Richard SWINBURNE
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EDITORIAL

Since the early 1950's philosophy as practiced in the English-speaking world has had as its ideal to investigate the truth of central philosophical claims with the aid of very clear and rigorous arguments sensitive to empirical data and the ambiguities of language, and sceptical of traditional philosophical positions. This movement subsequently called 'analytic philosophy' had its origins in Central and Eastern Europe in the work of Frege, Schlick, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Tarski, Lukasiewicz, and Popper. It went through a stage of 'logical positivism' and then a stage of 'ordinary language philosophy', in both of which metaphysical views were dismissed as 'meaningless'. But since the 1970's it has undergone a 'metaphysical turn' in which most philosophers have come to see it as their central task to construct (as before, by means of clear and rigorous arguments) a well justified metaphysics and epistemology, responsive to the latest discoveries of science. It was appropriate to describe this philosophical movement in its earlier stages as 'analytic philosophy' since it is concentrated on analysis of the constituents of the world or of the meaning of sentences. But that seems an inappropriate name these days for what is a basically metaphysical enterprise. Ignoring its origins, we could describe it simply as 'Anglo-American' philosophy. But this style of philosophy (though now written mostly in English) has spread far beyond the confines of the English-speaking world. So, for the present (despite the confusion) we may still have to call it 'analytic philosophy'.

When analytic philosophers first applied their techniques and results to the phenomenon of religion, most of them were totally dismissive of the worth of religious belief and practice – most religious claims, philosophers asserted, are either meaningless or obviously false; and philosophy of religion has no place in a philosophy syllabus. But with the 'metaphysical turn', all this has changed. There has been an enormous growth of careful rigorous argumentation applied to the phenomenon of religion which has led to a widespread recognition of philosophy of religion as a proper part of a philosophy syllabus, and to a great growth in the number of students studying it in English-speaking universities and more widely. From initial work on whether religious claims are meaningful, it proceeded to consider what the central claim of theistic religion – that there is a

God – means; whether there are good arguments which support or refute this claim, and whether it needs arguments in order for someone to be justified in believing it. This enterprise of investigating the meaning and justification of religious claims then extended more widely to considering the other claims of most theistic religions – that there are miracles, that God answers prayers, and that there is life after death; and now it is being applied to the particular claims of the Christian religion, and to a lesser extent to the claims of other theistic and non-theistic religions. This discipline relies to an enormous extent on theories about meaning, justification, probability, explanation, knowledge and ethics developed in other branches of philosophy.

In the last two decades there has been a growth of interest, not merely in analytic philosophy in general, but in particular in analytic philosophy of religion in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where it has begun to interact with the post-Kantian philosophy of Continental Europe. It is to meet this new interest in philosophy of religion, stimulated by analytic philosophy, that the *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* has been founded. We hope that the journal will be one useful means of encouraging the development of the philosophy of religion in Central and Eastern Europe, and that it will promote fruitful exchange between different traditions of philosophy of religion. Although the journal has this regional base, we intend it to be an international journal and welcome contributions from all parts of the world. The editor and members of the editorial board all come from Central and Eastern Europe; but the journal will be supervised by a large board of editorial advisors, most of the initial members of which come from the United States and Great Britain. We hope that it will make a small contribution to the philosophical enterprise of providing well-justified answers to some of the all-important questions which have engaged the attention of the greatest minds for the last 3000 years.

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RELIGIOUS PLURALISM
AND THE BURIDAN'S ASS PARADOX

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Abstract. The paradox of Buridan's Ass involves an animal facing two equally adequate and attractive alternatives, such as would happen were a hungry ass to confront two bales of hay that are equal in all respects relevant to the ass's hunger. Of course, the ass will eat from one rather than the other, because the alternative is to starve. But why does this eating happen? What reason is operative, and what explanation can be given as to why the ass eats from, say, the left bale rather than the right bale? Why doesn't the ass remain caught between the options, forever indecisive and starving to death? Religious pluralists face a similar dilemma, a dilemma that I will argue is more difficult to address than the paradox just described.

The paradox of Buridan's Ass involves an animal facing two equally adequate and attractive alternatives, such as would happen were a hungry ass to confront two bales of hay that are equal in all respects relevant to the ass's hunger. Of course, the ass will eat from one rather than the other, because the alternative is to starve. But why does this eating happen? What reason is operative, and what explanation can be given as to why the ass eats from, say, the left bale rather than the right bale? Why doesn't the ass remain caught between the options, forever indecisive and starving to death?[1]

Religious pluralists face a similar dilemma, a dilemma that I will argue is more difficult to address than the paradox just described. According to religious pluralists, there is enough truth in any religion (or perhaps some special subset of religions, such as the major world religions) to yield the soteriological benefits promised by the great religions of the world.

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[1] Originally, the point was not taken to generate a paradox, but rather a reductio of John Buridan's theory of free choice, where freedom could consist in inaction, in the ability to defer for further deliberation any decision that isn't absolutely certain. The example is not discussed by Buridan, but can be found as early as Aristotle's *De Caelo* 295b32.

This great good is available, not solely on the basis of allegiance to some particular religion, but to any among several. Religious pluralists need not hold that any religion is as good as any other, or that every religion is suitable for obtaining such a great good. They do hold, however, that there is more than one tasty religious bale of hay in sight.

The Standard Taxonomy and Its Discontents

The usual classification scheme in which pluralism finds its home divides options into exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism ("the EIP scheme," as I will refer to it). An initial clarification can be made with an example. Suppose there are two religions, Christianity and Buddhism, and we use the term "heaven" to refer to whatever great good a religion offers. Pluralists think both Christians and Buddhists attain heaven in virtue of adhering to their own home religion, exclusivists think that only one of the two can attain heaven (in virtue of adhering to the one true religion), and inclusivists think that both Christians and Buddhists can attain heaven (in virtue of the truth of the one true religion). Suppose, then, that it is Christianity that is the true religion. A Christian exclusivist bars Buddhists from heaven (so long as they do not convert to Christianity), while a Christian inclusivist claims that Buddhists can go to heaven, but any Buddhist in heaven will be there because of the work of God in Christ making it possible.

This example helps to explain the general character of the classification scheme. More generally, let us begin with a distinction between alethic and soteriological adequacy. A religion is alethically adequate if and only if the claims of the religion are true. It is soteriologically adequate if and only if it is effective in securing the great goods religions claim are available for their adherents (which I will refer to here as "salvation," though without intending anything beyond reference to the great goods in question). Using this distinction, we can understand the positions in question in terms of what they say about the relationship between truth and salvation. Exclusivists lean toward a one-to-one correspondence between alethic and soteriological considerations, tending to hold that salvation depends on the truth of the view in question and one's adherence or commitment to this truth. Pluralists of the simple variety view

alethic and soteriological considerations as relatively unrelated, so that pretty much any religion, or any major religion, is as good as any other at securing soteriological goods. Inclusivists fall somewhere in between these two options, holding that the explanatory basis of an adequate soteriology depends on the truth of some particular religious viewpoint, but denying that commitment to the truth in question must be present for soteriological benefits.

The most difficult position to clarify in this scheme is the inclusivist position. A typical explanation of this position starts with an adherent of a particular religion, e.g., Christianity, who does not want to endorse the harsh view that the vast majority of human beings will not go to heaven. So, suppose such a Christian holds that not only Christians, but also Muslims and Jews and Hindus and Buddhists, as well as representatives of other religions, will make it to heaven. Suppose that such a Christian holds that such individuals make it to heaven, however, not on the basis of their commitment to their own, home religion but rather because of the work of God through His Son, Jesus. They are, some will say, "anonymous Christians."[2] That is, such a Christian denies the efficacy of any religion other than Christianity in securing heaven for anyone; this imaginary Christian holds, however, that many non-Christians will nonetheless be in heaven because adherence to the one true religion is not required for salvation.

I'll say something in a moment about the vagueness and messiness of the EIP scheme, but first I want to distinguish it from a different one which emphasizes the degree to which one's account of salvation is revisionary with respect to extant religion. Revisionists about religion come in two varieties, but both count as versions of exclusivism. Some revisionists think that each religion has a logical core and that the core commitments of the major religions are all compatible with each other. Such "logical core" revisionists count as exclusivists, since they align alethic and soteriological considerations, explaining soteriological consequences in terms of commitment to the logical core of whichever religion one endorses. Logical core revisionism is an all-but-dead theoretical option, however, since it is fairly conclusively refuted by empirical considerations.

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[2] This is Karl Rahner's phrase; see *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, translated by William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978).

Any reasonable account of the core commitments of the major religions shows that they disagree with each other.[3]

A different kind of revisionary view is syncretism, according to which none of the major religions is true as it stands, but each contains true elements which can be combined into a correct account of religious reality. Syncretism tends to be a version of exclusivism, though the matter is a bit more complicated since, strictly speaking, most human beings will never have thought of the syncretism in question. Syncretists can go in several directions here. One option is to endorse the pessimistic view in which my religious ancestors delighted: that most of humanity is damned for lack of exposure to the truth. More appealing from a moral point of view, though, is the option according to which one relaxes the idea of what is required to adhere to the one true religion, counting the faintest glimmer of insight as sufficient for adherence to the syncretistic truth.

It is here that the messiness of the EIP scheme becomes obvious. On this scheme, positions are distinguished by what they say about two items. One concerns the salvific adequacy of a particular religious form of life, and the other concerns the alethic adequacy of a view and the kind of commitment required toward that view. Exclusivists are identified as those who hold that there is one correct religion, and that doxastic commitment to it is necessary for the salvific adequacy of such a form of life. Yet, when put this way, it is hard to think of any examples of exclusivism. If we take Christianity as the example and assume it to be true, there is no major Christian position that requires adherence to the entire truth as a condition for salvation. Exclusivist Christians, of course, claim that one must be a *Christian* in order to be saved, but the doxastic commitments required are rarely specified precisely, and with good reason. As soon as precision comes into the picture, counterexamples in the form of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob threaten the account, even if articulators of

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[3] There is a different use of the notion of the logical core of a religion that is unobjectionable. Any given religion can have multiple manifestations in terms of denominations, sects, cults, etc. Each such manifestation differs in doctrinal commitments, and thus we might seek the logical core of a religion. Adherents of a given manifestation may thus grant that adherents of other, e.g., denominations, may go to heaven in virtue of commitment to the logical core of the true religion. As I use the term "logical core revisionism" in the text, this appeal to the logical core of a religion doesn't constitute an instance of logical core revisionism.

a given precisification are willing to bite the bullet on the eternal destiny of saints of other religions.

We can adopt this scheme if we refuse to pretend that it removes all vagueness from our categorizing. Vagueness is nearly everywhere in language, and though precisification is often helpful from a theoretical perspective, we can often make progress without it. A clear example of vagueness occurs when a syncretist allows the faintest glimmer of recognition of truth to be salvifically adequate. How should we classify this view? In some respects, it looks like inclusivism, since a practicing Christian, or Jew, or Hindu, could achieve salvation but only because of the truth of the syncretistic view in question (which is, by hypothesis, incompatible with each of the faiths in question). In another respect, it looks very much like certain positions that one is inclined to classify as exclusivist. Most traditional Christians have maintained that the saints in the Old Testament are saved, but it is impossible to identify any distinctively Christian commitments of such individuals. That they had such beliefs would be a suggestion for which there is very little evidence. The usual explanation told here by traditional Christians cites the glimmer of understanding such individuals possessed, plus their faith in and commitment to the God of the Abrahamic traditions. The point to note, however, is the similarity here with what the syncretistic position in question maintains: namely, that the faintest glimmer of a grasp of truth is enough by way of doxastic commitment to make salvation possible.

I will not attempt here to resolve this vagueness in the EIP scheme, for my interest is not in the distinction between inclusivism and exclusivism but rather in the distinction between both of these and pluralism. On this score, the EIP scheme is less troubling, since one can sort the pluralists from the remainder simply in terms of whether some commitment to the truth is part of the soteriology advanced.

A caveat remains in order nonetheless. Things can become complicated and difficult to manage if what looks like pluralism is combined with unusual claims about truth. For example, consider John Hick's Kantian account on which the major religions are thought of in quasi-Kantian terms as different phenomenal windows on the same ultimate noumenal reality. The proper way to categorize this view depends on what it says about truth. To be thoroughly Kantian, the view will have to think of truth in terms of the phenomenal realm, but that turns out to require, to understate the

point, a rather lengthy detour into the logic of inconsistency (since, at what Hick terms the phenomenal level, we find all the particular claims of the various religious, claims that are obviously inconsistent with each other). Though Hick flirted with the idea that the salvation of his view lies in the direction of exploring such a logic,[4] it is hard to take seriously, even in a time when dialetheism has become a serious philosophical position.[5] The problem is that, when truth is conceived in Kantian fashion as pertaining to the phenomenal realm and one holds that all religions (or major religions) are alethically as well off as any others, there are way more contradictions than even dialetheists are willing to countenance. If one can swallow all the contradictions, such a view counts as a version of exclusivism, since it is in virtue of commitment to the truth that salvation is achieved. But, oh, the pain of swallowing.

Easier on the digestive system is the view that characterizes truth in terms of the noumenal realm, leaving Hick's view as a version of plural-ism, since none of the phenomenal claims can strictly accord with the noumenal truth. When combined with Hick's view that all the major world religions are equally good from a soteriological perspective,[6] the view that results is paradigmatically pluralistic.[7] On this view, salvific adequacy for a view comes apart about as radically as is possible from any requirement of doxastic commitment to the truth.

As briefly indicated already, I will talk here in terms of the existence of God and the salvific promise of heaven, rather than in terms of some great good available for human beings and attachments to the Real with a capital 'R', but I want it to be understood that such language is not meant to restrict the options that pluralists might have in talking about

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[4] The speculation about logics of inconsistency can be found in Hick's contribution to *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity*, edited by Kevin Meeker and Philip Quinn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), "Religious Pluralism and Salvation," 54–66.

[5] See, e.g., *Paraconsistent Logic*, ed. G. Priest, R. Routley and J. Norman (Amsterdam: Philosophia Verlag, 1989).

[6] See, e.g., John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989) and *Disputed Questions in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

[7] To continue the metaphor in the text, we still don't have a simple gustatory delight, however. The claim that all religions are phenomenal windows on the same ultimate noumenal reality is itself both true and about the phenomenal realm, it would seem. But if nothing about the phenomenal realm is true, then this claim can't be true either.

religious goods. I will speak of God and heaven for the sake of simplicity, leaving open the option that a religious pluralist might hold that the religious good in question does not involve theism or an afterlife (and leaving open the option that the great goods in question obtain both in the present and in the life to come). All that is essential to the position is a denial of the claim that adherence to some one true religion is necessary for securing the great goods that religions proffer, however cognitively feeble that adherence might be conceived to be.

I also leave open whether there is one great good that adherents of all the acceptable religions are successful in achieving. An imaginable position, though one hard to find any serious defense of, is relativistic pluralism, according to which the great good achieved varies depending on the religion to which one adheres. Perhaps some religions are useful in achieving Nirvana and others in securing heaven as understood by Christians. Nothing said here will presume any position on the issue of relativism for pluralists.

The point of this terminological digression is to make clear which view I want to discuss when talking about pluralism. It is easy to see why pluralism is different from exclusivism, but a bit harder to distinguish from inclusivism. My discussion here is meant to provide a basis for distinguishing relatively inclusivist adherents of a religion[8] from the focus of this paper, as well as to separate revisionary and syncretistic views from pluralist views. Neither inclusivist nor revisionary views are the target of the present essay, but only those who believe acceptability to God and resultant presence in heaven can be achieved on the basis of adherence to any of a number of religions, with no religion having a special status which makes it soteriologically superior to any other religion, and where the explanation of soteriological adequacy does not advert to the distinctive claims of any religion at all. For pluralists, the cognitive dimension of the religious life

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[8] I use the relativity qualifier since the difference among inclusivist and exclusivist Christians here is a matter of degree. Even the staunchest exclusivist Christians believe that some adherents of the Jewish faith will be in heaven, in spite of having no acquaintance with Jesus and no allegiance to any of the core teachings of Christianity about Jesus, his birth, life, death, and resurrection: for example, the great figures of the Old Testament. Some of these Christians also endorse a dispensationalist story as to why no one who lives after the time of Jesus has the same opportunity, but the point remains that they must interpret the "no other name" passage so that presence in heaven does not require, in one's earthly life, any particular mental attitude toward that first-century person in Palestine.

may be necessary to the entire experience of religiosity but the truth of the claims is explanatorily otiose regarding the question of salvific adequacy.

Pluralists, unlike inclusivists and exclusivists, must face the paradox of Buridan's Ass. For they believe that achieving heaven is a surpassing good, but also hold that there are a number of different paths to it. So, which path should a fully informed and rational individual take? Or is the result the damnable analogue of Buridan's ass starving to death through the inability to make a rational choice? We can begin to address this issue by considering the structure of a solution to the paradox conceived as an attack on the possibility of rational action in such a situation.

Reasons and Contrastive Reasons

Here's what we know about the version of the paradox I'll explore here: a proper theory of rationality does not require the ass to starve to death. The concept of rationality I'll focus on here is a teleological one, identifying items as rational when and only when they are appropriately related to the relevant goal in the domain in question. I will assume here that the epistemic goal can be explained in terms of the concept of truth and that the practical goal can be clarified in terms of self-interest or well-being. Given these assumptions, we can easily see that it is contrary to the well-being of the ass to opt for starving to death in such a situation, and so we know that a correct theory of rationality will not require the ass to remain in a state of indecision forever. Hence, it follows that it is not irrational for the ass to eat from either bale. What we should say about the question of explanation, the question of why the ass eats from, say, the left bale rather than the right, is left open at this point. What is not left open, however, is whether it is rational for the ass to starve to death.

From this point, some theorists will want three categories and some two. Some will want to classify actions into rational, nonrational, and irrational, while others will want to speak only of rational and irrational actions. One motivation, in my view, the primary one, for wanting three categories is to avoid having to count arbitrary actions as rational, where an arbitrary action is defined as one of several actions possible for the circumstances in question, where no reason can be found, relative to the goal in question, for preferring that action to its competitors (as in the paradox).

This argument for the existence of three categories can be rebutted by the following considerations. First, note that a theory of rationality should be perfectly general, applying both to actions and mental states (beliefs, desires, hopes, wishes, etc.). In the domain of belief, however, the threat of skepticism looms large if one is willing to endorse a connection between reasons and contrastive reasons. In the former case, we speak of having a reason to believe some claim *p*; in the latter case, we speak of having a reason to believe *p* rather than *q*, where *q* is an alternative to *p* (i.e., is a member of a set of claims including *p* where each member excludes all other members and where the set is exhaustive in the sense that some member of the set must be true). In the case of the Buridan's Ass Paradox, we may be inclined to say that the ass has no reason to eat from, say, the left bale *because it has no reason to eat from the left bale rather than the right*. To say such a thing is to endorse a connection between reasons and contrastive reasons, and an analogue of such a connection in the realm of belief is:

> Reason R is an adequate reason to believe p only if, for any alternative q to p, R is an adequate reason to believe p rather than believe q.

Such a principle threatens one with skepticism almost immediately. Suppose you have a visual experience of a red object on the table, and believe as a result that there is a red object on the table. Is your experience an adequate reason for your belief? By the above principle, it is so only if it is an adequate reason for believing that there is a red object on the table rather than that there is a black light shining on a non-red object, making it appear red. If the experience is a contrastive reason of this sort, it is also an adequate reason for believing that there is no black light shining making the object appear red when it isn't. Yet, if the question arises whether appearances are deceiving in this way, it would be pathetically bad epistemic practice to cite the very experience itself to assuage such concerns.

The problem of explaining how one can know that appearances are not deceiving in this way has come to be called the Problem of Easy Knowledge.[9] Various proposals have been developed in response to the

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[9] The first formulation of the problem is by Stewart Cohen, "Basic Knowledge and the Problem of Easy Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65 (2002): 309–329.

problem,[10] but whatever the proposal, any plausible approach to the problem will require denying the principle above. Adequate reasons for belief do not have to be adequate contrastive reasons for belief, and thus, in this limited sense, beliefs can be both arbitrary (in the technical sense described above) and yet rational. Perhaps acquiring an adequate reason for thinking that appearances are not deceptive in the way imagined is not especially difficult–for example, perhaps all one needs to do is to look briefly at the lighting in the room to acquire an adequate reason for thinking that there is no black light causing deceptive appearances. Perhaps, as well, there are other ways in which reasons and contrastive reasons align themselves—for example, even though in general, reasons don't need to be contrastive reasons, perhaps they must rule out alternatives that are psychologically salient in the right way. This possibility will become important later in our discussion, but for now the important point to note is that neither of these points rescues the claim that reasons must be contrastive reasons in the theory of rational belief.

Given that a theory of rationality ought to be fully general, we should expect the same result in the theory of rational action. If we find the same result there, then we can say that arbitrary actions, too, can be rational, i.e., that reasons for doing A need not be reasons for doing A rather than B for any competing alternative B to A. In this way, the case for a category of nonrational actions or beliefs on the basis of considerations of arbitrariness (where arbitrariness is understood in limited fashion in terms of a denial of a perfect correlation between reasons and contrastive reasons) is undermined. It is not true, in general, that arbitrariness is incompatible with rationality.

This argument can be summarized concisely as follows. First, define arbitrariness in terms of the failure of a requirement that an adequate reason be an adequate contrastive reason. Second, note that if arbitrary beliefs can be rational, then we should expect that arbitrary actions can be rational. Third, consider the Problem of Easy Knowledge, and the way in which it demonstrates that arbitrary beliefs can be rational, i.e., that

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[10] See, e.g., Peter Klein, "Closure Matters: Academic Skepticism and Easy Knowledge," *Philosophical Issues* 14 (2004): 165–184; Peter Markie, "Easy Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, forthcoming; Ram Neta, "A Contextualist Solution to the Problem of Easy Knowledge," in manuscript; Ernest Sosa, "Response," in *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*, ed. John Greco (Blackwell, 2004), especially his response to Cohen.

an adequate reason for belief need not be an adequate contrastive reason. Finally, note that the particular kind of action for which a category of nonrationality was desired is arbitrary actions that fail to be irrational. But if arbitrary beliefs can be fully rational, as they must on pain of having to endorse radical skepticism, then arbitrary actions can be as well. Thus, there is no reason based on this kind of arbitrariness to refuse the conclusion that when such an arbitrary action fails to be irrational, it is rational.

Arbitrary Actions and Arbitrary Choices: A Start on Solving the Paradox

This conclusion allows for the possibility of a solution to the Buridan's Ass Paradox. If the ass eats from either bale, there will be no adequate contrastive reason for doing so. Yet, if reasons don't need to be contrastive reasons, that allows for the possibility that the eating is rational nonetheless. It doesn't matter which bale the ass eats from, for the action involved will be rational either way.

Pointing out the difference between a reason and a contrastive reason doesn't tell us much about the general theory of rationality that might include such a distinction. Moreover, even describing vaguely the contours of such a general theory is difficult, but it is worth noting in this regard that there is a contrastive reason available at a higher level of generality, since there is an adequate reason for the ass to eat from one of the two bales rather than starve. Perhaps the more specific action inherits its rationality in the absence of support by a contrastive reason from the higher-order contrastive reason, even though whichever specific token of the general type is displayed, that token will count as an arbitrary action. In any case, whatever general account is given, it remains the case that arbitrary actions can be rational, so we can't argue that the ass fails to be rational for eating from the left bale simply because that action is an arbitrary one.

As pointed out, both beliefs and actions can be arbitrary and yet rational. But the notion of arbitrariness here is a technical one, defined in terms of the distinction between adequate reasons and adequate contrastive reasons. This sense of arbitrariness raises no particular problems for the pluralist: the pluralist is in the position of Buridan's ass, and rationality can accompany whatever choice is made.

Pluralism and Arbitrariness

The problem for the pluralist arises, however, when we think about other notions of arbitrary actions and beliefs. The notion of arbitrariness clarified to this point allows that a factor can confer rationality on an action or belief without conferring irrationality on competitors of that action or belief. It is compatible with this point, however, that there are important differences between the rationality of action and the rationality of belief as to why reasons don't have to be contrastive reasons. As a motive for considering this possibility, notice that even though we talk about the choice of a religion in much the same was as we talk about the choice the ass faces regarding which bale to choose, the language of choice may not be altogether appropriate in the realm of religious affiliation. To become an adherent of Christianity is not simply a matter of choosing to attend Mass or to attend confession or to be baptized. Essential to the story is a matter of cognitive commitment, a coming to view the claims of Christianity as true and important. Regarding cognitive commitments, however, the language of choice presents difficulties. I am sitting in a coffee shop and look up, and come to the view that my friend Robert has just arrived. To say that I looked up, considered the possibilities and chose to view the situation as one involving Robert's presence is thoroughly wrongheaded. In this case, no choice of any sort was involved. Instead, the belief resulted because of perception, and the process involved is of a general causal sort. Any reconstruction in terms of the language of choice would be mistaken.

Perhaps these same points apply to the cognitive commitments involved in becoming an adherent of a religion. One can choose to perform the actions associated with being an adherent of a religion, but it may be that one must also come to see the claims central to that religion as ones that are true in much the same way as I came to see that Robert just walked in to this coffee shop. It may be, that is, that the language of choice is simply inappropriate in the context of the cognitive commitments required to be an adherent of a religion.

Notice as well that the way in which reasons don't need to be contrastive reasons differs in the cognitive realm from the practical realm. In the case of the paradox, the ass can rationally eat from the left bale while fully aware of the equal attractiveness of the right bale. But the same kind of

claim isn't very plausible about cognitive commitments. It is true that Newton can't be charged with irrationality in belief simply because his evidence is compatible with general relativity theory, but it is not true that Holmes can rationally believe that the butler did it while being fully aware that his evidence is neutral between the butler or the baker having done it. Just because a reason doesn't have to be a contrastive reason doesn't imply that reasons can fail to be contrastive reasons in precisely the same way for both beliefs and actions. Since the religious pluralist faces a set of alternatives most obviously similar to that of Buridan's ass, using the solution to the paradox outlined above would commit the pluralist to the view that the kind of arbitrariness tolerable regarding rational cognitive commitments is the same as that regarding rational action. Since such a presupposition is false, the pluralist cannot escape the problem raised by the paradox in the same way that the paradox itself can be dissolved.

Thinking about the differences in the examples of Newton and Holmes reveals differences that are in part psychological: Newton hasn't even so much as conceived of general relativity theory whereas Holmes is imagined to be fully aware of the fact that his evidence is neutral with respect to the guilt of either the butler or the baker. Once we begin to think along these lines, the question becomes one of examining the psychological conditions under which the conferring of rationality is blocked by the presence of competitors that these factors do not rule out. In the case of belief, from the purely theoretical perspective of getting to the truth and avoiding error, the salience of a competitor not ruled out by one's evidence is often sufficient grounds for preventing the rationality of belief. Perhaps Newton can be excused for not withholding when it would be senseless to hold him responsible for considering relativity theory, but you're not likely to be impressed by Sherlock's reasoning if he admits that his evidence leaves open whether it was the butler or the baker and he believes and asserts that it is the butler nonetheless.

This difference is important, because if beliefs are not actions in this sense, one cannot follow the pluralists' advice of just arbitrarily selecting one. Cognitive commitments are central to adherence to a religion, and cognitive commitments are subject to stronger constraints on arbitrariness than are actions.

If pluralism is a mistaken view, there is a straightforward way to answer the question about how to go about selecting a religion: find the true one!

Some find it harder than others to arrive at a conclusion in such matters, but once one comes to see a certain religion as the true one, there is no mystery left about the cognitive commitments needed for allegiance to that religion. In seeing a particular religion as the true one, one has thereby made the cognitive commitments necessary. There is no guarantee that this process will itself impart rationality to the beliefs that result, but the important point to note here is that the process as so described does not guarantee irrationality in the way that Holmes's admission that the evidence is equally well-explained by the guilt of either the butler or the baker guarantees the irrationality of his view that the butler did it.

Since resolution for the religious pluralist is more like the resolution for Holmes of who committed the murder than it is like the situation of the ass who needs to avoid starvation, the kind of arbitrariness tolerable in a solution to the paradox is inapplicable to the situation of the religious pluralist in trying to secure the great goods that religion offers. This point raises an interesting quandary: if religious pluralism were true, could there be any rational religious pluralists in heaven? For if pluralism is correct, it is through adherence to any of a number of religions that one secures heaven. And adherence to a religion involves cognitive commitments implying seeing the world in a certain way, but religious pluralists will have difficulty being characterized by such commitments so long as commitments track rationality. To be characterized rationally by such commitments, a pluralist would have to commit cognitively to the central claims of some religion or other, but a pluralist also believes that no religion is soteriologically privileged over any other. Thus, the pluralist maintains that whatever cognitive commitments are involved in being an adherent of a particular religion are inessential to the soteriological efficacy of that religion. Yet, most religions include some uniqueness claim, to the effect that the path of salvation is tied to the claims of the particular religion in question and that being on the path of salvation involves recognizing this point. Religions typically claim, that is, that endorsing the claims preached by that religion is essential to salvation. The pluralist, however, endorses a meta-dogma as well, one that says that alethic commitments come apart from salvific adequacy.

It looks, then, that the possibility of a pluralism that is both rational and effective in terms of access to heaven rests on the possibility of inconsistent rational beliefs or on the possibility of finding a religion

that treats the meta-dogma in question as optional for adherents of that religion. Other options do not hold much promise, since the pluralist, as understood here, doesn't wish to become revisionary about religion itself. So it is not an option here for a pluralist to join a religion and then adopt an unusual construal of what is important from the perspective of that religion. Nor is it a very plausible route to take to insist that there are as many religions as there are noses of the religiously inclined, in order to allow the pluralist to have a set of beliefs adequate for salvation no matter what the content. Instead, religious pluralists wish to show respect for actual religions, at least the major world religions, and to do so, they need to avoid being revisionary or relativistic in these ways. Thus, their hopes ride on the possibility of inconsistent rational beliefs (where the dogmas of the endorsed religion are inconsistent with the meta-dogma definitive of religious pluralism) or of finding a religion that treats the meta-dogma in question as optional for adherents of that religion.

Neither route is promising. About the possibility of inconsistent rational beliefs, I will say very little. It is important, though, not to take refuge here in either the epistemic paradoxes or the possibility of opaque belief contents. In the paradoxes, especially the preface paradox and the lottery paradox,[11] a common approach claims that the lesson of the paradoxes is that rational inconsistent beliefs are possible. Rational inconsistent beliefs of this sort, however, depend in an important way on the size of the lottery and the sophistication of the book under discussion. If the lottery has only two tickets, one can't rationally believe that some ticket will win and that one's own ticket will lose. If the book has only two claims in it, one can't rationally believe each claim in the book plus believe the preface claim that there are mistakes in the book. Here, size matters. In the case of religious pluralism, the needed analogy is missing. Pluralists

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[11] For further information on the epistemic paradoxes, see Jonathan L. Kvanvig, "The Epistemic Paradoxes," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998. The lottery paradox derives a contradiction from noting that one has excellent though non-conclusive reasons for thinking that one's own ticket will lose, and thus reasons for thinking that every ticket will lose, despite knowing that some ticket will win. The preface paradox derives a contradiction from rational belief in each statement in a book, combined with the author's expression of modesty in the preface that because of the difficulty of the subject matter, errors are sure to be found in what has been written.

need both to endorse the doctrines of the faith tying alethic and salvific adequacy and also believe the pluralist commitment that all such doctrines are false. The proper analogy here isn't the existentially quantified preface claim, but the universally quantified one: believing that all the claims in the book are false. So no mileage can be gotten from the attempt to solve the problem for pluralists raised by the Buridan's ass paradox by appeal to the lessons of the paradoxes.

Moreover, even though there are accounts of the nature of belief on which a person can rationally believe, e.g., that Cicero was a great orator while denying that Tully was, such examples of rational contradictory beliefs hold only because of the opacity of belief contents that exist in such cases: the person in question is unaware that Cicero is Tully. No such opacity is present here, so such examples are no help in rescuing pluralism from the problem generated by the Buridan's ass paradox.

So the problem remains and is pressing, leaving only the hope that the dogma tying alethic and salvific adequacy, which religions tend to preach, will not be included among the cognitive commitments essential for salvation. In order to avoid revisionary attitudes toward religion, pluralists will need to look for attitudes of optionality regarding such dogmas in the religions themselves. It is part of the pluralist trademark to leave religions as they are rather than to try to revise them in a way that more accurately reveals their purported logical core. The latter view is a version of revisionism, not pluralism; so, the pluralist will need to hold out the hope of finding attitudes of optionality within the religion itself in order to adhere to it without contradiction.

Requiring the finding of such a religion does not sit well with the respect pluralists intend to maintain for at least the major religions of the world. Pluralists think religions, at least the major ones, are fine as they stand, but the major religions simply do not reflect the kind of optionality required for pluralistic rational commitment to them. The pluralist seeking rational attainment of heaven needs a religion that requires belief in nothing incompatible with the pluralist stance in order to avoid the cognitive dissonance that would prevent the rational commitments necessary for allegiance to a religion. The attempt to commit to a religion on pluralist grounds thus becomes the attempt to find a religion that has only cognitive commitments consistent with those the pluralist thinks are true. In so doing, however, the pluralist

will have ruled out most of the major world religions. Moreover, the pluralist will have begun the search for a religion worth having in the quite straightforward way of looking for a true one, using whatever resources are available, including one's view that alethic adequacy and salvific adequacy are unrelated. In short, the religious pluralist has to hope to find a religion that requires no cognitive commitments, no particular way of seeing, understanding, and experiencing the universe and our place in it.

This difficulty of describing how a pluralist could rationally attain heaven results from the insolubility of the Buridan's Ass paradox when applied to situations requiring cognitive commitments. When faced with such a situation, one's only recourse for doing anything that will have as a direct and immediate consequence the forming of the requisite beliefs is to try to find out what the truth is. That is how human beings go about forming beliefs. We could, I guess, go to Mass and hope for the best, or some analogue of such for religions other than Christianity, but that is not to have made a decision that resolves the paradox. It is only to do something which one hopes will result in forgetting one's pluralism while at the same time becoming convinced of the claims of the religion in question. A genuine pluralist adherent of a religion is possible only when a universal core of religions is found and some such version of a religion develops in response to perceived difficulties with the more typical exclusivism found in the major religions. In the absence of such a development, the Buridan's ass paradox undermines the possibility of rational pluralist salvation.

The same issues would arise for any arbitrary choice of which creeds to begin endorsing verbally. One might start talking like an adherent of a religion, with the idea that doing such will someday result in a commitment to the view. But in all such cases, the strategy is effective only if the pluralists forget their pluralism. The pluralist will have to forget that the particular religion one is hoping to achieve commitment to is no better than some others, and thus that the propositions which one hopes to come to believe that are incompatible with propositions constitutive of other religious points of view are not really true. So a fully informed and rational individual will simply be unable to commit in such a way as to secure heaven, for that is available, according to pluralists, only to those committing to some religion or other.

A Notion of Commitment for Pluralists?

This problem has its source in the distinction between the cognitive situation involved in religious commitment and the merely practical commitment needed for the ass to keep from starving. The ass doesn't need to hold any beliefs; all that is needed is a decision. But it looks as if the pluralist needs beliefs, and in any case, it looks like the pluralist needs something beyond a mere decision in favor of one religion over another.

This diagnosis of the issue is demanded by the non-revisionary character of pluralism. Without such a non-revisionary stance, one might diagnose the issue in different ways. Revisionary approaches might question the idea that cognitive commitments to any religion are necessary for eternal blessedness or that cognitive commitments are essential to religion, regardless of what these religions might claim about themselves. The former view is at odds with the presupposition of pluralism that religion is central to the good life, and though the second idea might gain some support from efforts in the last century of moral theory which attempt to give non-cognitive construals of the apparently cognitive details of morality itself, the revisionary scent of such a proposal is still overwhelming. For even if such an account could be defended regarding the moral aspect of a religion, it is obvious that there is much more to a religion than its moral component, and the appeal to the prospects for non-cognitivism in ethics would be nothing more promising than the bizarre proposal that there is hope that all odd numbers are prime because the first four are. So the conclusion that bears repeating is that pluralists, unlike revisionists, want to respect religion as it is, rather than replace it with something more philosophically respectable.

We are thus left with the diagnosis above, that the difficulty encountered arises because of the difference regarding the cognitive commitments needed in the matter of religion versus starvation. This diagnosis is a useful one for the pluralist as well, since it suggests a possible avenue of escape from the difficulty posed. Standard epistemological approaches to cognition emphasize mental states such as belief and experience, but there is little reason to suppose that these attitudes tell the entire story of cognition. One of the more interesting related attitudes is the attitude of acceptance, an attitude that one adopts toward a proposition, assenting to

its truth, committing oneself to acting on that proposition and defending it in the face of reasonable challenges. Any adequate psychology will have to endorse a distinction between belief and acceptance. Perhaps in the ideal case, all acceptances are believed to be true, but there is little reason to think that one cannot believe things that one does not accept and accept things that one does not believe.

Philosophical viewpoints are a good example of the latter. For example, one might accept classical logic, rejecting intuitionistic logic, but not actually believe anything here. At the very least, a realistic assessment should deny knowledge of such propositions, and some reflective philosophers strive to believe only what they know to be true. They nonetheless accept certain philosophical claims, refusing to stymie their discipline by refusing to accept anything that they don't know to be true. If their hopes are realized, they accept what they do not believe.

Any psychology influenced by Freud will admit the possibility of beliefs in opposition to what one accepts. The process of therapy is supposed to make possible the discovery that the doxastic forces underlying behavior are different than the overt stories we tell ourselves about what we are doing and why we are doing it. In such cases, it would be possible to find out that what one accepts is in conflict with what one believes, where the beliefs in question are not readily transparent to casual reflection.

