am the reverse of a wise man, he has found me out, and is going to accuse me of corrupting his young friends. And of this our mother the state is to be the judge. Of all our political men he is the only one who seems to me to begin in the right way, with the cultivation of virtue in youth; like a good husbandman, he makes the young shoots his first care, and clears away us who are the destroyers of them. This is only the first step; he will afterwards

attend to the elder branches; and if he goes on as he has begun, he will be a very great public benefactor.

Euthyphro. I hope that he may; but I rather fear, Socrates, that the opposite will turn out to be the truth. My opinion is that in attacking you he is simply aiming a blow at the foundation of the state. But in what way does he say that you corrupt the young?

Socrates He brings a wonderful accusation against me, which at first hearing excites surprise: he says that I am a poet or maker of gods, and that I invent new gods and deny the existence of old ones; this is the ground of his indictment.

Euthyphro. I understand, Socrates; he means to attack you about the familiar sign which occasionally, as you say, comes to you. He thinks that you are a neologian, and he is going to have you up before the court for this. He knows that such a charge is readily received by the world, as I myself know too well; for when I speak in the assembly about divine things, and foretell the future to them, they laugh at me and think me a madman. Yet every word that I say is true. But they are jealous of us all; and we must be brave and go at them.

Socrates Their laughter, friend Euthyphro, is not a matter of much consequence. For a man may be thought wise; but the Athenians, I suspect, do not much trouble themselves about him until he begins to impart his wisdom to others, and then for some reason or other, perhaps, as you say, from jealousy, they are angry.

Euthyphro. I am never likely to try their temper in this way.

Socrates I dare say not, for you are reserved in your behaviour, and seldom impart your wisdom. But I have a benevolent habit of pouring out myself to everybody, and would even pay for a listener, and I am afraid that the Athenians may think me too talkative. Now if, as I was saying, they would only laugh at me, as you say that they laugh at you, the time might pass gaily enough in the court; but perhaps they may be in earnest, and then what the end will be you soothsayers only can predict.

Euthyphro. I dare say that the affair will end in nothing, Socrates, and that you will win your cause; and I think that I shall win my own.

Socrates And what is your suit, Euthyphro? are you the pursuer or the defendant?

Euthyphro. I am the pursuer.

Socrates Of whom?

Euthyphro. You will think me mad when I tell you.

Socrates Why, has the fugitive wings?

Euthyphro. Nay, he is not very volatile at his time of life.

Socrates Who is he?

Euthyphro. My father.

Socrates Your father ! my good man?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates And of what is he accused?

Euthyphro. Of murder, Socrates.

Socrates By the powers, Euthyphro ! how little does the common herd know of the nature of right and truth. A man must be an extraordinary man, and have made great strides in wisdom, before he could have seen his way to bring such an action.

Euthyphro. Indeed, Socrates, he must.

Socrates I suppose that the man whom your father murdered was one of your relatives, clearly he was; for if he had been a stranger you would never have thought of prosecuting him.

Euthyphro. I am amused, Socrates, at your making a distinction between one who is a relation and one who is not a relation; for surely the pollution is the same in either case, if you knowingly associate with the murderer when you ought to clear yourself and him by proceeding against him. The real question is whether the murdered man has been justly slain. If justly, then your duty is to let the matter alone; but if unjustly, then even if the murderer lives under the same roof with you and eats at the same table, proceed against him. Now the man who is dead was a poor dependent of mine who worked for us as a field labourer on our farm in Naxos, and one day in a fit of drunken passion he got into a quarrel with one of our domestic servants and slew him. My father bound him hand and foot and threw him into a ditch, and then sent to Athens to ask of a diviner what he should do with him. Meanwhile he never attended to him and took no care about him, for he regarded him as a murderer; and thought that no great harm would be done even if he did die. Now this was just what happened. For such was the effect of cold and hunger and chains upon him, that before the messenger returned from the diviner, he was dead. And my father and family are angry with me for taking the part of the murderer and prosecuting my father. They say that he did not kill him, and that if he did, dead man was but a murderer, and I ought not to take any notice, for that a son is impious who prosecutes a father. Which shows, Socrates, how little they know what the gods think about piety and impiety.

Socrates Good heavens, Euthyphro ! and is your knowledge of religion and of things pious and impious so very exact, that, supposing the circumstances to be as you state them, you are not afraid lest you too may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against your father?

Euthyphro. The best of Euthyphro, and that which distinguishes him, Socrates, from other men, is his exact knowledge of all such matters. What should I be good for without it?

Socrates Rare friend ! I think that I cannot do better than be your disciple. Then before the trial with Meletus comes on I shall challenge him, and say that I have always had a great interest in religious questions, and now, as he charges me with rash imaginations and innovations in religion, I have become your disciple. You, Meletus, as I shall say to him, acknowledge Euthyphro to be a great theologian, and sound in his opinions; and if you approve of him you ought to approve of me, and not have me into court; but if you disapprove, you should begin by indicting him who is my teacher, and who will be the ruin, not of the young, but of the old; that is to say, of myself whom he instructs, and of his old father whom he admonishes and chastises. And if Meletus refuses to listen to me, but will go on, and will not shift the indictment from me to you, I cannot do better than repeat this challenge in the court.

Euthyphro. Yes, indeed, Socrates; and if he attempts to indict me I am mistaken if I do not find a flaw in him; the court shall have a great deal more to say to him than to me.