The distinction between beliefs and acceptances might offer a way out of the problem here for pluralists. Pluralists might claim that, though cognitive commitments are central to many religions, the commitments in question are not best conceived in terms of beliefs, but rather in terms of acceptances. They must admit, of course, that religions tend to speak rather uniformly of cognitive commitments in terms of belief and faith, but there is no reason to expect any great philosophical precision to the terminology in question. Characterizing religious commitments in terms of acceptance rather than belief may require some slight revision of actual religion, but not an objectionable sort of revision. In this regard, it is important to note that the line between respect for religion as it stands and revision is a vague one, since the boundaries of any particular religion are themselves not precise and reflective adherents of a religion often change it for the better. It is relatively easy to see that adherents of religions that require cognitive commitments could maintain orthodoxy while proposing that the kind of commitment in question is that of acceptance rather than

belief, so there is little reason to classify such a suggestion as requiring a revisionary attitude toward religion rather than a pluralistic one.

The advantage in the present context of emphasizing acceptance over belief for the pluralist is that acceptance is much more of a voluntary matter than is belief. What one accepts is more a matter of how one chooses to organize one's life, what claims to "go to bat for," which alternatives to argue against, and which stances to advocate both publicly and privately, all of which are obviously voluntary. Moreover, it is hard to see what objection particular religions might have to such a proposal. Consider traditional Christianity, for example. Though many religions use the language of belief to describe what is required for salvation, the point of such language is found in the contrasting state of unbelief. If a person accepts the claims of Christianity in the sense described above, they defend the faith, live by it (within the usual caveats about the compatibility of saving faith even in the face of continued displays of fallen human nature), and approach all of life from its perspective. The discovery of one whose commitments were of this nature, but who did not actually believe any of it, is not a possibility addressed in the theologies in question, but damnation for such would seem to be callous beyond belief.

Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that some particular religion, or version of a religion, would object to this pluralist ploy of substituting acceptance for belief. My claim, however, is that the pluralist can take some refuge in the distinction and that doing so does not automatically force one to become objectionably revisionistic about actual religion. In this way, a pluralist can show respect for actual religious practice while at the same time avoiding the unsavory result of succumbing to the Buridan's ass paradox. By emphasizing acceptance rather than belief, the pluralist can claim that one can adopt one religion over another in precisely the same way that the ass selects one bale from which to eat. The choice may be arbitrary, but arbitrariness in the sense in question is not incompatible with rationality.

To evaluate this suggestion, it is important to see its formal features. The idea is this. There's a difference between action and belief in that the former is voluntary and the latter is not (or at least can't be relied on to be). There is also a difference in the kind of arbitrariness tolerable in rational cases of each sort. In both cases, reasons don't have to be contrastive reasons, but one can't have rational beliefs without being in a position to

rule out known competing alternatives[12] whereas one can have rational actions even in the face of such alternatives. The hope involved in the pluralist's attempt to substitute acceptance for belief is that the latter normative difference supervenes on the former factual difference. That is, the hope is that *because* actions are voluntary and beliefs are not, rationality in the arena of action can be arbitrary in a way that it cannot be in the arena of belief.

This way of trying to rescue the pluralist from the problem arising from the Buridan's Ass Paradox is far from compelling, however. First, let me offer the reader the chance to share my own reaction that the explanation in question is utterly mysterious. According to this account, what *makes* rationality less restrictive in the domain of action than in the domain of belief is that voluntariness is present in the former but not in the latter. When such a suggestion is made, I experience perplexity. Why would one think this? How does the voluntariness point have the implications claimed? The point is far from obvious, and I don't see any plausibility to the claim at all. I hereby invite the reader to share in this perplexity.

Moreover, there is an alternative explanation to consider. If we think about the notion of rationality applying to various kinds of mental states as well as to actions, we may think in terms of direction of fit to carve a distinction among items rationally evaluable. For some such items, the direction of fit runs from world-to-item. The classic example here is belief: beliefs are supposed to represent the world as it is (in the sense that the goal of belief is truth), so the normative direction of fit runs from world to belief. The classic example of the other direction is desire: desires tell us how we want the world to be, not how it is, so the direction of fit runs from desire to world. Since actions function as the outward expression of inner items whose direction of fit runs from item to world (an expression of our wants, wishes, hopes, fears, and desires), actions too are best conceived in terms of item-to-world direction of fit.

If we use the language of connative versus cognitive items to describe this distinction, we can find an alternative to the above account in terms of voluntariness. Instead of claiming that the more voluntary an item happens to be, the less restrictive the demands of rationality on that item, we can

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[12] For an account of this notion of being in a position to rule out known competitors, see Peter Klein, "Closure Matters: Skepticism and Easy Knowledge," *Philosophical Issues* 14 (2004), pp. 165–184.

say that the less restrictive demands of rationality apply in the connative realm but not in the cognitive realm. This alternative explanation prevents the pluralist from escaping the problem arising from the Buridan's Ass Paradox by appeal to the distinction between acceptance and belief, since even though acceptance may be more voluntary than belief, it still falls on the cognitive side of the divide between the connative and the cognitive. For acceptance just as much as for belief, the appropriate direction of fit runs from world to item rather than the other way around.

It is important to note here that the notion of acceptance is not simply a behavioral notion. It, like the notion of belief itself, is assumed not to be susceptible to behavioral analysis. This point is important, for if it were explicable in this way, accepting the claims of a religion would involve no cognitive commitments at all. In such a case, replacing the notion of belief in religious commitments with the notion of acceptance would simply be the proposal that acting as if the claims in question are true is enough for sincere adherence to a religion, and such a proposal is surely too revisionist for a pluralist to adopt. It is thus crucial that, though acceptances explain some of our behavior, they are not reducible to it. Regarding this proposal concerning direction of fit, the experience of perplexity may be in order. To say that the direction of fit is what makes for greater or less restrictiveness regarding rationality is to say something every bit as mysterious and uncompelling as to insist on an explanation in terms of voluntariness. Neither suggestion comes accompanied by a feeling of insight or the satisfaction we experience when finally achieving understanding.

Let me be clear that the failure to be accompanied by these psychological phenomena does not show that either proposal is mistaken. The probative value of such points is much weaker than that here. But these points are relevant nonetheless, since they describe the kind of ideal explanation we seek regarding any phenomenon, and so the failure to obtain such an explanation here gives us some reason, however small, to continue wondering whether there is a more revealing explanation to be had.

If we extend our search for an explanation of variations in the restrictiveness of rationality beyond those that appeal either to voluntariness or direction of fit, I believe there is just such an explanation available. I think the correct story to be told is that the default setting for rationality is equally restrictive always and everywhere, but that this setting is only

a default setting rather than an unalterable one. The kind of rationality to which this point applies is the rationality of mental states and actions (though of course there are mental states, such as experiences, to which the notion does not apply). For each such item, there are at least three settings possible. For belief, for example, there is belief, disbelief, and withholding. For action, there is performing the action, performing a contrary action, and doing nothing. For connative states, such as desire, the story is similar to that of belief: there is desiring that a state of affairs obtain, desiring that the state of affairs not obtain, and being neutral regarding the obtaining of that state of affairs. We can thus identify these three possible settings as a positive setting, a neutral setting, and a negative setting.

In general, when the rationality-conferring factors present are equally weighted between the positive and negative settings, the rational setting is the neutral setting. That is the default position described above. But in certain cases, there can be a meta-reason present as to why the neutral setting is the worst option of all, as in the Buridan's Ass Paradox. Rationality here is understood teleologically, leaving open the possibility that a meta-reason is present for thinking that even though the positive and negative settings are equal as means to the goal in question, the neutral setting can be ruled out because it is so counterproductive to the goal in question. Thus, in cases of action in which delaying action to gather more information is not problematic, the fact that two competing actions are tied in terms of effectiveness at achieving the goal of well-being doesn't leave one free to perform either action and still be rational. The third, neutral setting wins out in such situations. But in cases where there is a meta-reason against the neutral setting, then the restrictive default setting must give way. The Buridan's Ass Paradox is just such a case, where the meta-reason in question is that adopting the neutral stance to gather more information results in starvation, which is as obviously contrary to the goal of well-being as anything can be. So the default restrictiveness built into the notion of rationality is overridden by this meta-reason.

It is an interesting question whether such a meta-reason could be found in a purely cognitive case involving belief. Such a reason would have to be a reason for thinking that the option of withholding was so contrary to the achievement of the epistemic goal that one should either believe or disbelieve in spite of having no good reason to favor either

view over the other. The possibility of such cases, however, appears to be undermined by the fact that the epistemic goal is dual in nature. It involves both getting to the truth and avoiding error, implying that the only meta-reason there could be for overriding the default restrictiveness of the notion of rationality would be a reason for thinking that failure to believe or disbelieve would undermine one's ability both to get to the truth and avoid error.

It is hard to imagine any possible situation in which there would be such a reason, and if so, we should expect the default setting of restrictiveness concerning rational belief to hold sway in every possible case. But perhaps there could be a meta-reason that shows that the default setting does not always hold sway. For reflective individuals, the question often arises whether to trust one's cognitive abilities to discern truth from error in a particular domain of inquiry. Such a question is one with answers in terms of degree of trust warranted, rather than only answers in terms of whether or not to trust. When the question of self-trust arises, the possibility of a paralyzing effect arises if we imagine the person unable to commit to some particular answer to the question of how much self-trust is appropriate. Suppose you assess the evidence for a given claim p as overwhelmingly positive, but you also claim to have no idea whether you are worthy of self-trust in assessing the truth-value of p. If your attitude was that you slightly overestimate the force of the evidence for claims such as p, you could still rationally accept p. If your attitude was that you are always wrong about such matters, confusing reasons for p with reasons against p, then you could rationally disbelieve p. But so long as you withhold on whether you are deserving of any trust at all about such matters, so long as you take the position that full neutrality on whether you are trustworthy is the best position to hold, you have eliminated all hope of achieving the epistemic goal. You are paralyzed, rationally speaking.

So perhaps any attitude you take would be epistemically preferable from a purely epistemic point of view to this situation of paralysis. Unlike the practical situation, however, you cannot resolve the paralysis simply by making a choice to believe or disbelieve. But you may be able to choose whether to accept or dis-accept, and in so doing, set in motion chains of causal influence that result in beliefs of various sorts, beliefs that are thereby rational or irrational in virtue of whether they are appropriate means to the epistemic goal.

I offer this example of self-trust, though, only as a possibility,[13] for nothing turns on the question of whether analogues of the Buridan's ass situation are possible in the cognitive sphere. If they are not possible, then the restrictive default setting of rationality can only be overridden in the practical sphere and not in the cognitive sphere. Even so, we will have an explanation of why rationality is less restrictive in some areas than in others without having to conclude that there are different notions of rationality at work in the two areas. It would be the same notion of rationality at work in both arenas, with the differences resulting from the impossibility of the existence of certain types of meta-reasons in the cognitive sphere. I myself am attracted to the idea that issues about self-trust show that such meta-reasons are possible in the cognitive sphere, but nothing turns on whether this idea is correct.

Conclusion

This account of the matter renders the appeal to the distinction between acceptance and belief impotent to save the pluralist from the difficulty caused by the Buridan's Ass Paradox. The fact that acceptance is voluntary doesn't take us any distance at all in showing that there is a rational resolution available to the pluralist who thinks that all religions are equally good. For to accept the claims of a religion is to accept them *as true*, and this the pluralist cannot rationally do except by abandoning his pluralism or corrupting it with revisionary tendencies toward actual religions.

There remains a residual feeling, however, that there is something that this pinning of the pluralist leaves out. It is the idea that mental states can be evaluated in terms of either the practical notion of rationality or the epistemic notion of rationality. All the above shows is that there is no epistemically rational way of escaping the problem raised for the pluralist by the Buridan's Ass Paradox, but it doesn't show that there is no practically rational way of escape. Since beliefs aren't voluntary, the fact that it would be practically rational to believe some religion or other can't eliminate the problem, since such features don't typically prompt

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[13] For extended discussion of the notion of self-trust and a defense of its centrality in the story of epistemic justification, see Keith Lehrer, *Self Trust: A Study of Reason, Knowledge and Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

belief. But since acceptance is voluntary, the practical considerations in question give one a practical reason to voluntarily accept some religion or other, and the pluralist can do that.

Though this point is correct, it ignores the way in which love of truth is central to religion. In Christianity, for example, the points about purity of heart and counsel against double-mindedness include alethic elements, so that engaging in religious practices while not doing so in virtue of the perceived truth of the view is a defect that needs to be overcome at some point in order for the promise of the beatific vision to be achieved. Given the centrality of such features of religion, the practical solution to the pluralists' dilemma is a solution adopted for the purpose of losing one's pluralist perspective in the process. It is thus a resolution of the dilemma only to the extent that it begins a process wherein the pluralist ceases to be one, for only in such a process can the great goods religion offers be appropriated. As such, it is not a pluralist solution to the dilemma, but rather a practical solution to the defect of finding oneself with pluralist views. A pluralist can escape the Buridan's ass problem for pluralism with a practical decision, but the solution will not be a solution to the problem for pluralism, but rather a potential way of getting out of the problem by taking steps to abandon one's pluralism. Such a solution is available in other ways as well, by evaluating the plausibility of the pluralist view itself and coming to see that it is false. But such a recommendation would not count as a solution to the Buridan's ass problem for pluralism, but rather a recommendation for how to avoid that problem by avoiding the pluralist views that generate the problem. As such, pluralism itself remains lost at sea, even though those who hope to become former pluralists need not despair.

THE DOUBLE-MOVEMENT MODEL OF FORGIVENESS IN BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN RITUALS

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Abstract. We offer a model of moral reform and regeneration that involves a wrong-doer making two movements: on the one hand, he identifies with himself as the one who did the act, while he also intentionally moves away from that self (or set of desires and intentions) and moves toward a transformed identity. We see this model at work in the formal practice of contrition and reform in Christian and Buddhist rites. This paper is part of a broader project we are undertaking on the philosophy of forgiveness.

Introduction

Many questions swirl around in the general vicinity of forgiveness. Can one have a duty to forgive someone? When might forgiveness be a virtue or vice? When does forgiveness conflict with justice? Must one confess and apologize if one is to receive forgiveness? In the course of a broader book project, we are developing what we are calling "the double-movement model" of forgiveness that will address these and other questions. This model draws from philosophical and religious analyses, historical examples, and literary sources. While we want our conceptions to be grounded in historical contexts, in the end, we wish to defend a normative position. Part of working toward a defensible analysis of forgiveness includes learning from forgiveness rituals and asking how they should inform a philosophy of forgiveness.

In this essay we focus on texts of confession and forgiveness from the Buddhist and Christian traditions. Forgiveness as understood and practiced in these texts and rituals will be set against the preliminary sketch of "the double-movement model" of forgiveness in part to test its viability as a model. This essay is thus an exploratory study to see if there are structural similarities in their respective conceptions of

confession and forgiveness. If there are differences, are those differ-ences substantive conceptually? Our tentative thesis is that while the general structure is similar in the Buddhist and Christian rituals and the texts considered here, i.e., both map well onto the double-movement model of forgiveness, the differences in emphasis that do appear are due chiefly to the radically different ontological commitments of the two traditions. Analysis of these rituals and texts on forgiveness suggests two formulations of the concept of forgiveness—*relational forgiveness* and *regenerative forgiveness*.

The double-movement model of forgiveness

First, consider the double-movement model of forgiveness. In brief, the model defends an analysis of forgiveness requiring both the one seeking forgiveness and the one offering forgiveness to perform a double-movement in terms of each person's (respective) self-identification. The one seeking forgiveness must return to and own the fault (confes-sion, authentic display of remorse, sorrow for the wrong committed), while at the same time moving from self-identification with the self who has committed the fault to a new self-identity which repudiates the self who commits such faults (a form of self-division). The new self-identification is a form of repentance which seeks reform and restitution. In a similar movement, the forgiver must recognize the identity of the self who has perpetrated the fault while seeing the guilty person in a new light—as capable of possessing a new self-identity. This is accomplished in part by an empathetic awareness on the part of the forgiver that one is capable of committing acts which would put oneself in need of forgiveness.

In passing we note that, of course, the full scope of this model may fail to be fulfilled in concrete instances in a number of ways. Confession may be made and forgiveness asked for, but the one harmed may not offer forgiveness. Forgiveness may be given even though there is no repentance. Or, forgiveness may be offered without the forgiver making the double-movement internally. The wrongdoer may ask for forgiveness without properly owning the fault and thus minimizing the significance of the wrong… and so on. While the full scope of the model may fail to be

fulfilled, we argue that where either the wrongdoer or the one wronged takes his or her part seriously, something good has been accomplished even though it is only a partial good to be sure.

Before examining Buddhist and then Christian forgiveness rituals, let us consider a challenge to our current project.

A Preliminary Worry

Consider a preliminary worry and puzzle about the nature and extent of forgiveness in Buddhism. One might object that the formulation of the double-movement model with its emphasis on self-identity and alterations in self-identity (self-division) is simply assuming too substantial a notion of selves to be applicable in Buddhism. One might ask, "Aren't we supposed to get past all that in Buddhism? What about emptiness?" And even more fundamentally, is forgiveness that central of an issue in Buddhism? One can check the indexes of many texts on Buddhism and not even find forgiveness and repentance listed. In fairly standard accounts of Buddhism we read statements like the following:

> The evil in man's life is man-made and, therefore, eradicable by man, without outside interference. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as original sin, no innate depravity, and no one is fore-ordained to be doomed. There is, likewise, no atonement and no forgiveness of sins, because there is no one who can forgive, and because a transgression, once committed, cannot be redeemed.[1]

Statements such as these suggest that our project here is completely misguided. And yet, in a recent book, His Holiness the Dalai Lama preaches forgiveness [in the context of discussing forgiveness and spiritual progress]:

> "It's [forgiveness] crucial. It's one of the most important things. It can change one's life. To reduce hatred and other destructive emotions, you must develop their opposites—compassion and kindness. If you have strong compassion, strong respect for others, then forgiveness is much easier. Mainly for this

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[1] G. P. Malalasekera, "The Status of the Individual in Theravada Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 14, No. 2 (1964): 152.

reason: I do not want to harm another. Forgiveness allows you to be in touch with these positive emotions. This will help with spiritual development."[2]

Elsewhere in the same work, he ties forgiveness to interdependence or codependent origination.[3] So, on the one hand, forgiveness is said to be non-existent in Buddhism; on the other hand it is tied to spiritual development in general and central Buddhist doctrines such as codependent origination in particular.

How to resolve this apparent difference? The Dalai Lama seems to be speaking of the role that forgiveness can play in one's own spiritual growth—not holding grudges and refraining from anger have positive effects on emotions and even physical health. This forgiveness is based on an awareness of the interdependence between oneself and the other.[4] This fits well with the double-movement model on the side of the forgiver. In agreement with Malalasekera, the forgiveness taught by the Dalai Lama affirms the emptiness of the self and the resulting generation of compassion due to an awareness of interdependence. Malalasekera assumes that forgiveness implies a substance view of selves and (perhaps) some type of ontological transaction. Since the law of karma with its causal effects must not be abrogated, there is no forgiveness for Malalasekera since such karmic outflows cannot be [magically] wiped away. This suggests perhaps two different core conceptions of forgiveness—relational forgiveness and regenerative forgiveness. We explicate these below.

A BUDDHIST EXAMPLE: *PRATIMOKSA*

Another approach to the preliminary worry is to note that forgiveness and reconciliation play central roles in early Buddhist rituals and texts. The *Pratimoksa*, the earliest set of rules for monastic discipline in Buddhism, was typically recited on days one and fifteen of the lunar calendar by the community of monks. While the oldest parts of the *Pratimoksa*

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[2] Dalai Lama, with Victor Chan, *The Wisdom of Forgiveness* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2004), 73.

[3] Dalai Lama, *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 111.

[4] See an example of this awareness of forgiveness as interdependence in the case of vandalism at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Boston in Richard Higgins, "Mindful Suffering," *Christian Century* 118.29 (October 24–31, 2001): 9–10.

text probably date from 500–450 B.C.E., the final form of some of its earliest versions can be dated to around 400 B.C.E.[5] It exists in variant forms in the various Buddhist sects and schools in India, Tibet, and China.[6] Roughly it contains a set of rules for proper living in monastic life, including stipulation of punishments for particular actions and formulae for confession, forgiveness, and restitution. The ritual recitation of the *Pratimoksa* twice monthly is a type of communal confession and affirmation. It begins with praise, followed by instructions from the abbot or leader of the ritual as to how responses are to be made when various categories of rules are recited (we are quoting here from the "The Pratimoksa Sutra of the Mahasamghikas," in Prebish):

> O Venerable Ones, I will recite the Pratimoksa Sutra. I will speak, and you should listen to it obediently and aptly, and reflect on it. For whom there may be a fault, let him confess it. If there is no fault, [one] should be silent. By being silent, I will know the Venerable Ones are completely pure. Just as, O Venerable Ones, there is an explanation for a monk questioned individually, so it will be proclaimed in this or that form in the assembly of monks up to the third time. For whatever monk, being questioned in this way up to the third time in the assembly of monks, who does not reveal an existing fault which is remembered, there is the speaking of a deliberate lie. The speaking of a deliberate lie has been declared by the Blessed One to be an obstructive condition. Therefore an existing fault should be revealed by a fallen monk, remembering [the offense and] hoping for purity. Having revealed it, there will be comfort for him, but by not revealing it, there is none.[7]

In general, after each category, the monks will be asked three times if they have anything to confess; silence will be taken to mean that they are all pure. The categories include precepts whose violation requires expulsion, suspension, and other consequences, confession and forfeiture, confession and absolution, and so on. Expulsion from the community

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[5] Prebish, Charles S. "The Pratimoksa Puzzle: Fact versus Fantasy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol. 94, No. 2 (1974): 171.

[6] Much useful information about confession and repentance groups (including revivals of *Pratimoksa* practice in China) can be found in Wu, Pei-Yi, "Self-Examination and Confession of Sins in Traditional China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* Vol. 39, No. 1 (1979), 5–38.

[7] Charles S. Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 48, 50.

of monks is the punishment for breaking any of the first four teachings which the text summarizes (after more detailed description) as "(1) sexual intercourse, (2) taking what is not given, (3) slayer of one having human form, and (4) asserting that one may have superhuman faculties."[8] We note parenthetically that the Dalai Lama in an interview with Victor Chan recorded in the book *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*, when questioned about his own spiritual experiences, takes great pains to make sure that he is not understood to be claiming more than exactly what he says. He interjects that he would have to stop being a monk if he were to tell a lie about his spiritual experiences. This appears to be a straightforward reference to (4) in the *Pratimoksa*.[9]

After the initial four teachings, a set of thirteen are given where faults in these areas can result in temporary suspension from the community. The last four (of this set of thirteen) allow for admonitions up to three times to bring the monk at fault to the state of confession. Faults in this set of thirteen include (9) falsely accusing a brother monk of committing one of the four initial offenses which are punishable by expulsion. At the end of this set of thirteen, the leader recites the typical formula of asking three times if all are pure, and the monks assert by their silence that they are pure in this category as well. However, due to their special interest, we cite briefly several comments made by the leader just before the three-fold purity call is made (using a more modern translation of the *Pratimoksa* based on a Chinese version of the text):

> If One of this Sangha has broken these Dharmas, willfully concealing it, such a one should be placed in isolation for a period equal to the period of concealment; willingly or unwillingly should such a one be so confined. When the isolation period is ended, let such a one spend six nights undergoing joyful confession, repentance and reflection. When these six nights are completed, then with clear mind such a one should be summoned and, in accord with this Dharma, should be absolved. Twenty Pure Ones of this Sangha may absolve such a one; however, if there is but one less than twenty, there is no absolution and those who would conduct absolution with less that [sic] the full number shall be called blameworthy. (*A Pratimoksa Sutra for Western Lands*).

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[8] Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 52.
[9] Dalai Lama, *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 185.

At a number of points, elements within the ritual of the *Pratimoksa* line up with the double-movement model of forgiveness. From the side of the one needing forgiveness, a vital element in this ritual is confession (owning that it is you engaging in the wrongful conduct). Confession in itself, in this context, is an indication that one wants to rejoin the community (hence a self-identification with a self who will no longer perpetrate the fault). Confession is even described as "joyful" which can be construed as indicating that the identification with the new self signals a radical shift.

An intriguing aspect of the punishment phase is that one is to be confined for a length of time equal to the time of wrongful concealment. Perhaps the insight here is that the length of time of concealment corresponds to how firmly one has identified with the self who is guilty of the fault. An equal length of time may be necessary to rid one's thinking of that self-identification and formulate a new self-identification as one who rejects such things. (Parenthetically, note that Dante has some of the late repentant souls in ante-purgatory also waiting for a length of time equal to the time on earth during which they failed to make confession (make their peace with the church), before they are allowed to start climbing Mt. Purgatory).[10]

These passages do not focus as much on the side of the one who forgives. However, we note in passing the communal emphasis—twenty monks must be present and agree for absolution to take place. It appears that it is the monks themselves who perform the rite of absolution. In this context, a community of monks (not an individual monk) can be identified as the forgiver in the double-movement model.

One curiosity in the *Pratimoksa* ritual is that nothing in the text indicates that actual confessions are expected within the ritual. For example, even though the monks are asked three times if they have faults at the end of each section, the text has no provision within the ritual for how the ritual is to go if someone were to confess. This line of thought might be easily dismissed as an argument from silence, except that there is a brief passage near the beginning of the *Pratimoksa* which describes all those assembled as pure ("And here no one is unordained, disposed to passion,

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[10] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*, Translated by Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 1981), Canto IV.127–132.

a matricide, a patricide, the murderer of an arhant, a schism-maker in the samgha…")[11]. So, one might characterize the *Pratimoksa* ritual as a confession and forgiveness ritual which is a seal of what has already been accomplished prior to the ritual. Prebish offer historical support for this interpretation noting that the Buddha once refused to take part in a *Pratimoksa* ritual because an impure monk was present.[12]

We now shift to an example from the Christian tradition.

A Christian example: *The Rule of St. Benedict*

The Rule of St. Benedict,[13] dating from the 6th century C.E., is still followed widely and is the model for many later monastic rules (although it itself is drawn in part from earlier rules).[14] Before offering several passages from *The Rule of St. Benedict*, consider two chapters which focus on faults and what is to be done about them:

> Chapter 23: Excommunication for faults
> If a brother is found to be stubborn, disobedient, proud or a murmurer, or at odds with the Holy Rule, or scornful of his elders' directions, he should be admonished by his superiors—in accordance with the Lord's injunction—twice in private. If even then he does not make amends, let him be reproved in public. However, if there is still no change, he shall be subject to excommunication, if he understands what kind of punishment this is. If he is obstinate he shall undergo corporal punishment.

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[11] Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic* Discipline, 46.

[12] Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 25.

[13] *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Translated by Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

[14] There is one difficulty with using *The Rule of St. Benedict* as an example. While it is a close comparison to the *Pratimoksa* in that it contains rules for monastic life, perhaps it lacks a point of comparison at the ritual level. While it has often been recited and studied in monasteries (indeed Chapter 66 instructs that the *Rule* is to be read frequently in the community), the recitation of the *Rule* itself has not, as far as we know, functioned as a rite of confession and forgiveness. It does describe how confession is to be encouraged and forgiveness effected. For a more complete *ritual* of forgiveness, one might need to look elsewhere.

Chapter 24: The measure of excommunication
The severity of excommunication as a punishment depends upon the nature
of the violation, which is to be judged by the abbot. For minor faults a brother
should be kept from eating at the common table. This exclusion means that
he shall not intone a psalm or antiphon or read a lesson in the oratory, until
he makes his amends. His meals will be taken alone, after the others have
finished. If the brothers eat at the sixth hour, he will do so at the ninth; if
they eat at the ninth, he will eat in the evening. He will continue to behave
like this until he has been granted pardon by means of some suitable act of
atonement. (*The Rule of St. Benedict*, 70–71).

Here again, aspects of the double-movement model of forgiveness are
clearly present. In Chapter 23, confession (owning up to being the self
who has perpetrated the fault) is so necessary that one may be admonished
three times, placed outside the fellowship of the community, and even
suffer corporal punishment if one fails to make confession. Other passages
(not quoted above) illustrate the empathetic understanding of those on
the forgiving side since they are to treat the guilty party with care and
concern as if the latter were sick, with the implication that we are all sick
at times (Chapter 27).

Elsewhere (Chapter 13), the *Rule* states that Lauds and Vespers are
to end with the Lord's Prayer, specifically so that the monks will have
the injunction to forgive on their minds. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we
forgive those who trespass against us." To be forgiven one must be active
in forgiving others. This brief phrase ties together tightly the forgiver and
the one forgiven in the double-movement model.

The *Rule* also contains instructions for public penance when late
for services (Chapter 43), as well as prostrations for particular faults.
These are clearly designed to aid the one at fault in developing a new
identity (these acts of penance/punishment are necessary so that the
monk "will fare better in the future," or "until he reforms and makes
satisfaction"—Chapter 43).

Aspects of the double-movement model are clearly displayed
here as well. We now return to some fundamental conceptions of
forgiveness.

Relational Forgiveness and Regenerative Forgiveness

Might it be possible that in both traditions, there is an awareness of two possible meanings of forgiveness? The communal necessity of forgiveness might fall under the heading of *relational forgiveness*. All must be well between members of the community for the community to function. Rituals of forgiveness are necessary to insure the communal bond. In addition, the examples we looked at add something to the double-movement model. This concept of relational forgiveness implies that the new identity to be owned by the one in need of forgiveness is not merely a morally purified identity; it is also a communal identity. ("I am not simply seeing myself as one who is pure with regard to X; I am a member of the samgha which includes that I am pure with regard to X.")

On the other hand, the appeal to a concept of forgiveness where deeper ontological change takes place in the order of things might be called *regenerative forgiveness*, for here some change in status is imputed to the individual or understood to have happened in the individual. Both traditions, in the examples we have looked at, focus on relational forgiveness. Some Buddhist commentators expressly reject regenerative forgiveness given their understanding of the (non-substantial) nature of things and the law of karma.[15] The comment by the Dalai Lama noted earlier focuses on forgiveness as part of ongoing spiritual work that one does for oneself—ridding oneself of hateful thoughts and intentions. He says little about the effect this has on the one being forgiven. Even in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, where a theology of regenerative forgiveness is affirmed, the two seem to be separated—one may fail to achieve relational forgiveness but still hold out hope for regenerative forgiveness due to the mercy of God (see Chapter 29 on readmitting brothers who leave the community—"If he leaves again, he may re-enter a third time. After that he will be forever forbidden re-entry" (*The Rule of St. Benedict*, 74). Similarly, in terms of relational forgiveness, the *Pratimoksa* also has recourse to expulsion.

In later Buddhist contexts, regenerative forgiveness (perhaps suitably redefined as karmic changes for the individual outside of the individual's

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[15] Further discussion of comparative puzzles related to karma and grace can be found in Stephen T. Davis' "Karma and Grace," in *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, and Gerald O'Collins, SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 235–253.

stream of karmic outflows) can be entertained through the compassion of bodhisattvas such as Amida in Pure Land Buddhism. Of course even in this example, the regenerative forgiveness is at one remove from change in the ultimate karmic order, since the bodhisattva must have accrued enough karma to overcome the negative karma of the one needing forgiveness.[16]

Tentative Conclusions

Comparisons of the Buddhist and Christian examples reveal some striking similarities and confirmation of the double-movement model of forgiveness.

First, both have the optimal case of confession (the first stage in self-division): the *Pratimoksa* continually, throughout the ritual, gives the option for confession, while *The Rule of St. Benedict* describes a number of ways to encourage confession for the reform of the brother.

Second, both entertain the idea of placing the guilty party in isolation, perhaps to encourage and cement self-division, or the use of punishment to bring the guilty party to a place where self-division is contemplated as a live option. In both traditions, separation from the community is a significant punishment (note especially *The Rule of St. Benedict* on eating at table). Separation from community, a forced self-division from one's identity as a member, in good standing, of the community, places the focus on the guilty party as disruptive of the community and highlights that this disruption must be addressed before the individual in question and the community can be whole again.

Third, as noted above, one feature of the punishment phase in the *Pratimoksa* dictates that the length of confinement is to be equal to the length of time the fault was concealed. *The Rule of St. Benedict* hints at

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[16] The Eighteenth Vow of Dharmakara (who becomes Amida Buddha) in *The Larger Sutra on Amitayus* (also knows as *The Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra*) makes the need for accrual of merit clear: „If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and think of me even ten times should not be born there, may I not attain perfect enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five grave offenses and abuse the Right Dharma" (*The Three Pure Land Sutras*, 16). When sentient beings call on his name, Amida is able to preserve the law of karma by using his surplus merit to offset their damaging karmic outflows so that he can take them to the Pure Land at their death.

something similar; even everyday mistakes are to be more severely pun-
ished if they are hidden (Chapter 46). While the double-movement model
of forgiveness asserts that a self-identification and self-division must take
place, the rituals studied here make clear that the movement may not be
so simple, that it may need some external persuasion, and that it may take
time to solidify the new self-identification. This has been instructive.

Fourth, in comparing Buddhist and Christian thought on *regenerative
forgiveness*, one expects to see a difference in emphasis given the differ-
ent ontological commitments. In the forms of Buddhism which do not
recognize "other power," the notion of regeneration seems less appropriate
since any improvement is made by oneself (even as one's sense of self
diminishes). One might prefer to speak of self-correction. In the forms
of Buddhism which do recognize or appeal to "other power" (*tariki*),
such as Pure Land Buddhism, a difference with Christianity might still
be noted given that Amida Buddha has to have accrued enough karmic
merit to overcome the negative karmic outflows of any person who calls
on his name with faith. Here the "regeneration" is a re-direction of karmic
streams. So, historically Pure Land was the "easy path" for those unable
or unwilling to attempt the traditional (long series of rebirths) method
of achieving enlightenment in earlier forms of Buddhism. However,
Amos Yong has suggested that even here, the parallel with Christian
regenerative forgiveness may be closer than appears at first sight, since
in Christian thought we have "the Pauline idea that the second Adam
has to accomplish what the first Adam failed to do, which is to live that
perfect holy life, and it is this life (the holy karma) which enables Jesus
to be the sacrificial lamb through whom regenerative forgiveness is made
available to others (those laboring under the negative karma of the first
Adam)" (Yong, personal communication, January 9, 2006).

This has been only an initial exploration into forgiveness rituals. We
welcome suggestions of other rituals to be studied and insights into how
to make their analyses more fruitful, as we work toward a comprehensive
inter-disciplinary philosophy of forgiveness.[17]

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[17] Paul Reasoner presented this paper at the Ritual Studies Group and Ethics Section
meeting at the American Academy of Religion (November 2005) and at the Central Division
Meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers (Union University, TN, April 2008). Both
Reasoner and Taliaferro are grateful to comments from many at those sessions, and particularly
thank William LaFleur (responding at the AAR session), Robert Roberts, and Amos Yong.

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THE GUILTY MIND

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Abstract. The doctrine of mens rea can be expressed in this way: MRP: If A is culpable for performing φ, then A performs φ intentionally in circumstances in which it is impermissible to perform φ. The Sermon on the Mount suggests the following principle: SMP: If A intends to perform φ in circumstances in which it would be impermissible for A to perform φ, then A's intending to perform φ makes A as culpable as A would be were A to perform φ. MRP and SMP are principles representative of intentionalism, a family of views that emphasizes the importance of intention to judgments about culpability. This essay examines an intentionalist's defense of MRP with respect to lying, strict criminal liability, and the distinction between intention and foreseeability, along with a defense of SMP with respect to failed attempts, and self-defense.

Consider two passages that are the focus of this paper.

When Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, turns his attention to the commandment against adultery, he amplifies it by saying that "everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28).

It is a time-honored principle in the criminal law that *actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*, an act does not make [its agent] guilty unless the mind be guilty. Call this the *mens rea* principle.

Suppose one interprets "with lust" in Jesus' pronouncement as signaling the presence of an intention to commit adultery. Then, even if the lustful agent were never to act on the intention (for lack of opportunity, say), he would not escape a charge of guilt; he would have a guilty mind. Suppose further that Jesus' pronouncement generalizes, that for any kind of wrongdoing, φ, to intend to φ is already to do something for which one is culpable. Intention can be sufficient for culpability.

According to the *mens rea* principle, a person is not legally liable for her action if she did not intend to do what she did. (Cases of criminal negligence and reckless behavior provide counterexamples to the principle.

No harm will be done, however, if we set them aside.) The *mens rea* principle has its roots in common-sense morality. Your believing that I trod clumsily but accidentally on your sore foot would provoke one set of reactions; your believing that I did it intentionally, quite another. Intention can be necessary for culpability.

Together, then, the Sermon on the Mount and the *mens rea* principle make a strong case for the importance of intention to judgments of culpability. But importance comes in degrees, as do notions of intention. As a result there can be different versions of *intentionalism*, a family of views that lays stress on the significance of intention in assessments of culpability. In what follows I shall present a robust version of intention-alism championed by a philosopher, let us call him Aurel, who takes both the *mens rea* principle and the Sermon on the Mount seriously. A few preliminary remarks are in order to describe the general contours of Aurel's position.

Sometimes to say that a person acted intentionally is to say nothing more than that she did not act accidentally.[1] Aurel's notion of acting intentionally is more robust than that. To act intentionally is to act as the result of a deliberative exercise that takes beliefs and desires as inputs and yields a decision as output. Thus Aurel's conception of acting intention-ally supports the following conditional concerning intending to φ: If A intends to φ then A will φ if the opportunity arises.[2] Aurel is willing to concede that phenomenologically the decision-making exercise can seem to the agent to take place instantaneously. What is important to him is a kind of logical, not temporal, priority, namely, that the analysis of acting intentionally requires specification of beliefs and desires. For this reason, if we suppose that to act willingly or voluntarily is simply to do what one wants to be doing, Aurel distinguishes acting willingly from acting intentionally. Many actions are performed both willingly and intentionally, but not all are. I surrender my wallet to the mugger intentionally but not willingly. The nicotine-depleted smoker might light up willingly but nonetheless "absent-mindedly."

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[1] Cf. T. M. Scanlon, "Intention and Permissibility," *The Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 74 (2000): 306.

[2] Further refinement of the conditional would build in a requirement that A believe that the opportunity is not immensely unlikely. I cannot seriously intend to win the Powerball lottery.