Socrates And I, my dear friend, knowing this, am desirous of becoming your disciple. For I observe that no one appears to notice you, not even this Meletus; but his sharp eyes have found me out at once, and he has indicted me for impiety. And therefore, I adjure you to tell me the nature of piety and impiety, which you said that you knew so well, and of murder, and of other offences against the gods. What are they? Is not piety in every action always the same? and impiety, again, is it not always the opposite of piety, and also the same with itself, having, as impiety, one notion which includes whatever is impious?

Euthyphro. To be sure, Socrates.

Socrates And what is piety, and what is impiety?

Euthyphro. Piety is doing as I am doing; that is to say, prosecuting any one who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any similar crime, whether he be your father or mother, or whoever he may be, that makes no difference; and not to prosecute them is impiety. And please to consider, Socrates, what a notable proof I will give you of the truth of my words, a proof which I have already given to others:, of the principle, I mean, that the impious, whoever he may be, ought not to go unpunished. For do not men regard Zeus as the best and most righteous of the gods?, and yet they admit that he bound his father (Cronos) because he wickedly devoured his sons, and that he too had punished his own father (Uranus) for a similar reason, in a nameless manner. And yet when I proceed against my father, they are angry with me. So inconsistent

are they in their way of talking when the gods are concerned, and when I am concerned.

Socrates May not this be the reason, Euthyphro, why I am charged with impiety, that I cannot away with these stories about the gods? and therefore I suppose that people think me wrong. But, as you who are well informed about them approve of them, I cannot do better than assent to your superior wisdom. What else can I say, confessing as I do, that I know nothing about them? Tell me, for the love of Zeus, whether you really believe that they are true.

Euthyphro. Yes, Socrates; and things more wonderful still, of which the world is in ignorance.

Socrates And do you really believe that the gods, fought with one another, and had dire quarrels, battles, and the like, as the poets say, and as you may see represented in the works of great artists? The temples are full of them; and notably the robe of Athene, which is carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenaea, is embroidered with them. Are all these tales of the gods true, Euthyphro?

Euthyphro. Yes, Socrates; and, as I was saying, I can tell you, if you would like to hear them, many other things about the gods which would quite amaze you.

Socrates I dare say; and you shall tell me them at some other time when I have leisure. But just at present I would rather hear from you a more precise answer, which you have not as yet given, my friend, to the question, What is 'piety'? When asked, you only replied, Doing as you do, charging your father with murder.

Euthyphro. And what I said was true, Socrates.

Socrates No doubt, Euthyphro; but you would admit that there are many other pious acts?

Euthyphro. There are.

Socrates Remember that I did not ask you to give me two or three examples of piety, but to explain the general idea which makes all pious things to be pious. Do you not recollect that there was one idea which made the impious impious, and the pious pious?

Euthyphro. I remember.

Socrates Tell me what is the nature of this idea, and then I shall have a standard to which I may look, and by which I may measure actions, whether yours or those of any one else, and then I shall be able to say that such and such an action is pious, such another impious.

Euthyphro. I will tell you, if you like.

Socrates I should very much like.

Euthyphro. Piety, then, is that which is dear to the gods, and impiety is that which is not dear to them.

Socrates Very good, Euthyphro; you have now given me the sort of answer which I wanted. But whether what you say is true or not I cannot as yet tell, although I make no doubt that you will prove the truth of your words.

Euthyphro. Of course.

Socrates Come, then, and let us examine what we are saying. That thing or person which is dear to the gods is pious, and that thing or person which is hateful to the gods is impious, these two being the extreme opposites of one another. Was not that said?

Euthyphro. It was.

Socrates And well said?

Euthyphro. Yes, Socrates, I thought so; it was certainly said.

Socrates And further, Euthyphro, the gods were admitted to have enmities and hatreds and differences?

Euthyphro. Yes, that was also said.

Socrates And what sort of difference creates enmity and anger? Suppose for example that you and I, my good friend, differ about a number; do differences of this sort make us enemies and set us at variance with one another? Do we not go at once to arithmetic, and put an end to them by a sum?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates Or suppose that we differ about magnitudes, do we not quickly end the differences by measuring?

Euthyphro. Very true.

Socrates And we end a controversy about heavy and light by resorting to a weighing machine?

Euthyphro. To be sure.

Socrates But what differences are there which cannot be thus decided, and which therefore make us angry and set us at enmity with one another? I dare say the answer does not occur to you at the moment, and therefore I will suggest that these enmities arise when the matters of difference are the just and unjust, good and evil, honourable and dishonourable. Are not these the points about which men differ, and about which when we are unable satisfactorily to decide our differences, you and I and all of us quarrel, when we do quarrel?

Euthyphro. Yes, Socrates, the nature of the differences about which we quarrel is such as you describe.

Socrates And the quarrels of the gods, noble Euthyphro, when they occur, are of a like nature?

Euthyphro. Certainly they are.

Socrates They have differences of opinion, as you say, about good and evil, just and unjust, honourable and dishonourable: there would have been no quarrels among them, if there had been no such differences, would there now?

Euthyphro. You are quite right.

Socrates Does not every man love that which he deems noble and just and good, and hate the opposite of them?

Euthyphro. Very true.

Socrates But, as you say, people regard the same things, some as just and others as unjust,, about these they dispute; and so there arise wars and fightings among them.

Euthyphro. Very true.

Socrates Then the same things are hated by the gods and loved by the gods, and are both hateful and dear to them?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates And upon this view the same things, Euthyphro, will be pious and also impious?

Euthyphro. So I should suppose.

Socrates Then, my friend, I remark with surprise that you have not answered the question which I asked. For I certainly did not ask you to tell me what action is both pious and impious: but now it would seem that what is loved by the gods is also hated by them. And therefore, Euthyphro, in thus chastising your father you may very likely be doing what is agreeable to Zeus but disagreeable to Cronos or Uranus, and what is acceptable to Hephaestus but unacceptable to Here, and there may be other gods who have similar differences of opinion.

Euthyphro. But I believe, Socrates, that all the gods would be agreed as to the propriety of punishing a murderer: there would be no difference of opinion about that.

Socrates Well, but speaking of men, Euthyphro, did you ever hear any one arguing that a murderer or any sort of evil-doer ought to be let off?

Euthyphro. I should rather say that these are the questions which they are always arguing, especially in courts of law: they commit all sorts of crimes, and there is nothing which they will not do or say in their own defence.

Socrates But do they admit their guilt, Euthyphro, and yet say that they ought not to be punished?

Euthyphro. No; they do not.

Socrates Then there are some things which they do not venture to say and do: for they do not venture to argue that the guilty are to be unpunished, but they deny their guilt, do they not?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates Then they do not argue that the evil-doer should not be punished, but they argue about the fact of who the evil-doer is, and what he did and when?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates And the gods are in the same case, if as you assert they quarrel about just and unjust, and some of them say while others deny that injustice is done among them. For surely neither God nor man will ever venture to say that the doer of injustice is not to be punished?

Euthyphro. That is true, Socrates, in the main.

Socrates But they join issue about the particulars, gods and men alike; and, if they dispute at all, they dispute about some act which is called in question, and which by some is affirmed to be just, by others to be unjust. Is not that true?

Euthyphro. Quite true.

Socrates Well then, my dear friend Euthyphro, do tell me, for my better instruction and information, what proof have you that in the opinion of all the gods a servant who is guilty of murder, and is put in chains by the master of the dead man, and dies because he is put in chains before he who bound him can learn from the interpreters of the gods what he ought to do with him, dies unjustly; and that on behalf of such an one a son ought to proceed against his father and accuse him of murder. How would you show that all the gods absolutely agree in approving of his act? Prove to me that they do, and I will applaud your wisdom as long as I live.

Euthyphro. It will be a difficult task; but I could make the matter very dear indeed to you.

Socrates I understand; you mean to say that I am not so quick of apprehension as the judges: for to them you will be sure to prove that the act is unjust, and hateful to the gods.

Euthyphro. Yes indeed, Socrates; at least if they will listen to me.

Socrates But they will be sure to listen if they find that you are a good speaker. There was a notion that came into my mind while you were speaking; I said to myself: 'Well, and what if Euthyphro does prove to me that all the gods regarded the death of the serf as unjust, how do I know anything more of the nature of piety and impiety? for granting that this action may be hateful to the gods, still piety and impiety are not adequately defined by these distinctions, for that which is hateful to the gods has been shown to be also pleasing and dear to them.' And therefore, Euthyphro, I do not ask you to prove this; I will suppose, if you like, that all the gods condemn and abominate such an action. But I will amend the definition so far as to say

that what all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy; and what some of them love and others hate is both or neither. Shall this be our definition of piety and impiety?

Euthyphro. Why not, Socrates?

Socrates Why not ! certainly, as far as I am concerned, Euthyphro, there is no reason why not. But whether this admission will greatly assist you in the task of instructing me as you promised, is a matter for you to consider.

Euthyphro. Yes, I should say that what all the gods love is pious and holy, and the opposite which they all hate, impious.

Socrates Ought we to enquire into the truth of this, Euthyphro, or simply to accept the mere statement on our own authority and that of others? What do you say?

Euthyphro. We should enquire; and I believe that the statement will stand the test of enquiry.

Socrates We shall know better, my good friend, in a little while. The point which I should first wish to understand is whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods.

Euthyphro. I do not understand your meaning, Socrates.

Socrates I will endeavour to explain: we, speak of carrying and we speak of being carried, of leading and being led, seeing and being seen. You know that in all such cases there is a difference, and you know also in what the difference lies?

Euthyphro. I think that I understand.

Socrates And is not that which is beloved distinct from that which loves?

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates Well; and now tell me, is that which is carried in this state of carrying because it is carried, or for some other reason?

Euthyphro. No; that is the reason.

Socrates And the same is true of what is led and of what is seen?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates And a thing is not seen because it is visible, but conversely, visible because it is seen; nor is a thing led because it is in the state of being led, or carried because it is in the state of being carried, but the converse of this. And now I think, Euthyphro, that my meaning will be intelligible; and my meaning is, that any state of action or passion implies previous action or passion. It does not become because it is becoming, but it is in a state of becoming because it becomes; neither does it suffer because it is in a state of suffering, but it is in a state of suffering because it suffers. Do you not agree?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates Is not that which is loved in some state either of becoming or suffering?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates And the same holds as in the previous instances; the state of being loved follows the act of being loved, and not the act the state.

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates And what do you say of piety, Euthyphro: is not piety, according to your definition, loved by all the gods?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates Because it is pious or holy, or for some other reason?

Euthyphro. No, that is the reason.

Socrates It is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates And that which is dear to the gods is loved by them, and is in a state to be loved of them because it is loved of them?

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates Then that which is dear to the gods, Euthyphro, is not holy, nor is that which is holy loved of God, as you affirm; but they are two different things.

Euthyphro. How do you mean, Socrates?

Socrates I mean to say that the holy has been acknowledge by us to be loved of God because it is holy, not to be holy because it is loved.

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates But that which is dear to the gods is dear to them because it is loved by them, not loved by them because it is dear to them.