With this understanding of intention as resolving-to-do-should-opportunity-arise, Aurel understands the *mens rea* principle and Matthew 5:28 (generalized) in the following ways, respectively,

> **MRP** If A is culpable for performing φ, then A performs φ intentionally in circumstances in which it is impermissible to perform φ.
> **SMP** If A intends to perform φ in circumstances in which it would be impermissible for A to perform φ, then A's intending to perform φ makes A as culpable as A would be were A to perform φ.

Aurel takes **MRP** and **SMP** to be principles concerning the appraisal of an agent's performance, not a principle about the rightness or wrongness of actions performed. The two principles are silent about what makes it impermissible for A to perform φ. If it helps, you can imagine that acts are impermissible if they fail to maximize happiness, or are not validated by the Categorical Imperative. Aurel is apt to favor the view that acts are impermissible if they contravene a divine command, but that is a topic for another paper.

In order to get a full sense of the robustness of Aurel's intentionalism, we need to see how he uses it to criticize moral and legal practices that deviate from adherence to **MRP** and **SMP**. In what follows I present three kinds of case that test Aurel's allegiance to **MRP**, namely, Lying, Strict Criminal Liability, and Intention and Foreseeability. I will then present two kinds of case to which **SMP** has application.

Lying

The first test for Aurel's intentionalism is provided by the phenomenon of lying. When asked to say what a lie is, most people will agree that a lie is a false statement that the speaker believes to be false. Both conditions seem necessary. In telling you the truth that St. Paul is the capital of Minnesota I have not lied to you even if I believe that Minnesota's capital is Minneapolis. And if I sincerely tell you that Brasilia is the capital of Brazil, when in fact Brazil's capital is São Paulo, although I might misinform you, I have not lied. Further reflection will lead many people to think that the two conditions are not sufficient. That is, there

are cases in which A tells B something that is false and that A believes to be false, but in which A has not thereby lied to B. Examples: A tells B a joke—"So, space aliens abducted Dick Cheney last week . . ."; A recites the line, "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" while auditioning for a production of *Hamlet*. What these cases suggest is a third condition, something to the effect that a lie has to be told in a context in which truth-telling is the norm (and clearly the telling of jokes and the reciting of scripts are not such contexts).

Aurel is happy enough to accept these three conditions, but, given his intentionalism, he does not regard them as jointly sufficient. Consider the following cases:

Devotion: Francesca protests Paolo's innocence to Paolo's brother and her husband, Gianciotto. In fact, Francesca has been sleeping with Paolo. Moreover, Francesca knows that Gianciotto knows about the couple's infidelity; thus that her protestation does not fool Gianciotto as to the facts. The context of the announcement is a context in which truth-telling is the norm. The point of Francesca's protestation is to give Paolo enough time to escape.

Not Guilty: Grimesby pleads Not Guilty at his arraignment before the judge, even though Grimesby knows that he committed the crime. Because his participation in the crime was recorded on videotape that has been aired repeatedly on the local television stations, Grimesby does not imagine that the judge or anyone else in the court believes that he is not guilty. He simply takes his plea to be a step necessary to obtaining a trial.

By Aurel's lights neither Francesca nor Grimesby has lied. Why not? Because neither had an intention to deceive anyone. According to Aurel, a fourth condition necessary to pin down the notion of lying is that the speaker must intend to deceive at least some members of the audience by means of what the speaker has said.[3] Now Aurel's addition will not be allowed to pass muster without an inspection. Some might try to handle **Devotion** and **Not Guilty** without the addition, either by claiming that a lie has been made, irrespective of the agent's intention, or by claiming that the context of utterance is not a context governed by a norm of

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[3] For a recent endorsement of this condition, see Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 96.

truth-telling. The latter tactic might be deployed with regard to **Not Guilty**. "A judicial arraignment," a critic might allege, "is just not a setting in which one expects a defendant to speak the truth. Grimesby's plea is not a declaration having a truth value. It is more like a password that he must utter to proceed to the next stage of the legal process." Notice that Aurel *can* agree that arraignments are exceptions to the assumption of truth-telling. But he *need* not agree. Is the critic making an empirical observation about people's attitudes towards arraignments? Or is the critic's claim rather that there is something constitutive about arraignments that exempts them from the norm? And what will the critic say of the case of the defendant who pleads Guilty? These are questions for the critic to answer, not Aurel. For all that the critic has said, Aurel can and does maintain that *whether or not* arraignments presuppose truth-telling, Grimesby has not lied, because he lacked an intention to deceive.

The critic's tactic is less plausible in **Devotion**. There is a norm of truth-telling when the audience is one's spouse. So let us consider a critic who says that contrary to Aurel's claim, Francesca lied. This critic says: "I grant you that Francesca's primary aim was to buy time for Paolo, but her means of doing that consisted in telling a lie, directly about Paolo and indirectly about her own involvement with Paolo. The context presupposed truthfulness, and Francesca exploited that presupposition in her utterances." Aurel can acquiesce in much of what the critic says, except, of course, for the assertion that Francesca lied. To be sure, depending on how we embellish the story, it might be that Francesca's protestation is in service of a grander plot to assassinate Gianciotto. There is nothing amiss about inquiring skeptically into Francesca's motivation. But, Aurel will insist, it is one thing to impute a base motive to an action, and another thing to classify an action as a lie. It is tempting to make the inference from "basely motivated linguistic performance" to "lie." We should resist the temptation.

Aurel supposes, then, that **Devotion** and **Not Guilty**, properly understood, count in favor of requiring an intent to deceive clause in the characterization of a lie. But might there not be other cases of verbal actions in which it is undeniable that the agent lied even though the agent had no intention to deceive? Thomas Carson has designed two such cases to show that the intent to deceive condition is not essential to lying. Let us call the first one **Craven Witness**:

Suppose that I witness a crime and clearly see that a particular individual committed the crime. Later, the same person is accused of the crime and, as a witness in court, I am asked whether or not I saw the defendant commit the crime. I make the false statement that I did not see the defendant commit the crime, for fear of being harmed or killed by him. It does not necessarily follow that I intend that my false statements deceive anyone. (I might hope that no one believes my testimony and that he is convicted in spite of it.) Deceiving the jury is not a means to preserving my life. Giving false testimony is necessary to save my life, but deceiving others is not; the deception is merely an unintended "side effect." I do not intend to deceive the jury in this case, but it seems clear that my false testimony would constitute a lie.[4]

The second one we can call **Cheating Student**:

Suppose that a college Dean is cowed whenever he fears that someone *might* threaten a law suit and has a firm, but unofficial, policy of never upholding a professor's charge that a student cheated on an exam unless the student confesses in writing to having cheated. The Dean is very cynical about this and believes that students are guilty *whenever* they are charged. A student is caught in the act of cheating on an exam by copying from a crib sheet. The professor fails the student for the course and the student appeals the professor's decision to the Dean who has the ultimate authority to assign the grade. The student is privy to information about the Dean's *de facto* policy and, when called before the Dean, he (the student) affirms that he didn't cheat on the exam. . . . The student says this on the record in an official proceeding and thereby warrants the truth of statements he knows to be false. He intends to avoid punishment by doing this. He may have no intention of deceiving the Dean that he didn't cheat.[5]

Consider first **Craven Witness**. Carson claims that the lying witness does not intend to deceive *the jury*. That is not enough to show that intent to deceive is inessential to lying. Suppose that Riff and Bernardo are on their way to the local numbers parlor to lay down a few illegal bets. They are accosted by Officer Krupke, who wants to know what they are doing. Riff tells Krupke that he and Bernardo are going to church. Riff lies, intending to deceive Krupke, not Bernardo. It is no part of a plausible intent to deceive condition that one must intend to deceive

⁴ Thomas L. Carson, "The Definition of Lying," *Noûs* 40 (2006): 289.
⁵ Carson, „The Definition of Lying", 290.

every member of one's audience. From the way in which **Craven Witness** is described, it appears that there is at least one person who the witness intends to deceive about what he saw, namely, the defendant. Let us make it explicit, then, on Carson's behalf, that the witness knows that the defendant knows that the witness saw the defendant commit the crime. Aurel can still demur from the claim that the witness does not intend to deceive the jury, by invoking the distinction between acting intentionally and acting willingly. Aurel can claim that it is more accurate to say that the witness does not willingly deceive the jury, but does so, nonetheless, intentionally.

Now on to **Cheating Student**. Carson claims about this case both that the student lies and that the student has no intention to deceive anyone. But notice the context in which the case is embedded. The student began a project of deception when he cheated on the exam, a project in service of the goal of getting a higher grade. He could have terminated the project by not appealing his professor's decision to the Dean. Aurel agrees that the student's warranted statement is a lie, but insists that it *is* intended to deceive, by furthering the deceptive project that began with the cheating. We can call the principle to which Aurel appeals the Furtherance of Deception Principle:

> **FDP** If a statement is made with the intention to further a project of deception, then the statement is made with the intention to deceive.

Note that "the intention to deceive" in the consequent of **FDP** need not be an intention regarding the content of the statement picked out in **FDP**'s antecedent. A *true* statement can satisfy **FDP**: deception need not confine itself to the false. It might be that A's long-range intention is to lie to B about some sordid episode in A's past. In order to gain B's trust, and thus to set B up for accepting the falsehood, A reveals to B a whole series of *truths* about A's past. The true revelations that A thus makes qualify under **FDP** as statements made with the intention to deceive. Of course the intention to deceive in the case of the true revelations is not directed at the content of A's statements. Here it is instructive to compare Aurel with Bernard Williams. When Williams defines the notion of a lie, he says that it is "an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, which is made

with the intention to deceive the hearer with regard to that content."[6] Let us adopt Williams's idiom, but add the requirements that the speaker's assertion must *be* false and be made in a context in which truth-telling is the norm. Finally, let us blend in the upshot of **FDP**. Aurel can then say that

> **LIE** A lie is an assertion made in a context in which truth-telling is the norm, whose content is false, which the speaker believes to be false, and which the speaker makes with the intention either to deceive at least one of the hearers with regard to that content or to further a project of deception undertaken by the speaker.

According to Carson, **Cheating Student** is a case of lying without intent to deceive. By Aurel's lights, intentional deception is still implicated essentially. I suggest that, at a minimum, **LIE** is a serious contender for an adequate definition of lying. Given the prominent role that it assigns to intention, **LIE** allows for the creation of a special case of **MRP**:

> **MRP: Lie** If A is culpable for lying, then A makes an assertion in a context in which truth-telling is the norm, whose content is false, which A believes to be false, and which A makes with the intention either to deceive at least one of the hearers with regard to that content or to further a project of deception undertaken by A, in circumstances in which it is impermissible for A to make the assertion.

Finally, we should note that **LIE** is an attempt to depict what a lie *is*. It is aimed at determining whether a person in a particular situation has lied. **LIE** is silent on the normative question raised by the last clause of **MRP: Lie**, namely, under what circumstances lying is impermissible. It is open to Aurel, for example, to take the hard line that there are no circumstances in which lying is permissible. But for now let us leave him content to argue for the correctness of **LIE** and **MRP: Lie**.

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6 Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 96.

Strict Criminal Liability

Imagine the following scenario: Perry the lawyer has been approached by Cheatley, who wants Perry to defend him against a charge of murder. "Who is the victim?" Perry asks.

"Somebody named Vicky. I forget her last name; I never met her."

"Then how did you kill—let me rephrase that—how is it that Vicky met her demise?"

"It began when she opened a mailing I sent…"

"Oh, dear, a letter bomb. Courts take a dim view of people who send letter bombs. We'd better go for an insanity defense."

"No, that's not what happened at all. Vicky was an agent for the Internal Revenue Service. When she opened my tax return, she realized quickly that it was fraudulent. That realization gave her a fatal heart attack. So I've been charged with her murder."

The scenario is not as farfetched as one might imagine. First, filing a fraudulent tax return is a felony. So Cheatley was engaged in felonious activity when he filed his return. Second, Cheatley's filing the return brought about Vicky's death: had he not filed the return, she would not have had her heart attack.[7] Were Perry to take the case, he would argue that there is a huge gap between intending to defraud the government and intending to kill an IRS agent, claiming truthfully that Cheatley did harbor the first intention but not the second, and further, that had Cheatley known that his fraud would result in someone's death, he would have abandoned his intention to defraud.

Depending on the venue in which the case is to be tried, Perry will find his argument facing greater or less resistance. Many states in the United States have *felony-murder laws*, laws which maintain that if someone is killed in the course of an attempt to commit a felony or to flee from a felony, all accomplices to the felony can be charged with murder. Felony-murder laws are the most dramatic members of a class of *strict criminal liability laws*, items of legislation that criminalize certain kinds of behavior in certain circumstances irrespective of the agent's intentions. In both wording and precedent, different states apply the notion

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[7] I do not believe that the truth of the counterfactual conditional is sufficient to impute causal agency. Holding all other factors constant, Vicky might have had her heart attack whether or not Cheatley filed his fraudulent return.

of a felony-murder differently. But would any state sustain a conviction of Cheatley on charges of first-degree homicide?

Probably not. But there are actual cases that come surprisingly—some would say disturbingly—close to Cheatley's. In *People v. Hickman*[8] the Illinois Supreme Court upheld a lower court's finding that the defendant was guilty of murder as a result of an unsuccessful burglary attempt at a liquor warehouse. The police had the warehouse under surveillance at night. As Hickman and two accomplices exited the warehouse, the police closed in. The three burglars fled. In the ensuing confusion one police officer mistook an armed police detective for one of the burglars. The officer shot the detective, killing him. There was no evidence that Hickman was armed before, during, or after the burglary. It does not take excessive charity to suppose that had Hickman believed that his burglary would lead to someone's death, he would have abandoned the burglary. The relevant part of Illinois's felony-murder statute states that "(a) A person who kills an individual without lawful justification commits murder if, in performing the acts which cause the death … (3) [h]e is attempting or committing a forcible felony other than voluntary manslaughter."[9] One might be surprised to learn that Illinois regards burglary as a "forcible felony," especially when compared to burglary's more violent sibling, armed robbery. But surely even under Illinois's expansive conception of a forcible felony, fraudulent tax filing does not qualify. Nonetheless, *People v. Hickman* suggests that *People v. Cheatley* might be closer to legal reality than we had hitherto expected.

It is easy to anticipate some of Aurel's reaction to strict criminal liability laws in general and felony-murder laws in particular. Strict liability laws flout the *mens rea* principle by dispensing with the intentionality requirement. Felony-murder legislation abuses the well-entrenched notion of murder by promoting some palpably unintentional homicides to the rank of first-degree homicides. Aurel campaigns for a conception of murder that respects the *mens rea* principle:

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[8] 59 Ill. 2d 89 (1974). Another salient case is *People v. Fuller*, 89 Cal. App. 3d 618 (1978).

[9] Ill. Rev. Stat. 1971, ch. 38, sec. 9–1(a)(3).

MRP: Murder If A is culpable for murder, then A kills some person intentionally in circumstances in which it is impermissible for A to kill that person.

There is more to be said than this. For an intentionalist like Aurel, felony-murder laws cry out for justification. So let us imagine a defender of their propriety offering the following rationale:

"The defense I offer is a defense that is relative to the basic legal structure of a society. Different civil societies exhibit different patterns of response to behavior they regard as criminal. These patterns typically embody any number of historical accidents. Once embodied, the patterns take on a life of their own. Entrenchment can set in, in the name of evenhandedness and predictability; think of the importance attached to *stare decisis*. Working against universal entrenchment are social pressures to dislodge legally ensconced practices now believed to be wrong. The result is that any human society's system of criminal law is apt to be a medley of vagariously assembled doctrines. Otto von Bismarck is supposed to have said: 'Laws are like sausages. It is better not to see them being made.' The point is that like sausages, human laws *are* made by human beings with all their foibles.

"Yet all these different patterns are recognizable attempts to provide security for citizens by punishing behavior that threatens their safety. As such, much of the criminal law is directed against behavior that we all regard as seriously morally wrong. But sometimes legislators find themselves having to achieve a balance among competing goals, each of which has warrant. For example, American jurisdictions place a high premium on the presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings. The presumption places the burden of proof on the prosecution and, in criminal cases, the standard of proof is high, 'beyond a reasonable doubt.' Adherence to the presumption of innocence results in an asymmetrical, adversarial trial dynamic, in which the prosecution's efforts are aimed at proving guilt while the defense's task is to induce reasonable doubt, chiefly by rebutting parts of the prosecution's evidence. Subscription to the presumption of innocence is optional: some other countries that have criminal judicial systems equally as just as the American system do not follow the principle or its attendant adversarial trial structure so assiduously. Although the presumption is optional, to

say this is not to say that it is capricious, misguided, or wrong. At tension with the presumption of innocence is the goal of public safety: Americans understandably want to keep the number of violent crimes at a minimum. An ideal system of criminal justice would be one that infallibly identified the intentions and motives of every defendant brought before it. But for obvious reasons that is humanly impossible. Humans don't have the time, the resources, or the expertise that would be required to search the souls of people. Yet that is what American prosecutors would seem to have to do, following the presumption of innocence, namely, prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant had the requisite *mens rea*.

"What courts can do is assess behavior and other kinds of publicly accessible evidence. Some types of behavior are dangerous to others. In order to strike some sort of balance between public safety and the presumption of innocence, a legislature can adopt the policy that if a kind of behavior is felonious, can be shown to have been undertaken intentionally, and results in the death of another, then it is permissible to tax the agent of the behavior with a penalty that is the penalty he would have incurred had he unambiguously intended the other's death. The legislature need not be construed as adopting the patent fiction that the agent intended the death.[10] It can be viewed as declaring instead that the consequences of the agent's actions have exposed him to the same penalty he would have faced had he directly killed the other person.

"Felony-murder laws thus have two deterrent virtues. First, they discourage the commission of certain kinds of felonies by raising the stakes. They put would-be felons on notice that if things go

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[10]   Here is a sampling of some dubious legal fictions.

(F1) Whoever intends φ also intends all the consequences of φ.

(F2) Whoever intends φ, knowing that φ is wrong (or illegal, take your pick), intends all the bad consequences of φ.

(F3) Whoever intends φ, knowing that φ is wrong (etc.), intends all the bad foreseeable consequences of φ.

(F1) and (F2) are enough to impale Hickman; maybe (F3), too—it all depends on how much is packed into the notion of foreseeability. (Some consequences are more foreseeable than others. Cheatley cannot have been expected to have foreseen that his fraudulent tax return would bring about a heart attack, but maybe Hickman should have realized that his burglary would run the risk of someone's dying.)

awry with their felonious activity, they may find themselves facing the most serious penalties one can face. Second, they undercut the advantage the would-be felon might have thought he would have with the presumption of innocence. In cases of homicide to which felony-murder laws apply, prosecution no longer has the burden of proving the defendant's *mens rea*.

"I wish to emphasize that this defense of the legitimacy of felony-murder laws is provisional and contingent. Provisional, because it depends on empirical claims to the effect that felony-murder laws further the goal of public security by deterring people from certain kinds of crime. If those claims are false then the defense is punctured. Contingent, because there are different legal systems that get along fine without felony-murder laws. One cannot claim that they are necessarily woven into the fabric of an ideal legal structure. (The United Kingdom abolished them in 1957 and hasn't slid into chaos as a result.) Do they violate **MRP: Murder**? It is clear that they allow for the possibility that people can be held *legally* culpable for murder even when they are not morally culpable. But the boundaries of the province of legal culpability are drawn by a society's legislature: they are no more grounded in the nature of things than is the boundary between Minnesota and Ontario."

By now one might be excused for wondering how Aurel will react to this defense. The answer is simple. The defense *is* Aurel's. All that Aurel needs to do is to add two sentences to it: "In contrast, **MRP: Murder** is not a matter of convention. Its conditions on culpability for murder are not subject to human legislation and thus cannot vary from one jurisdiction to another." Note that, as was the case with **MRP: Lie**, **MRP: Murder** does not pronounce on what kinds of intentional homicides, if any, are permissible.

Intention and Foreseeability

Aurel's intentionalism would be flawed if its emphasis on what the agent intends were to result in an unsupportable exaggeration of the difference between intended consequences and merely foreseen consequences. Discussions of the role of intention in ethics frequently lead to discussions of the Doctrine of Double Effect, which in turn

frequently lead to a consideration of the distinction between intended and merely foreseen consequences. The doctrine is supposed to apply to choice situations in which the consequences are unavoidably mixed, some being good, some bad. The doctrine has received insightful and provocative attention recently in its application to choices made in medical ethics, in the conduct of combatants in war, and in how one should conduct oneself in an area plagued by distressingly many wayward trolleys.[11] There are several ways of formulating the doctrine, not all of them obviously equivalent, but I shall assume that the following version is representative:

> **DDE** If A's performing φ would unavoidably have both good consequences, **GC**, and bad consequences, **BC**, then it is permissible for A to perform φ if and only if (1) φ itself is not morally forbidden, (2) A does not intend to bring about **BC**, (3) **BC** is not causally necessary for **GC**, and (4) the badness of **BC** does not outweigh the goodness of **GC**.

Illustration: In the course of prosecuting a formally declared war against Bulgia, the Commander in Chief of the armed forces of Ulceria has to decide whether to bomb Bulgia's major munitions factory, thereby bringing the war to a speedier conclusion. The **DDE** tells the Commander that his action is permissible, even if the bombing results in loss of life of some noncombatant civilians, as long as the bombing itself is not a forbidden act, the Commander does not intend the death of the civilians, their death is not a causal means necessary for bringing about the speedier conclusion, and the good consequences of the speedier conclusion (say, in Bulgian and Ulcerian lives spared) is not outweighed by the bad consequences of the Bulgian civilian deaths.

Let us put pressure on clause (2) of **DDE**. Suppose that the Commander *knows* full well that bombing the munitions factory will kill several innocent noncombatants. (He knows this, we might suppose, because it is common knowledge that the Bulgians force kidnaped

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[11] See Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect," *Oxford Review* 5 (1967): 5–15; Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem," *Yale Law Journal* 94 (1985); 1395–1415; F. M. Kamm, *Morality, Mortality: Volume II: Rights, Duties, and Status* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Scanlon, "Intention and Permissibility."

Ulcerian citizens to work in the factory.) Is it not facetious in this circumstance to maintain that although he foresees that they will be killed if he bombs the factory, he does not intend their death? How, in this circumstance, could foreseeing their death not just be intending their death, accompanied, perhaps, by some self-deception? And if it is not the same thing, how could the difference be significant enough so that intending their death would make the bombing impermissible whereas merely foreseeing their death would not?[12] Put the question in the idiom of Aurel's robust conception of intention: how can the decision to bomb, based in part on the true, justified belief that the noncombatants will be killed, not be a decision to kill the noncombatants?

It may be that the pressure on clause (2) is generated by the thought that known consequences are intended consequences:

> **KCIC** If A intends to perform φ and knows that ψ is a consequence of A's performing φ, then A also intends ψ.

If true, **KCIC** would deal a serious blow to **DDE** by collapsing the distinction between foreseeing a consequence and intending it. But **KCIC** does not appear to be true. Suppose that A can save the life of either B or C, but not both. Suppose further that A knows all the facts pertinent to her predicament. A lets a randomizing device, for example, a toss of a coin, determine whom she will save: heads, it is B; tails, C. Suppose the coin lands heads up. A now intends to save B, knowing that it follows that C must die. A does not intend that C die, even though she surely foresees that C's death is a consequence of her intentionally saving B.

I do not claim to have vindicated clause (2), much less **DDE**, for there may be other considerations independent of **KCIC** that allow pressure to continue to be applied to (2), and there are other quarrels one might have with the other clauses. But I do want to point out that an intentionalist of Aurel's stripe need not swear fealty to **DDE**, at least not in the way in which it is typically understood. Keeping with the spirit of **MRP**, Aurel can put forward something that looks like the Doctrine of Double Effect, but which nonetheless differs from it in significant ways:

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[12] Scanlon reports that a similar case was suggested to him by Judith Jarvis Thomson; see "Intention and Permissibility," 304–305.

> **MRP: Double Effect** If A's performing φ unavoidably had both good con-
> sequences, *GC*, and bad consequences, *BC*, then A is culpable for performing
> φ if and only if *either* (1) φ itself was morally forbidden, *or* (2) A intended to
> bring about *BC*, *or* (3) *BC* was causally necessary for *GC*, *or* (4) the badness
> of *BC* outweighs the goodness of *GC*.

Clause (2) shows that **MRP: Double Effect** does not dissolve the
problem of distinguishing between what is intended and what is
merely foreseen. But **MRP: Double Effect** is not simply a De Morgan
transformation of **DDE**, specifying a logically equivalent principle in
terms of forbiddenness instead of permissibility. The notion highlighted
by **MRP: Double Effect** is culpability, not forbiddenness. Recall that
the original **MRP** was put forward as a principle of agent performance
appraisal, not as a principle about what is forbidden, obligatory, or
permissible. The latter sort of principle is insensitive to the time at
which it is applied to a particular case. **DDE**, for example, can be
invoked prospectively, as a guide to action, or retrospectively, as a vehicle
of moral criticism of the action committed. **MRP: Double Effect**, in
contrast, has only a retrospective function—hence its formulation is
in the past tense—namely, the assessment of the agent's performance
after the fact. An omniscient judge could, one presumes, determine
whether A merely foresaw or intended that *BC* would come about,
but short of omniscience, **MRP: Double Effect** is no better off than
DDE concerning the foreseen-intended distinction. Moreover, the fact
that **MRP: Double Effect** is exclusively retrospective and exclusively
agent-judgmental may seem to rob it of much of its interest.

 In a while Aurel will have a chance to respond to this attempt at
dismissal. For now, however, let us turn to cases relevant to principle **SMP**.
So far we have looked at cases that attempt to belittle the importance
of intention as a necessary condition for imputations of culpability. The
next two cases, Failed Attempts, and Intentions and Motives, cast doubt
on the sufficiency of a presence of intention for ascriptions of culpability,
thus challenging principle **SMP**.

Failed Attempts

Here are two alternative hypothetical cases, one a "success," the other a "failure."

Premeditation: Alpha has coolly planned in advance to kill Beta, believing with good reason that Beta would soon blow the whistle on Alpha's embezzling activities. Alpha raises his rifle, takes careful aim, and dispatches Beta with one shot.

Mosquito: Same scenario, two different actors. As Gamma peers down the barrel of his rifle aimed at Delta and begins to squeeze the trigger, a mosquito lands on his nose, causing his shot to go astray.

In **Premeditation** Alpha is guilty of first-degree homicide, something for which Alpha would presently stand to face the death penalty in thirty-eight out of fifty states in the United States. In **Mosquito** Gamma is guilty of attempted murder, a felony, to be sure, but one that exposes Gamma to a much less severe penalty. Why the disparity? Alpha and Gamma have exactly the same evil intentions and motives. Gamma did everything he could to further his quest, just as Alpha did. Why should an adventitious mosquito make such a big legal difference?

Skeptics about the importance of intentions will say that the disparity indicates that we care more about results. How much more? As a statistical exercise, one might try to compute the average sentence meted out to defendants found guilty of first-degree homicide (arbitrarily assigning sixty years, say, to life sentences and to the death penalty), along with the average sentence imposed on defendants found guilty only of attempted homicide. The first average divided by the second would then give us the *failed attempt discount index*, or FADI, which could serve as a measure of the extent to which a particular jurisdiction discounts failed attempts compared to successful attempts. Thus if the jurisdiction hands out, on average, fifty-year sentences for first-degree homicides and five-year sentences for attempted homicides, its FADI is ten. One could then compare the FADIs among different jurisdictions to see whether interesting patterns emerge, and to gauge the strength of the skeptics' case for demoting intentions.

As sociologically interesting as the construction of FADIs might be, they would merely quantify the practice; they would not justify it. The normative question remains: why *should* we follow a schedule

of legal punishment in which Gamma's deed is treated more lightly
than Alpha's? One might naturally seek to give a justification for the
disparity by appealing to consequences. But while it is true that Alpha's
act had worse consequences than Gamma's, it is hard to find a plausible
systematic rationale for punishing Gamma less severely among the
familiar consequentialistic dimensions of general deterrence, particular
deterrence, incapacitation (or social quarantine), rehabilitation, and
education.[13] Perhaps in recognition of the lack of justification, Section
5.05 of the American Law Institute's Model Penal Code recommends
that

> Except as otherwise provided in this Section, attempt, solicitation and con-
> spiracy are crimes of the same grade and degree as the most serious offense
> which is attempted or solicited or is an object of the conspiracy. An attempt,
> solicitation or conspiracy to commit a [capital crime or a] felony of the first
> degree is a felony of the second degree.[14]

It appears that the recommendation is to treat attempted burglary as if
it were burglary, attempted arson as if it were arson, and so on, with the
exception of a capital crime or a felony of the first degree, which would
surely encompass premeditated, intentional homicide. In this case, the
failed attempt would be demoted to second-degree homicide, which
would carry with it a lesser penalty.

By Aurel's lights the Model Penal Code has almost got it right. If the
various consequentialistic justifications for downgrading failed attempts
are themselves unpersuasive, then there appears to be no provisional or
contingent argument, akin to the rationale Aurel offered for felony-
murder laws, that justifies treating failed attempts less severely than
successful attempts. In short, the FADI for any jurisdiction should be
one, even for failed attempts at homicide. We can imagine Aurel saying,
with rhetorical zeal, that Gamma is as guilty of murder as Alpha is,
thereby giving a forceful rendition of the phrase "guilty for all intents

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[13] For criticism of these sorts of attempts at justification, see David Lewis, "The
Punishment That Leaves Something to Chance," in *Papers in Ethics and Social Philosophy*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 227–243.

[14] American Law Institute, Model Penal Code (1962), as reprinted in Wayne R. LaFave,
Modern Criminal Law: Cases, Comments and Questions (St. Paul: West Publishing Co.,
1978), 741 (brackets in original).

and purposes." The fact that Delta did not die because of Gamma's effort is immaterial to the assessment of Gamma's culpability. Aurel subscribes to a close relative of **SMP**:

> **SMP: Failed Evil Attempts** If A attempts but fails to perform φ in circumstances in which it is impermissible for A to perform φ, then A's attempting to perform φ makes A as culpable as A would have been had A succeeded in performing φ.[15]

It may have occurred to you by now that failure comes in at least two flavors. One can fail in the attempt to do something evil, but one can also fail in the attempt to do something good. Suppose that Alberta and Alberto individually intend to donate substantial amounts of money to a charity. For that purpose it happens that both of them entrust their money in accounts managed by Bezzle, the banker. Bezzle decides to drain one of the accounts and abscond with the funds. Bezzle flips a coin to determine which account to drain. It happens to be Alberto's. As a consequence, Alberta's money goes to the charity while Alberto's money does not. If Alberta is praiseworthy then Alberto should be equally as praiseworthy. But Alberta's existence in this case is, at bottom, irrelevant. It is Alberto who should be equally as praiseworthy whether or not he succeeds. The principle at work here is

> **SMP: Failed Good Attempts** If A attempts but fails to perform φ in circumstances in which it is permissible for A to perform φ, then A's attempting to perform φ makes A as praiseworthy as A would have been had A succeeded in performing φ.

Intentions and Motives: The Case of Self-Defense

Intentions are one thing, motives another. **SMP** ignores the importance of motives to the assessment of character (and thus may do an injustice to the interpretation of Matt. 5:28). We can examine the difference between intentions and motives by looking at the legal plea of self-defense.

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[15] Here and below let us understand "A attempts to φ" to rule out "half-hearted" attempts.

Criminal law relies on a set of purely external, formalistic criteria by which it gauges putative cases eligible for a plea of self-defense. Chief among these criteria are the following:

Imminence: The harm threatened by the attacker must be temporally immediate and unavoidable. B's threat to attack A a week from next Tuesday does not justify A in attacking B today (unless, perhaps, A is already unjustly in B's clutches). In the eyes of the law, a preemptive strike is not self-defense.

Proportionality: The harm inflicted by the intended victim must be just sufficient to thwart the attacker and must not exceed in any case the harm the attacker would have inflicted. If B's proposed act of aggression is simply to mush a custard pie in A's face, A cannot plead self-defense for gunning down B.

Reasonable Person Standard: The intended victim is expected to have assessed the situation and responded as a reasonable person would in the victim's circumstances. A's prospects for a successful plea of self-defense evaporate if it turns out that A believed B to be a space alien. (In this case, perhaps an insanity plea would be more successful.)

Consider now two hypothetical cases. In both of them the agent, fully aware of the eligibility criteria for a successful plea of self-defense, contrives to be the intended victim of an attack, using the attack as the occasion for killing the attacker.

Greed: Avaritia stands to inherit Luger Shortfuse's considerable fortune. But Luger is young and fit, with prospects of living a long life. Obsessed with the prospects of wealth and knowing of Luger's penchant for violence, Avaritia intentionally provokes him into attacking her with a poker. Avaritia puts to use Luger's loaded pistol, which she had planted nearby, thereby quickly becoming a wealthy heiress.

Tender-heartedness: Mauser Shortfuse, Luger's father, is suffering horribly from a terminal disease for which palliation is ineffective. Mauser wants to be put out of his misery but does not want his death to be counted as a suicide. Nor does he want his kin to be put at risk of a charge of murder, were they to exercise conventional modes of euthanasia. His daughter, Mercy, who knows all this and is moved by nothing other than compassion for her father, ruefully but determinedly exploits Mauser's one family foible by goading Mauser into attacking her so that she can kill Mauser quickly.

One can refine these cases so that Avaritia and Mercy both pass the tests for a successful plea of self-defense. And one can easily imagine someone who reasons in this fashion: "I would not care to live next door to the Shortfuse family. Even so, I would harbor less cold feelings for Mercy than for Avaritia. My differential response does not appear to be based on a difference in their intentions, for they both act from the same sort of intention—to kill a family member while making it look like self-defense. Nor is it based on the facts that Luger had no desire to die while Mauser did, and that Avaritia deprived Luger of a longer, happier future than the future denied to Mauser by Mercy. Perhaps not all intentional killings are forbidden—let's set aside for another day a discussion about killing in warfare and legally sanctioned executions—but these two killings are forbidden. Nor can I detect more evil remote intentions in Avaritia. Her remote intention is to inherit, to which her intention to kill is a means, while Mercy's remote intention is to alleviate suffering. There is nothing wrong with an intention to inherit *per se*. So I'm left to conclude that what explains my antipathy towards Avaritia is the presence of greed in her, which is not present in Mercy. Greed is not an intention; back in the old days it was numbered among the seven deadly sins, an acquired vice that disposes its possessor to seek after more material goods than is necessary or fitting. So when it comes to agent performance appraisal, **SMP** can't be the whole story."

Aurel can acknowledge that whether it is acquired voluntarily or not, greed is the sort of character trait that ought to be resisted or stifled, precisely because it disposes its possessor to form evil intentions. But whatever culpability one has for the possession of a vice, it pales in comparison to the culpability one has for intentionally exercising it. A vice is a bit like Luger's loaded and unattended pistol—merely dangerous in itself but calamitous when used to evil purposes. The best way, perhaps the only way, to resist a vice like greed is the same way one tries to break any bad habit—by avoiding situations that encourage the exercise of the vice and by resolving not to acquiesce in the vice when the situations are unavoidable. One may not succeed, but there seems to be no other way of even trying. The principle that applies here, by Aurel's lights, is this:

SMP:Vice If A attempts but fails to avoid performing φ in circumstances in which it is impermissible for A to perform φ, because A's vice-driven desire to perform φ overpowers his attempt to avoid performing φ, then A is less culpable than A would have been had A not (even) attempted to avoid performing φ.

Aurel also has a bone to pick with the formalistic criteria that help to define a successful plea of self-defense. That they can be manipulated, as in **Greed** and **Tender-heartedness**, is a symptom that they set the standard too low. More specifically, they are insensitive to the role that the agent's intention plays in these cases. Even more specifically, they function as surrogates to intention: instead of attempting to assay what the agent intended, courts can simply apply the criteria, thus allowing Avaritia and Mercy to slip through the cracks undetected.

Aurel's complaint here may strike one as unrealistically high-minded. We cannot read people's minds. Courts must make decisions by applying objective tests to publicly observable behavior, resisting the temptation to construct invidious and unverifiable hypotheses about the agent's intentions. Even if some sort of technology were developed that would allow authorities to eavesdrop on people's thoughts, we would regard that development with horror. Aurel himself is deeply suspicious about the wisdom, justice, and continued stability of any political authority. He is thus inclined to agree that there are many instances of wrongdoing for which government intervention would be worse than allowing the wrongdoing to go undetected, unapprehended, and unpunished. What else can one hope for?

Confessions

When it comes to appraising the hidden springs behind a person's publicly observable performance, one can hope for an authority who is omniscient, infallible and incorruptible, perfectly just and perfectly merciful, who will sort out and set right the injustices in the world. That is the direction in which Aurel has been steering us.[16] And Aurel

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[16] Note how **MRP: Double Effect**, even though exclusively retrospective, takes on importance from the point of view of a divine judge.

is not a fictional character. I take myself to have been channeling, in contemporary idiom, the thought of Aurelius Augustinus, known more familiarly as St. Augustine, supplemented in some cases by insights from Peter Abelard, who, I am prepared to argue, knew Augustine's moral thought very well.[17] A champion of human-made law would do well to attend to their arguments, but need not fear usurpation of power: Aurel's judge presides over a different jurisdiction.

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[17] For my more historical excursions in these fields, see "Inner-Life Ethics," in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 140–165; "To Catch a Heretic: Augustine on Lying," *Faith and Philosoph* 20 (2003), 479–495; and "Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. Jeffrey Brower and Kevin Guilfoy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 279–304.

BEAUTY AND METAPHYSICS

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Abstract. It is shown through examples ranging from Parmenides and Plato to Whitehead and Wittgenstein that beauty is central among the values that have made metaphysical theories appealing and credible. A common attitude would be that the aesthetic properties of metaphysical theories may be important for effective presentation but are irrelevant to the cognitive value of the theories. This however is question-begging, since it assumes without argument that ultimate reality is indifferent to value-considerations such as beauty. If on the contrary we allow that the aesthetic properties of theories may be cognitively relevant, which such properties should be considered? This question is explored in the final section of the paper.