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates But, friend Euthyphro, if that which is holy is the same with that which is dear to God, and is loved because it is holy, then that which is dear to God would have been loved as being dear to God; but if that which dear to God is dear to him because loved by him, then that which is holy would have been holy because loved by him. But now you see that the reverse is the case, and that they are quite different from one another. For one (theophiles) is of a kind to be loved cause it is loved, and the other (osion) is loved because it is of a kind to be loved. Thus you appear to me, Euthyphro, when I ask you what is the essence of holiness, to offer an attribute only, and not the essence, the attribute of being loved by all the gods. But you still refuse to explain to me the nature of holiness. And therefore, if you please, I will ask you not to hide your treasure, but to tell me once more what holiness or piety really is, whether dear to the gods or not (for that is a matter about which we will not quarrel) and what is impiety?

Euthyphro. I really do not know, Socrates, how to express what I mean. For somehow or other our arguments, on whatever ground we rest them, seem to turn round and walk away from us.

Socrates Your words, Euthyphro, are like the handiwork of my ancestor Daedalus; and if I were the sayer or propounder of them, you might say that my arguments walk away and will not remain fixed where they are placed because I am a descendant of his. But now, since these notions are your own, you must find some other gibe, for they certainly, as you yourself allow, show an inclination to be on the move.

Euthyphro. Nay, Socrates, I shall still say that you are the Daedalus who sets arguments in motion; not I, certainly, but you make them move or go round, for they would never have stirred, as far as I am concerned.

Socrates Then I must be a greater than Daedalus: for whereas he only made his own inventions to move, I move those of other people as well. And the beauty of it is, that I would rather not. For I would give the wisdom of Daedalus, and the wealth of Tantalus, to be able to detain them and keep them fixed. But enough of this. As I perceive that you are lazy, I will myself endeavor to show you how you might instruct me in the nature of piety; and I hope that you will not grudge your labour. Tell me, then, Is not that which is pious necessarily just?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates And is, then, all which is just pious? or, is that which is pious all just, but that which is just, only in part and not all, pious?

Euthyphro. I do not understand you, Socrates.

Socrates And yet I know that you are as much wiser than I am, as you are younger. But, as I was saying, revered friend, the abundance of your wisdom makes you lazy. Please to exert yourself, for there is no real difficulty in understanding me. What I mean I may explain by an illustration of what I do not mean. The poet (Stasinus) sings,

Of Zeus, the author and creator of all these things,

You will not tell: for where there is fear there is also reverence.

Now I disagree with this poet. Shall I tell you in what respect?

Euthyphro. By all means.

Socrates I should not say that where there is fear there is also reverence; for I am sure that many persons fear poverty and disease, and the like evils, but I do not perceive that they reverence the objects of their fear.

Euthyphro. Very true.

Socrates But where reverence is, there is fear; for he who has a feeling of reverence and shame about the commission of any action, fears and is afraid of an ill reputation.

Euthyphro. No doubt.

Socrates Then we are wrong in saying that where there is fear there is also reverence; and we should say, where there is reverence there is also fear. But there is not always reverence where there is fear; for fear is a more extended notion, and reverence is a part of fear, just as the odd is a part of number, and number is a more extended notion than the odd. I suppose that you follow me now?

Euthyphro. Quite well.

Socrates That was the sort of question which I meant to raise when I asked whether the just is always the pious, or the pious always the just; and whether there may not be justice where there is not piety; for justice is the more extended notion of which piety is only a part. Do you dissent?

Euthyphro. No, I think that you are quite right.

Socrates Then, if piety is a part of justice, I suppose that we should enquire what part? If you had pursued the enquiry in the previous cases; for instance, if you had asked me what is an even number, and what part of number the even is, I should have had no difficulty in replying, a number which represents a figure having two equal sides. Do you not agree?

Euthyphro. Yes, I quite agree.

Socrates In like manner, I want you to tell me what part of justice is piety or holiness, that I may be able to tell Meletus not to do me injustice, or indict me for impiety, as I am now adequately instructed by you in the nature of piety or holiness, and their opposites.

Euthyphro. Piety or holiness, Socrates, appears to me to be that part of justice which attends to the gods, as there is the other part of justice which attends to men.

Socrates That is good, Euthyphro; yet still there is a little point about which I should like to have further information, What is the meaning of 'attention'? For attention can hardly be used in the same sense when applied to the gods as when applied to other things. For instance, horses are said to require attention, and not every person is able to attend to them, but only a person skilled in horsemanship. Is it not so?

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates I should suppose that the art of horsemanship is the art of attending to horses?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates Nor is every one qualified to attend to dogs, but only the huntsman?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates And I should also conceive that the art of the huntsman is the art of attending to dogs?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates As the art of the ox herd is the art of attending to oxen?

Euthyphro. Very true.

Socrates In like manner holiness or piety is the art of attending to the gods?, that would be your meaning, Euthyphro?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates And is not attention always designed for the good or benefit of that to which the attention is given? As in the case of horses, you may observe that when attended to by the horseman's art they are benefited and improved, are they not?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates As the dogs are benefited by the huntsman's art, and the oxen by the art of the ox herd, and all other things are tended or attended for their good and not for their hurt?

Euthyphro. Certainly, not for their hurt.

Socrates But for their good?

Euthyphro. Of course.

Socrates And does piety or holiness, which has been defined to be the art of attending to the gods, benefit or improve them? Would you say that when you do a holy act you make any of the gods better?

Euthyphro. No, no; that was certainly not what I meant.

Socrates And I, Euthyphro, never supposed that you did. I asked you the question about the nature of the attention, because I thought that you did not.

Euthyphro. You do me justice, Socrates; that is not the sort of attention which I mean.

Socrates Good: but I must still ask what is this attention to the gods which is called piety?

Euthyphro. It is such, Socrates, as servants show to their masters.