The title of this essay is "Beauty and Metaphysics." This may remind some of you of another, more famous, title: "Beauty and the Beast." My hope, though, is that even those readers who regard metaphysics as beastly will be in favor of beauty, and so I will have at least a halfway chance of gaining your interest and approval. My thesis is that beauty is intimately involved in metaphysics, to the extent that beauty is central among the values that have made metaphysical theories appealing and credible. I will not claim that all metaphysicians have been deeply concerned about the beauty of their results; that would not be the case. Bertrand Russell, for instance, once wrote that "the point of philosophy is to begin with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it."[1] It would be rash to deny that Russell achieved this goal in some of his own philosophical endeavors! And on the other hand, beauty by itself is by no means a guarantee of metaphysical excellence. When Keats wrote, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"

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[1] Bertrand Russell, „The Philosophy of Logical Atomism, Lecture II," in *Readings in Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, ed. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (London: The Free Press, 1963), 310.

he neatly provided his own counterexample: his assertion is undeniably beautiful, but it is equally certain that it is not true.

Beauty, then, is not sufficient for success in metaphysics, and perhaps it is not necessary either. Nevertheless, I maintain that it has been, and continues to be, an important ingredient in the construction and reception of metaphysical theories. I shall illustrate this thesis with a few examples, drawn from the history of philosophy, among many others that could be adduced. We begin with the very founder of the metaphysical enterprise, Parmenides. Probably most of us have wondered, at one time or another, how Parmenides found it possible to believe in his own theory—a theory that outrages common sense and ordinary experience by denying the very existence of motion, change, and a plurality of objects in the world. To be sure, Parmenides offered arguments for his conclusion, and these arguments were later reinforced by those of his disciple Zeno. To many of us, though, the arguments seem insufficient; one may be puzzled by the paradoxes that are put forward, but they don't seem to provide sufficient motivation for the even more paradoxical conclusion we are asked to accept. My proposal is that Parmenides was enthralled by what was for him the overwhelming beauty of the conception of Being he had arrived at, a conception partially conveyed in the following lines:

> But motionless in the limits of mighty bonds, it is without beginning or end, since coming into being and passing away have been driven far off, cast out by true belief. Remaining the same, and in the same place, it lies in itself, and so abides firmly where it is. For strong Necessity holds it in the bonds of the limit, which shuts it in on every side, because it is not right for what is to be incomplete. For it is not in need of anything, but not-being would stand in need of everything... But since there is a furthest limit, it is complete on every side, like the body of a well-rounded sphere, evenly balanced in every direction from the middle; for it cannot be any greater or any less in one place than in another.[2]

Whether this description will strike you as compellingly beautiful I cannot say; probably different minds will have differing responses. But I believe it did strike Parmenides that way, and has so struck many other philosophers

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[2] John Mansley Robinson, *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 115 (Diels-Kranz 28 B 8).

since his time, resulting in the incorporation of at least parts of his conception in their own theories. My hypothesis concerning Parmenides' aesthetic motivation may receive at least partial confirmation from his choice of a literary vehicle in which to convey his theory; it takes the form of a poem, written in hexameters, in which he recounts his instruction by a goddess in the Way of true thinking. Even if Parmenides was not an especially gifted poet, this choice of a vehicle says something about where he perceived the appeal of his theory to lie. This correspondence between the aesthetic motivations internal to a metaphysical theory and the means chosen for its communication is a theme that will recur throughout our story.

Parmenides' *bête noir,* Heraclitus, put forward a theory with a very different sort of aesthetic appeal. Heraclitus' view of the world is almost literally kaleidoscopic. The world consists of continuous flux and never-ending transformations, held in balance by the tension of opposites, and symbolized by that most mobile of the "elements," fire:

> This world-order, the same for all, no god made or any man, but it always was and is and will be an ever-living fire, kindling by measure and going out by measure...
> All things are an exchange for fire, and fire for all things; as goods are for gold, and gold for goods.[3]

The aesthetic element is evident when Heraclitus writes,

> To god all things are beautiful and good and just, but men suppose some things to be just and others unjust.[4]

Here as with Parmenides, the aesthetic appeal of the view is reflected in that of its presentation; Heraclitus was undoubtedly more successful as an aphorist than Parmenides was as a poet.

Plato, of course, is an inescapable part of the story we are telling; indeed, this essay reveals itself as one more of those innumerable "footnotes on Plato." For Plato, the case I am making scarcely requires argument; it

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[3] Robinson, *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy*, 90, 91 (Diehls-Kranz 22 B 30).
[4] Ibid., 92 (Diehls-Kranz 22 B 102).

suffices to cite a familiar passage from Socrates' speech (ostensibly quoted from Diotima) in the *Symposium:*

> The person who has been instructed thus far about the activities of Love, who studies beautiful things correctly and in their proper order, and who then comes to the final stage of the activities of love, will suddenly see something astonishing that is beautiful in its nature. This, Socrates, is the purpose of all the earlier effort.
>
> In the first place, it is eternal; it neither comes into being nor passes away, neither increases nor diminishes. Therefore, it is not beautiful in one respect while ugly in another, nor beautiful at one time while ugly at another, nor beautiful with reference to one thing while ugly with reference to something else, nor beautiful here while ugly there, as though it were beautiful to some while ugly to others. Moreover, the beautiful will not appear to this person to be something like a face or a pair of hands or any other part of the body, nor will it appear as a particular statement or a particular bit of knowledge, nor will it appear to exist somewhere in something other than itself, such as in an animal, in the earth, in the sky, or in anything else. On the contrary, it exists as itself in accordance with itself, eternal and uniform. All other beautiful things partake of it in such a way that, although they come into being and pass away, it does not, nor does it become any greater or any less, nor is it affected in any way. When someone moves through these various stages ... and begins to see this beauty, he has nearly reached the end.[5]

Once again, beauty in the metaphysical conception is matched by beauty in its presentation; I think there will be little argument that Plato's dialogues are the single most outstanding literary creation in the entire history of philosophy.

There is no doubt that similar motivation appears in Plato's follower Plotinus, in spite of his paradoxical insistence that the One is not beautiful, but rather "beyond beauty":

> [The soul] must, I say, withdraw from understanding and its objects and from every other thing, even the vision of beauty. For everything beautiful comes

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[5] Plato, *Symposium,* 210e-211b, in The Symposium *and* The Phaedrus, *Plato's Erotic Dialogues,* translated with introduction and commentaries by William S. Cobb (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 48.

after it and is derived from it, as all daylight from the sun. It is for this reason that Plato says that the One is ineffable in spoken or written word.[6]

In this connection we may recall the remark of A. H. Armstrong that Plotinus "very often represents the One-Good as That to which no predicates and no determinations can be applied because It is more and better than the reality of which It is the source, and Its excellence goes beyond the resources of our thought and language."[7] Surely the phrase in the quotation, "*even* the vision of beauty," is significant, indicating that somehow this vision is closer than anything else to the truth about the inexpressible One, even while it necessarily falls short of that truth.

It would be easy to go on drawing out similar thoughts from the great medievals, all of whom were profoundly influenced, directly and indirectly, by Plato and Plotinus. Life is short, however, and so must philosophy be, if it hopes to have a living audience! So we skip forward some fifteen centuries, and take as our next example Leibniz. Leibniz' thought is rich and complex, but it would be difficult to deny that aesthetic motivations play an important role in it. He may well have agreed with sentiments of the sort we have seen in Plato and Plotinus; my point here, however, concerns rather the aesthetic appeal Leibniz found in the system of monads that was the core of his metaphysic. He held that "each possible [universe] has a right to claim existence in proportion to the perfection it involves." Furthermore, "perfection" is defined in terms that carry strong aesthetic overtones: the system of monads "is the means of obtaining the greatest possible variety, together with the greatest possible order: in other words, it is the means of obtaining as much perfection as possible." Pierre Bayle, Leibniz states, "was inclined to believe that I attributed to God too much, and even more than is possible. But he was unable to adduce any reason why this universal harmony, due to which every substance exactly expresses all the others through the relations it has with them,

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[6] Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI. 9, in *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, Revised Edition, ed. Charles M. Bakewell (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), 397–398.

[7] A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, 3rd Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 181. Note also Armstrong's comment that "Not infrequently, in spite of his carelessness about style ... the power of his thought forces him to a great magnificence of expression" (Ibid., p. 176).

should be impossible." Admiring his own theory, Leibniz exclaims, "Thus there is nothing uncultured, sterile, or dead in the universe, no chaos, no disorder, though this may be what appears. It would be about the same with a pond seen from a distance: you would perceive a confused movement, a squirming of fishes, if I may say so, without discerning the single fish."[8] I do not claim that aesthetic reasons were the only reasons Leibniz had for embracing this theory, but there can be no doubt that they were for him important reasons.

Skipping forward another two centuries, we come to a philosopher who may well be the most outstanding metaphysician of the twentieth century—Alfred North Whitehead. Like Leibniz, Whitehead crafted a rich and complex metaphysical system, and here also one could hardly deny that aesthetic considerations play a major role. He did not, it would seem, view God as himself the supreme instance of beauty, so much as the instigator of both order and novelty in the world, with the aim of bringing the world-system into a condition of great intrinsic beauty and harmony. In setting up the Cosmological Problem—the problem which is to be resolved by a proper understanding of the role of God—Whitehead develops two pairs of polar opposites: permanence/flux, and order/novelty. Both these contrasts, I submit, are essentially aesthetic in nature, and they set the tone for what follows concerning God: ethical considerations, while not without relevance, are in a manner submerged and subordinated to the aesthetic goal. The final resolution of these opposites, furthermore, is established through the harmonization of the struggles and the triumphs of finite beings in the consequent nature of God:

> The wisdom of subjective aim prehends every actuality for what it can be in such a perfected system—its sufferings, its sorrows, its failures, its triumphs, its immediacies of joy—woven by rightness of feeling into the harmony of the universal feeling … The revolts of destructive evil, purely self-regarding, are dismissed into their triviality of merely individual facts; and yet the good they did achieve in individual joy, in individual sorrow, in the introduction of needed contrast, is yet saved by its relation to the completed whole. The image … under which this operative growth of God's nature is best conceived,

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8 W. G. von Leibniz, *Monadology* 54, 58, 59, 69. In *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays,* translated and edited by Paul Schrecker and Anne Martin Schrecker (Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1965), 156, 157, 159.

is that of a tender care that nothing be lost. … He does not create the world, he saves it; or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."[9]

God as "the poet of the world"—with that one phrase, Whitehead himself makes my case, and I have no need to say more.

My final example is none other than Ludwig Wittgenstein—not the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations,* who as we all know was no metaphysician, but rather the early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus.* In the *Tractatus*, I acknowledge, the aesthetic element is somewhat more subtle than with our other examples, yet I think it is both present and important. The overall effect is perhaps similar to that of a geometric abstraction—but geometric abstractions can have their own kind of beauty; think of the paintings of Mondrian. Beyond this, I submit that a further aesthetic element is contributed by the paradoxes integral to Wittgenstein's enterprise, paradoxes that create a sense of mystery with a powerful aesthetic appeal, something like a philosophical version of an Escher engraving. One major paradox is found in the statement of a metaphysical view which includes the assertion that metaphysical views cannot be stated; this is the ladder we must throw away after we have climbed up it. There is also the paradox of what he termed the "second part," of his work, the ethical part which Wittgenstein did not write but which is nevertheless, according to him, the most important part of his philosophical work![10] Furthermore, considerable artistic skill is expressed in the literary form of the *Tractatus*, including such unforgettable aphorisms as "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem."[11] There are also the wonderful, hymn-like rhythms of the opening sentences of the work. I've often thought one could almost get away with reading these sentences as one of the lessons in a church service. People wouldn't understand them,

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[9] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology,* Corrected Edition edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 346.

[10] See his letter to Ludwig von Ficker, in Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life: Young Ludwig 1889–1921* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988), 288.

[11] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* German text with translation by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 6.521, p. 149.

of course, but the sound and cadence seem just about right for such an occasion:

> The world is all that is the case.
> The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
> The world is determined by the facts, and by their being *all* the facts.
> For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.
> The facts in logical space are the world.[12]

I submit that these aesthetic features of the *Tractatus* go quite a long way in accounting for the continuing fascination of this work for many philosophers.

It is my hope that I have persuaded you of my general claim, that beauty has been and remains an important element in the creation and reception of metaphysical views. But what shall we make of this fact? What, if anything, is its broader significance? Our erstwhile friends, the logical positivists, would have been ready with a response. Beauty and other "emotive" considerations are not merely important for the practice of metaphysics; they constitute the *only* content of metaphysical theories, which are simply misunderstood if they are viewed as having any cognitive significance. It follows from this that, if we do not follow Hume's recommendation to consign the works of metaphysics to the flames, we should at least turn them over to the literary critics for appropriate disposal.

But of course, hardly anyone thinks this way any more. A response more typical of contemporary philosophers would be that the aesthetic properties of metaphysical theories, while perhaps important for effective presentation. are simply irrelevant to whatever cognitive value these theories may possess. Believing a theory because it is beautiful is akin to believing there are fish in the pond because we should like to catch some for our dinner. This may seem a natural and initially plausible response, but examined more closely it faces serious difficulties. One such difficulty is that of accounting for the role of aesthetic values in the assessment of scientific theories, which are frequently taken as a model of the right kind of hard-headed rationality. It is said that Albert Einstein slept peacefully through the first serious test of his general

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[12] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico–Philosophicus,* 1–1.13, p. 7.

theory of relativity, involving the deflection of light from a distant star by the gravitational attraction of the sun during a solar eclipse. He later told his friend Max Planck, who spent a sleepless night awaiting the results, that he need not have worried; a theory as beautiful as this one could not have failed to be confirmed![13] In a similar vein Thomas Nagel, reflecting on some of C. S. Peirce's thoughts about science, remarks that "the idea of a natural sympathy between the deepest truths of nature and the deepest layers of the human mind, which can be exploited to allow gradual development of a truer and truer conception of reality, makes us more *at home* in the universe than is secularly comfortable."[14] Nagel nevertheless finds the idea of such a "natural sympathy" compelling, and tries to console his naturalistically-minded friends with the thought that "one can admit such an enrichment of the fundamental elements of the natural order without going over to anything that should count literally as religious belief."[15]

The denial of the cognitive relevance of beauty is not merely in conflict with scientific practice; it is also question-begging. To be sure, if we knew at the outset that human life and human minds are the accidental by-products of purposeless forces that have operated without thought for them or anything else—if we knew this, then it might be reasonable to conclude that the human sense of beauty is without cognitive significance. But of course, we do *not* know this; on the contrary, whether or not this naturalistic hypothesis is correct is precisely one of the questions that metaphysical inquiry needs to address. If, then, we wish to proceed in a way that leaves it open whether this, or some more human-friendly view of the universe, is correct, we should also leave it open that our awareness of beauty is to some degree a pointer to the truth of things. Not every beautiful theory can be true—Einstein went too far there, if indeed he was wholly serious in his remark to Planck—but perhaps beauty is, in some degree, an indication of the cognitive value, the truth-likeness if you will, of our theories of the world. This is the possibility that will be explored in the remainder of this paper.

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[13] Karl W. Giberson, "The Patent Clerk from Mount Olympus," *Books and Culture*, November/December 2005: 37.

[14] Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130 (emphasis in original).

[15] Nagel, *The Last Word*, 132.

Suppose, then, that we assume provisionally that the aesthetic value of a metaphysical view counts to some degree in favor of its truth. Can we go further, and say which particular aesthetic qualities are most relevant? This is an extremely difficult question. We should not succumb to complete aesthetic relativism, but it cannot be denied that human beings exhibit a wide range of variability in their aesthetic responses. This variability, furthermore, will almost certainly prove to be relevant to the question of which metaphysical theory is most aesthetically satisfying. (Recall Quine's preference for desert landscapes!) The challenge, then, is to put forward aesthetic criteria with some determinate content, without simply engaging in special pleading for one's own preferred metaphysical conclusions. As with other journeys between Scylla and Charybdis, there is a considerable likelihood of shipwreck, but one can only do one's best. I have three criteria to suggest.

First, *an aesthetically satisfying metaphysic must exhibit convincingly both the multiplicity in the world and its underlying unity.* This of course is the old standard, "variety in unity," which is axiomatic for aesthetic analysis. The criterion is recognized explicitly in Leibniz' combination of the "greatest possible variety" with the "greatest possible order," and in Whitehead's polarity of order and novelty. Sheer unresolved diversity lacks cohesion and suggests a mere catalog of contents, but unrelieved unity becomes sterile and empty; neither is aesthetically satisfying. Parmenides pretty clearly fails if judged by this criterion; Heraclitus may also be in trouble, though this is less clear. For Plato the problem of "the one and the many" becomes a central theme for philosophical reflection, and it has remained so ever since.

My second criterion is somewhat less obvious. I propose that *an aesthetically compelling metaphysic must give a central role to the values pertaining to living creatures and especially to persons.* The reason this is not so obvious is that there are numerous aesthetic values that are formal in nature and that, like "variety in unity," do not pertain in any special way to living creatures or to persons (except, of course, that it takes living beings to appreciate them). Nevertheless, I maintain that the values peculiar to life and to personality occupy a privileged place in our aesthetic responses, and that a metaphysic that fails to honor this will prove to be aesthetically unsatisfying. As evidence, I point to the fact that by far the preponderance of the greatest works of art feature these values, by way of representing

human beings, or animals, or sometimes supernatural beings in human-like or animal-like guises. This holds true from the *Winged Victory* and the marbles of the Parthenon to the drawings of Leonardo and Rembrandt and the paintings of Renoir and Picasso. There are numerous exceptions, of course. But even landscapes devoid of human and animal figures tend to include features that signal to us the human relevance of what is portrayed. The Chinese mountain-scape has a scholar's pavilion or a hermit's hut; Monet's water lilies are found in a garden tended by human hands and intended for human enjoyment.

One could object that this fact about our aesthetic preferences merely reflects our narcissistic human self-preoccupation, and has no wider importance. But to adopt that stance would be to revert to a position we have already examined and found to be question-begging: that the existence of human persons and the things they value is merely accidental, and has no significance for the nature of things in general. Our present stance, in contrast, is one in which we take seriously the aesthetic values humans do in fact appreciate, and consider where they may point if taken as a clue concerning the truth of things.

Nevertheless, the pre-eminence suggested here for the values of life and personality comes into serious conflict with trends in contemporary metaphysics, especially with reductive versions of materialism and naturalism. Whitehead formulated the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" in order to protest the tendency to take the abstractions of theoretical physics as representing ultimate reality. His own philosophy, significantly termed by him the "philosophy of organism," was designed in part as a corrective to this tendency. Even those of us who are unable to embrace his philosophy in its details may well consider his objection here to be well-founded.

My third and final point is perhaps not aptly termed a criterion; I put it forward, not as a requirement for a metaphysic that will be aesthetically satisfying, but rather as a desideratum. My proposal is that *a metaphysic that affords the greatest possible aesthetic satisfaction will be one in which the ultimate reality is also the supreme object of aesthetic contemplation.* This is what Parmenides, and Plato, and Plotinus were seeking, and believed themselves to have found; it also captures a central feature of the thought of Anselm, Spinoza, Jonathan Edwards, and many others before and since. Clearly, this represents the maximum demand that aesthetics can make

upon metaphysics, and some will find that it exceeds what can reasonably be asked. To be sure, for the promise of this approach to be realized more is needed than the mere postulation of an ultimate Beauty which is also the final Real. The existence of such an entity must be made vivid to the metaphysical imagination, and this will almost certainly call (among other things) for a fuller and more definite account of its properties. (This by the way points to a difficulty for the more severe forms of negative theology, for example as practiced by Gordon Kaufmann and John Hick. One cannot readily get enough of a grasp on a Real characterized only in negative terms, to feel very joyous or worshipful about it.) Many will revert here to our second criterion, and will insist that the ultimate Beauty must possess many of the attributes of personality, no doubt understood in some analogical fashion. Parmenides and Spinoza will demur, and their objections must be duly considered. Nor is it my contention that questions such as these can be settled on aesthetic grounds alone. My aim has been to gain for aesthetics a place in the metaphysical conversation, not to turn metaphysics into an aesthetic monologue. So there is still need for all of the arguments and counter-arguments, as well as testimonies of experience and claims about proper basicality. Suppose, however, that all of this has been done—all the arguments carefully formulated and evaluated, all of the testimonies given their due weight, all the objections heard and considered. If, when all that has been done, we are able to arrive at a warranted belief in an aesthetic Object of the sort here described—then at last, we shall have found the Truth that is Beauty, the Beauty that is Truth.

ETERNITY AND VISION IN BOETHIUS

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Abstract. Boethius and Augustine of Hippo are two of the fountainheads from which the long tradition of regarding God's existence as timelessly eternal has flowed, a tradition which has influenced not only Christianity, but Judaism and Islam too. But though the two have divine eternality in common, I shall argue that in other respects, in certain crucial respects, they differ significantly over how they articulate that notion.

Boethius and Augustine of Hippo are two of the fountainheads from which the long tradition of regarding God's existence as timelessly eternal has flowed, a tradition which has influenced not only Christianity, but Judaism and Islam too.[1] But though the two have divine eternality in common, I shall argue that in other respects, in certain crucial respects, they differ significantly over how they articulate that notion. Most of our space will be devoted to what Boethius has to say in the *locus classicus* of his views, Book V of The *Consolation of Philosophy*, and to some of its rather unfortunate implications. I shall conclude, after a shorter discussion of features of Book XI of Augustine's *Confessions* (the other classic source), that Boethius would have been wiser to take Augustine's tack.

Book V of the *Consolation* is devoted to Boethius's attempt to offer an account of providence, in particular his attempt to reconcile God's infallible knowledge of the future with human agency, sin and merit. Boethius famously illustrates the relation of the timelessly eternal God's knowledge to the goings on of the temporal order by supposing that God surveys the whole of reality as we might see from the top of a hill all that is going on in the valley below. Divine providence 'is far removed from matters below and looks forth at all things as though from a lofty peak

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[1] For example David Burrell, CSC, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

above them'.[2] As I shall argue, for Boethius such a reference to perception is more than a casual comparison, a disposable figure of speech. By the time that the careful reader of the *Consolation* has reached the end of Book V he will have realised that a fairly precise idea of divine perception has been woven into the centre of Boethius's account of divine eternity, and contributes quite a bit to furthering the apologetic purpose of that account. Boethius draws the parallel between divine knowledge and visual perception many times throughout Book V of the *Consolation*.

He says that God's knowledge

> … embraces all the infinite recesses of past and future and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they are happening in the present. If you wish to consider, then, the foreknowledge or prevision by which He discovers all things, it will be more correct to think of it not as a kind of foreknowledge of the future, but as the knowledge of a never ending presence. So that it is better called providence or "looking forth" than prevision or "seeing beforehand." For it is far removed from matters below and looks forth at all things as though from a lofty peak above them.[3]

God 'foresees', he has 'pure vision', he gazes down on all things, 'you cannot escape divine foreknowledge just as you cannot escape the sight of an eye that is present to watch,'[4] and so forth. Since according to Boethius divine intelligence enjoys 'the highest form of knowing', 'boundless immediacy',[5] God's eternal knowledge is like immediate visual perception.

Boethius's central contention can be expressed (in his own words) as follows. God's knowledge

> does not change the nature and property of things; it simply sees things present to it exactly as they will happen at some time as future events. It makes no confused judgments of things, but with one glance of its mind distinguishes all that is to come to pass whether it is necessitated or not. Similarly you, when you see at the same time a man walking on the earth and

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[2] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. V. E. Watts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 165.

[3] *Consolation*, 165. Boethius here says that God knows things '*as though* they were happening in the present', suggesting perhaps a rather different account of divine timeless eternity. But his central view is clearly eternalist.

[4] *Consolation*, 168.

[5] *Consolation*, 162.

the sun rising in the sky, although the two sights coincide yet you distinguish between them and judge the one to be willed and the other necessitated. In the same way the divine gaze looks down on all things without disturbing their nature; to Him they are present things, but under the condition of time they are future things.[6]

Of course Boethius did not think that God has eyes, but strangely this fact did not lead him to qualify the language of visual perception. Many in the tradition of regarding God's existence as timelessly eternal have thought of it more sparingly than Boethius did and have often preferred negative ways of expressing God's atemporality. By comparison Boethius is much bolder. To speak of God's immediate visual perception must be an analogy, we may think, and yet Boethius did not treat it as one. As we shall eventually see, he appeals to the idea of immediate visual perception for at least two reasons.

When Boethius said that God is eternal he did not mean that God exists at all times. He is sensitive to the distinction between the 'everlasting life' that the world has if (as Plato believed) it had no beginning in time and will have no end, and (divine) eternity which embraces 'the whole of everlasting life in one simultaneous present'.[7] That is, Boethius holds that even if the world is backwardly everlasting and forwardly everlasting, and so in a sense 'eternal', nevertheless the world embodies a temporally successive order, and so exists sempiternally. By contrast God embraces the whole of (such) everlasting life in 'one simultaneous present'. 'God is eternal, the world perpetual.'[8]

Nevertheless, God knows the temporal order in accordance with his nature, and (Boethius appears to argue) it is because God is timelessly eternal that he is able to know that entire order immediately in the sense that he knows it nonsequentially. He does not know one event and later another, then later another, and so on.

> His knowledge, too, transcends all temporal change and abides in the immediacy of His presence. It embraces all the infinite recesses of past and

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[6] *Consolation*, 166.
[7] *Consolation*, 164
[8] *Consolation*, 165

future and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they are happening in the present.[9]

Martha Kneale thought that this is incoherent. The spectator on the top of the hill sees the road beneath all at once, but he does not see the person walking in all positions at once; hence she thought that Boethius's analogy is crucially flawed.[10] Of course this is to interpret timeless eternity as *totum simul*; everything is present to the divine mind at the same moment, simultaneously. But such a way of thinking about timelessness is less than fully consistent and is not, I believe, warranted by the main thrust of Boethius's views. For as we have seen, for Boethius God knows everything but not at the same temporal moment because there are no such moments in the eternal life of God. For Boethius the 'at once' is not the 'at once' of time but the 'at once' of non-successiveness. God is eternally present to the whole of reality that lies before his 'gaze'.

Nevertheless, if Boethius really does insist on the immediacy of God's knowledge then it may seem that his apologetic for divine providence is jeopardised, because that apologetic requires God to see the entire created order non-sequentially. The *fore*knowledge of God, which in Boethius's view places human freedom in question, has to be eliminated, and Boethius's way of effecting this is to appeal to God's timeless gaze. But further, if God truly does see the entire order non-sequentially then it may seem that that is how the events of that order are, non-sequential. For God knows (by non-sequentially seeing); hence that is how what he sees must be, non-sequential. So by appealing to immediacy it appears that Boethius jeopardises the true temporality of that order. Accepting the sequential character of the temporal order as illusory would seem to have the unfortunate consequence (inter alia) of undermining the reality or efficacy of human agency and of causal powers of all other sorts, and to involve a commitment to a kind of temporal immobility. So Boethius's view may carry the consequence not, as Mrs Kneale said, that everything happens at the same moment, but the rather different consequence that nothing happens at any moment. For if God immediately knows what is true of me next Tuesday

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[9] *Consolation*, 165
[10] Martha Kneale, „Eternity and Sempiternity", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1968–9): 227.

by non-sequentially knowing it, then the question is not how I now have the power not to bring it about that I will do something else next Tuesday—a question often discussed in connection with God's exhaustive knowledge of the future—but the more basic question: How do I now have the power actually to do what it is eternally known, by non-sequential knowledge of the entire created order, that I will do next Tuesday? On the visual analogy employed by Boethius God does not immediately know what I *will* do next Tuesday, nor what I *am doing* next Tuesday, he knows immediately what I non-sequentially *do* on that timelessly ordered Tuesday.

It might be said that the answer to this problem is straightforward: it is that God not only non-sequentially knows what I am doing next Tuesday, but that he also non-sequentially knows how it comes about that I will do whatever it is that I do next Tuesday: my decisions and plans, and the means that I am able successfully to take to implement my plans. He non-sequentially knows not only the ends, but also the means to effect these ends. But the retort to this is equally straightforward: how can God non-sequentially know that an event X is temporally prior to and causally sufficient in bringing about some later event if all events are eternally and non-sequentially seen by him? How can the reality of temporal precedence and of causal power be represented in the divine mind as it is if the divine mind exists timelessly and if the way to understand this representation is as a case of immediate perception? How can what is sequential be faithfully represented as non-sequential? If I bring about X, X does not occur until I bring it about. How then can my bringing X about exist as a percept in God's eternal gaze? Is not true temporal and causal precedence 'flattened' by the Boethian proposal that God eternally knows the whole of reality in his non-sequential gaze? And is not this flattening consequence a powerful argument against divine timeless eternity in its Boethian variety?

This problem of the flattening of temporal agency is not to be confused with yet another familiar problem of the relation of God's knowledge to time, the problem of how a timelessly eternal God can faithfully represent temporal indexical expressions used in accordance with an A-series understanding of time. How can a timeless God know what is going on now, and if he cannot, how can he be said to be truly omniscient? Even if we can solve this question by an appeal to a B-series understanding of

time, according to which temporal indexical propositions do not represent temporal reality as it is, there remains the problem of how God can represent to himself in timeless fashion something that most A-series and B-series theorists hold in common, and that presumably Boethius himself held, the reality of causal processes, and of the unidirectionality of time.

Padgett's interpretation of timeless statements

Someone who accepts the force of an argument that is the same or very similar to the flattening argument is Alan Padgett, who uses it to cast doubt on the B-series view of time which any account of divine timelessness, not only Boethius's, seems to require. Considering what Padgett says will be helpful in our efforts to understand Boethius's views. However his treatment of the issue arises in a way that is not specially or directly theological. We shall consider it first in this non-theological variant and make a theological application of it later on.

As Padgett sees it, the problem of flattening, the problem of the genuineness or otherwise of causal powers, arises over a *prima facie* conflict between the reality of temporal agency and the representation of that agency by expressions that are timelessly true. In explanation of an argument offered in defense of the B-theory of time Padgett writes

> The argument (of the B-theorist) seems to run that, since something is a fact at time T_3, and it is thus always a fact and can be expressed by a true statement that is always true, then in some way the fact of "the fact at T_3" must always exist.[11]

I shall try to show that there is a way to avoid the flattening that Padgett holds to be a consequence of the B-theory. But this way, (as I shall also try to show) is not open to Boethius's argument.

Padgett holds that it is an unfortunate and indeed a fatal consequence of the B-theory of time, which holds that all times are equally real, that what happens at those times is now happening at them.

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[11] Alan Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (London, Macmillan, 1992), 117.

Thus the difference between the stasis and the process views of time can be put this way: is it now a physical state of affairs that the sun rises (tenselessly!) on the 4th of July 1776? The process theorist says "No," and the stasis theorist says, "Yes." For the stasis view insists that, in some way or other, the event of the sun's rising exists (tenselessly) on the 4th of July 1776.[12]

On this interpretation of the B-theory it is committed to the consequence that the sun is tenselessly rising at dawn on the 2nd of July 1776, tenselessly setting at dusk on the same day, and so on. This, besides being a false belief, or at the very least confused or counter-intuitive (the point Padgett insists on), also seems to rule out the reality of human agency and of causal efficacy more generally, but for a rather different reason than Boethius's argument rules it out. (Though Padgett does not as far as I can see draw out any particular implications that his understanding of the theory has for human agency, but rather concentrates on the unacceptable consequence it has for the B-theory (as he sees it), that physical processes such as those implied by 'it is raining' tenselessly exist.)[13] This he believes runs counter to our ordinary beliefs about time which favour what he calls the process view of time (the A-theory). For if the setting of the sun at dusk on the 2nd of July 1776 is happening tenselessly how could it have been up to some causal factors having to do with the movements of the planets to ensure that it happens at that time?

Padgett believes that this unacceptable consequence of the B-theory is due to the confusion by B-theorists of concrete episodes with propositional states. A concrete episode is the event of John shaving on the 22nd of July 2001. A fact from a logical point of view is the true statement 'John is shaving on the 22nd of July 2001'; this is a propositional state. But this true statement is in fact an abstraction, not to be confused with the concrete, physical event that is John shaving. Padgett thinks that the B-theory does and must confuse the two, and that the theory carries the unacceptable consequence that every event in the entire temporal order is happening tenselessly. Hence the flattening.

However, according to Padgett what is true tenselessly is not the physical occurrence, but the abstract expression of that occurrence. From the B-theorist's alleged confusion between concrete events and their

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12 Ibid., 118. The 'stasis view' of time is the B-theory, the 'process view' the A-theory.
13 Ibid., 118–9.

abstract representations Padgett concludes that the B-theorist is confus-
edly committed to the claim that from the abstract timeless proposition
'The sun rises on the 2nd of July 1776' (an expression the truth of which both
the A-theorist and the B-theorist may accept) there is now the concrete
physical state of affairs of the sun rising (tenselessly) on the 2nd of July
1776, (or for that matter on the 2nd of July 2076).

    He believes that if these two realms of the physical and the logi-
cal are kept separate, then the abstraction, the timeless truth, carries no
ontological implications of the sort that he believes that the B-theorist
is burdened with, and enables us to avoid the mistaken view that all
times are equally real. 'The main problem with the stasis theory (i.e. the
B-theory), then, is that it confuses physical "fact" (physical states of affairs)
with "fact" from a logical point of view (truths).'[14] The B-theory would
then reduce to the more commonsense A-theory according to which
only the present is real.

    Padgett is surely correct to say that the physical and logical ought
not to be confused, but it is hard to see that this point is at all relevant
to his argument against the B-theory, which rests upon a particular
understanding of tenselessness, and upon the imputation of this view
to reality itself, as I shall now go on to try and show.[15] The first move is
carefully to understand the way in which Padgett interprets what he calls
timeless statements, and to identify its weaknesses. The second is to note
that even if what he says about the nature of tenselessness were true, it
is only relevant on the assumption that grammar is an infallible guide to
the nature of reality, a point which the new version of the B-theory of
time denies. For it does not hold that indexical sentences can be shown
to have the same meaning as their non-indexed counterparts.[16] So even
if Padgett's argument is successful against some versions of the B-theory
it is not successful against all versions.

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[14] Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time*, 118.

[15] I have been helped to see this by Nathan Oaklander, „Freedom and the New Theory
of Time", in *Questions of Time and Tense*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin (Oxford, Clarendon
Press, 1998).

[16] For convenient discussion of the 'new' B-theory see the Introduction to *The
Philosophy of Time*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin and Murray Macbeath (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 1993).

Let us look first, then, at Padgett's interpretation of timeless statements. The B-theory of time argues that contingent truths about temporal events are tenselessly true. But how is this idea of tenselessness to be understood? In order to answer this we need carefully to attend to the idea of sempiternity, or at least to one particular understanding of sempiternity. I shall try to show that Padgett's assumption that the tenselessness of the B-theory is to be explicated in the sempiternal fashion that he supposes is unwarranted.

It is possible to construe the idea of sempiternity in at least two distinct ways. An object O may be said to exist sempiternally when it exists at all times. Alternatively, O may be said to exist sempiternally if, for any time, O exists at that time. On the first view, if O is sempiternal then it exists both in 1066 and 2066, and at all other times. (Let us call this view universal sempiternity (US)). On the second view, if O is sempiternal then it exists when it is 2066 and exists when it is 1066, and likewise for all other times. But O does not exist at all those times at once. We can call this view particular sempiternity (PS)

Padgett's interpretation of what he calls timeless statements is clearly a US interpretation of them, as can be seen from how he understands the B-theory. According to him the stasis view (or B-theory) is committed to the view that it is now a physical state of affairs that the sun rises (tenselessly!) on the 4th of July 1776. Yesterday it was a physical state of affairs that the sun rises (tenselessly!). Tomorrow it will be a physical state of affairs that the sun rises (tenselessly!). And so on. On US if something occurs at some time it occurs at all times. Padgett claims that on the stasis or B-theory view of time all physical states of affairs now exist,[17] which presumably means that the physical universe now exists at all times. That is, on Padgett's view the B-theory entails an indexical version of sempiternity. Everything that occurs has sempiternal implications, for it now exists at all times.

However, it is possible to understand the verb in a sentence such as Padgett's 'The sun is rising on the 4th of July 1776' in a different way. It may also be interpreted in US fashion, as 'On the 4th of July 1776 the sun is rising'. On either construal, statements made using this sentence have an unchanging truth value, and are consistent with the B-theory's

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[17] Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time*, 118.

commitment to the equal reality of all times. But the B-theory is not as such committed to one interpretation as against the other. Clearly if a B-theorist were to opt for the PS rather than the US interpretation of sempiternity then he may not be saddled with the undesirable consequence of the US interpretation of sempiternity, that the whole of physical reality now exists. He may rather hold that it is true for all times that what exists at 1066 exists at 1066. So there is no convincing reason to suppose that it is a consequence of the B-theory that all events now exist tenselessly in the way claimed by Padgett.

The second point against Padgett is to show that the way in which he interprets his tenseless sentence, in US fashion, assuming that reality itself must have this character, is in any case mistaken. What lies behind this second confusion of Padgett's is the assumption that grammatical tense (or tenselessness) is a good guide to the nature of reality. It needs to be emphasised, as the so-called 'new' B-theory of time does, that grammatical tense and metaphysical reality are distinct; unlike the older B-theory, it is not claimed by the 'new' B-theory that grammatical tense (or indexicality more generally) is eliminable without loss of meaning. Rather, the use of tense and indexicality is indispensable for the way we engage practically with the world, but such a use does not imply that reality as such is tensed. If for good reason reality is judged to be tenseless, this does not mean that we are thereby barred from employing tensed and indexical discourse. Padgett assumes a close connection between grammar and ontology which is more characteristic of the older B-theory. So there is a need to resist the conflation between grammar and reality. There is indeed, as Padgett claims, a distinction between a 'fact' from a logical point of view and a 'physical' fact. A 'fact' from a logical point of view is the truth expressed by a true statement. Thus it is a 'fact' that 2+2=4, or that London is south of Cambridge'.[18] But, as Nathan Oaklander points out[19] Padgett could only imagine that there is a problem here in the first place by confusing (or exclusively identifying) tenseless language with omnitensed (or US) language and then conflating omnitensed language with temporal reality.

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[18] Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time*, 118.
[19] Oaklander, „Freedom and the New Theory of Time", 191.

Despite all this, one may nevertheless be tempted to think that the basic contention of the B-theory, that all times are equally real, takes away causal power. The events of 2004 are all equally real, so how can one event depend on another? But as Oaklander argues[20], the only necessary conclusion about the events of 2004 that can be drawn from the B-series view is not that necessarily they will be such and such but rather the necessity of the principle of bivalence applying to any description of the events of 2004. But it is a fallacy to argue from (N(p v- p)) (The Principle of Bivalence) to Np or from (N(p v- p)) to N-p. If one possible event of 2004 is that I shall mow the lawn on the 22nd of July then it is my decision to mow the lawn on that occasion that renders 'Helm mows his lawn on the 22nd of July 2004' true. Our ignorance of the future is not simply the ignorance of some truths about the future, but it is also ignorance of the exact nature of the causal forces which we ourselves are subject to and contribute, as well as of the outcomes of those causal forces.

So in what sense are all times equally real for the B-theory? Not necessarily in the US sense that what exists does so at all those times, but possibly in the PS sense. On the 22nd of July 2002 what exist are those states and events which are contemporaneous with that date. What exists on the 23rd of July 2002 does not in virtue of that fact also exist on the 22nd of July 2002, or now, if now is different from the 22nd of July 2002. And we can be sure that what exists on the 23rd of July 2002 partly or perhaps wholly depends on what exists on the 22nd of July 2002. To say that events which occur on these dates are equally real is to make what is in essence a negative point; that not one of these times is privileged (by being present, or now, for example) over any of the others. It may be said that NIS expresses a trivial truth, the trivial truth that for all times, whatever exists at a time _t_ exists only at _t_ , but a trivial truth is surely preferable to a non-trivial falsehood.

But what if we are thinking of such sentences not as merely tenselessly true, and so (in that sense) equally as real as each other, but also that the truths they express are, in Boethian fashion, eternally and immediately seen by a timeless God, as someone on a hillside sees an array of events before him? Does this not mean that all times exist in the way that

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[20] Oaklander, „Freedom and the New Theory of Time", 194.

Padgett argues flattens human agency? Let's now return to this question and examine it a bit more closely. Perhaps it does. Perhaps Padgett has a point after all.

God's timeless representation of the temporal order

We must now transpose this discussion of tenselessness and sempiternity into the theological key of Boethian divine eternality. Earlier it was suggested that given such a God's timelessly immediate epistemic relation to the temporal universe that universe must be an object of non-sequential knowledge. For God there is no past or future. He gazes onto the whole temporal order, seeing it immediately. But if he non-sequentially perceives everything how can any event be earlier than or later than any other? The further question is, does such a God have a use for the temporal relations of earlier than/later than beloved of the B-theorist? As we have seen, on a plausible construal of the B-theory of time all events occur determinately at the moment that they do,[21] the future is as fixed as the past. The view is committed to the principle of bivalence according to which necessarily every proposition is either true or false. So that necessarily it is true (or false) that I will eat a tuna sandwich for lunch a year from tomorrow, January the 15th 2004. All objects have a tenseless existence, and nothing really changes, where change is accounted for by sequentially different features of perduring objects. Paul's change from being hirsute to being bald is accounted for by Paul being hirsute at t_1 and Paul being bald at t_2.

This is a metaphysical view about the nature of time and change. And if it is the true view then we might at first suppose that a Boethian timelessly eternal God, who sees things as they are, represents the created order to himself, insofar as it is considered a temporal order, in this fashion. So let us suppose that this eternal representation, whatever its exact character in the divine mind, is isomorphic with the tenseless expressions of our language used to represent temporal orderings. But how can this be? How can God immediately perceive that X is later than Y if he perceives X and Y in one timelessly eternal, non-inferential vision? Perhaps there is

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21 Oaklander, „Freedom and the New Theory of Time", 185.

an answer to this question. As we have noted in discussion of Padgett, it is not nowadays usually argued by holders of the B-theory of time that tensed language can be eliminated, because it is recognised that tensed language is a necessary feature of how we practically cope with the world. But the need for such tensed language does not mean that there are, in reality, tensed properties. All temporal properties, it is argued by the B-theorist, are tenseless. Might we not deploy this point in defence of Boethius's idea of God? Just as the B-theorist may use the language of tense without being committed to the A-series view of time, so may not God use timelessly eternal representations of his creation without being committed thereby to the elimination of temporality in his creation? God's eternal vision is then a mere divine *façon de penser*. Perhaps God is a 'new' B-theorist!

However, maybe this attempt to rescue Boethius does not make sufficient allowance for the fact that these visually immediate, non-inferential representations in the divine mind are held by Boethius to be states of *knowledge*, states of mind of one who is both omniscient and infallible. If this is so, does it not strictly follow, and not loosely follow as a mere *façon de penser*, that if we suppose that God has a timeless, visually immediate awareness of some event A, then the object of awareness must be timelessly eternal? If this is how it appears to God, then this is how it is. So our earlier dilemma recurs. Either God is fallible and not omniscient, or the temporal order is an illusion. Despite Boethius's insistence that divine knowledge does not change the nature and property of things[22], it seems that it cannot fail to change them, or to represent them other than they are. Taking a cue from this, some may argue that a timelessly eternal God is doubly ignorant: ignorant of the truths expressed by temporal indexicals, and ignorant of truths expressed by statements of temporal causal agency. The Boethian will be wise to dismiss the first of these areas of ignorance, for in his view there is nothing that a temporal indexical sentence expresses that cannot be as well expressed in a tenseless sentence. But ought not he nonetheless to be bothered by this second area of alleged divine ignorance?

However, before we rush to the conclusion that God's immediate (in the sense of non-sequential) knowledge of the world implies that the world

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[22] *Consolation*, 166.

itself is non-sequential we may reflect on a more basic fallacy that lies at the heart of this anti-Boethian argument that we have been pursuing. It is the fallacy of concluding that because knowledge is obtained under certain conditions therefore what is known, the object of that knowledge, must also possess these conditions. If what I see I certainly see, it does not follow that what I see is certain. I may certainly see something the character of which is uncertain. I might certainly see a blur in my visual field and be uncertain whether or not the blur was a bear. More to our present point, if what I see I presently see, it does not follow that what I see is present. I may presently see a bright light, but the light may be the light of a star which no longer exists. More generally, it is fallacious to argue that since all my experience is present experience I can only have knowledge of what is present. How is it that I can know truths about the past even though all my experience is present experience? Because it is possible for me to make inferences from the present to the past. So we cannot confidently conclude that if God non-sequentially knows that E occurs and that F occurs that E and F cannot be two events one of which is later than the other.

A second sense of 'immediacy'

Not until, that is, we take into account a second sense of immediacy which is implied in the various expressions—'boundless immediacy', 'one simultaneous present', 'the divine gaze'—which are at the heart of Boethius's account. As we have seen a central point made by Boethius is that the knowledge that a knower has depends for its character not only on what is known, (nor, we might add, on the metaphysical condition of the knower, timeless or otherwise), but also on the epistemic powers of the knower. God's eternality is such that all his knowledge of his entire creation is *immediate* in the further sense that he knows what he sees without the intervention of any inferential element. This further sense of immediate is also, for Boethius, central to our appreciation of how the eternal God knows. I shall argue that it is this second sense of immediacy, a perception of the entire creation that is non-inferential, that poses the ultimate difficulty for his account of how God knows the created order.

This is what Boethius says about this sort of immediacy. It is knowledge 'free from all corporeal influence'.[23] Beings in this position do not have to react to external stimuli in order to perceive things. Integral to Boethius' account is a hierarchical view of knowledge according to which the manner in which non-human animals know (by imagination) is different from the way in which humans know (by reason) , and how humans know is different from the way in which God knows (by intelligence).[24] Divine knowledge has 'boundless immediacy'.[25]

God's knowledge, therefore embraces all the infinite recesses of past and future and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they are happening in the present.......It makes no confused judgments of things, but with one glance of its mind distinguishes al that is to come to pass whether it is necessitated or not.[26]

> God's knowledge does not change, as you think, with alternate knowledge of now this and now that, but with one glance anticipates and embraces your changes in its constancy ...The power of this knowledge which embraces all things in present understanding has itself set a limit upon things and owes nothing to events which come after it.[27]

The two senses of immediacy, non-sequential and non-inferential, need to be kept distinct, because while God could non-sequentially perceive the temporal creation as a whole, he could not do so except by inference. But all of God's knowledge, Boethius strongly implies, is non-inferential. So it would seem that if this is so our earlier objection is reinstated. God could perceive the creation without sequence as a result of inference, but the knowledge he gains by such a 'gaze' must be non-inferential knowledge.

> Since, therefore, all judgement comprehends those things that are subject to it according to its own nature, and since the state of God is ever that of eternal presence, His knowledge, too, transcends all temporal change and abides in the immediacy of His presence. It embraces all the infinite recesses of past

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[23] *Consolation*, 161.
[24] *Consolation*, 161–2.
[25] *Consolation*, 162.
[26] *Consolation*, 165–6.
[27] *Consolation*, 168.

and future and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they
are happening in the present.[28]

It will be recalled that Boethius contrasts the divine life, which embraces
the whole of everlasting life in one simultaneous present, and the infinite
changing of things in time. 'It cannot possess simultaneously the whole
fullness of its life, but by the very fact that it is impossible for its existence
ever to come to an end, it does seem in some measure to emulate that
which it cannot fulfill or express'.[29] But perhaps this contrast cannot be
quite as stark as Boethius makes out. If his view about the eternal God's
knowledge carries the implications argued for earlier, must he not give up
his doctrine of the sempiternity of the world? Yes and no. Yes, as an account
of the temporal character of the created order ('the infinite changing of
things'). But not as a way of characterising the contingency of that order.[30]
The temporal order, this eternal, non-temporal series of times, might not
have been. But for Boethius it doesn't exist across all times, nor does it exist
at a time, it exists timelessly eternally, the created counterpart of God's
eternally timeless life. So I venture to suggest that one consequence of his
view of divine knowledge is that it is inconsistent with other things he
wishes to stress, namely, that God is eternal while the world is perpetual.[31]
On his account of divine knowledge, the world, though contingent, must
be an immediate percept of the eternally divine mind.

What creates the problem for Boethius is not the use of the language of
visual perception but his insistence that such perception is non-sequential
and non-inferential perception. When we combine these two sorts of im-
mediacy, perception without sequence and perception without inference,
then it follows that the percepts, the individual objects of immediate
perception such as events, cannot be percepts of what is temporally or-
dered. It is not possible to immediately perceive the entire temporal order
'at once' and also to immediately recognise it (in the perceptual sense) as
a temporal order. This is the flaw.

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[28]   *Consolation*, 165.
[29]   *Consolation*, 164–5.
[30]   Assuming, that is, that Boethius holds that the world, though infinite in time, is
nevertheless contingent.
[31]   *Consolation*, 165.

Why Boethius insists on this double immediacy is clear: in his view his apologetic strategy for the reconciliation of divine providence and human responsibility requires it. But other than that, it would seem that Boethius has at least the option of thinking of God's knowledge of the temporal order in more straightforwardly intellectualist terms: as involving understanding, or judgment. On such a view although God does not immediately perceive the temporal order, he eternally judges that it is temporal. Sticking to Boethius's analogy between divine knowledge and visual perception, this would be to understand divine immediate perception along the lines of Fred Dretske's 'simple seeing' (where if A simply sees X he need have no beliefs about X)[32] together with sets of immediate and infallible beliefs about X. God simply sees time-bound individuals and temporal sequences and has infallibly true beliefs about this temporality. In addition, presumably God infallibly knows that he simply sees what he sees. God's knowledge is immediate in that both the seeing and the beliefs held about it are timelessly eternal, though it is not immediate in the sense of being non-inferential. This approach seems more promising: but at the cost of forfeiting Boethius's *apologia* for the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom.

Summarising, I have argued that if we take the Boethian notion of immediate perception as the way to understand a timeless God's knowledge of the temporal order, then this results in a flattening of the temporal order, the elimination of its true temporality. This flattening is different from that mistakenly alleged by Padgett in his criticism of the B-theory, which is a semipiternal flattening, according to which every event occurs at all times. On the Boethian view, since God, being infallibly omniscient, knows the world exactly as it is, in that world everything may 'occur' in a sequence, though not in a truly temporal series, but in one that is more like an arithmetic series. Only if God's knowledge is obtained through inference may this conclusion be avoided. But Boethius is clear that God's knowledge is non-inferential. He must thus surrender his contrast between eternity and perpetuity, for the world is as timelessly eternal as God himself is.

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[32] Fred Dretske, „Simple Seeing," in *Perception, Knowledge and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Augustine

What of that other fountainhead of the idea of divine timeless eternity? Although in Book XI of the *Confessions* Augustine occasionally uses the analogy of vision to offer some understanding of what divine timelessly eternal knowledge is like[33] the analogy which appears to interest him much more is that of speech, and in particular our knowledge of our own speech, whether or not we express this publicly. He concentrates on this in the closing sections of Book XI, from xxvii (34) to the end, at that stage when, he thinks, the truth is beginning to dawn regarding the measurement of time. He takes the analogy of a voice sounding out. 'It sounds. It continues to sound, and then ceases. Silence has now come, and the voice is past. There is now no sound. Before it sounded it lay in the future. It could not be measured because it did not exist; and now it cannot be measured because it has ceased to be'.[34] But neither can a voice that is still sounding be measured. Yet when it comes to an end, then it has ceased to be. And how can what has ceased to be be measured? How then can the voice be measured?

> Nevertheless we do measure periods of time. And yet the times we measure are not those which do not yet exist, nor those which already have no exist- ence, nor those which extend over no interval of time, nor those which reach no conclusions. So the times we measure are not future nor past nor present nor those in process of passing away. Yet we measure periods of time.[35]

And if we suppose not merely a sound, but sung or spoken words, how shall we know that one of the syllables of those words is twice as long as another? 'How shall I keep my hold on the short, and how use it to apply a measure to the long, so as to verify that the long is twice as much? The long does not begin to sound unless the short has ceased to sound'.[36]

What do I measure when I measure the fact that one syllable is twice as long as another, when both syllables are past and have 'flown away'?[37]

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[33] Augustine, *Confessions*, e.g. 221.
[34] *Confessions*, 240.
[35] *Confessions*, 241.
[36] *Confessions*, 241.
[37] *Confessions*, 242.

It can't be the syllables I'm measuring because they have passed away, but something which is present, my memory of them. 'The impression which passing events make upon you abides when they are gone'.[38] And we can do this when we do not utter any sound, as when we mentally recite poems. I can decide to utter a sound lasting for ten seconds, and then utter it. In doing this, the mind expects, and intends and remembers, as the sound is sounded out. So, Augustine says, my life is a distension in several directions.[39] And Augustine draws a vivid contrast between the turmoil of earth and the tranquility of heaven. 'The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge into you'.[40]

But what of God himself? What of his eternal knowledge of the temporal order?

> Certainly if there were a mind endowed with such great knowledge and prescience that all things past and future could be known in the way I know a very familiar psalm, this mind would be utterly miraculous and amazing to the point of inducing awe. From such a mind nothing of the past would be hidden, nor anything of what remaining ages have in store, just as I have full knowledge of that psalm I sing. I know by heart what and how much of it has passed since the beginning, and what and how much remains until the end.[41]

Is this how it is with God, for Augustine? Does he know as we know, only more so? 'But far be it from you, Creator of the universe, creator of souls and bodies, far be it from you to know all future and past events in this kind of sense. You know them in a much more wonderful and much more mysterious way. ....Just as you knew heaven and earth in the beginning without that bringing any variation into your knowing, so you made heaven and earth in the beginning without that meaning a tension between past and future in your activity'.[42] And that's how Augustine leaves it.

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38 *Confessions*, 242.
39 *Confessions*, 243.
40 *Confessions*, 244.
41 *Confessions*, 245.
42 *Confessions*, 245.

Augustine holds to divine timeless eternality just as fervently as Boethius but he is much more guarded and agnostic, even sceptical, about how to understand such divine knowledge than Boethius. He certain does not favour the idea of immediate visual perception. He is, it seems, much less confident that we have the capacity necessary to elucidate it. And in view of the difficulties that follow from Boethius's understanding of God's eternal knowledge as a case of immediate perception, such reserve would seem to be the wiser stance.

How does God know the temporal order? It is tempting to answer that he knows because for him the temporal order is 'spread out in time'. But as we have seen in our discussion of Boethius, this is to spatialise time in a misleading way. Rather, it is better to use temporal analogies for God's knowledge of the temporal order if these are available. Augustine tries these analogies, and has what seem to be reasons to think that they don't work. In these circumstances is it not wiser to offer no analogies at all?

> Who can lay hold on the heart and give it fixity, so that for some little moment it may be stable, and for a fraction of time may grasp the splendour of constant eternity? Then it may compare eternity with temporal successiveness which never has any constancy, and will see there is no comparison possible.[43]

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TWO MODELS OF RADICAL REVELATION
IN AUSTRIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract. In this paper I highlight two opposing models of the notion of divine revelation: the propositional and the radical. The propositional understanding of revelation was central to theology and philosophy until the 19th century. Since then, a number of other models of revelation have emerged. I define as radical the understanding of revelation which emphasizes two features of revelation: 1) God's existence is *per se* revelatory; 2) God's revelation is *per se* self-revelation. I propose too an assessment of the notion of propositional revelation as presented by Richard Swinburne. And I offer detailed analyses of two representatives of the early understanding of divine revelation as self-revelation: the views of Bernard Bolzano and Anton Günther. Bolzano, the renowned mathematician, was also a philosopher of religion; and Günther, one of the most ingenious writers in Austrian philosophy, was not only a theologian but also a philosopher comparable to the important figures of 19th century German thought.[1]

Introduction

The expression "divine revelation" is traditionally considered as belonging to the vocabulary of Christian theology. According to theologians, divine revelation is the most fundamental theological notion without which no other theological concept can be properly understood and explicated.[2] Theological consideration of the concept of revelation, that is to say a theology of revelation, is therefore a fundamental discipline,

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[2] Josef Schmitz, *Offenbarung* (Düsseldorf: Pathmos, 1988), 10.

which systematically determines the building of theology.[3] On the other hand, a theology of revelation cannot merely consist of arguments based on supernatural revelation. Fundamental theology is first of all a philosophical discipline, for its methods and contents are based on what is traditionally termed unassisted, as opposed to supernaturally enlightened, human reason. A fully developed theology of revelation thus starts with the philosophy of divine revelation.

Just as the structure of a theology of revelation is dual, containing both introductory and higher level theological considerations, so too the philosophy of revelation has a twofold structure. While it can be conceived of as an introduction to theology properly so called, it is at the same time a philosophical discipline in its own right.[4] We can even say that a philosophy of revelation is the preeminent philosophical discipline inasmuch as it deals with the ultimate sources of human knowledge. According to the traditional understanding of theological propaedeutics, a merely philosophical approach to the problem of divine revelation consists in demonstrating the possibility, necessity, and discernability of revelation. As revelation entails the revealing subject, God, thus the philosophy of revelation—or at least some part of it—argues in due course for the existence and attributes of such a God.[5] There is also the important question, if there is a God Who reveals important information to certain persons, what kind of recipient is needed in order to be able to receive divine revelation? The question of the conditions of possibility for the human reception of divine revelation is for many authors the decisive philosophical question in a philosophy of revelation.[6]

I define the expression "divine revelation" as an act of God by which some uniquely significant information becomes accessible for a certain number of human and non-human persons concerning their origin, present situation, and future; as well as concerning the reality they live

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[3] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione per Ecclesiam Catholicam proposita* (Torino: Marietti, 1944), I, x–xi; Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Alba House, 1966).

[4] In the Introduction to *Models of Revelation,* Dulles defines his approach to the problem of revelation as belonging to the realm of fundamental theology, that is to say philosophy.

[5] Peter Eicher, *Offenbarung. Prinzip neuzeitlicher Theologie* (München: Kosel, 1977), 507.

[6] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

in and know to a certain extent.[7] The God of classical theism is such that any of His acts counts as a certain kind of revelation, inasmuch as an act of God is an act of an infinite and absolute being Who, by acting, reveals His infinity and absoluteness. As we shall see, the concept of divine revelation proves to be a complicated one, and the above definition serves as a preliminary orientation only.

A history of the concept of revelation should emphasize that it was in response to the naturalistic and rationalistic tendencies of the Enlightenment period that systematic theories of revelation of quite different kinds—from J. G. Fichte to the teaching of the First Vatican Council, or from F. D. Schleiermacher to Karl Barth—gradually emerged. Before the First Vatican Council no council or official declaration of the Church dealt with the concept of divine revelation in an articulate way and it was only the Second Vatican Council that issued a thoroughly developed text, that of *Dei Verbum,* explaining the Catholic standpoint in view of various debates on divine revelation. In both texts, however, the capability of natural, unassisted human reason to recognize the existence of God *without* divine revelation is clearly propounded.

One central point in the philosophical and theological discussions concerned the nature of divine revelation. For a long time, the Classical understanding of revelation took the term as signifying most importantly God's special actions by which He communicates some definite truths or propositions in order to inform certain human persons about verities indispensable for their salvation. Such revealed propositions were considered instructions—based on the authority of the Church's magisterium—to be listened to, freely acknowledged and followed by all persons wishing to participate in the divine work of salvation. However, the *propositional* understanding of revelation (hereafter PR) came to be challenged by a different approach to divine revelation, emphasized by theologians and philosophers seeking new ways to understand divine revelation. They gradually realized the insufficiencies of the notion of propositional revelation especially under the influence of new forms of

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[7] By 'God' I understand the conception of classical theism. Accordingly, there 'is' an ultimate, absolute and infinite, and in some sense personal being who has created reality in its totality by the act of his free will, who maintains this reality and takes care of it in a complex fashion, a being referred to as 'God' in the English language.

thought originating in the Kantian critique of traditional theology in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[8]

Let me term the other understanding of divine revelation *radical revelation* (hereafter RR). I call this kind of revelation radical for two reasons. First, it sees God's reality as revelatory *per se;* God's reality, on this view, is self-revelatory. Second, divine revelation is not considered as an activity of God resulting in a set of propositional truths, but rather as disclosing (manifesting or revealing) what God is in Himself, in a way that cannot be termed propositional in its genuine form. RR can properly be called *God's self-revelation*. There are various ways to construe what God's self-revelation consists in, but the way pointed out, for instance, in *Dei Verbum*—namely that God's self-revelation is His historical action—seems to be the most widely accepted view. This is not to say that divine revelation, as God's self-revelation, cannot be conceived of in a different way; as an example of another approach I shall investigate Anton Günther's view below.

Although it was F. W. J. Schelling, and following him G. W. F. Hegel, who invented and introduced the expression 'self-revelation' (*Selbstoffenbarung*) as a technical term into the philosophical and theological discussions of the 19th century, the *notion* had been present in various works before that time.[9] The German word for revelation, *Offenbarung*, was especially apt to give the term a broad meaning. *Offenbarung* means, literally, 'disclosing' or 'manifesting'. Thus German theologians, by using this word instead of a version of the Latin *revelatio* (as most European languages do), had a language-based inclination to understand revelation as the most general

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[8] See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), I, II, II, III, VII. Even if the distinction between propositional and non-propositional revelation can be typically identified as traditionally characteristic of the mainstream Catholic and Protestant viewpoints respectively, Keith Ward is right in pointing out that the conception of propositional revelation "is nowhere better set forth than in Calvin's *Institutes*." Ward offers a detailed and instructive analysis of this difference in Keith Ward, *Revelation and Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 212–232.

[9] The English *self-revelation* was the translation of *Selbstoffenbarung* and did not appear before the 1820s. In German, solid compound forms of *selbst* and *Offenbarung* start to surface by the end of the 1500s. *Selbstoffenbarung* in the definite meaning of *revealing oneself as oneself* was first used, not yet as a technical term, by the 16–17th century German mystic, Jacob Böhme.

act of God manifesting or disclosing Himself.[10] Yet the ancient doctrine of the Trinity already shows that various revealed propositions have been latently considered as entailing divine self-revelation. Christianity, by emphasizing the propositional character throughout the centuries, never denied that PR was based in the last analysis on God's self-revelation.[11] The theological synergy between Christian denominations throughout the 20th century in matters of revelation is well demonstrated by the effects of the radical theory of revelation of Karl Barth on the one hand, and the intricate understanding of revelation offered by Karl Rahner on the other hand.

Divine revelation understood as PR highlights two aspects of revelation: first, the aspect of propositional truths explicit in the Scripture, in the tradition, and in the teachings of the Church. Second, it accentuates the recipient of PR in terms of the intellectual and volitional functions required for the acceptance of a revelation propositional in character. While divine revelation as PR narrows down the possible scale of God's revealing activity, it also reduces the possibilities of human persons in communicating with God. Thus, PR does not consider divine revelation as an encounter between God and man, nor does it allow features of immediacy in the divine-human relationship. Rather, PR entails a notion of the recipient of revelation as a being possessing especially understanding and will, in order to conceive the propositions and to approve them. On the other hand, the emphasis on propositions goes together with the emphasis on the characteristic warrant of such propositions, that is the authority of the Church.

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[10] The German *Offenbarung* was originally the translation of the Greek *apokalupsis*. Yet the Greek word, itself again a translation of the Hebrew *gala*, meant simply the removal of a cover. In German, however, the compound is put together from *offen* (open), and *barung* (making bare, naked, free). Unintentionally, the German translation introduced a much wider meaning into the traditional meaning of *apocalupsis-revelatio.*

[11] The explicitly *propositional* understanding of divine revelation was proposed during the post-Tridentine period, by among others Francisco Suarez. His understanding of revelation shifted the emphasis from the action of God (understood as power) to the action of God (understood as object, see Latourelle, pp. 181 sq.). God's revelation is "the simple and sufficient proposition of the revealed objects" (Latourelle, p. 183.). Avery Dulles considers propositional revelation as one *model* out of various other models (Dulles 1992).

As opposed to PR, divine revelation understood as RR spells out the radical character of divine revelation. By "radical character," I understand, first, the fact that divine revelation does not merely consist of propositions but rather *sets of propositions*, that is *systems* of propositional truths. The unity of such systems however cannot be expressed propositionally; so divine revelation is in the last analysis *non-propositional*. Second, RR emphasizes that divine revelation is identical with divine action in the various meanings of the term, but primarily with reference to God's activity aimed at fulfilling His intention to realize the economy of salvation. RR is not confined to the created world; just as the work of salvation is realized by God's revealing His own reality, so too RR refers to God's original activity taken in all the four senses of the term mentioned above. Such a view of RR does not imply that God's absolute and infinite reality can become revealed in its absoluteness and infinity to created beings. It implies, however, that God communicates Himself not only immanently, that is in His absolute and infinite reality, but also with respect to the created world. Inasmuch as RR implies PR in a certain way, RR does not lack propositional truths, whereas its whole significance is given in view of God's full activity.

In what follows I examine two models of divine revelation. In section 2, I consider the model of PR by considering Richard Swinburne's view. In section 3, I develop two versions of the model of RR based on the work of the Austrian philosopher Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848). Another Austrian philosopher, Anton Günther (1783–1863) develops a different version of RR, which I investigate in section 4. As we shall see, Bolzano offers a weak and Günther a strong version of RR.

Propositional Revelation

In order to explain the characteristics of PR, I make use of Richard Swinburne's view as propounded in *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy*. I have chosen Swinburne's book because he clearly points out that his work is about *propositional revelation*, while he does not deny the existence

of another kind of revelation.[12] Swinburne spells out in detail that some propositions central to divine revelation may be understood in metaphorical or analogical senses, that is in ways not immediately given in the normal use of sentences containing such propositions. His view of PR is complex and allows a perspicacious interpretation of PR. I shall, however, point out that even his elaborate understanding of PR can be criticized for not taking into account what I term RR. The main point of my criticism consists in this, that PR cannot be properly investigated without appropriately contemplating the dimension of RR.

Swinburne briefly investigates the distinction between PR and another kind of revelation, God's action in human history. According to Swinburne,

> Divine revelation may be either of God, or by God of propositional truth. Christianity has claimed that Christian revelation has involved both of these; God revealed himself in becoming incarnate (i.e. human) as Jesus Christ, and by the teaching of Jesus and the Church which he founded God revealed various propositional truths. My primary concern in this book is with revelation in the secondary sense of revelation of propositional truth."[13]

As becomes clear from the above quotation, Swinburne distinguishes between two basic kinds of revelation: 1. The revelation "of God," that is to say of God revealing Himself in the incarnation of Christ. 2. The revelation "by God of propositional truth," which I termed PR above. Swinburne's emphasis is on the second kind, without however denying the existence of further kinds, such as knowledge of God made available to us in private ways, or God's actions in history. He suggests, however, that in his approach the propositional form of revelation remains the main target of investigation. He argues that God's self-revelation or historical actions cannot be properly analyzed in non-propositional terms.

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[12] The problem of propositional revelation has been considered and analyzed in Terence Penelhum's essay (in: Avis, op. cit. See also Dulles, op. cit.).

[13] Richard Swinburne, *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–2. In the first edition of his book, Swinburne does not speak of God's self-revelation; he only points out that though there are various forms of revelation his concern is with revelation of propositional truth. See Swinburne, *Revelation*, 1992, 2–3.

The problem of PR can be seen more clearly if we try to clarify what Swinburne understands by a proposition. He carefully distinguishes between token and type sentences, and defines the proposition as expressed in token sentences:

> The proposition which a token sentence s expresses is that element of claim in what is said which is also made by any other token sentence (whether of the same type or not) which is synonymous with s.[14]

A proposition, then, is the meaning of a token sentence, which can be expressed by other token sentences as well. In order to be able to grasp such a meaning, it needs to be in a propositional form, according to Swinburne; that is in a form, which makes it possible to understand the proposition. Thus for instance I can have the same proposition in two token sentences, one in German, the other in English, and if I have a sufficient knowledge of the two languages, I am able to grasp the same proposition in both sentences. A proposition describing some features of God can be grasped in various token sentences, for instance in various languages. In all cases, I grasp the same proposition.

"Grasping the same proposition," however, is not without difficulties in the Christian context. Depending on the meaning of 'grasping' and of similar terms, we can distinguish between a traditional and a rationalistic understanding of certain propositions of Christianity. According to the rationalistic understanding, human beings are able to grasp or understand fully every proposition about God. The traditional understanding, on the other hand, very often refers to the notion of 'mysterium'. Accordingly, there are *second order mysteries* (*mysteria non stricte dicta*) which can be grasped or understood fully once they are revealed. Such mysteries can be expressed in propositions that are clear and can be sufficiently grasped by human reason. Such a mystery is, for instance, the doctrine of God's incarnation, which can be argued for once divine incarnation is already an accomplished fact. Thus it can be argued that God, if He is infinitely good and human beings cannot be helped otherwise, may take a human form in order to manifest His love for human beings and to ensure their salvation.

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[14] Swinburne, *Revelation*, 2007, 8.

   On the other hand, there are *first order mysteries* (*mysteria stricte dicta*) which, even if revealed, cannot be fully grasped or understood. The proposition "God is three persons in one substance" is such that its meaning, that is its propositional character, cannot be properly understood by a finite mind. If we define a proposition as what can be grasped or understood fully, then first order mysteries, even if expressed in propositional form, cannot be called propositional strictly speaking. Even if we introduce metaphor and analogy into our understanding of such mysteries, we still face the difficulty that there is a categorical difference between a metaphorical and analogical understanding of certain propositions (such as propositions in literary works) on the one hand, and propositions referring to first order mysteries on the other hand. Propositions referring to first order mysteries cannot be propositionally understood, since the infinite and absolute God—in accordance with the view of classical theism—cannot be fully conceived of, grasped, or understood.

   The expression 'mystery' refers first to *mysteria stricte dicta.* A mystery is precisely such that its meaning cannot be grasped or understood fully. Mysteries considered understandable once revealed are mysteries only in virtue of first order mysteries. God is above all non-understandable, given His absoluteness and infinity; He is the very first "first order mystery." Only because of first order mystery am I able to understand second order mysteries that are derivative of the previous kind. In order to be able to conceive of propositions expressing second order mysteries, I need to have the conception of first order mysteries, that is a conception of divine revelation as possessing the character of such mysteries. Divine revelation is a revelation, of the first order, of first order mysteries. Even if they can be expressed in propositional form, they are not, most importantly of a propositional character.

   Let me briefly point out the problem of PR from a different angle. According to Bernard Bolzano (whose concept of revelation will be considered below), one of the most important terms in logic is "proposition as such" (*Satz an sich*). "Propositions as such" exist ideally in themselves, but can be exemplified in acts of judgment by judging them true or false. Thus in Bolzano's vocabulary 'judgments' (*Urteile*) more or less amount to what we have termed 'propositions' above. A judgment in Bolzano's definition is a proposition taken to be true or false in an act of judgment, that is to say in a cognitive act. We may say that a judgment

is a proposition exemplified in the act of any created being. Judgments exemplify propositions as such in various ways, but it is not the case that every proposition as such can be exemplified in judgments. There are propositions as such which we did not, do not, and shall not know; and others we cannot exemplify properly in judgments. In a similar way, a given set of judgments J is capable of exemplifying a given proposition p only to a limited extent, and the proposition as such 'p' can never be grasped *in its 'p' character* in any or every J entailing $j_1, j_2, j_3 \ldots j_n$. We may thus say that 'p' is by no means a judgment, but rather what judgments refer to by exemplifying it. In the last analysis, the set (*Inbegriff*) 'P' of all propositions as such ('p_1', 'p_2', 'p_3'… 'p_n') is not even a proposition as such, but rather, as Bolzano points out, is identical in a certain way with an aspect of God's knowledge.

As Bolzano writes,

> The all-knowing God knows not only every true but also every false proposi-
> tion (*Satz*). He knows not only those propositions that are taken to be true
> or conceived of by any created being, but also those which are not taken to
> be true and are not even conceived of by any creature either now or in the
> future.[15]

Bolzano's analysis points out that judgments (or Swinburne's proposi-
tions) are such that they refer to their own non-propositional dimension.
Even if we do not take into account the notion of first and second order
mysteries, it seems to be possible to argue that no propositional truth is
a self-contained unit of meaning, but refers to greater contexts, in the
last analysis to God's mind, which cannot be expressed propositionally
in its full extent. If a message M is a unit of communication such that
propositions $p_1, p_2, p_3 \ldots p_n$ are moments of M, then M is a unit implying
P, that is the set of $p_1, p_2, p_3 \ldots p_n$. Given that M is a greater unit of
communication than P, M implies P but is not identical with P, that is
to say M > P, in which '>' expresses implication but not identity. We can
thus say that P expresses or exemplifies M, only if P is implied in M in
such a way that it exemplifies M in the form of $p_1, p_2, p_3 \ldots p_n$. On the

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[15] Bernard Bolzano, *Grundlegung der Logik* (*Wissenschaftslehre I/II*), edited by Friedrich
Kambartel (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1963), 23. When not noted otherwise, I am responsible
for the translations of the original texts.

other hand, P exemplifies M, only if M is not implied in P otherwise than in the form of p1, p2, p3… pn. If propositions are characteristic of P and if M > P, then M is by definition not a proposition, but a message that implies propositions. M as such is thus not propositional but can be exemplified propositionally in terms of P. This point can be expressed with respect to the Christian notion of revelation (CR): if CR is M, CR is not propositional, although it can be exemplified propositionally. To be more precise, CR is such that it is a set of messages [M] implying M1, M2, M3… Mn, each of which can be expressed propositionally, but none of which is in itself a proposition.

Because of the relationship between first and second order mysteries one can say that divine revelation conceived of in terms of PR cannot be understood, save on the basis of divine revelation understood in terms of the non-propositional dimension of revelation. The conception of RR refers precisely to that dimension. Thus, any proper propositional investigation of divine revelation presupposes, inasmuch as possible, a proper understanding of RR. If divine revelation is reduced to a merely propositional conception, we may not be able to understand the nature of PR, given that PR is based on, in the sense of being derivative of, RR.

The Bolzano Model of Radical Revelation[16]

Bolzano's model of divine revelation (hereafter BM) is in many ways close to PR, but, as will be clear, his understanding of divine testimony as the crucial element in BM makes it a version of RR. Testimony or witnessing is a biblical term that Bolzano investigates first in its scriptural background. As he explains, divinely revealed religions, such

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[16] Bolzano is well known for his work on the mathematics of infinity. Anton Günther, in the view of some of his commentators the most ingenious Austrian philosopher of the 19th century, was opposed not only to Bolzano, his Prague teacher in philosophy, but also to the emerging Neo-Scholasticism; instead Günther chose a way of thinking that was sharply polemical both with German idealism and the traditional philosophizing in the Church. His publications led to an investigation against him in Rome. After the condemnation of some of his teachings by the Church in 1857 Günther withdrew from public life.

as the religion of Israel and Christianity, always considered themselves as warranted by God's testimony (Hebrew *edah* [Strong 05713], Greek *marturia* [Strong 3144]).

Bolzano offers a general and a particular understanding of God's testimony. In the general sense, testimony is defined as follows:

> I say […] that A *testifies* to B a certain belief b, if A undertakes an action with the definite intention that B, when proceeding in accordance with his best insights, be able to see it as A's will that he accept belief b on the basis that A takes b to be true.[17]

General testimony has several kinds that share the common feature of being expressed in certain characteristic events in the created world. Thus, there are oral and written forms of testimony and even the lack of testimony in the explicit sense of the word may count as God's testimony in a given situation. God's testimony in the proper sense, however, is God's utmost action in which He testifies His own action *in and by the act itself*; this Bolzano terms God's *authentic action*.

God's testimony is what Bolzano takes to be *God's revelation* (*Offenbarung*, hereafter R) in the particular sense of testimony. There is an active and a passive sense of God's testimony. Revelation in the active sense is the act of revelation undertaken by a subject in order to express a message to another subject. Revelation in the passive sense is the result of the act of revelation. In Bolzano's definitions, both senses are important, since revelation as an action always results in revelation as an object.