Socrates I understand, a sort of ministration to the gods.

Euthyphro. Exactly.

Socrates Medicine is also a sort of ministration or service, having in view the attainment of some object, would you not say of health?

Euthyphro. I should.

Socrates Again, there is an art which ministers to the ship-builder with a view to the attainment of some result?

Euthyphro. Yes, Socrates, with a view to the building of a ship.

Socrates As there is an art which ministers to the housebuilder with a view to the building of a house?

Euthyphro. Yes.

Socrates And now tell me, my good friend, about the art which ministers to the gods: what work does that help to accomplish? For you must surely know if, as you say, you are of all men living the one who is best instructed in religion.

Euthyphro. And I speak the truth, Socrates.

Socrates Tell me then, oh tell me, what is that fair work which the gods do by the help of our ministrations?

Euthyphro. Many and fair, Socrates, are the works which they do. *Socrates* Why, my friend, and so are those of a general. But the chief of them is easily told. Would you not say that victory in war is the chief of them?

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates Many and fair, too, are the works of the husbandman, if I am not mistaken; but his chief work is the production of food from the earth?

Euthyphro. Exactly.

Socrates And of the many and fair things done by the gods, which is the chief or principal one?

Euthyphro. I have told you already, Socrates, that to learn all these things accurately will be very tiresome. Let me simply say that piety or holiness is learning, how to please the gods in word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices. Such piety, is the salvation of families and states, just as the impious, which is unpleasing to the gods, is their ruin and destruction.

Socrates I think that you could have answered in much fewer words the chief question which I asked, Euthyphro, if you had chosen. But I see plainly that you are not disposed to instruct me, dearly not: else why, when we reached the point, did you turn, aside? Had you only answered me I should have truly learned of you by this time the nature of piety. Now, as the asker of a question is necessarily dependent on the answerer, whither he leads, I must follow; and can only ask again, what is the pious, and what is piety? Do you mean that they are a, sort of science of praying and sacrificing?

Euthyphro. Yes, I do.

Socrates And sacrificing is giving to the gods, and prayer is asking of the gods?

Euthyphro. Yes, Socrates.

Socrates Upon this view, then piety is a science of asking and giving?

Euthyphro. You understand me capitally, Socrates.

Socrates Yes, my friend; the. reason is that I am a votary of your science, and give my mind to it, and therefore nothing which you say will be thrown

away upon me. Please then to tell me, what is the nature of this service to the gods? Do you mean that we prefer requests and give gifts to them?

Euthyphro. Yes, I do.

Socrates Is not the right way of asking to ask of them what we want?

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates And the right way of giving is to give to them in return what they want of us. There would be no, in an art which gives to any one that which he does not want.

Euthyphro. Very true, Socrates.

Socrates Then piety, Euthyphro, is an art which gods and men have of doing business with one another?

Euthyphro. That is an expression which you may use, if you like.

Socrates But I have no particular liking for anything but the truth. I wish, however, that you would tell me what benefit accrues to the gods from our gifts. There is no doubt about what they give to us; for there is no good thing which they do not give; but how we can give any good thing to them in return is far from being equally clear. If they give everything and we give nothing, that must be an affair of business in which we have very greatly the advantage of them.

Euthyphro. And do you imagine, Socrates, that any benefit accrues to the gods from our gifts?

Socrates But if not, Euthyphro, what is the meaning of gifts which are conferred by us upon the gods?

Euthyphro. What else, but tributes of honour; and, as I was just now saying, what pleases them?

Socrates Piety, then, is pleasing to the gods, but not beneficial or dear to them?

Euthyphro. I should say that nothing could be dearer.

Socrates Then once more the assertion is repeated that piety is dear to the gods?

Euthyphro. Certainly.

Socrates And when you say this, can you wonder at your words not standing firm, but walking away? Will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who makes them walk away, not perceiving that there is another and far greater artist than Daedalus who makes them go round in a circle, and he is yourself; for the argument, as you will perceive, comes round to the same point. Were we not saying that the holy or pious was not the same with that which is loved of the gods? Have you forgotten?

Euthyphro. I quite remember.

Socrates And are you not saying that what is loved of the gods is holy; and is not this the same as what is dear to them, do you see?

Euthyphro. True.

Socrates Then either we were wrong in former assertion; or, if we were right then, we are wrong now.

Euthyphro. One of the two must be true.

Socrates Then we must begin again and ask, What is piety? That is an enquiry which I shall never be weary of pursuing as far as in me lies; and I entreat you not to scorn me, but to apply your mind to the utmost, and tell me the truth. For, if any man knows, you are he; and therefore I must detain you, like Proteus, until you tell. If you had not certainly known the nature of piety and impiety, I am confident that you would never, on behalf of a serf, have charged your aged father with murder. You would not have run such a risk of doing wrong in the sight of the gods, and you would have had too much respect for the opinions of men. I am sure, therefore, that you know the nature of piety and impiety. Speak out then, my dear Euthyphro, and do not hide your knowledge.

Euthyphro. Another time, Socrates; for I am in a hurry, and must go now.

Socrates Alas! my companion, and will you leave me in despair? I was hoping that you would instruct me in the nature of piety and impiety; and then I might have cleared myself of Meletus and his indictment. I would have told him that I had been enlightened by Euthyphro, and had given up rash innovations and speculations, in which I indulged only through ignorance, and that now I am about to lead a better life.

12.2 Questions

1. What, in your opinion, is the relationship between God's commands and moral truth?

2. In what sense is morality dependent or independent of God?

3. Are there any significant differences in the moral commands of different religions? Does this have any implication for your views concerning God and morality?