Bolzano's definition of revelation has several steps through which he offers an ever more specific meaning of the term. In its first and general sense, Bolzano defines revelation as follows:

> R1: A reveals or announces belief b to B if A is a full or a partial cause of the emergence of b in B.[18]

In R1 there is no information as to the exact character of A's revealing b to B. The expression "full or partial cause" refers to the fact that 'revealing'

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[17] Bernard Bolzano, *Lehrbuch der Religionswissenschaft*, Vols. 1–4 (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag-Günther Holzbog, 1994), I, 108.

[18] Ibid., I, 107.

may or may not use mediating moments, such as words or other signs. On the other hand, we do not know whether 'revealing' or 'announcing' is an articulately intentional action of A, or if it belongs rather to the nature of A that, inasmuch as it is A, it reveals b to B.

In R2 however we can say with Bolzano that

> R2: A reveals or announces b to B if A is a full or a partial cause of the emergence of b in B, and A's action is accompanied by knowledge and will as to its own activity.[19]

R1 is termed by Bolzano *inauthentic* revelation; R2, consequently, is *authentic* revelation. The authenticity of R2 is given in the intentional character of A's revealing b to B. A has the intention to reveal b to B in ways that can be mediate or immediate, that is A can be both a full or a partial cause of b in B. Bolzano, moreover, emphasizes that the intentional character of A's action is given by both A's knowledge and will, in accordance with Bolzano's understanding of God as possessing these faculties.

So far Bolzano has defined 'revelation' in a general sense; now he turns his attention to *divine* revelation. R3 is for Bolzano *divine revelation in the inauthentic sense*. Divine revelation in the inauthentic sense is such that God reveals or announces b to B in such a way that b is *unconditionally willed and known by God*. That is to say b is revelation in a general religious sense of the word, inasmuch as b is such as to contribute to the salvation of a certain number of persons. In Bolzano's definition:

> R3: A reveals or announces b to B if A is a full or partial cause of the emergence of b in B, and A's action is accompanied by unconditional knowledge and will as to its own activity.[20]

In the sense of R3 all religions are revelations, inasmuch as, Bolzano explains, there is no human or non-human belief that is not some effect of God's will and knowledge. Since 'religion' in Bolzano's understanding is the totality of beliefs (*Meinungen*) possessed by a human being at any time of his life with reference to his virtue and happiness, so various religions of human history can indeed count as 'revelations' in accordance with R3.

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[19] Ibid., I, 107.
[20] Ibid., I, 112.

It is however only definition R4 that offers Bolzano's most charac-
teristic understanding of divine revelation. We have divine revelation in
the strict sense of the word if and only if

> R4: A reveals b to B if A is the full cause of b in B, and A's action is not only
> accompanied by unconditional knowledge and will as to its own activity,
> but A *testifies* that b is fully acknowledged and willed by A in order that B
> accepts b as R.[21]

In contradistinction to the previous definitions, revelation in the sense of
R4 is not restricted to being merely an 'announcement'; it can take various
forms which we have briefly considered above in connection with the
kinds of God's testimonies. The key concept in R4 is indeed 'testimony'
which, on BM, is an ultimate concept not to be analyzed in other terms.
As Bolzano emphasizes, God's testimony coincides with God's action as
to some sort of change in the world. He seems to think that, in certain
cases, the absence of an anticipated change (such as the interruption of
the Sun's visible movement across the sky) can be seen as a change in the
world produced by God's intervention. Bolzano stresses too that God's
action is intentional with respect not only to b but also to B's acceptance
of b as R. If b entails that A takes b to be true unconditionally and fully,
then it follows deontically that B too takes b to be true unconditionally.
Nevertheless, Bolzano does not raise the problem of the conditions of
the subject's understanding of a certain occurrence, physical or mental,
as God's revelation.

R4 entails God's authentic action understood as authentically divine
revelation accompanied by God's unconditional knowledge and will in
order that B accept b as revealed by God. God's testimony, in Bolzano's
view, cannot be unconditionally identified either with the existence of
Scriptures, or with a series of historic events, such as Christ's life, or
even with the magisterium or the sacramental life of the Church. R is
expressed in all of these factors, but it remains, essentially, God's utmost
and authentic action—His testimony that makes any of the factors
mentioned a moment in R.

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[21] Ibid., I, 113–115.

It is important to note that Bolzano applies the then widely accepted distinction between formal and material revelation.[22] R is formal if its content, once revealed, can be understood by the human mind in such a way that the content of formal revelation is by itself evident and certain. R is, however, material only if its content, even if revealed, cannot be fully understood by the human mind. The human being can only accept material revelation 'in faith'.

If I term BM a sort of RR, I refer not only to his understanding of divine testimony, but also to the emphasis on the very fact that there is material revelation. I do not want to deny however that many points in Bolzano's views stand closer to PR than to RR.

The Günther Model of Radical Revelation

The Günther model of RR (hereafter GM) as put forward in Günther's collected works, can be approached in three ways.[23] In terms of ecclesiology, Günther holds that RR is factually present in the Church, since the Church is in a way Christ Himself; and while Christ has become invisible after His ascension, there is a visible representative of His person, the visible side of the invisible Christ, namely, the bishop of Rome.

In terms of Christology, RR is fully given in the person of Christ. Christ is the unique, unrepeatable moment not only in the history of humanity, but *a fortiori* in God's reality itself. Christ is the miracle as such, as Günther holds, who consummated in His person the fullness of R. The structure of GM can be reduced to the simple statement that Jesus Christ embodies and expresses "the fullness of God." (Col 2:9) Günther emphasizes the factual character of the person of Christ; so much so that for him the existence of Christ is the ultimate fact of all possible and

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[22] Ibid., I, 128.

[23] Anton Günther, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Neue Ausgabe in neun Baenden (Wien, 1882. Unveränderte Nachdruck, Frankfurt: Minerva G. M. B. H., 1968). Since Günther's thoughts are not systematically proposed in any of his works, I have also made use of the works of some commentators, most importantly Josef Mader, *Offenbarung als Selbstoffenbarung Gottes. Hegels Religionsphilosophie als Anstoss für ein neues Offenbarungsverständnis in der katholischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München-Hamburg-London: LIT, 2000) and Joseph Pritz, Glauben und Wissen bei Anton Günther. Eine Einführung in sein Leben und Werk mit einer Auswahl aus seinen Schriften (Wien: Herder 1963).

actual facts. Just as the human being is God's testimony (*Gottes Zeugnis*) in a certain way, so too Christ is *Zeugnis,* but infinitely more so than the human being in the created order (Günther, *Janusköpfe*, 115).

There is a third approach to GM in Günther's writings: the strictly speaking *philosophical* understanding of divine revelation (Günther, *Peregrins Gastmahl*, 157 sq.). It is due to Günther's Cartesianism that his starting point is human consciousness, more precisely the kind of certitude given in one's own self-consciousness. Following the Cartesian line of argument, Günther points out that certitude is in the last analysis self-referring and any heteronomous form of certainty is logically dependent on the former and basic kind. Still, as Günther points out, human certainty can never be absolute. In any act of knowledge, I recognize not only the certainty of my own conscious existence, but also its limited character. I as a conscious being am finite—an insight immediately given together with the insight into the certainty of my own conscious existence. I cannot however recognize the limited nature of my own conscious existence except on the basis of an even deeper insight—given as the third moment in the insight of self-certitude—of the existence of infinity as opposed to my own finitude. Since self-certitude is limited, I recognize that there is an infinite self-certitude in contradistinction to which I recognize my own limited certitude. In other words, Günther holds that it is possible for us to arrive at the recognition of God's infinity on the basis of the recognition of our own finitude.[24]

As Günther writes: „Just as my own knowledge of myself (as an existence for itself) is certain, so my knowledge of God is certain." (Günther, *Janusköpfe*, 275). Although Günther seems to suggest that the certainty is of the same kind in the two cases (in the case of my own consciousness, and in the knowledge of God), he in fact means only an analogy between the finite and the infinite. The finite character of the human person can be comprehended as given in the inherent process of human consciousness; and that is the process that leads, in the final instance, to the recognition of God's infinity as surpassing my own human and finite existence.[25]

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[24] This is clearly Descartes' standpoint too. Cf. Mader, *Offenbarung als Selbstoffenbarung Gottes,* 285.

[25] Mader, *Offenbarung als Selbstoffenbarung Gottes*, 280.

The finite nature of human consciousness is expressed also in that it becomes realized in three steps or phases. First, the human ego conceives itself as an object. Second, in grasping itself as an object it realizes its subjectivity. And it is in the third step, in the synthesis of its being an object and a subject at the same time, that human consciousness is able to conceive itself as a *person*. The human person is endowed with the faculties of passivity (mind, *Vernunft*) and activity (will, *Wille*) which are united in the substance of the person. In contradistinction to 20th century personalist philosophies, Günther's understanding of the person culminates in the third moment of the process of self-realization, in the synthesis of mind and will. The human person is free, although his freedom is limited like his self-certitude (Günther, *Süd– und Nordlichter*, 140 sq.).

In considering the logical structure of the three approaches it becomes clear that, for Günther, divine revelation as embodied in the person of Christ is the most important moment. This ultimate fact is the logical starting point for discovering the life of divine reality as it is in itself as well as the life of the human person who, in accordance with the Christian understanding, is made in the likeness of God. We are able to understand human personhood as an image of God, because God made human beings in His likeness. We nevertheless know of God in virtue of the fact of divine revelation, and more particularly in virtue of the fullness of revelation embodied in the person of Christ. At this point it becomes clear again that in Günther's view the philosophy and theology of revelation are fused in a way characteristic of German Idealism.

Thus it becomes possible for Günther to develop his complex model of divine revelation as *self-revelation*. He distinguishes between internal and external revelation (*revelatio ad intra*, *revelatio ad extra)*, the former meaning the immanent life of divine reality (Günther, *Vorschule I*, 112 sq.). The fundamental point is that God in himself is nothing other than self-disclosure, *revelatio*; divine being is identical with being disclosed or revealed, first immanently in God Himself. Just as the existence of human persons consists in the process of self-realization, via the three phases mentioned above, so too God is self-realization in the ultimate sense of the word, in a sense we are not capable of understanding fully. The way we understand divine self-realization is linear or sequential; still it is a way of conceiving of God's reality. Accordingly, God realizes Himself in the three persons of the Trinity, each of Whom represents a step towards

His own absolute fullness. The Father is understood thereby as God's self-objectification; the Son as the subjective moment in divine reality; and the Holy Spirit as the synthesis of the two previous moments in God's essence. God as trinity and God as unity coincide fully in God's divine reality; but it can humanly be reconstructed as an infinite process or activity in which the three moments can be distinguished.

God's reality understood as 'revelation' implies no necessary mechanism, but rather absolute freedom; and this understanding is consonant with the traditional Christian thesis that goodness is self-diffusing (*bonum est diffusivum sui*).[26] God is "by His nature" (that is to say in accordance with His absolute freedom) self-revealing. The very basis of self-revelation is God's reality seen as a process of *immanent* self-revelation. Such a view seems theologically in no way reproachable as Günther emphasizes that the relationship between the three persons and the one divine substance forms an ultimate unity understood in accordance with the traditional Christian conception.

As Günther writes,

> I recognize and confess one God in three persons. He is One in His essence or being. He is Three as to the form of His existence. I recognize Him in His one essence, because thinking needs only one being that exists by itself in order to grasp, on the basis of that one being, all other beings which do not exist by themselves. The One, however, is in three Persons, because He as being by itself must at the same time be His own Knowledge by itself. This Knowledge is absolute self-consciousness or absolute self-intuition (*Selbstschauung*) in such a way that He, while totally emanating Himself, sets His own being against Himself *in the total identity* (or essential selfsameness) of the one who emanates and the one who is emanated. (Günther, *Peregrins Gastmahl*, 355).

Günther's understanding of external revelation (*revelatio ad extra*) follows the Christian understanding in an original way. As opposed to Hegel, who maintained no difference between the internal and the external (historical) life of the Spirit, Günther suggests that it is crucial for Christian philosophy to emphasize the categorical difference between internal and external revelation. God is entirely free in initiating and accomplishing

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[26] Cf. "Bonum enim, secundam suam rationem, est diffusivum sui." Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II q, 1 a, 4. And see also Bonaventure: "Secundum igitur bonum summe diffusium est sui," *Itinerarium*, Ch. VI.

His external revelation, that is to say His primary and secondary revelation. These aspects of revelation are transcendent; they constitute, first, the creation of non-divine reality (primary revelation *ad extra*), and second, the work of redemption realized by Christ (secondary revelation *ad extra*). Creation is God's primary external revelation—the center and accomplishment of which is the first human being, "the first Adam." There is again a threefold structure in the primary external revelation that I shall not consider here in detail; suffice it to mention that human beings, as authentic representatives of this kind of divine revelation, are finite manifestations or exemplifications of the structure of God's internal revelation.

As opposed to the "first Adam," Jesus Christ the "second Adam" is not only the fullness of divine revelation *ad extra,* but at the same time the fullness of divine revelation. Divine revelation as expressed in Christ can be approached from two angles. On the one hand, the person of Christ represents God's redemptive act, which is to abolish original sin and to restore the initial innocence of human beings. This aspect of divine revelation concerns the dimension of the past. On the other hand, Christ is the manifestation not only of God's external revelation, but also of the internal one such that He discloses a *new moment* in divine reality. By assuming human nature, the second person of the Trinity in a way deifies humanity, that is He makes some human persons partake in divine reality in a way that was not possible before the incarnation of Christ. This aspect of divine revelation concerns the dimension of the future.

From the human perspective, it seems that the importance of the secondary divine revelation *ad extra* consists in the fact that it expresses the dynamism of God's internal life in a particular way. It expresses divine reality as a process of renovation, as it were, in which new moments of God's reality become manifest. The importance of this aspect of secondary divine revelation *ad extra* can be seen as soon as we consider the future aspect of revelation. Divine revelation, in accordance with the Christian understanding, has not only the aspect of past and present, but that of future too in which the totality of God's reality becomes visible for some human and non-human persons in what is traditionally called the beatific vision. God's self-revelation reaches its full radicalism in that moment, whereas divine revelation is given in its fullness already in the person of Christ. An important point to emphasize: the dynamic

structure of GM makes the aspect of the future an inherent moment
of divine revelation in a way that is not characteristic of BM (Günther,
Vorschule I, 96 sq.).[27]

Günther distinguishes two conceptions of RR. According to the
first, God is self-revealing in Himself and for Himself in His own
immanent reality; according to the second, He is self-revealing to the
created world in virtue of the incarnation of the second person of the
Trinity. Günther attributes the fullness of RR to the second sense of
self-revelation; God's self-revelation in the proper sense of the word
becomes realized in virtue of the secondary revelation *ad extra*. The
radical character of GM can be sufficiently seen in all these moments; it
is not only God's self-revelation that is at the center of GM, but rather
the *radical self-revelation of God*.

Still, God's radical revelation remains a perennial mystery for the
human mind. Since the human mind is finite, divine revelation, even if it
is received as fully as possible, even if it discloses God's innermost reality,
remains a secret.[28] Divine revelation, we may say, is primarily a *mysterium
stricte dictum*, it is—to use the distinction mentioned in the description of
BM—*material revelation* in its essence. There is no conceivable proposi-
tion, which can fully express, exemplify, or make propositionally clear
what God's revelation is in its material essence.

As opposed to BM, therefore, GM is based on the peculiar, redemp-
tive or salvific fact of DR. Philosophical theology is based on the same
moment, with the consequence however that there is even less room for
the distinction between natural and supernaturally enlightened reason in
GM. In this sense, Günther's philosophical theology is more radical than
BM. Still, both models share the principle of divine warrant in the context
of Church, tradition, and magisterium. Günther's emphasis on DR fits
in well with his understanding of philosophical theology as a reflection
of objective data; above all the datum of the Incarnation.

In both models, the concept of RR hangs together with the radical
character of the respective philosophical theologies. The radicalism of
philosophical theology is expressed in Günther's thought in his ac-
centuated anti-Scholasticism. For Günther, it was the all too strong

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[27] Günther is convinced that his "speculative theology" is the way in which Christianity
as the true philosophy would demonstrate divine truth in its fullness in the future.

[28] Mader, *Offenbarung als Selbstoffenbarung Gottes*, 268.

rationalistic tendencies of Scholasticism, which led to the emergence of monistic philosophies in the 19th century. Christian philosophy should overcome, in Günther's view, the monistic tendencies both in scholasticism and in monistic philosophical systems. The only way to reach that objective is the standpoint of a strong metaphysical dualism between the divine and the human. As Günther writes: "My theism is the result of a life-long process in which I have become fully conscious of my own disgust concerning all forms of deification of created beings, all forms of making God and the creature essentially equal." (Günther, *Janusköpfe*, 411).

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THE CHALLENGE OF THEODICY
AND THE DIVINE ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSE

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Abstract. Any new attempt to cope with the problem of theodicy is forced to reinterpret and remodify the classic set of divine attributes. Classical monotheism, at least in the Christian or Islamic tradition, emphasizes the concept of God as a personal, almighty being who is in a completely free relation to the world. However, even within Christianity we find other tendencies which might help us to rewrite the idea that God has some sort of libertarian and unrestricted access to the world. The following article raises the question whether God, as an absolute being, can influence the course of the world directly. The answer to this question has an enormous impact on the problem of theodicy: If God's non-intervention is based on God's essence (rather than any form of initial self-restriction), then God cannot be held directly responsible for not performing direct acts of intervention.

The Battlefield

Is there any current debate on theodicy? If we put it this way, we have to say that there is always a current debate on theodicy. The problem in question is an everlasting problem for theology and philosophy as well, but the increasing pressure coming from atheistic writers (one might recall the very sketchy and philosophically biased book *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins) forces philosophy and theology to take a look at the problem of theodicy over and over again.

On the other side, a brief look at the contemporary agenda of systematic theology leaves us with the strange impression that the battlefield is already quiet. A large percentage of systematic theologians endorse what is often referred to as the "free-will-approach"; a minority still holds on to other "solutions" of the problem in question. Thus, three parties seem to segregate the area of interest and you can find hardly any compromise

between them.[1] The contemporary approaches still circle around the so-called free-will-defense[2] (FWD) on the one side, and around process-theodicy[3] (PT) and a mystery-approach on the other. In addition to the above mentioned strategies, Friedrich Hermanni has recently proposed a defense of Leibniz's best-of-all-possible-worlds strategy. His considerations may help us to get some valuable insights into certain notions which constitute the backbone of the problem of theodicy. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take a sidestep to examine some aspects of Hermanni's No-Better-World-Theory in addition to a reevaluation of FWD.

Although FWD and PT share a common appreciation of human freedom, they represent rivaling positions and disagree with respect to some crucial issues: free-will-theodicy theorists, like Richard Swinburne[4] or Alvin Plantinga[5], emphasize a so-called "classical" concept of God—a concept which tells us that God has to be regarded as an almighty, completely good, benevolent, non-material, omniscient, and perfect person Who is in a free and interpersonal relationship to the world as a creation that emerged out of nothing else but God's initial act alone. So, for the free-will-theodicy theorist, every process-theological account involves either the immediate abandoning of Christian theism[6], or an almost blatant withdrawal into a dualism which is incompatible with Christian monotheism.[7] On the other side, for the process-theologian,

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[1] As an example, see the appendix in the new edition of Armin Kreiner, *Gott im Leid: Zur Stichhaltigkeit der Theodizee-Argumente* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder-Verlag, 2005).

[2] Compare as an excellent summary Armin Kreiner, *Gott im Leid: Zur Stichhaltigkeit der Theodizee-Argumente* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder-Verlag, 1997), 207–319. A more recent version of FWD can be found in Klaus von Stosch, *Gott—Macht—Geschichte: Versuch einer theodizeesensiblen Rede vom Handeln Gottes* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder-Verlag, 2006).

[3] Cf. David Basinger, *Divine Power in Process Theism: A Philosophical Critique* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, eds., *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000); John B. Cobb, *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969); David R. Griffin, *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

[4] Cf. Richard Swinburne, "The Free Will Defence," in *Teodicea oggi?*, ed. Marco M. Olivetti (Padua: CEDAM, 1988), 585–596.

[5] Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

[6] Cf. William Hasker, "The Problem of Evil in Process Theism and Classical Free Will Theism," *Process Studies* 29 (2000): 194–208; Kreiner 1997, 103–124.

[7] Cf. Kreiner 1997, 103–124.

free-will-theodicy is a relic of an old-fashioned metaphysics which is no longer adequate, given the truth of the evolutionary origin of the cosmos and the many accidental events that led to its present stage. Furthermore, the idea of a personal God—which is crucial for free-will-theorists—leads to a much too anthropomorphic picture of God's relation to the world. The classical concept of omnipotence seems to be a dead-end street. Therefore, process-theology is searching for a more advanced metaphysical ground on which the architecture of the Christian worldview can be built– an architecture that is meant to combine the ontological commitments of the natural sciences with the conviction that there exists a loving, caring and calling God in and beyond the universe. Nevertheless, process-theodicy– viewed from the perspective of its results—is just another version of a free-will-defense, though it points to an important and noteworthy strategy: the restriction of God's omnipotence and ability to intervene on assumed metaphysical grounds.

The third group, labeled as "mystery theology," can't be easily categorized or described. One might call it, tentatively of course, the "case of Job." This position permanently puts into question every so called "theoretical solution" of the problem of theodicy.[8] "Auschwitz" remains the key word here, indicating the purely negative result of any attempt to resolve the problem in question. Moreover, this approach holds that any *theoretical* answer would be a betrayal of those who suffered immeasurable pain in Auschwitz and in other archetypical outcomes of human cruelty. The measureless sufferings experienced during the Holocaust do not only bring into question any theological attempt, they bring into question the trustworthiness of reason itself.[9] It is not surprising that a more Continental philosophy and theology might support this view; it finds adherents in certain branches of post-idealistic and post-modern philosophy.

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[8] Cf. eg. Gerd Neuhaus, *Frömmigkeit der Theologie: Zur Logik der offenen Theodizeefrage* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder-Verlag, 2003).

[9] Cf. Johann Baptist Metz, "Theodizee-empfindliche Gottesrede," in *Landschaft aus Schreien: Zur Dramatik der Theodizeefrage*, ed. Johann Baptist Metz (Mainz: Grünewald, 1995), 81–102.

HIDDEN PRESUPPOSITIONS

The challenge of atheism is written between the lines of the problem of theodicy, though we should be cautious with the assessment of this challenge. How powerful can the force of atheism ever be? It is noteworthy that atheism has a point only when very *specific virtues* of scientific reasoning are presupposed and acknowledged: for instance, the virtue of avoiding inconsistencies or the virtue of choosing the better alternative among alternative explanations. While the former virtue can be embraced by many people, the latter seems to be obvious only at first glance: What happens if we cannot come up with a better answer to a certain problem? Might an equal response do the job? And, besides, who in the end is accountable for determining the degree of improvement and examining the value of alternatives? It seems too obvious that naturalists, like Dawkins, have a very different understanding of the phrase "better explanation"—different from what theists would call "explanation." And, like it or not, the appeal to universally accepted standards of reasoning seems to create these standards anytime they are needed rather than just referring to something everybody can agree with.

Even with certain standards already in place the problem of theodicy does not lead to atheistic conclusions straightforwardly: Alvin Plantinga, for example, signed off on the virtue of reasonable discourse; and he tried to show, on this very basis of reasonable argumentation, that what atheists claim does not, in fact, really hold: There are *no inconsistencies* in Christian theism if we correlate the existence of God with the existence of evil because there is no way of transforming the assertion that God exists (as a good, powerful, and omniscient God) directly and conclusively into the idea that the existence of evil has to be rigidly excluded.[10]

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[10] Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 115–130. Plantinga does not deny the existence of evil, but he "forces" the atheist to claim that there are unjustified evils. Connecting a broad notion of justification with a Greater-Good-Defense, which plays the role of a criterion for morality and goodness, Plantinga arrives at an interesting destruction of the assumed inconsistency.

So, contrary to what is often claimed by atheists[11] and what is often repeated by theologians,[12] there is no straightforward inconsistency in our concept of God—even if we have to state that evil exists in the world. Atheists also focus on the problem of evidence: Even if the existence of evil does not contradict the existence of God (as a good, all-powerful, omniscient God) it might, nevertheless, bring into question *our belief* in the existence of a good, all-powerful and all-knowing God.[13] But what does that mean? Let us try to understand this position as well as we can by furnishing a possible line of argumentation:

(1) "God" is defined as IQMCN (ID QUO MAIUS COGITARI NEQUIT)

(2) The property "IQMCN" is explicatively/intensionally identical with the conjunction of the properties $Q, P, R \ldots$ (for example: perfect moral goodness, perfect wisdom and knowledge, unlimited power …)

(3) If an entity x is missing any of the combined properties (for example Q) or if it has an opposite property (for example $\neg Q$), it cannot be an IQMCN.

(4) Every x's having a property $Q, P, R \ldots$ is rigorously related to a certain configuration S of states of affairs which itself is the result of the combination of instantiated states of affairs (= events) $p \ \& \ q \ \& \ r$.

(5) If the states of affairs $p \ \& \ q \ \& \ r$ are not instantiated or the opposite states of affairs $\neg p \ \& \ \neg q \ \& \ \neg r$ are instantiated, then the assertion of "x's having $Q, P, R \ldots$" is not allowed, given the common rules of meaningful communication or discursive justification.[14]

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[11] It is, however, noteworthy that some atheists concede that there is no contradiction between the assumption that God exists, on the one hand, and the fact that evil exists in the world, on the other; cf. Norbert Hoerster, *Die Frage nach Gott* (München: Beck, 2007), 87–113.

[12] Cf. von Stosch 2006, 175–180.

[13] An echo and caricature of this distinction can be found in Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 108–109; cf. Hoerster 2007, 113.

[14] This version could help us to keep the epistemological tones of an atheistic argument without getting into a deeper analysis of statements that are the scope of certain beliefs.

(6) The existence of evil is the instantiation of states of affairs such that it is not permissible to call God a perfectly moral being or a perfectly wise or a perfectly almighty being …[15]

(7) If God cannot be called a "perfectly moral being …" then He cannot be an IQMCN. And if He must not be called an IQMCN He is not an IQMCN.

(8) If God is necessarily defined as an IQMCN and He is not an IQMCN, then He cannot exist due to the ontological principle by whose guidance we deny existence to self-contradictorily circum- scribed entities.

This argument is in accordance with what a certain version of con- temporary atheism has strategically objected. Take, for example, Kai

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[15] Of course, one can doubt the "rule of exclusion." It is precisely the range of this rule which is at stake within the contemporary discussions of atheism. But how can we understand this rule? Are there any ways to illustrate it? Let us assume that it is still in accordance with the idea that God is the creator of the universe even if we do not find signs of divine design in evolution but at a certain point we need some configuration of states of affairs which makes belief in God discernible from the belief that no God exists. Some theologians insist that the expansion of the universe points to a beginning of time which supports the so-called cosmological argument. In their view, the expansion of the universe would contribute to a configuration of states of affairs that excludes the belief in a purely random origin of the universe or, at least, in the eternity of our universe. But, of course, it could be harder to find other examples that fit the proposed problem of divine goodness. In the tradition of classic theism the primary attributes of God are trans-categorial attributes. And it could be argued that these attributes aren't subject to the rule sentences (4), (5), (6) allude to. Nevertheless, in defense of sentence (6) one could try to argue for a specific list of special attributes: like God's *moral goodness*. Theologically, however, classic theism would have to emphasize that God's ontological goodness is the primary focus which the trans-categorially used notion of "goodness" refers to. In other words: Classic theism might not be too impressed by sentences (4), (5), (6) and could easily dismiss the whole threat by pointing to the trans-categorial nature of basic divine attributes. Sentences (4), (5), (6) have to silently presuppose that intrinsic divine attributes are mirrored in relational attributes (which are established upon God's relation to us) and that the rule sentences (4), (5), (6) allude to does apply to these attributes whereby any impact on these attributes is considered to have an impact on God's intrinsic attributes as well. But, this is just a presupposition. One might be able to see how this works for the attributes "being omnipotent" and "being the creator of the universe." But it is much harder to see the connection between "being ontologically good (= all-desirable)" on the one side and being "morally good" ("omni-benevolent") on the other side.

Nielsen's[16] examination of crucial phrases used by theists—an examination which was based on certain semantic presuppositions. As pointed out, the abovementioned steps are meant to give some credit to atheistic challenges by getting rid of some of the loose ends one might find in some simpler versions of atheistic challenges. But if we look at the "emperor's new clothes," is the updated version of an atheistic argument better? Is it really convincing? Are its presuppositions written in stone? Any answer to this type of atheism has to emphasize the arbitrariness of the underlying *verificationist* semantics of sentences (4) and (5).[17] But in doing so, the achievement of consistency within theism on the one hand might cause a loss of *significance* on the other hand. From this perspective, belief in God would become just another case of Wittgenstein's "beetle in a box"[18].

Although "significance" is a highly disputed concept within the theory of science, to accommodate the atheist's position, we can describe this as:

(SIGN) If we have no criteria for mapping x's having a property Q to a set of states of affairs, we would hardly see any consequences of x's having Q in contrast to x's not-having Q or even to x's having $\neg Q$.

So, for the sake of the argument, let us assume that SIGN is a valid principle and that (4) and (5) can remain unquestioned, although SIGN breathes the air of Popperian *falsificationism* and although it is not clear whether such a principle can and should be applied to theistic propositions. But how can we assess proposition (6)? This sentence hardly seems valid. In other words: How does the existence of evil in the world create states of affairs that count against the assumption that we have reasons to call God "good?" As Plantinga pointed out, only if we think that evil is generally unjustified or that the greater good it might serve can be accomplished

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[16] Kai Nielsen, "On Fixing the Reference Range of 'God'," *Religious Studies* 2 (1966): 13–36. These ideas can be found in other, more recent publications of Nielsen; cf. eg. Kai Nielsen, *Naturalism and Religion* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2001).

[17] A critique of verificationism can be found in Plantinga 1990, 156–168.

[18] Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, § 293.

otherwise, can we create the sort of contradiction an atheist needs.[19] But, there is no basis for such an assumption. Rhetorically, atheistic strategies sometimes appeal to what one might call a principle of benevolence and compassion which basically says:

(PBC)   Any benevolent and compassionate being *a* would *always* reduce the suffering of a sensitive person *b* if *a* had the means to do so.

This, of course, presupposes that suffering is under any circumstance and regardless of any context something that has to be avoided intrinsically. But, one can question whether we might find a convincing justification of PBC.[20] Apart from the vagueness of the key terms, PBC isn't even unanimously held within ethical disputes. Discussions about the legitimate execution of power for the well-being of many show that PBC can be restricted, even violated, if there is a greater good involved. As a matter of fact, adherents of FWD would follow that route. They would insist that the execution of free will necessarily limits the range of PBC for God. In contrast, PT would focus on the "if"-clause, which is a crucial aspect of PBC. Through a modified understanding of divine omnipotence, PT would be able to stick to PBC, but to question its applicability in the context of theodicy. Either way, since the atheist cannot presuppose that FWD or PT aren't successful in their interpretations of PBC, he/she might not have a case here.

Neglected Aspects

The above-mentioned questions, which circle around the applicability of a rule alluded to in sentences (4) to (6) suggest that there might not be an unequivocal understanding of the crucial phrases. The notion of "goodness" is a marvelous example, insofar as divine goodness, at least in a classic sense, does not just exceed moral goodness but surpasses it. Our difficulties in making the specific distinctions or connections might support the idea that a rational response to the problem of

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[19] Cf. Plantinga 1990, 122–130.
[20] Cf. ibid.

theodicy is impossible and that it might be more appropriate to bow our heads in the light of a mystery which is, first and foremost, a conceptual one.

In terms of historical epitomes, we could refer to Immanuel Kant as a sophisticated predecessor who used the notorious ambiguity of certain terms as a basis to establish a very specific mystery-approach.[21] His considerations, especially of the problem of theodicy, are to be regarded as an early, but very subtle, example of the strategy which is preferred by the third group we described at the beginning. Nowadays Kant's way of dealing with the problem of theodicy has become slightly neglected, and in the context of academic disputes almost forgotten, although Kant's way of handling the problem is in no way irrational or just another example of simply reducing the problem to a theological mystery. It is quite the opposite: On the one hand, in a very detailed and fine-grained manner, Kant disputes the arguments of the rationalistic philosophy and the protestant theology with which he was familiar and which set the agenda at that time. On the other hand, Kant stresses the insolvability of the problem of theodicy without addressing God's mysteriousness directly. To discuss all of his noteworthy insights would require some in-depth analysis.[22] Instead, let us focus on summarizing the claims Kant made as a result of his considerations. In his treatise *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee* Kant writes:

> [U]nsre Vernunft [ist] zur Einsicht des Verhältnisses, in welchem eine Welt, so wie wir sie durch Erfahrung immer kennen mögen, zu der höchsten Weisheit stehe, schlechterdings unvermögend.[23]
> [Our reason is completely unable to get any insight into the connection which relates the world we know by experience to the highest wisdom.]

We can modify and simplify his argument using a modern language, while keeping the core message, in the following way: Human reason structurally delivers, Kant would have said, *two entirely different concepts of wisdom*.

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[21] Immanuel Kant, "Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee," in *AA*, Vol. 8, 253–271.

[22] Cf. Richard L. Velkley, *Kant as Philosopher of Theodicy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978); Volker Dieringer, *Kants Lösung des Theodizeeproblems*: *Eine Rekonstruktion* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2008).

[23] Kant, *Über das Mißlingen*, 263.

On the one hand there is a more technical concept of wisdom applicable to the data we experience by observing nature and figuring out laws of nature. For example, the wings of a butterfly or the eyes of a mammal can be called a "product" of technical wisdom insofar as this equipment turn out to be perfectly suited to meet environmental conditions. On the other hand, we are used to dealing with a so-called moral concept of wisdom which is applicable to actions that can then be called "successful" or "good" with respect to a given aim and purpose. These concepts of wisdom, as Kant points out, do not fit together. These concepts have to be treated and applied separately. Otherwise, the result would be a persistent category-mistake and a perennial source of philosophical deception. But when we approach the problem of theodicy, we are necessarily tempted, as Kant would have said, to combine, even to fuse both concepts by wondering whether the structure of the world, which allows room for any kind of evil, can be the result of God's (moral) wisdom. But, as Kant would have added, we should not yield to temptation whenever the consistency of reason is at stake.

Let us try to clarify Kant's point with the help of some distinctions. Therefore, let us elucidate the term "wisdom" by using the phrase "orderly" and suggesting the following:

(O)   The occurrence of an event-token e is an "orderly" occurrence if and only if there is a structure S such that the occurrence of e is a means m related to a certain end G and the means-end relation is governed by S for any event-type φ for which e is a token.

From here we can define two senses of "orderly" in order to come closer to Kant's problem and verdict:

(NO) The occurrence of an event-token e is a *natural-orderly* occurrence if and only if there is a *natural* structure S^* such that the occurrence of e is a means related to a certain end G^* and the means-end relation is governed by S^* for any event-type φ for which e is a token.

(MO) The occurrence of an event-token e is a *moral-orderly* occurrence if and only if there is a *moral* structure S^{**} such that the occurrence

of e is a means m related to a certain end G^{**} and the means-end relation is governed by S^{**} for any event-type φ for which e is a token.

It is apparent that we are dealing with two different senses of "orderly" here. And this causes, as Kant underlines, further problems for our understanding. In particular, evil events (and first and foremost natural evils) seem to fulfill the requirements of NO. "Orderly," in a moral understanding, means "good." It seems to be obvious that evil events do not fulfill that standard. Yet, the solution of the problem of theodicy requires nothing less than the applicability of NO *and* MO to events in the universe once we believe that God is the ultimate "governor" of the universe. To believe in God as the wise governor of the universe implies, following Kant, that an event e is natural-orderly and moral-orderly simultaneously. Since we hesitate to call evil events moral-orderly and to simply conflate MO with NO, we are left with a puzzle: It seems to be the case that we don't really understand what we mean by God's wisdom and that we don't understand how NO and MO are related to each other once we approach the problem from God's point of view.

So, do we have to end our considerations at this point? Admittedly, it is far from being intellectually satisfying to confess that the conceptual paths we follow are not made to lead us towards higher ground. But satisfaction, so Kant reminds us, is no intellectual motive at any rate. Why should we take any further steps? Why should we try to leave Kant behind? How can this be accomplished? The post-Kantian tradition could help us with a very bold piece of advice: There are questions that have to be answered, even if the answers are not in a position to count as ordinarily justifiable knowledge.[24] These answers, presented in a speculative manner, have to be given to sustain the nature of reason itself. Since reason is in charge of integrating the plurality of experiences and concepts into the unity of a so-called unifying idea, reason will not get rid of the task of giving a well-developed answer, even to merely speculative questions. Speculative questions reveal patterns which indicate the necessity of conceptual unification. It would mean a threat to reason

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[24] Cf. Dieter Henrich, "Grund und Gang spekulativen Denkens," in *Bewußtes Leben: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Subjektivität und Metaphysik*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988), 85–138.

itself if we were to leave the gap between the concepts involved (the connection of NO and MO and God's wisdom) completely unabridged, since we have to understand ourselves as unified and unifying identities, and since we experience the necessity of combining so-called technical, event-related wisdom with pure moral, action-related wisdom through the fact that we are embodied persons, "minds dipped in matter and matter dipped in spirit." We are inhabitants of both the natural and the moral realm. The same is true for the problem of theodicy: We are in need of unifying concepts to bridge the difference between pure natural and pure moral wisdom, as we do in other areas of theistic concept-formation, to bridge the gap between causality and teleology, between agents and events.

Still, Kant's warnings seem to be valid: Since we are in no position to explain the meaning—the meaning relative to a divine perspective—of single events and their contribution to a presumed ultimate goal of the universe, our considerations must remain somewhat speculative and fragile. In other words: We might only be able to point to *goal*-types γ for *event*-types φ by referring to a very speculatively described superstructure S' (which must then be portrayed as something that *unifies* the moral and the natural realm), but we might not be able to indicate the concrete means-end-function $G(m) = e$ for a concrete (evil) event-token e.[25] For the sake of a label, let's call the restrictedness of our abilities "Kant's ghost," who might haunt us every once in a while.