4. If God does not exist, then can there be any objective moral truth? Why or why not? Explain and evaluate Nielsen's position.

5. Compare the ethical behavior of religious people to that of non-religious people. Does this have any implications for your view of the relationship between religion and morality?

6. What is your view of the Old Testament passages in which God seems to command something that we would consider immoral?

Chapter 13

Philosophy and Christian Doctrine

Some of the doctrines of Christianity bring up significant philosophical issues. It is not necessary to solve all of the philosophical problems before one can believe the doctrine, but working through the problems does help us to better understand what we believe.

13.1 The Trinity

Christianity, along with Judaism and Islam, is one of the three great monotheistic religions of the western world. Christians differ from Muslims and Jews, however, in that we believe that God is three Divine Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one God. What does this mean? Can it be expressed coherently?

The New Testament contains several ascriptions of divinity to Christ. There are also certain formulaic passages which mention all three members of the Trinity such as the baptism formula in Matt. 28:19. One of the earliest theological controversies, the Arian controversy of the 4th century, concerned the Trinity. Arianism is the position that the Son is a created being, and is not eternal. It was rejected at the councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381.

Over the years, there have been two arguments for the Trinity. Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) argued that if God is loving, then he must share. Therefore, a loving Father must coexist with the Son. Likewise, if God is loving, then he must cooperate in sharing. Thus, the Father and Son must coexist with the Spirit.

Objections to this argument include a potential problem with divine aseity (not being dependent an anything else). Also, does love require the presence of another? What about the love of self? Self-love is wrong only when it is at the expense of others. Does cooperation require a third person?

Hegel (1770-1831) argued that self-consciousness requires the projection of oneself onto something else. In order to be fully aware of oneself, there must be another. The Father then requires the Son in order to have full self-consciousness. This argument, even if successful, does not result in the Trinity. It would, however, show that some multiplicity of divine persons is necessary.

Over the years, many analogies have been offered to help believers understand the Trinity. Being analogies, all have fallen short in some way or another. It is no surprise that this doctrine is considered one of the great mysteries of the church.

13.2 Incarnation

Given the doctrine of the Trinity, the Son is God. Upon the Incarnation, God became human. Can the same thing be both God and human?

The Incarnation has been seen as necessary for the atonement. Irenaeus of Lyon (d. 200) said, "If a human person had not conquered humanity's foe, that foe would not have been conquered justly. Conversely, unless it was God who conferred salvation, we would not possess it securely" Likewise, Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389) said "What is not assumed has not been healed."

Many have objected to the coherence of the Incarnation, on the basis that divinity is incompatible with humanity. To be divine is thought to be essentially not human, and to be human is to be essentially not divine. It has not been clearly shown, however, that there is a contradiction between humanity and divinity.

One problem with the doctrine of the Incarnation is that Scripture seems to imply that Jesus failed to have certain attributes that are essential to God, such as moral perfection and omniscience. Jesus was tempted, according to Hebrews 4:15; grew in wisdom, according to Luke 2:52; and did not know the time of the end of the world, according to Mark 13:32.

Two explanations for this have been proposed. The first is the two-minds theory. On this account, Jesus had both a divine mind and a human mind. Everything in the human mind is accessible to the divine mind, but some things known by the divine mind are hidden from the human mind. It could also be the case that Was Christ necessarily good? If so, then he could not

sin. In what sense could he be tempted? Some have suggested that Jesus could be tempted as long as his earthly mind believed he could sin. Or that he could not be tempted to do evil, but to do a lesser good.

The primary objection to the two-minds theory is simply the coherence of one person possessing two minds.

The kenotic theory claims that Jesus emptied himself of certain divine attributes, especially omniscience, appealing to the Christ-hymn of Philippians 2 for support. Upon his glorification, Christ took on those divine attributes that he had given up.

13.3 Sin and Original Sin

According to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, sins are actions contrary to the will of a morally perfect deity. The doctrine of original sin is distinctively Christian. According to both Paul and Augustine, the Fall results in guilt, and this guilt is inherited from Adam. Innate guilt, however, is a morally problematic concept.

On the medieval analysis, the sinful nature causes each person to be sinful and guilty from moment of their initial possession of this nature. The primary problem is for infants, this led medieval theologians to assert that unbaptized infants are excluded from heaven.

The main philosophical problem with respect to original sin is the transference of guilt. How can the guilt of one person be transferred to another? In the Reformation, this was explained with something called "Federal theology." In federal theology, Adam is our representative. By virtue of the sin of our representative, we have all sinned. Guilt is thus justly imputed by God.

We are sometimes liable for the actions of those that represent us, if we have freely chosen them as representatives. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case here. How can one person represent others who have yet to exist? These problems have led some (Kierkegaard, for example) to think that there no such thing as inherited sin and guilt.

One contemporary explanation comes from Richard Swinburne. According to Swinburne, in Responsibility and Atonement, the propensity to sin is innate in humans. It is a product of our natural selfishness, which is part of our evolutionary heritage. Although these selfish desires give us an inclination to sin, they do so without necessitating our sin. Thus, the inclination does not inevitably result in wrongdoing. No one is morally guilty for the actions of any other person unless they had an obligation to deter that other person

from wrongdoing. No one alive could have deterred the first humans, so no one is guilty for their sin.

Consider Ezek. 18:20, "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him." (NIV)

Again, this is a difficult issue. It is important, though, and struggling with it can help us to understand both the nature of sin and the nature of our salvation from it.

13.4 Hell

The traditional doctrine of Hell is the punishment model. The punishment model contains these four key theses:

1) Punishment thesis: the purpose of hell is to retributively punish those whose earthly lives and behavior warrant it. 2)No escape thesis: it is impossible to get out of hell once consigned there. 3)Anti-universalism thesis: some people will be so consigned. 4)Eternal existence thesis: hell is a place of conscious experience.

Some believers are committed to the occurrence of an act called the harrowing of Hell, in which Christ offered redemption to those in Hell. This is a modification of the second thesis. It is considered to have been a unique event and no longer offers any hope for escape.

Alternatives to the traditional theory deny at least one of these theses. Those who hold doctrines called annihilationism and conditional immortality deny the fourth thesis. According to these doctrines, God causes those who are condemned to Hell to either cease to exist (annihilationism) or to fail to be resurrected (conditional immortality).

Second chance theories deny the second thesis. On these accounts, people are offered an opportunity to escape eternal punishment, even after being consigned to Hell.

Universalism denies the third thesis. According to the universalist, no one will go to Hell, instead, everyone is saved.

Others deny that Heaven and Hell are exhaustive of the possibilities for the afterlife, those postulate other realms such as Limbo and Purgatory.

The primary problem with annihilationism and conditional immortality is the assumption that nonexistence is to be preferred to existence in Hell. Could one rationally choose Hell?

One problem with universalism is that everyone, no matter how heinous, receives eternal reward. This seems to make God fundamentally unjust.

The reason for adopting second chance theories is that if the punishment of Hell is so bad, a second chance must be given. If a second chance is deserved, however, then a third chance will be also, then a fourth, a fifth, etc.

13.5 Providence and Prayer

The primary philosophical problem with God's providence is the problem of foreknowledge and free will that has already been discussed.

Petitionary prayer is also philosophically interesting. If God is perfectly good, then God will act for the best. If God is omniscient, then God knows what the best is. God, being omnipotent, is able to act for the best. It seems to follow that God will act for the best regardless of what we ask him to do.

13.6 Questions

1. What, in your opinion, is the best analogy for the Trinity? What is its weaknesses?

2. Assess the two arguments for the Trinity that were presented. Which one do you think is better?

3. Explain and evaluate the theories of the Atonement presented in the text.

4. How do you respond to the tension between God's love and eternal damnation?

5. Can prayer change things? If so, is God in complete control?

6. Could Christ sin? If not, in what sense was he really tempted?

7. Is there a conflict between God's sovereignty and human free will. Explain your answer.

8. Some have said that no matter what a person has done, it is at worst a finite wrong. Infinite punishment, then, is never deserved. How would you respond?

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Writing in Philosophy

Introduction

Writing in philosophy can be quite different from writing in other disciplines. It is certainly different from most writing that is done for assignments in high school. The purpose of this short guide is to help you understand what philosophical writing is, so that, with practice, you can learn to do it well.

Why Write?

Ever since Socrates, philosophy has been a communal activity. An essential aspect of doing philosophy is to engage in dialogue with the broader philosophical community. Writing enables one to address the broadest possible audience. Even if a paper will never be read by the broader community, the process of writing that paper can be quite beneficial for other reasons. Writing enables us to move beyond a broad knowledge of a specific subject, and develop a more detailed understanding of particular issue within that subject. Finally, writing is one of the best ways to develop clarity of thought. One of the goals of a philosophy course is to help students understand what they believe and to help them assess the reasons for those beliefs. The best way to achieve this is to write.

The Process

Choosing a Topic

Choosing a topic is often the most difficult part of the writing process. Writing a good paper requires time for research, thought, writing drafts, getting feedback, editing, and so on. To do this well, one must choose a topic long before the paper is due. That, unfortunately, means that you must choose a

topic before you know much about the subject! You have my sympathy, but you still have to write the paper.

Fortunately, choosing a topic does not have to be hard. Remember that a topic is not a thesis, it's just a general issue that the paper will investigate. Examples of topics are whether divine foreknowledge is consistent with human free will, whether the involuntary redistribution of wealth is morally permissible, or whether there can be an objective standard of beauty. Most people have wondered about these questions, and others like them, before they ever took a course in philosophy.

Sometimes it helps to do a little general reading on the subject before choosing a topic. I like to browse through the good reference works in philosophy, and I also find topics by browsing through the philosophy journals in the library. The key is to find an issue that you think is interesting. The more interested you are in the issue that you're writing on, the better your paper is likely to be. This doesn't mean that it is an issue about which you've already made up your mind! This is a great opportunity to investigate something that you've always been curious about.

As you choose a topic, keep the paper requirements in mind. In some ways, this is obvious—don't write a paper on contemporary epistemology for a course in medieval philosophy. In other ways, though, it's very easy to violate this common-sense rule. The shorter the length requirement, the narrower the topic must be. Don't write a paper on the concept of faith in the history of western philosophy. Instead, write about the concept of faith in St. Anselm's *Monologion.*

Research

The best sources to begin your research with are the same sources that I recommended for investigating potential topics. Start by reading articles on your topic in philosophy reference works. Some very good reference works are published by Blackwell, Routledge, and Oxford University Press. There are several encyclopedias of philosophy, many encyclopedias for the different branches of philosophy, and some very good internet resources. Of course, there are also some very bad internet resources, so be careful. There are two critically important tasks at this stage in your research. The first is to determine what the major positions are. The second is to learn what the important works are on that particular topic. So, begin with the reference works, paying special attention to the bibliographies at the end of each article, then move to the books and journal articles cited in those bibliographies.

Writing the Paper

As you research the topic that you have chosen, you will begin to develop you own position on the issue. Your task is to convince the reader that your position is correct. Simply put, every good philosophy paper is an argument for a clearly articulated position. The conclusion of the argument is the thesis of the paper.