Overestimated Strategies

Two highly advanced strategies, which claim to offer profound reasons for negating sentence (6) in the atheist's argument, turn out to have the same problem in common. At a certain point, both the Free-Will-Theodicy and the No-Better-World-Theodicy deal unavoidably with modal operators. This is apparent for the No-Better-World-Theodicy

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[25] Especially the latter is the more important concern for a First Person Perspective on natural evil. In the light of a certain catastrophe one is inclined to ask: Why did this happen to me, why did it happen now? The occurrence of certain evil-tokens is part of the questions we ask when we face the problem of theodicy from a First Person Perspective, as opposed to only from a Third-Person-Perspective.

as this is presented in Friedrich Hermanni's book.[26] It is not so obvious for FWD unless we take a closer look at the topological architecture of their argument: The Free-Will-Theodicy tries to answer the question: "Why is there any evil in the world?" by pointing out that evil is a consequence of human freedom and that natural evil, which, of course, cannot be a consequence of human action, is the presupposition for inductively gained knowledge of natural laws and their influence on human intention, action and will.[27] The Free-Will-Defense is connected to a Laws-of-Nature-defense in the end.

Yet FWD has, as one could call it, a problem with *divine morality*. Whenever they are asked: "Why does God not intervene in the course of nature?" the Free-Will-Theorist has to answer: The only reason why God does not intervene is because of his respect for human freedom and his desire to guarantee it. The *existence* of freedom (to be more precise: the possibility of carrying out free acts) is a higher value than any stage of the world that would be a result of God's initiative in protecting us from the bad consequences our actions bring about. But, one might ask, would not the horrifying amount of suffering experienced during the Holocaust and the Second World War, at the very least, provide a certain context in which the value of freedom would be reasonably exceeded by the value of compassion? Wouldn't a reasonable being have turned from non-intervention to intervention, guided by the value of compassion under circumstances where human cruelty endangers the conditions of freedom itself? Wouldn't it have been a low price for God to pay to support Graf von Stauffenberg's attack on Hitler with better effort, even if it may have been God's intention not to bring about too many miracles, which have the tendency to turn a human being's "will to believe" into the force of assent to knowledge?[28] Even if God wanted to stay behind the scenery,

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[26] Cf. Friedrich Hermanni, *Das Böse und die Theodizee: Eine philosophisch-theologische Grundlegung*, (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 2002).

[27] Cf. Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd edit. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 236–272.

[28] The No-Enforcement-of-Faith-Principle (NEFP) is a very tricky principle. It can be misused in a number of ways. One example is the creationist's response to the material evidence scientists put forward to justify a Darwinian theory of evolution. The creationist might point out that this evidence was placed in the soil of the earth by God himself in order to make it harder for us to believe since, otherwise, the handwriting of the creator would have been too obvious and we would have been "forced" to believe in God. Well,

he could have done so very easily by hidden, i.e. unobservable, effects of his power. If any Free-Will-Theorist tries to answer the question why the value of freedom is always (and this implies: *regardless* of any special circumstances[29]) higher than the value of compassion, he/she cannot help but declaring, at last, that God's specific intentions and preferences are a mystery. In the end the Free-Will-Theodicy collapses into a Mystery-Theodicy by pointing to the incompatibility between human and divine values.

Furthermore, the problem of natural evil is not touched at all by any declaration of God's respect for human freedom. If natural evil is a result

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it is hard to see whether NEFP is really needed—given a careful analysis of the act of faith as an act of human freedom and human autonomy. But what is more disturbing about NEFP is that one could be forced to assume that God willingly plays tricks with us in order not to violate NEFP. It might be noteworthy to point out that such an idea is unacceptable within a Catholic framework in relation to the concept of God. Within such a framework the idea that God is the source of reason (including human reason) is still powerful. A God who willingly deludes human beings in their endeavours, including (scientific) reasoning, seems to be a highly problematic idea. But, of course, this remark does not prove that NEFP is wrong. It just points to certain unwelcome consequences arising from it. For the application of NEFP to outcomes of divine action see Klaus von Stosch, *Einführung in die Systematische Theologie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 85. Von Stosch's use of NEFP seems to be necessary to keep the "epistemological" freedom of the act of belief. On the other side, if God's action is ambiguous and does not produce evidential clarity then God's action cannot be distinguished from non-action (at least from an epistemological point of view). But then, do we have any criteria to identify God's actions at all?

[29] It might be noteworthy to mention that even in a secular context—the context of legal enforcement of governmental power—almost everybody would agree to the legitimacy of restricting human freedom whenever a greater good (the well being of others, an un-endangered performance of justice etc.) is at stake. It seems to be the case that the freedom of a mass murderer has more value according to a FWD than the freedom of the victim that falls prey to the murderer. To avoid these consequences FWD has to embrace a version of "open theism" which consequently denies divine foreknowledge and, therefore, would have to point to the risky situation an omnipotent being (that is deprived of foreknowledge) would have to face if it didn't bind itself strictly to a policy of non-intervention. But such a God—as contemporary critics of open theism point out—would be poorer than any human being that finds itself called to compassion and, therefore, intervention. See von Stosch 2006, 55, FN 111. Von Stosch seems to embrace open theism although his appreciation is expressed within the context of a temporalist notion of God's eternity. For "open theism" compare Clark Pinnock et alii, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1994).

of the laws of nature God has "designed" for the universe why is it that God could not come up with "better" (let's say: less "bloodthirsty") ones? And if natural evils aren't by any means strictly logical implications of the laws of nature, but occasional occurrences of events which are *in accordance* with these laws, why does God not intervene at least at certain points in history to prevent the total extinction of species or the killing of people instead of sacrificing them to the blind powers of nature?[30] Is it valid to say, as some philosophers and theologians do, that the laws of nature are a presupposition of human freedom?[31]

But if freedom in nature is a prerequisite for human freedom, then it seems unavoidable for us to overstretch the notion of "freedom" a little bit—applying the *Principle of Alternative Possibilities* (which is valid for human libertarian freedom)—to development in nature and to the entities that are involved in this development.[32] It is clear that PT's metaphysics (in a Whiteheadian sense) could support such a move, but would FWD be willing to sign off on that as well?

Let us focus once more on the above mentioned claim that natural evils are unavoidable. Any adherent of FWD is more or less forced to say that:

1) Natural evils are a *result* of the Laws of Nature—of those laws which
2) God chose to *ensure* the possibility of human freedom.

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[30] Cf. Hoerster 2007, 94.
[31] For this position compare von Stosch 2006, 264 and 268.
[32] The overstretching of the notion of "freedom" has to be justified, of course. Per se the application of PAP to non-human nature seems to induce category-mistakes unavoidably. This is part of the reason why process metaphysics have to come up with an almost extravagant vocabulary. But neither a neologistic understanding of freedom nor the overstretched application of PAP will justify the idea that the laws of nature that allow certain natural evils are a necessary prerequisite for human freedom. These maneuvers are only tools and need the support of another principle. It would have to be the idea of an Impossibility of Emergent Attributes (IEA). IEA plays a basic role in a naturalistic and materialistic explanation of human consciousness. It is used to question the non-physical nature of mental phenomena. In the hands of PT, IEA would become a reverse tool to implement a pan-psychistic ontology which allows the ascription of certain mental qualities, phenomena, and attributes to non-human entities. IEA itself is, in the end, based on the intuition of the homogeneity and the unity of everything that exists.

It is, at first glance, not so easy to explain what one could mean by "result," although this seems to be the cornerstone of 1). "Result" is a very ambiguous term. To illustrate this let us take a look at an analogy: After extensive grocery-shopping, I take a look at the bill. I might get the impression that the result is shocking or, at least, disturbing. The bill is in a way the result of laws of mathematics (very primitive ones: simple laws of algebra and calculation). The final number on the bill, however, is the product of my undisciplined shopping behavior; it is the product of certain events and the application of mathematical laws. The same is true for natural evils. If we want to know *why* there is natural evil in the world (take a hurricane or an earthquake as examples), we won't be satisfied with an answer that points to the laws of nature. The evil in question is the *product of certain events* which served as antecedents of a causal connection that is based on the laws of nature. The natural evil that bothers us is not the *product* of the presupposed law of causality itself. A comparable ambiguity can be found in claim 2): What does it mean to say that the laws of nature that include the possibilities of natural evil are presuppositions of human freedom? Presumably, claim 2) alludes to the "necessity" of *chance and occasion* or—in other words—the "necessity of possibilities." However, this answer does not satisfy anybody who wants to know why a certain event in nature is a presupposition of human freedom or, to be a bit more precise, a necessary presupposition for the possibility and development of human freedom. The laws of nature and the realm of possibilities would still remain untouched and unquestioned if none of the natural catastrophes we are able to recall ever happened.

We can use a more prominent terminology to describe the problems of a Natural-Law-Defense: Let N be a set of possible Worlds which are possible by laws of nature. Presumably, it could be agreed that N is smaller than L, which is the set of all logically possible worlds, since we don't have good reason to believe that N is co-extensional with L. Now, for all worlds w_α, w_β, ... w_ω in N, natural evil is just a probability, which means that natural evil occurs in some worlds of N, but not in all worlds. To put it in a nutshell: Whenever natural evils occur in w_α they do not occur in, for example, w_ω (otherwise the occurrence of natural evils would be natural-law-necessary). If w_α is identical with our actual world α, which is a world in which many natural evils have occurred and will occur, and if it is true that evil does not occur in, for example, w_ω, then the question

must arise why w_α is the *actualized* world and not w_ω. If an answer to that question points to the idea that α would be identical to w_ω only if God had interfered with the course of w_α several times, then in saying this, we would have to deal with the very same question that bothered us while we took a look at the value of human freedom within the context of FWD: Does God have good reasons for his non-intervention? Why is God interested in having w_α as α and not any other world or, at least, not w_ω? There is nothing in the way N is furnished that prevents w_ω from being identical with α. These questions and remarks fit precisely with Immanuel Kant's verdict. Kant would have repeated his core message: We may explain certain atrocities in nature as the outcome of the design of the laws of nature; nevertheless, we don't understand why a specific atrocity had to occur and what the specific event's position really is within the whole "story" of the universe (a story that means to "ensure" the outcome of human freedom). The situation becomes more complicated again once we ask whether a certain evil event in nature *could have* been prevented by divine intervention. Kant's "ghost," the problem of ambiguity and non-understanding, is starting to "haunt" us again.

In contrast to FWD the No-Better-World-Theory argues in a more aprioristic mode because the unsurpassable quality of the actual world is deduced from divine attributes only: If God exemplifies unsurpassable greatness, it is impossible for Him not to bring the best of all possible worlds into existence. Therefore, the actual world α must be the best of all possible worlds. Since our actual world includes evil and suffering, the events producing or carrying evil must be regarded as integral parts of the course of the best possible world. Friedrich Hermanni tries to support this view by declaring that the chain of events in the actual world is *logically necessary* for our world to be the best of all possible worlds.[33] At this point, one can see that the special problems of the No-Better-World-Theory are somewhat easier to identify: The empirically describable form of the actual world α seems to be of no interest to this theory. In other words: This theory expresses an extraordinary blindness to the suffering in the actual world. Furthermore, one will uncover logical problems in what Hermanni wants to tell us: To regard a specific chain of events as a *logical necessity* (translating this claim into the language of possible-worlds) implies that

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[33] Cf. Hermanni 2002, 266–291.

apart from the actual world α, no other world, in which the mentioned chain of events *does not occur*, is an element of the set of possible worlds (which must mean logically possible worlds) L. But, why must we think that there cannot be any other world equipped with alternative chains of events? If there is no reason to restrict alternative courses of events, then the course of events in our actual world α cannot be declared a logical necessity; perhaps one might call it a necessary condition for realizing the end God intended to be realized. And perhaps this interpretation is more adequate to Leibniz' basic idea, but necessity-related-to-aim is just functional and not logical necessity. Furthermore, one could argue as follows: As long as we are able to conceive alternative courses of events, there *are* alternative courses of events which constitute other possible worlds. And as long as we still have the ability to conceive alternative chains of events, bringing about less suffering and evil, we can imagine an alternative possible world which is better than the actual world. Although conceivability might not always be a good criterion of possibility, it might, at least, do the job of overriding the assumption that evil is a necessary component of our actual world α. On a more intuitive basis, it is hard to see how the enormous amount of evil in our actual world can contribute to the marvelous rank it seems to have in God's eyes—given that alternative courses of events could have been set into motion.[34]

Discussions like this, moreover, reveal that Kant's "ghost" continues to haunt us: The No-Better-Worlds-Theory actually presupposes that worlds are comparable on the basis of some sort of goodness or quality. But this causes a problem that leads to a dichotomy of categorization which resembles Kant's verdict. The precise cause is a set-theoretical problem. Within ethical discussions and with respect to the problem

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[34] Of course, the problem of natural evil is usually approached from a different angle as well. Swinburne offers some additional motives to "defend" the existence of natural evil: 1) Natural evils are a way to improve our inductive ways of gaining knowledge. 2) Natural evils are an important occasion to perform acts of mercy and compassion; and they provide occasions to perform super-erogatory acts. Cf. Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 160–192. Although Swinburne is right in pointing to these aspects it is still hard to see how this strategy might justify the number of natural evils and their rather disastrous consequences. Furthermore, justifications like the above-mentioned approach natural evils from a Third-Person-Perspective only. For the victims of natural catastrophes and terminal diseases the indicated defense strategies may have no bearing, no relevance, and no impact.

of theodicy, the use of the terms "good" or "better" is related to actions and events that are implied by actions.[35] Events are instances of states of affairs and are, therefore, elements of worlds (worlds seen as sets in a very broad understanding of possible-worlds-semantics). It is not without reason to think that qualifications which are ascribable to elements of sets are, nevertheless, not ascribable to the set in question. For example, the *set* of all red entities in Berlin is not red. It seems to involve a category mistake if we want to use the mentioned qualification for both the elements and the set. If these preliminary considerations are right, then we bump into the above mentioned problem or become haunted by Kant's "ghost." The problem we are facing has the structure of a dilemma. Either:

(1) We are not permitted to call a world good or better for set-theore-tical-reasons.
(2) Or, we are permitted to use the terms in question and we can call the actual world the "best of all possible worlds." We would then have to clarify the "goodness" of the actual world by determining $G(m) = \alpha$ [in contrast to, let's say, the $G(m)$ for other possible worlds $w_\beta, w_\gamma \dots w_\omega$].

So, even if we can sneak around 1) Kant's ghost will catch us at alternative 2). We simply have no clue why our actual world (with all its atrocities etc.) is the best of all possible worlds. We have no idea what the specific ends of the atrocities are, and what the overall end of the course of events in the actual world really is. Without such a clue, the comparison of worlds remains useless. Thus, the claim that this world is the best of all possible worlds is nothing else but a claim.

What kind of problem do the above-mentioned strategies have in common? Both strategies, in one way or the other, share the view that it is necessary to restrict God's doing and deciding by an appeal to "certain necessities." To answer the question: "Why did God not intervene?" both theories point to a certain limitation of omnipotence. The only *restricting modality* FWD can offer is some kind of *moral necessity* with respect to human freedom: To enable human freedom, God is morally obliged not

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[35] Cf. Hoerster 2007, 90.

to intervene in the course of the actual world. With regard to natural evil Free-Will-Defense-theorists are tempted to base the validity of natural laws on *logical necessity*. But this is just a vague hypothesis.[36] In contrast, the No-Better-World-Theory prefers logical necessity to explain why God couldn't change the course of the actual world by intervention. But, as already noted, this assertion is hardly convincing because to exclude any alternative chains of events from being realized in other possible worlds means to restrict the sphere of possibility and to narrow it down to a very small set, including the actual world *α* as the only element. Since one may find no reason for doing so and since every restriction of the same sort would lead to a collapse of possible-worlds-talk, the strategy in question is a dead end.

Despite these problems, both strategies reveal an important aspect: To accommodate the question: "Why did God not intervene?" every answer has to deal with some sort of limitation of God's omnipotence. How can this be achieved? A necessary, but not completely satisfying, starting point would have to admit that God's decisions are restricted by *logical impossibility*.[37] For example, God is not able to create round squares. Even the widest interpretation of omnipotence would concede that God's omnipotence is limited by God's nature. Therefore everyone who is asked whether God has the ability to sin[38] can answer very clearly: "No." If we call this kind of necessity a metaphysical or conceptual necessity

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[36] Cf. von Stosch 2006, 259–269. Von Stosch examines the idea that the Laws of Nature could not have been different from what they are as a matter of fact. Although there is no scientific support for a "No-Better-Laws-of-Nature-Theory" (NBLNT), he wants to stick to this idea, at least for the sake of a hypothesis. But even a merely hypothetical use of a NBLNT is nothing else but a sophisticated version of a No-Better-Worlds-Theory. Any criticism that challenges a No-Better-World-Theory will challenge the NBLNT as well.

[37] As a basic introduction to the problems and ranges of omnipotence see Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), chapter 7; cf. Armin Kreiner, *Das wahre Antlitz Gottes—oder was wir meinen, wenn wir Gott sagen* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder-Verlag, 2006), 308–316.

[38] Usually William of Occam is referred to as a representative of a fairly wide interpretation of omnipotence. However, detailed research supports a more careful assessment. Cf. Hubert Schröcker, *Das Verhältnis der Allmacht Gottes zum Kontradiktionsprinzip nach Wilhelm vom Ockham* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2003) 200–206, 502–508; for the outline of the problem cf. Nelson Pike, "Omnipotence and God's Ability to Sin," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1969): 208–216.

we can add: God's omnipotence is limited by metaphysical necessity as well. Metaphysical necessity is a much stronger modality than moral necessity or natural-law-necessity, although metaphysical necessity is somewhat weaker than logical necessity. Since logical necessity is only formal, metaphysical necessity is the strongest content-providing modality we can propose. So, if we managed to furnish an argument dealing with metaphysical necessity with regard to God's non-intervention, we would be able to deal with the problem of God's responsibility, despite the existence of evil.

GOD'S RELATION TO THE WORLD

Before we turn to the last part of our considerations it is important to develop an overview of the differences and degrees of possibilities (and, along the same lines, impossibilities and necessities). Although in philosophical literature one will discover a highly advanced debate on how to distinguish (or *not* to distinguish) the spheres of possibilities, it is hardly deniable—at least on a more intuitive basis—that there are significant gradual distances between logical, metaphysical and natural-law-possibilities if one is willing to base possibility on conceivability (but, of course, not every philosopher is willing to agree with this).[39] In contrast, moral possibility or impossibility is a vague conception. Its meaning and range can be strengthened only if we anchor it in conceptual or metaphysical necessity.

Let us illustrate the extension of possibilities with the help of some examples that offer insight by approaching the opposite direction: impossibility. We can distinguish logical impossibility from conceptual impossibility, conceptual impossibility from mere metaphysical impossibility, and metaphysical impossibility from laws-of nature-impossibility. Different possibilities and impossibilities represent different kinds of

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[39] For further discussion see Stephen Yablo, "Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53 (1993): 1–42; Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne, eds., *Conceivability and Possibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Uwe Meixner, *The Theory of Ontic Modalities* (Frankfurt and Paris: Ontos-Verlag, 2006), 40–52, 152–156.

limitations within the logical sphere of possibility.[40] Take, for example, the following propositions:

# 1:	It is not possible to claim p and $\neg p$ in the same proposition.	*Logical impossibility*
# 2:	It is not possible for a dolphin to walk around.	*Conceptual impossibility*
# 3:	It is not possible for a (temporally located) entity to vanish every five minutes, then be brought into existence one minute later.	*Metaphysical impossibility*
# 4:	It is not possible to travel faster than light.	*Laws-of-nature-impossibility*
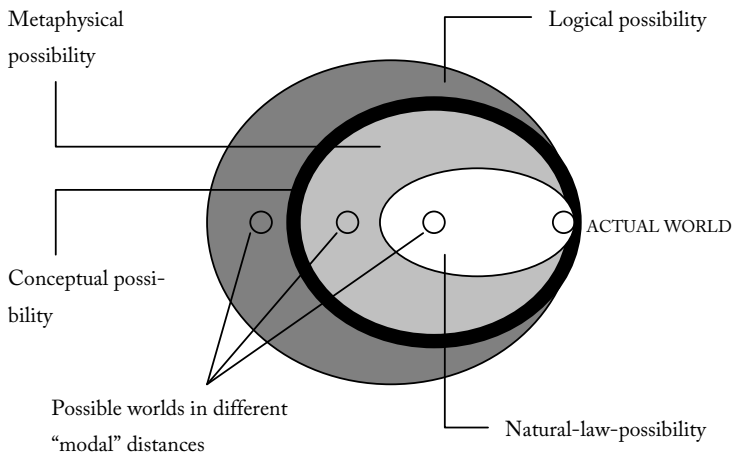
It is easy to see that the different degrees of possibility and impossibility are the outcome of conceivability and inconceivability on the one hand and some sort of content and input on the other hand. The claim that p and not-p are true simultaneously violates the most basic rule of communication. These rules have to be obeyed even before we start to think

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[40] See Ernest J. Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity, and Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 16–21.

about conceivability. The fact that dolphins don't walk is not a matter of conceivability either, but rather a presupposition of conceivability insofar as conceivability needs stable concepts. Conceptual stability is the architecture that stabilizes the force of metaphysical necessity and impossibility, respectively. On the other side, metaphysical necessity is sensitive to the world and the universe as it is. This implies that we could imagine another world with other metaphysical laws. Nevertheless, a universe with different metaphysical laws would be disastrous for our concepts. In other words: It is the fact that metaphysical necessity is seated between concepts on the one side and input on the other side—input stemming from the ways in which we experience the world- which makes this kind of necessity so interesting. In contrast, natural-law-necessity does not exclude the imagination of another universe with different laws of nature, even if the metaphysical laws might be the very same. A world with different laws of nature might be un-inhabitable, but it would not be disastrous for the concept and metaphysics itself. If we discuss moral necessity we might, at first glance, think that the status of moral necessity is questionable.[41]

In a purified form, it should be a conceptual or a metaphysical necessity. This step is crucial for the problem of theodicy: As long as the limitation of God's omnipotence isn't based on conceptual or metaphysical necessity, there is no *good* reason for God's non-intervention. As a matter of fact, this is precisely the missing link in any Free-Will-Theodicy: to explain God's non-intervention in terms of metaphysical necessity (without

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[41] Given the lively discussion of modalities with regard to their conceivability it seems hazardous to stick to the above introduced distinctions. Maybe only logical necessity/ possibility and nomological (laws-of-nature-) necessity/possibility should survive a process of further cleaning. Meixner's base-theory of modality would allow me to introduce the above mentioned examples as pointers to different bases (b^1 to b^4) of modality and to develop different necessities and possibilities thereafter ($\Box^1 p$ to $\Box^4 p$ and $\Diamond^1 p$ to $\Diamond^4 p$). While Meixner himself tends to reduce the number of bases significantly, I don't see why the above mentioned examples wouldn't support a more fine-grained distinction of modalities especially if we, as Meixner recommends, want to balance the epistemological, semantical, and metaphysical aspects of modal expressions. Cf. Meixner 2006, 83, 154–155. But I am sure that "modal skeptics" are frightened if they take a look at the multiplication of modal degrees I have indicated. Maybe we should point out that any further discussion has to clarify if there is any form of modality beyond logical necessity/possibility and, if so, whether what remains is reducible to nomological necessity/possibility.

thereby destroying God's divinity). To accomplish this, two strategies can be offered:

A)   The first strategy still favors a *classic* concept of God which, nevertheless, includes a strong connection between divine will and divine essence. The latter has to serve as a basis for a restriction of divine omnipotence.
B)   The second strategy is in favor of a more or less *idealistic* notion of God which forces us to rethink the usual notions of divine action and to replace these concepts with notions which hold that God cannot be conceived as capable of interfering immediately in the course of the world.

Strategy A) remains within the framework of FWD. One could find hints in Aquinas's theology that support the underlying idea: God's will is somehow bound by His essence; it is, however, not bound by some sort of necessity but by "fittingness."[42] Nevertheless, fittingness creates a very *specific* form of necessity:

(NF)   The realization of *e* is most fitting *if and only if* its non-realization is logically possible and if its non-realization severely jeopardizes the dignity of the agent that has the power to bring about *e*.

To arrive at a strategy which can cope with the problem of theodicy we have to establish a modification of NF, namely, NFD and its complement NFD*:

(NFD)   The realization of an event-type φ is most fitting *if and only if* its non-realization is logically possible and if its non-realization severely jeopardizes the dignity of the divine agent that has the power to bring about tokens of φ.

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[42]   The most important example can be found in Aquinas's treatises on the Incarnation. Although, in his theory, each person of the Trinity could have become God incarnate it was most "fitting" that the eternal Word became God incarnate because of the attributes ascribed to the eternal Word. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III q. 3 a. 8.

(NFD*) The non-realization of an event-type φ is most fitting *if and only if* its realization is logically possible and if its realization severely jeopardizes the dignity of the divine agent that has the power to bring about tokens of φ.

Classic Theology has argued that NFD* holds (as a general principle to describe the relation between God and the world) that, if God's creation is perfect, it does not really require specific acts of divine intervention. Frequent acts of intervention would violate God's dignity because they would prove the natural order to be imperfect. Another application of NFD* makes the pros and the range of this principle more obvious: Could God perform miracles that are un-witnessed and irrelevant for mankind (like chasing atoms at the surface of Jupiter)? Although there is no conceptual limitation that excludes God from performing such acts, these acts might go against God's dignity. This would be sufficient reason for God not to perform those acts. NFD* serves as a basis for a *de-facto*-limitation of God's omnipotence.

NFD* presents a sort of necessity, which is weaker than conceptual and, at first glance, metaphysical necessity. To lift it to the level of a metaphysical necessity/impossibility one would have to say that God's dignity is, in fact, God's essence. While dignity is something humans might lose without (unfortunately) losing too much, in God's case, dignity would be something God could not lose without losing his very nature and essence. Although this might strengthen the credibility of NFD* and the range of its applicability and possibly transform NFD* from a *de-facto*-limitation of divine omnipotence into a *de-jure*-limitation, one might still have trouble thinking of direct acts of divine intervention as acts that would instantiate φ-types of events as precluded by NFD*. In other words: It is hard to see why God would lose his dignity if he would perform acts of intervention (motivated by nothing less than mercy and compassion).

This is precisely the reason why strategy B) wants to take a step further. Its basic claim is a metaphysical limitation of God's omnipotence with respect to direct acts of divine intervention. This strategy seeks to find a basis which is significantly stronger than NFD*. But what kind of principle could serve as a basis for this step? Let us assume that the idea

strategy B) is looking for might be some sort of Transcendent-Being-Principle:

(TBP)   A transcendent and absolute being cannot directly intervene in the course of the world.

Strategy B) has a huge impact on a more classic understanding of God as a personal being. There are benefits to this strategy as well: As long as we think it might be possible that God has the power to intervene in the course of the world any time He wants, we are left with a challenging problem: Either God is not *benevolent* at all or He is not a reasonable agent because His interventions do not follow a rule or pattern. Strategy B) wants to establish an alternative view: God does not intervene directly in the course of the world. Saying this, one might ask whether strategy B) supports a more or less subtle form of deism.

     To answer this question and to figure out where the proposed idea stands on the spectrum of available divine-action-theories, let us introduce a conceptual framework *of possible concepts* dealing with the idea of God's action or intervention, respectively.[43] If we take a look at contemporary and classic philosophical treatises on the matter in question, we can distinguish seven different approaches[44]:

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[43] A very good overview of the debates concerning God's action in the world can be found in Reinhold Bernhardt, *Was heißt "Handeln Gottes"? Eine Rekonstruktion der Lehre von der Vorsehung* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1999); Ute Lockmann, *Dialog zweier Freiheiten: Studien zur Verhältnisbestimmung von göttlichem Handeln und Gebet* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2004) 167–252; Kreiner 2006, 312–342; von Stosch 2006, 23–85.

[44] Von Stosch offers a different system of categories. He distinguishes between a *personal*, a *sapiential* and a *representational* model of divine action. These distinctions were established by Bernhardt 1999, 313–442. The personal model regards God as a personal agent. The second model thinks of God as somebody who established the order of the world, which might contain certain elements that may affect human agents (without overriding their freedom). The representational model thinks of certain events in the universe as icons, symbols and images of divine presence. In addition to Bernhardt, von Stosch included a distinction between the personal model of action and a "causative" model of efficiency, borrowing from Lockmann 2004. Cf. von Stosch 2006, 23–85. My distinction between *seven* models includes von Stosch's delineation but uses a simpler starting point, i.e. the basic difference between direct and indirect divine intervention. The difference between "personal" and "causative" models of agency is not very clear. And, as von Stosch points out himself, the distinction between "sapiential" and "representational" is not so clear either. The spectrum of seven approaches I have provided might be easier to grasp and easier to apply.

(1) Straightforward Non-Interventionism
(2) Idealistic Non-Interventionism
(3) Process Interventionism
(4) Semi-Non-Interventionism
(5) Semi-Interventionism
(6) Interventionism
(7) Straightforward Omni-causation

Most certainly, answer (1) is a version of deism if this approach claims that God does not intervene in the course of the world and does not add anything further. Usually, any theologian who holds (1) includes some modifications that point to an indirect influence of God's will[45] on the outcome and end of the world.[46] Eventually, modifications like that turn (1) into something which comes closer to (4) and (5).

Model (2) is called "idealistic" because it has some affinity with approaches coming from *German Idealism* and was, as a matter of fact, spelled out by theologians that were inspired by German Idealism. This theory claims that God does not and cannot intervene in the course of the world because He is an *absolute being*. Therefore, approach (2) asks us to replace the phrase "intervention." Instead, we should talk about God's presence and about the means of *representing* the absolute in the world.[47] Since the world participates in God, as approach (2) tells us, it is conceivable that God is present (i.e. represented) in the world without directly interfering

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[45] One way to assure divine influence would be to say that God set up a master-plan for the direction his creation would take. But such an idea could destroy the intentions of strategy B) if the master-plan is deterministic because one might wonder why God's master-plan did not entail an event that, let's just say, killed Hitler before he became chancellor. Apparently, a master-plan-theory has to be subject to some sort of FWD. In this case, we should stop talking about a divine "master"-plan. Maybe, using analogies, it might be more appropriate to talk about certain "devices" God implanted in the universe—devices that point to God's will or that help us act on God's behalf.

[46] Cf. Maurice Wiles, *God's Action in the World* (London: SCM Press, 1986); for further discussions see Richard Sturch, *The New Deism: Divine Intervention and the Human Condition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990). In order to be fair one should take a closer look at the richness of Wiles' position. It is far from being a straightforward deism. Wiles proposes the idea of a divine plan that starts rolling at the beginning of creation. For a more detailed examination cf. von Stosch 2006, 91–97.

[47] Cf. Bernhardt 1999, 422–435.

with the course of the universe.[48] Questions that might arise from this perspective are concerned with the meaning of action-predicates, which are usually ascribed to God. If idealistic non-interventionism were true, how could we make sense of those action-predicates that seem to be a crucial part of religious language and any religious heritage?

Approach (3) has to deal with the same sort of problems since it tells us that God cannot intervene in the course of the world because he "emptied" his sovereign omnipotence right from the start in order to enable the free development of the world. Instead, as this version of divine action theory underlines, God tries, with His patient love, to "persuade" and "convince" the world to follow His intended course, in order to ensure a generally good end for the world.[49]

In contrast, model (4) comes closer to a traditional concept of God in saying that God cannot intervene in the course of the world since He is an absolute being and that He, nevertheless, can influence the world with the help of a "supportive web" of secondary causes.[50] It is a further, rather metaphysical question how God as the first cause is related to the secondary causes in a way that maintains the integrity of God's intention and will, as well as the identity and partial independence of those instances that serve as secondary causes. Model (4), however, can collapse into a theory of divine omni-causation.

Problems like that are of no concern for version (5) since this version sticks to the idea of a possible divine intervention. However, God's

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[48] Cf. Peter C. Hodgson, *God in History. Shapes of Freedom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989); cf. the further discussion of idealistic positions in von Stosch 2006, 76–85. A very subtle theological version of idealistic-non-interventionism can be found in Hansjürgen Verweyen, *Gottes letztes Wort: Grundriß der Fundamentaltheologie*, 3rd edit. (Regensburg: Pustet-Verlag, 2000), 154–166. Verweyen's position is inspired by Fichte; cf. therefore Johann G. Fichte, "Die Wissenschaftslehre in ihrem allgemeinen Umrisse (1810)," in *Fichtes Werke, Vol. 2* (Berlin: de Gruyter), §§ 1–3.

[49] Cf. John Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 95–110.

[50] Cf. Béla Weissmahr, "Bemerkungen zur Frage der Möglichkeit eines nicht durch Geschöpfe vermittelten göttlichen Wirkens in der Welt," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 96 (1974): 126–130; a traditional hint in favor of this position can be found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I q. 103 a. 3—a. 6 and q. 104 a. 2; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* lib. I, 67–79. Theologically this view has been adopted by K. Rahner. Cf. Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder-Verlag, 1976), 93–96.

apparent non-intervention has to be justified. This can be done in two ways. One way would be to explain God's seeming lack of intervention by saying that the world would be a greater mess than it is if God did not act invisibly all the time. Although this is a theoretical possibility, it seems obvious that the amount of tragedies occurring in the world, does not really support this view. We could hardly call God a successful or reasonable agent, if He invisibly prevents many tragedies, while seemingly failing to prevent, or even guide, so many others. Another way to support version (5) would be to say that, although God can intervene in the course of the world, He decided to refrain from intervention to ensure human freedom, for the sake of human freedom.[51] If this were true, i.e. if God's non-intervention were based on an initial decision only, then one is entitled to ask whether God is morally responsible for the effects of his non-intervention. As contemporary action theories might point out: Under certain circumstances, *non-intervention resembles action* if the person in question had the ability and the freedom to intervene and to alter the course of what happened, as a matter of fact, without intervention. The only way out for model (5) would be an adaptation of NFD*.

Model (6) runs into comparable problems when it claims that God can intervene and does so whenever He wants and adds that God has performed acts of intervention throughout history, and continues to do so.[52] One might ask how we can detect single events of God's intervention and, once we do so successfully, whether we might find some patterns of God's intervention to help us figure out a more general divine plan or strategy that gives meaning to the events in the world (including the suffering in the world). In case we should not be able to come up with such a pattern, a backfiring question is waiting for us: Can we call God a reasonable agent? If we have no response to that question, wouldn't we have to sign off on a mystery theology eventually?

Concept (7), however, embraces the mystery for the sake of a higher idea: God is the ultimate cause of everything—including every event and

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[51] Cf. Keith Ward, *Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emergent Universe* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press 2007).

[52] Cf. William P. Alston, "Divine Action: Shadow or Substance," in *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*, ed. Thomas F. Tracy (Philadelphia: University Park, 1994), 41–62.

every state of affairs in the world. But this answer—emphasized by rather Calvinist authors—truly endangers human freedom. Of course, with the sacrifice of human freedom the problem of theodicy gets an entirely different outline. One might question if there is any chance to resolve it at all on the basis of (7). The only way out that version (7) would have is to declare everything that God causes "good"—even if the goodness is something that goes beyond our understanding.

The above-mentioned strategy B), which is based on TBP, would presumably present itself as a combination of divine action theories (2) and (4). The foundation of these theories is the idea that God cannot intervene directly in the course of the world. Nevertheless, since TBP does not exclude indirect actions or *mediated* effects of God's will, some aspects of divine action can be preserved and even strengthened. Based on TBP, we could respond to the problem of theodicy as follows: To ask "Why doesn't God intervene?" elicits the answer: Because of the *metaphysical impossibility* of the immediate occurrence of the absolute, inside the event-course of the non-absolute universe. Despite this impossibility, we can nevertheless talk of God's presence by pointing, as some more or less idealistic divine-action-theorists do, to the shapes of freedom and love within the universe. But the appearances of these forms and shapes of the unrestricted are bound to the means that serve as a medium: Usually it is human beings who serve as the means to represent the absolute in the finite universe. So, God's "mediate intervention" is observable at any time when, for instance, finite human courage turns into unrestricted love, and when conditioned duty turns into the unrestricted will to diminish suffering. This comes close to the idealistic idea that the primary place of God's intervention is human conscience.[53] On the other side: God cannot be present when humans refuse (based on their free will) to serve as the image of the absolute. At this point, it might be apparent that God's presence in the world is metaphysically bound to human freedom. Nevertheless, some kind of mystery still remains: If God wanted to avoid evil, he would have had to refuse creating the world at all. But, in the words of *classic theology*, the non-existence of the world would be much worse than the existence of the actual world.

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[53] Cf. Johann G. Fichte, *Ueber den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung*, in *Werke, Gesamtausgabe, Part I, Vol. 5* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977), 347–357.

Nevertheless, TBP doesn't say much about the occurrence of natural evils in the world. Expanding these concepts may be necessary to reach a more feasible point of departure. To arrive at an adequate perspective on nature, which helps us to come to terms with the problem of natural evils, we would have to think and imagine that the gift of freedom was spread out through the whole history of the universe. This is even more important if we want to have an answer to the problem of theodicy, especially, with respect to the problem of natural evil. As discussed earlier: It is not satisfying to say that natural evils are a result of natural laws; they are in accordance with these laws and are only in this respect the *products* of these laws. Once we see natural evil as a product of occasion as well, we cannot help but look at the atrocities in non-animated nature as a result of *misguided* possibilities. To "explain" this, we would have to turn to the rather speculative idea which not only holds that freedom is already part of non-animated nature but also that what one might call *sin* can be found in nature as well.[54] Admittedly it sounds like nonsense to claim that a "quark" or "photon" makes some sort of decision. Perhaps we can soften the provocation if we, instead, propose that intentionality (in its most basic form as a mere tendency) is a constituent of the universe at every stage and level (e.g., to explain the strange phenomena of quantum mechanics, the category of "intentionality" is a rather promising basis). Yet, the combination of *intentionality and freedom* seems to be an implication of metaphysical or conceptual necessity. Even if we do not want to regard "quarks" and "photons" as living beings it might be worthwhile to look at the issue from a fresh perspective. To allude to Rahner's famous words: Matter is *frozen spirit*.[55] Along those lines one could say that matter is frozen intentionality and frozen freedom.