The Thesis

Every paper should have a thesis. The purpose of the paper is to establish that the thesis is true. So, it is critically important to clearly state the thesis of the paper. If the reader cannot know what the thesis of the paper is, the reader also cannot know whether the paper was successful. The more interesting the thesis, the more interesting the paper is likely to be. A paper that attempts to prove something that the vast majority of the philosophical community believes anyway is unlikely to be above average in quality. A paper that attempts to prove that Descartes was a dualist, for instance, has little chance of captivating its audience. A paper that makes a plausible case that Descartes was not a dualist, however, would be interesting. Keep in mind that a thesis that you cannot establish, no matter how interesting, cannot be the basis for a successful philosophy paper.

Support for the Thesis

The purpose of the body of the paper is to make a good case for the thesis. There are several ways to do this. One way is to make a positive case for the thesis. After you have chosen a thesis, ask yourself, "What must I do to prove that this thesis is true?" Let's say that you decide that to prove your thesis, A, you must prove B, C, and D. Then, your paper naturally divides into sections. The first is the introduction, where you state your thesis and summarize how you will prove that thesis. In the next section, you make the case for B, followed by a section on C, and so on.

Another way to make a case for a thesis is negative, that is, showing that the alternatives are false, weak, or implausible. Of course, ideally, one would hope to both make a positive case for thesis and show that the alternatives are mistaken.

There are no positions in philosophy that are immune from objection. A good paper anticipates the objections that are likely to be made and offers responses. A good deal of your paper should be made up of explanations and examples. Philosophy, by nature, is often very abstract. Define key terms

clearly, use plenty of examples, and explain things so that someone unfamiliar with your subject could understand it.

Sources

How many sources should you have? Unfortunately, there is no magic answer. You should have the sources that are important for establishing your thesis. A paper with too few sources is prone to two obvious risks. First, you may be saying something that someone else has already said much better. Second, you may be arguing for a thesis that someone else has already made a very good case against. In both cases, ignoring those sources would be a critical mistake.

As you know, all sources must be cited. It makes no difference whether you explicitly refer to the author in your paper. You must cite any idea that you got from another person. For instance, here are three ways to refer to a passage found on page 164 in Alister McGrath's *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion*, published by Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1998:

1. According to Alister McGrath, "It will therefore be clear that an integral aspect of critical realism, whether in the sciences or theology, concerns the use of intermediate models or analogies in the representation or depiction of reality." (McGrath 1998, 164)

2. McGrath claims that portraying reality by using models is an essential feature of critical realism. (McGrath 1998, 164)

3. Portraying reality by using models is an essential feature of critical realism. (McGrath 1998, 164)

All three ways are acceptable, but all three must cite McGrath as a source. Failure to credit others for ideas is plagiarism, which is an instance of academic dishonesty, and, *at the very least*, will result in a failing grade for the assignment. Notice that I prefer in-text, parenthetical references. Occasional peripheral comments can be made in content footnotes.[1] For my courses, *never* use endnotes. Note that these citation guidelines are for my courses only—different disciplines, and even different professors in the same discipline, have different requirements.

[1]Here is an example of a content footnote. They should be rarely used, however. Most of the time, if something is important enough that it needs to be stated in a footnote, it is important enough to be included in the body of the paper.

As a general rule, avoid directly quoting from sources. In a paper written for a course, showing that you read the source is good, but showing that you understood the source is better. There are two instances when it is important to directly quote from a source. The first is when it is critical to your argument that the source used those particular words. Second, use direct quotes when you are claiming that the source said something, and the statement is not something that we would expect that source to make.

Revision

I guess it's possible to make a paper worse by revising it. It's also possible that a stranger will give me a million dollars tomorrow, but it's extremely unlikely. The only real problem with revising is that it takes time. Therefore, begin the process of research and writing as soon as the paper is assigned. It is very helpful to get feedback from friends. They are more likely to notice problems that would be difficult for you to see. It is also helpful to put the paper down for a few days, work on other things for a while, then return to the paper when your mind is clear. Again, this takes time, so start early.

Grammar and Spelling

We all make mistakes. A few spelling errors are forgivable. The more errors there are, the more difficult the paper will be to understand. One of the essential qualities of a good philosophy paper is clarity. Breaking too many grammar rules can make a paper difficult to understand, but so can slavishly following those same grammar rules. Don't sacrifice clarity and ease of reading for the sake of grammar. If moving a preposition away from the end of the sentence would result in an overly awkward sentence, then leave it at the end. Likewise, use simple prose, avoid technical jargon when possible, and write in an easy, conversational style.

Format

All papers should be typed, of course. Double-space all text except for block quotes and the small identification block on the first page that contains your name, date, course, and assignment number. Pay careful attention to the length requirements in your syllabus.

Set the margins to 1 inch on the top and bottom, and 1.25 inches on the sides.

Use a font that is easy to read, not one that is "interesting." Times New Roman is a nice, boring, but very readable font. Last, but certainly not least, turn it in on time. There may be a significant penalty for late papers.

Grading

It is certainly not a requirement for a good grade that the instructor agree with your thesis. Here are some general guidelines to consider:

A – This paper shows superior understanding of the relevant material. The author presents very good and original arguments for the thesis.

B – This paper shows a good understanding of the material, and presents original and thoughtful arguments.

C – This paper demonstrates an average knowledge of the topic. The author primarily compiled the arguments of others. Any original argumentation is relatively weak.

D – This paper demonstrates failure to understand the topic and uses relatively poor reasoning to support the thesis.

F – A failing paper either has no thesis, or there is nothing to support the thesis.