But, of course, one question remains: How can we support TBP? Is there any good reason to stick to it or even defend it and, therefore, to

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[54] A comparable strategy can be found in Plantinga 1990, 153–155 where Plantinga discusses the idea that natural evils could be caused by nonhuman agents (spirits, demons). I don't want to discuss the pros and cons of this idea. I just want to point to it as a strategy that tries to work out a synthesis between the idea of freedom on the one side and the problem of nature and natural evils on the other side.

[55] Cf. Karl Rahner, "Die Einheit von Geist und Materie im christlichen Glaubens-verständnis," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, *Vol. 6*, ed. Karl Rahner, (Einsiedeln, Zürich and Köln: Benzinger-Verlag, 1968), 185–214, 203.

prefer strategy B) over strategy A)? TBP breathes the air of idealistic phi-
losophy; it is not hard to find a prominent supporter: F. Schleiermacher.[56]
Before we take a closer look at Schleiermacher's concept, it must be
underlined that Schleiermacher does not make use of these ideas for
the problem of theodicy. As a matter of fact, Schleiermacher presents
a version of classic "privation-boni"-theodicy[57] in combination with a
more or less Protestant idea of divine omni-causation.[58] Nevertheless,
Schleiermacher's remarks on the problem of immediate divine acts
could help us to figure out the premises of TBP. In particular, two
loosely connected trains of thought deserve our attention: Schleiermacher
argues in favour of the dignity of the natural order of causes; his point
is a subtle version of NFD*. He makes a distinction between absolute
causes and finite causes—a distinction which might have an interest-
ing impact on the concept of divine action. Schleiermacher's point of
departure is an initial examination of divine omnipotence. He refers
to some theological positions, which stress that the ability to perform
extraordinary acts (such as immediate intervention by miracles) is a sign
of divine omnipotence. Schleiermacher, however, seeks to defuse this
impression. He underlines that this idea rests on a severe misconception:
First of all, it presupposes a view of nature that regards nature and
events, which are in accordance with the order or nature, as something
that is not only devoid of God's presence but is almost anti-divine. If
God is truly sustaining the universe then nature cannot be without a
divine signature.[59] Secondly, to assume that certain acts of intervention
are required to get the development of the universe back on track,
would seriously bring into question divine omnipotence and divine
omniscience: If God has foreknowledge (at least in a Molinist[60] sense),
then He could have been aware of the problems (caused by his creation,
or by the laws of nature at work in his creation) and could have initially

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[56] Cf. D. Friedrich E. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der
Evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt* (1830/31), ed. Martin Redeker (Berlin
and New York: de Gruyter, 1999), § 46.

[57] For a discussion of the problems of this very classic approach to the problem of
theodicy cf. Kreiner 1997, 125–139.

[58] Cf. Schleimeracher 1830/31, § 48.

[59] Cf. ibid. § 47, 236.

[60] Compare the discussion of this approach in Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence: The
Molinist Account* (Ithaca and London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11–71.

altered the outlines of the creation in order to avoid acts of immediate intervention.[61] In other words: Immediate acts of intervention would disqualify God's initial omnipotence and omniscience. Admittedly, some parts of Schleiermacher's remarks sound a bit like a No-Better-World- or a No-Better-Laws-of-Nature-Theory. Only in this case, the connection between the world and God's action is made a bit more explicit. But Schleiermacher offers a second, rather independent train of thoughts to make his point: What would be the implication of the idea that God, the absolute cause, could act within the context of natural, i.e. finite causes? Schleiermacher's answer contains some important hints: If God, as the absolute cause, could act within the context of natural causes in order to bring about what cannot be brought about by natural causes (including finite persons such as human beings[62]), then God would destroy the order and connection of natural causes with grave consequences for the past and future. With respect to the past, the chain of natural causes would be interrupted and put on hold; with respect to the future, the course of events would be significantly altered and based on something that could not be found in the natural order of causes (including the actions of human persons).[63] Furthermore, any action of an absolute cause is an act of creation. But to think of an act of creation as being a supernatural link in a chain of natural causes (including the actions of human persons), would undermine the integrity of this chain. Moreover, it would seriously bring into question its existence since an act of creation would jeopardize, if not annihilate, what may have existed before.[64] Schleiermacher's remarks can help us to modify TBP:

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[61] Cf. Schleiermacher 1830/31, § 47, 235.

[62] It is important to note that "natural" in Schleiermacher's sense does not mean naturalistic. The actions of free agents (such as human beings) are in accordance with the order of nature. In other words: Events are meant to be altered by beings that participate in nature and are parts of nature.

[63] Cf. Schleiermacher 1830/31, § 47, 236, 237.

[64] Cf. Schleiermacher 1830/31, § 47, 240. Cf. parallel arguments in Béla Weissmahr, *Gottes Wirken in der Welt: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zur Frage der Evolution und des Wunders*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Knecht-Verlag, 1973); Gordon Kaufman, "On the Meaning of 'Act of God'," in *God's Activity in the World*, ed. Owen C. Thomas (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1983), 137–161.

(TBP*) A transcendent and absolute being cannot intervene directly
          in the course of the world because whatever acts as an absolute
          cause cannot act as a relative cause (within the world).

For the idealistic approach presented by Schleiermacher, *relative causes* are *finite* causes that are somehow part of the spatio-temporal fabric of the universe. Since God is beyond space and time, TBP* is a consequence of an idealistic understanding of God's ontological primacy and eternity.[65]

   It is important to notice that contemporary discussions of divine eternity seem to revolve around the problems presented by TBP*. At least in a reverse sense, these discussions give TBP* some credit. This is the reason why some atemporalists[66] developed the idea of an eternal act of God (which unfolds with the development of the universe) and why some temporalists[67] are eager to dismiss a traditional notion of eternity in order to defeat TBP*. Even if one questioned the validity of TBP* some of Schleiermacher's claims would still remain as thought-provoking questions: How could it be possible that God, as the absolute cause of being, acts within the framework of finite causes in order to replace finite causes every so often?[68] Apart from the fact that the admission of such a possibility might have disastrous consequences for the problem of theodicy, it is hard to imagine that God could act as a finite cause without becoming finite (i.e. spatio-temporal) Himself. If one wants to avoid any kind of non-interventionism (idealistic or otherwise) the only response one could give to this problem would be a reflection on

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[65] Cf. Schleiermacher 1830/31, § 52.

[66] Cf. Paul Helm, "Divine Timeless Eternity," in *God and Time: Four Views*, ed. Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove: Inter Varistiy Press, 2001), 28–60; Helm, "Response to Critics," in *God and Time*, 79–91.

[67] Cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," in *God and Time*, 187–213; Wolterstorff, "Response to Paul Helm," in *God and Time*, 68–78.

[68] Of course, a whole bunch of questions will arise from any adaptation of TBP* since some might feel that this is straightforward deism. But a more careful reading of TBP* could defuse this impression: TBP* holds that God cannot act as a finite cause in the course of events; it does not exclude the possibility that God indirectly influences the course of the world.

our lack of imagination.[69] In any case, to cope with the problems of apparent divine non-intervention in the light of evil an interventionist has to pay the price for strategy A) unless he/she wants to hide behind a cloud of mystery.

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[69] This would be Kreiner's response to non-interventionism; cf. Kreiner 2006, 325, 332. Kreiner himself has a strong inclination to support open theism and to stick to a Natural-Law-Defense which conflates natural-law-necessity with logical necessity. Cf. Kreiner 1997, 300–313, 364–379. Usually the so-called lack of imagination in non-interventionsim is more than counter-balanced by a very vivid imagination in interventionist approaches, cf. Ward 2007, 119–133, 170–189.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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Climbing Mount Unintelligible? Science, Religion and the Question of Meaning and Explanation

Richard Dawkins. *The God Delusion*. New York: First Mariner Books, 2008.

Michael Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Louise M. Antony, ed. *Philosophers without Gods. Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

I.

Science and religion, atheism and theism, seem to be attracting quite a lot of attention these days. Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* has generated significant debate not just among philosophers of religion (most notably Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga among others) but also among scientists (for example, Steven Weinberg and Peter Atkins) and other thinkers such as Daniel Dennett, Michel Onfray and so on. Recent volumes tend to reinforce the idea of an upsurge of interest in the philosophical and scientific foundations, if any, of atheism. Two of the most significant recent contributions are the volumes edited by Michael Martin and Louise Anthony. All of these volumes deserve careful analysis and scrutiny.

II.

Dawkins attacks a number of important philosophical and religious targets. For example, "agnosticism" is critiqued, though Dawkins argues that it is acceptable, even reasonable, where evidence is lacking (p. 69). He cites Hugh Ross Williamson and Carl Sagan on agnosticism, but not the Pyrrhonists, Pascal, Hume, Kant, Ayer, JJC Smart, Haldane, and many others (see for example, Floridi, 2002; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2004; Nelson, 1981; Penelhum, 2000; Forster, 2008; Ayer, 1990; Smart and Haldane, 1996). He understands it in terms of absence of evidence and in terms of good arguments for opposing positions (p. 70). "Temporary Agnosticism in Practice" [TAP] amounts to "fence-sitting where there really is a definite answer… but we lack the evidence to reach it" (p. 70); "Permanent Agnosticism in Principle" [PAP] applies where "the very idea of evidence is not applicable." Agnosticism about "the existence of God belongs firmly in the … TAP category" (p. 70). Dawkins insists: "it is a scientific question"- we do not know the answer now—but "we can say something pretty strong" about the probability.

The "inventor" of the term "agnosticism," T. H. Huxley (p. 71), focused on the impossibility of furnishing a proof or disproof of the existence of God, but ignored the "shading of probability" (p. 72). Again, Dawkins asserts that the existence of God is a scientific hypothesis, *like any other*. It would be interesting to hear what, for Dawkins, exists beyond the bounds of scientific inquiry, if indeed anything does, and whether or not the domain of metaphysics exceeds these bounds. Dawkins relies more on assertion than on sustained argument here. He asserts that God's existence is discoverable "in principle" (p. 73); and if it is neither proven nor disproven, "available evidence and reasoning may yield an estimate of probability far from 50 percent" (p. 73). Dawkins seems to mean that this estimate of probability would be made in accord with methods of empirical inquiry. But then what of metaphysics? (It is frustrating that, in the end, one is left with an unclear, incomplete notion of Dawkins' understanding of metaphysics). He states, baldly, "it is in the nature of faith that one is capable… of holding a belief without adequate reason to do so" (p. 74); atheists "do not have faith" (p. 74). Neither assertion is adequately or clearly defended. Where might a biologist find such

a creature, atheistic in inclination, and faithless (literally, completely)? On Mount Unintelligible, perhaps?

There is no account of "*adequate* reasons" and what differentiates these from other sorts of reasons, yet much turns on this move; no coherent account of "faith" and its diverse forms. What does "faith in x" or "having faith" mean in relation to deities, as well as to other people, other minds, the future, induction in the sciences, theories, unobservable entities, events, and so on? He means that atheists do not have "religious faith," but this is typical of the book's blind spots and lacunae, and indeed, lack of clear, sustained thinking at a number of critical points.

Russell's "parable of the celestial teapot" (p. 76) is quoted approvingly: "revolving around the sun in an elliptical orbit" that "nobody would be able to disprove" provided one "were careful to add that the teapot is too small to be revealed even by our most powerful telescope". The conclusion drawn from this is that the "burden of proof rests with the believers not the non-believers" (p. 76). There is no critical reflection on the analogy: is it wholly uncontroversial or uncontentious, especially given the anomaly of the scenario with its completely physical, manufactured vessel? The resemblance seems superficial, at best. Yet the analogy is asserted uncritically even as the irony is missed: a champion of "science" proceeds by unwarranted or unsubstantiated assertions. It would help to know why he thinks the analogy *suffices*—because it reinforces his case? Why suspend critical thinking in relation to questionable analogies, assumptions and assertions?

Russell's teapot "demonstrates that the ubiquity of belief in God … does not shift the burden of proof in logic" (p. 77). How it demonstrates this is not explained. What does Dawkins *understand* by the "burden of proof" in logic? Is he thinking of *inductive* arguments? If so, what of proof and *demonstration?* Again, the vast literature on agnosticism, and its complex historical affiliations, is largely overlooked, forgotten, or ignored at this point. The research is very thin—a pity given what is at stake in these debates.

The sections on the classical theistic arguments are also problematic, because they are dismissive or not deeply researched. According to Dawkins, Aquinas' "five ways" are "easily… exposed as vacuous" (p. 100)—an intemperate and unscientific judgment, perhaps even an irrational one, since it is not demonstrated by any argument in the book. Dawkins notes,

with good reason, that there are some "unwarranted assumptions" in these arguments (p. 101). Perhaps there is "absolutely no reason to endow" a first cause with omniscience and omnipotence; perhaps, as he points out, calling this cause, "God," is "at best unhelpful and at worst perniciously misleading" (p. 102). But even if one grants all of this, for the purposes of argument, his conclusion (that these arguments are "vacuous") would still not follow. This kind of lack of rigor and care at critical stages undermines the book as a whole.

He asserts that Darwin "blew [the teleological argument] out of the water" (p. 103). The fact that Hume, among others, critiqued such arguments almost a century before Darwin's *Origin of Species* is not given much credit. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is not discussed. These thinkers are mentioned briefly in the section on the Ontological Argument, but not here. The Ontological Argument translates into the "language of the playground" (p. 104); it employs "logomachist trickery" (p. 104). It does not feed "in a single piece of data from the real world" (p. 107). It is hardly reasonable to expect an ontological argument to do the work of a cosmological argument, that is, to begin with empirical premises. He leaves out much of the debate especially the work of its defenders: Plantinga, Hartshorne, Godel, Malcolm, and so on. Assertions and presuppositions about the "real world" are not elucidated or substantiated: is this "real world" the "world" revealed by, or consistent with, quantum physics or neuroscience? If so, how is this the case?

The "central argument" of the book (p. 187) deserves careful scrutiny, as it turns on numerous claims that raise significant (and largely unanswered) questions. For example, Dawkin's assertion that the "argument from improbability is the big one" and "*comes close* to proving that God does *not* exist" (emphasis added; p. 136). He calls this "statistical demonstration" the "Ultimate Boeing 747 Gambit" (after Hoyle): the probability "of life originating on earth is no greater than the chance that a hurricane, sweeping though a scrapyard, would have the luck to assemble a Boeing 747" (pp. 137–138). The Gambit is not developed much: why not present the analogy critically, that is to say even-handedly? Is it actually defensible? He does imply that "science" is an "honest quest for truth" (p. 185), after all. Another example: "Darwinian natural selection is the only known solution to the otherwise *unanswerable* riddle of where the information comes from [i.e. the "source of all the information in living matter"]" (emphasis added;

p. 138). It would help to know how a theory can do all of this work, and conclusively, without going well beyond the available evidence, and if it does go well beyond, how these conclusions are to be justified.

Six other central claims are questionable to say the least. First, he states that "complex things could not have come about by chance" (p. 139), yet no evidence is presented to justify this proposition in relation to *all* complex things. Second, he states that the "illusion of design is a trap"—fair enough, but the link between the evidence, design and "illusion" in *nature as a whole* remains obscure; the *evidence* may someday *establish* this much, but it may require a fair measure of faith! Third, he states that natural selection "explains *the whole* of life [it is a "theory of *life*," emphasis added] in terms of non-random but purely natural causes" (p. 141). How then do we arrive, starting from what we know of *nature* by observation, experience, calculation, reasoning, and so on, at a comprehensive view of the whole of *life?* Indeed, what does Dawkins mean by "life"? Fourth, he states that "evolution by natural selection is the ultimate scientific conscious-ness raiser" (p. 142). It would help to see evidence for claims concerning "ultimate" things, so that Dawkins might escape the suspicion that he is committing a kind of "Biologism"—*discriminating, without sufficient reason, in favor* of biology. Fifth, he states that "Darwin and Wallace… provided explanations of our existence that completely rejected supernatural agents" (Susskind quoted, p. 143). There is no account of what "explanation of our existence" means, of how Darwin's science relates to metaphysics and specifically, ontology. Finally, he claims that "the designer immediately raises the bigger problem of his own origin… Far from terminating the vicious regress, God aggravates it with a vengeance… who designed the designer?" (p. 146). Even if one grants this, does Dawkins' posited first "vital ingredient," a "genetic molecule," evade the "regress"? It is not clear how. The analysis seems tendentious and incomplete.

He misses the irony again when he writes that, "we on the science side must not be too dogmatically confident" [!] (p. 150)—though the basis on which he speaks on behalf of "science" remains obscure. Even as he speaks for "science" (whatever that grandiose monolith signifies) he warns against too much dogmatic confidence! Likewise, he speaks of the "scientist's natural—indeed necessary—rejoicing in (temporary) uncertainty" (p. 152). It is a pity, it has to be said, that more evidence of such rejoicing isn't evident in this book.

He insists, sensibly, that making an assertion without further argument or justification is "no way to do science" (p. 154) and misses the irony again; it is tempting to conclude then, that many of the positions in the book, some of which have already been mentioned, are "no way to do science." He asserts that God "explains nothing" (p. 161) but misses the ambiguity in the meaning of "explanation," which might refer to the "explanations" that might conceivably flow to theists from the belief in an intervening creator, or the "explanation" that God might constitute for theists, or the "explanation" of why something came out of nothing, or the "explanation" in terms of some creative origin of life. Some disentangling is necessary. It should be noted that there is another large body of research—on "explanation"—which is missing from the book (see for example, Ayer, 1973 and 1956; Hempel, 1965 and 2001; Achinstein, 1983; Rescher, 1983; Pitt, 1988; Kitcher and Salmon, 1989; Ruben, 1990; Knowles, 1990; Wisdom, 1991; Charles and Lennon, 1992; Earman, 1992; Schaffner, 1993; Lipton, 1995; Salmon, 1998; Campbell, O'Rourke and Silverstein, 2007; and many others)

Other monoliths such as "the religious mind" (p. 164) are presented without deep analysis. The lack of supporting evidence, clarification and critical reflection is again striking. What on earth does "the factual premise of religion" (p. 189) *mean?* Is "religion" monolithic? Such one-dimensional thinking raises doubts about this conception of "religion," which seems to be reduced to a Straw Man. One cannot but wonder, if any profound truths can be revealed about "religion" or "faith" by this kind of thinking? The understanding of the "first cause" is hardly less problematic: a "self-bootstrapping crane which eventually raised the world as we know it into its present complex existence" (p. 185). A crane that *self-bootstraps?* And in such a way, that the whole "world" and "our existence" arise from it? One awaits, with eager anticipation, a presentation of clear evidence in justification of this claim,. The noble discourse- that Dawkins invokes- of an "honest quest for truth" (p. 185) becomes problematic in light of gaps in the evidence Dawkin's provides, and flaws in his reasoning.

It is disappointing in this day and age, given the vast research (largely absent from the book) on philosophy of science and of religion, to see such a flawed yet encompassing, unsubstantiated affirmation of "science"—a kind of *naïve biologism,* one might say, at the foundation, that broadens and

blazes, albeit nebulously, into a kind of *naïve neo-scientism*. Affirmation is fine, but Dawkins seems unaware of, or he overlooks, at least *four* areas of significant contemporary debate that impact on his understanding, broadly, of "science" and "religion." Firstly, debates about the *epistemology* of scientific *theories*, which raises questions about whether theories are the *only* or the *best* sources of our knowledge of nature, what these *theories* entail or offer, particularly in relation to "truth," whether or not *theoretical* knowledge can be *privileged* over other forms of knowledge, as well as examining the meaning, nature and scope of theoretical *explanations* and *probabilistic explanations*, and so on. Secondly, debates about the *metaphysics* of scientific theories as representations of "reality," broadly defined, and their *explanatory* capability in relation to "reality" as a whole. This includes debates about induction and the logic of causation, especially in light of the physics of indeterminacy, uncertainty and complementarity; debates about the nature and scope of scientific revolutions and about the contingency of empirical propositions; and about the question of the *unity* of the sciences (which ought *not* to be presupposed, unless what are arguably *articles of faith*, are to be allowed into the discussion. Dawkins should make his understanding of and position on these debates clear if the broad understanding of science that underpins the book is to be well-informed, thoroughly researched, profound and/or convincing.

III.

Martin's volume is particularly rich and thought-provoking: there are 3 papers on context and "background" (Ian N. Bremmer on atheism and antiquity; Gavin Hyman on atheism in "modern history"; Phil Zuckerman on contemporary atheism); nine chapters on the case against theism (including papers by William Lane Craig on "theistic critiques of atheism"; Richard M. Gale and Keith Parsons on theistic arguments; Dennett on evolution; Quentin Smith on Kalam cosmological arguments and so on; and six essays on "Implications," including Martin on "atheism and religion," Christine Overall on feminism, and John D. Caputo on postmodernism.

Dennett argues that Darwin's theory was "in fact a new and wonderful way of thinking… a bubble-up vision in which [anthropomorphic]

intelligence…eventually emerges as just one of the products of mindless, mechanistic processes… fueled by untold billions of pointless, undesigned collisions, some vanishing small fractions of which fortuitously lead to tiny improvements in the lineages in which they occur" (p. 136). Further, "these ruthlessly tested design innovations accumulate over the eons, yielding breathtakingly brilliant designs that never had a designer—other than the purposeless, distributed process of natural selection itself" (p. 136). What is remarkable, and unsurprising, about this discourse—not so much an *argument* as a discourse, or *a rhetorical flourish,* perhaps—is not just that it is breathtaking in its stylistic brilliance, but that much is simply asserted and remains unsubstantiated. Indeed, the effulgenjce threatens to push significant scientific and philosophical questions almost out of view: is Darwin's way of thinking "new" in a literal sense, and if so, in what sense? In part or as a whole? Does the *available evidence* justify the assertion of "mindlessness" or "purposelessness" in relation to all the processes or, for that matter, the "pointless" nature of all the "collisions"? Dennett does seem to go well beyond the evidence; too much is taken for granted.

One can go on: in what sense does the available biological evidence *show* that "fortuitousness" reigns, and reigns *everywhere*? Dennett believes that "there can be no reasonable doubt" that the Darwinian picture is "in all its broad outlines… the true story of how *all* living things came to have the designs we observe" (emphasis added; p. 137). We start with regularity (order) and time- "the mere purposeless, mindless, pointless regularity of physics" (p. 141)—and proceed to "a process" [at times Dennett speaks of one process; at other times, "processes"] that yields "products" in which both regularity and purposive design are *observable.* (Are the "regularities" of the quantum world, if there are any such regularities, demonstrably or *observably* "pointless"?)

The understanding of "explanation" implicit in the statement that "X (e.g. God) explains nothing," a claim which Dennet repeats after Dawkins, is debatable ; it is one thing to *explain something* (though there is some disagreement on what might *count* as an explanation); it is another thing to *explain something well or conclusively.* One might say: a false or misleading explanation is in a logical sense still an *explanation*; one might distinguish meaningfully between its *sense*, and its *validity, truth or justification.*

According to Dennett, "All that is left over in need of explanation at this point is a certain perceived elegance or wonderfulness in the observed laws of physics" (p. 147). Does this mean that the enigmas of quantum theory, which presumably underpins biological entities (as Schrödinger believed), have been resolved? Dennett, though, makes an important philosophical point: the "Darwinian perspective doesn't prove that God … couldn't exist, but only that we have no good reason to think that God does exist" (p. 147). It is a pity that he does not provide a compelling defense of a number of assertions that are required for the general thrust of his argument to cohere: for example, the claim that there are *no logical arguments* that justify belief in God. (There does seem to be a confusion here between logical arguments for *belief in* God and logical arguments for the *existence of* God; and the best that Dennett can do here is argue that there are no such arguments *up to this point*, if one grants for the moment that he is correct.)

Keith Parsons provides a critique of some arguments by Swinburne and Plantinga. He notes that the arguments he chooses are "unavoidably somewhat idiosyncratic" (p. 102), due to the restrictions on space. He outlines two versions of Plantinga's argument. Plantinga holds, according to Parsons, that "it is reasonable to believe that God exists even if there are no arguments, reasons, or evidence for the claim that God exists," p. 103). To be rational means "that we have certain duties with respect to our beliefs—such as the duty to strive to base our beliefs on adequate evidence" (pp. 103–104) or on "permissible" beliefs that "flout no epistemic duties" (p. 104) According to Plantinga's 1983 version of theism, "Christians are within their epistemic rights in taking 'God exists' as properly basic" (a belief is basic if "is not inferred from any other belief or beliefs") (p. 103), and so do not flout their epistemic "duties." Parsons argues forcefully that Plantinga makes the "conditions of proper basicality so absurdly easy to meet that just about anything, however bizarre, could count as properly basic for someone" (p. 106). The critic of the 1983 version can offer a *reductio ad absurdum,* so long as "other patently irrational beliefs" can also be shown to be properly basic "for the groups that endorse them," for example, belief in "Moloch or voodoo" (p. 108).

Parsons then turns to Plantinga's "2000 Version": belief is rational "if and only if it is 'warranted'", that is, has "nothing to do with anyone's subjective awareness of justifying reasons" (p. 108). "Warrant" is used

in an externalist sense: for example, if it is "broad daylight," Parson's eyes are open, and there is an elephant in front of him, then his belief that there is an elephant in front of him is warranted, if his optical and cognitive faculties are operating as designed and nothing blocks or distracts his view (p. 109). The "proper functioning of our faculties in appropriate circumstances sometimes produces beliefs that are 'warrant basic', that is, both basic and warranted" (p. 109); and according to Parsons, Plantinga argues further that we have a *sensus divinitatis,* a "faculty, that when operating properly and in appropriate circumstances, will provide us with the warrant basic belief that God exists" (p. 109). However, not everyone has such a properly functioning faculty; "unbelief" is construed as "a product of epistemic malfunction" (p. 110). Parsons responds hastily by arguing that the atheist can "stand Plantinga's argument on its head and argue that the fact that theistic belief is not warrant basic [as noted by Tyler Wunder whom Parsons quotes] shows that there probably is no God!" (p. 111). Parsons adds: "arguments against the *rationality* of theistic belief now become arguments also against the *truth* of theism" (p. 111).

He then turns to Swinburne's cosmological argument (that "theism can be confirmed as an explanatory hypothesis," p. 112). According to Parsons, Swinburne argues that the "great simplicity of theism" makes its "intrinsic probability" very high ("relative to other hypotheses about what there is") (p. 114). Parsons asks three significant questions: is theism "ontologically simpler than any possible naturalistic rival?" Parsons argues that it is not clear why a God who has attributes such as omnipotence would "possess a simplicity that no finite, limited attributes could match," (p. 115). If theism is "ontologically simpler than any possible naturalistic rival," does it "achieve greater ontological simplicity at the price of greater conceptual complexity and explanatory obscurity?" And why "should allegedly greater simplicity make theism intrinsically more probable than naturalism?" (p. 115)

Parsons believes that theism of this kind introduces far "greater explanatory obscurity into our view of reality" (p. 115). He adds, "by contrast, the quest for a scientific theory of everything is the search for a theory that will, *we hope*, not only simplify our ontology, but also, ideally, provide greater conceptual simplicity and explanatory clarity" (emphasis added, p. 115). At this point Parson's argument becomes quite

problematic. First, it is conceivable that Swinburne's theism could be true; if so, it would not necessarily follow that the object of someone's theistic beliefs would introduce greater ontological or "conceptual complexity" and "explanatory obscurity" into their view of reality. It also does not follow that a "theory of everything" would provide greater "conceptual simplicity" or less "explanatory obscurity" than the knowledge of that previously mentioned theist, if they turned out to be right. The problem here is the ambiguity of the phrase "theory of everything"; which normally signifies the bridging, so to speak, of relativity and quantum theory. Parsons seems to understand it more broadly, and literally. Some clarification would help; so too would a convincing case for the view that such a theory- in either or both senses—will produce "conceptual simplicity" and "explanatory clarity."

A counter-argument that hinges, to a significant degree on a *hope,* is hardly going to do the work that is required to secure a conclusive refutation of the Swinburnian theist's position. Further, Parsons also needs to give a clearer preliminary account—if his argument is to be conclusive—of what sort of ontology would count as conceptually simple, and precisely how this ontology would cohere with a naturalistic theory of "reality" that is demonstrably true or valid. His final point is also questionable: he asks if the "promise of a quasi-scientific theism" that "fails to deliver" is the "best that theism can offer in support of itself" and concludes that it is, even though the sample he has analyzed and studied does seem to be a very small one. It would seem that the *idiosyncrasies* of Parson's selection (which he himself acknowledges at the beginning of the essay), may have extended to his *conclusion* as well.

IV.

Louise M. Antony's volume fills an important gap; what the collection of essays offers is not "manifestos or creeds" but explanations, introduced with a quiet eloquence, an arresting honesty: "we have no sacred texts, no authorities with definitive answers to our question about the nature of morality or the purpose of life…only our ideals… to motivate us, only our sympathy and our intelligence to make us good….we want simply to explain what we believe, and why…" (p.xiii)

The first section consists of personal "journeys" by thinkers who "abjure traditional religious faith" (p.x). Antony writes on love and reason; Stewart Shapiro ruminates on "faith and reason"; Joseph Levine writes on secular humanism; Daniel Garber gives an account of the costs of living without God; Dennett reflects on "goodness"; and so on. The essays that comprise the second part of the volume explore more general issues in philosophy and religion. For example, Simon Blackburn reflects on respect; Kenneth A. Taylor reflects on atheism and the "human adventure"; David Owens contributes an essay on "disenchantment"; Richard Feldman reflects on "reasonable religious disagreements"; Jonathan E Adler writes on fanaticism; and David Lewis writes on "divine evil."

Dennett, having survived "a dissection of the aorta" and nine hours of surgery, provides another vivid, memorable but debatable essay, entitled "Thank Goodness!" in the first section, He wishes to celebrate the "fantastic human-made fabric of excellence" responsible for his continuing life. He argues that "no religion holds its members to the high standards of moral responsibility that the secular world of science and medicine does" (for example, the "standards of conscientiousness endorsed by lab technicians and meal preparers") (p. 115). However, *no religions* are mentioned here or in footnotes. He certainly has a broader understanding of "faith" than Dawkins, even if the picture seems a little idealized: "this tradition puts its faith in the *unlimited* application of reason and empirical inquiry, checking and rechecking, and getting in the habit of asking, 'What if I'm wrong?'"

Dennett is generous in his affirmations, and understandably so: "it is the goodness of this tradition of reason and open inquiry that I thank for my being alive today" (p. 115). He is less generous towards his theistic friends: he has had to forgive friends who prayed for him and has resisted the temptation to ask them, "but did you also sacrifice a goat?" (p. 116). Yet there is a tension, potentially fatal, especially in terms of the essay's coherence. He praises, voluminously and memorably, the "goodness of the tradition" of open inquiry but makes a number of dogmatic assertions (which are not substantiated): the "effectiveness of prayer" is a "myth" (there is nothing in this essay about empirical inquiries into such matters); and the "very idea of thanking God is ludicrous" (p. 117), since gratitude means making "paltry repayments." "What if I'm wrong?" is the question that Dennett wants "religious people" to ask themselves. Fair enough, too.

But how odd, and ironic, that he does not follow the logic of his argument through, and ask, what if he is wrong, especially about the "fantastic fabric" as a whole?

Simon Blackburn provides a thoughtful, thought-provoking and acutely poignant account of religion and respect, surely one of the compelling questions of our age. He asks why we should respect belief systems that we do not share (p. 179). He notes that respect is a "tricky term" (this "makes it uniquely well placed for ideological purposes," p. 180) that spans a "spectrum from simply not interfering, passing by on the other side, through admiration, right up to reverence and deference" (p. 180). On the question of "getting the nature of the gods right," the "only honest way," he argues, "would be to query the cognitive trappings of religion, or in other words, to admit that we are in the domain of emotion or attitude or stance rather than the domain of belief" (p. 181). Like Lewis, he believes that beliefs are "contagious" (p. 182) ("Whence, then, the demand for respect" for people who seemingly adopt "irrational" beliefs?)

Blackburn argues that "onto-theology" "makes existence claims" (p. 183) which "are more or less reasonable or convincing, and when they are true they point to an explanation of the way things are in one respect or another" (p. 183). The alternative it seems is "expressive theology" (p. 184) which describes "*other* worlds, or even past and future events in *this* world, but only to orientate us towards this world… towards each other" (p. 184). Blackburn adds, insightfully again, "we don't know how to reject a stance until we know what it is, and unfortunately just here, matters become somewhat indeterminate" (p. 184). He also adds, sensibly, that he does "not think the expressive account of religion could possibly be the whole story" (p. 185). He does assert that "religions are human productions" (p. 185), though there is no scholarly support for this in the essay. He argues that there is no entitlement to respect for someone who holds a "false belief" (p. 188) .

He concludes by arguing, quite reasonably, that religion does not necessarily "occupy" "the entire territory of spirituality, or the search for the meaning of life" (p. 189). Finite things are not devoid of "meaning" (a notion which is not clarified) just because they do not last forever. The "immanent option" involves some dogmatic elements, it seems: "there is nothing beyond or apart from the processes of life"; there is "no one goal

to which all these processes tend, but we can find something precious, value and meaning, in the processes themselves"; "there is no such thing as *the* meaning of life, but there can be many meanings within a life" (p. 190). Blackburn adds, it "may well be a regrettable feature of modernity that we have not found a balance [between the sacred and the secular] and a severe condemnation of the capitalist world that may make it impossible to give it political expression."

If one is asked to show respect for a position that seems to be based on "ontological self-deception" (p. 193), what then? Blackburn says, with memorable honesty: "I fear there is no one answer. I fear that the somewhat unaccountable state of mind of my host may be interpreted in either way, and no doubt in yet other ways again" (p. 193). The room Blackburn makes for the complexities and indeterminateness that inform "our" view of the world gives his essay and his argument a consistency, complexity and coherence that is frankly lacking in a number of the other essays reviewed.

David Lewis argues that the "most ambitious version" of the argument from evil "succeeds conclusively" (p. 231): that is, "the existence of evil is logically incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and completely benevolent deity" (p. 231). Lewis insists: "there is no evasion, unless the standards of success are set unreasonably high." The "neglected version" of this argument focuses not on "the evils that God fails to prevent," but rather the "evils God himself perpetrates" (p. 231). "The orthodox story" shows that insubordination is to be punished, and forever, and though there are disagreements about what counts as insubordination, "it is clear" that there are attitudes and actions that will "suffice for damnation" (p. 232). What "God does is thus infinitely worse that what the worst tyrants did" (p. 232): God prolongs the torture forever and by "vastly surpassing all the modes of torment about which we know" (p. 232). The "punishment of the damned is infinitely disproportionate to their crimes" (p. 232). If lack of faith "suffices for damnation" (does it?), then the suffering will be eternal.

The counter-argument that "the orthodox story" is a kind of "cartoon" version of theism is rejected by Lewis on two grounds: "the neglected argument" does apply against "mainstream versions of theism" (p. 232). Lewis claims that there are numerous passages in the New Testament and in the Koran that when "read at face value," support the thrust

of the "neglected argument." The counter-argument fails "to appreciate how difficult it is to avoid the 'orthodox story' while simultaneously retaining the distinctive doctrines of Christianity" (p. 233). If people are punished because of their choices, and if we "suppose that the alleged choice is ill-informed and irrevocable, then God does evil" because he "places people in a situation in which they must make a judgment that binds them for eternity, and he knows that some will be so inadequately informed that they will opt for an eternity of torment" (p. 233). Much remains unclear: would it follow that if one makes an "ill-informed and irrevocable" choice and one's creator punishes one, that the latter "does evil"? What is an "irrevocable" choice? What does it mean for someone with free will to be "placed in a situation" in which they "*must* make a judgment" (emphasis added)? Worse, the proposition concerning *the doing* of evil is ambiguous: is it evil because of the punishment, because of the divine plan or will, because of the nature of freewill, or because of the choices that are available (or not available)?

Lewis turns to the standard reply to the question of why God does not prevent damnation (which Lewis seems to assume is evil). "Even an omnipotent, omniscient, and completely benevolent deity who wished to create a world in which incompatibilist freedom [which has "supreme value"] was found might have to allow for the existence of stubborn beings who chose eternally to remain in torment" (p. 234). Lewis sees no greater value in incompatibilist freedom and so, will "not be satisfied with the thought that God may have to allow some people who eternally choose damnation" (p. 234)—God "could have set things up so as to keep his creatures out of trouble" (p. 234) Why, Lewis asks, must choices be made "through a glass darkly"? A God who sets things up in this way "seems negligent, at best" (p. 234). Lewis does not set out an alternative account of what making choices through a glass clearly, so to speak, might be like or an account of how he would reconcile such an alternative account with a coherent concept of freewill.

Freewill, "evil," proportionate and "disproportionate" punishment, and so on and so forth, are not unpacked clearly or sufficiently enough. So, later, he argues that torment is not an "apt metaphor" for the alienation of an atheist from God and that he would be treated unjustly if his "eternal prospects were determined by a choice" he had been "forced to make in ignorance" (pp. 234–235). Other questions arise: what is "forcing"

Lewis to make such a choice, in what sense is he being "forced," and if these are characteristic conditions, what sort of "choice" or freewill is involved?

God fails also, according to Lewis, if an atheist changes their mind and makes "amends in the hereafter" only to be tormented because of a memory of insubordination; the atheist has been "permitted" to "hazard… eternal felicity in a state of radically incomplete knowledge" (p. 235). It is a pity that Lewis did not give a more rigorous account of the relation between incomplete knowledge and freewill, or between "hazard" and choice, or of the conditions that make freewill possible. As it stands, his argument takes much for granted and therefore cannot resolve these puzzles convincingly. Lewis claims that "God could have" set up "the causal conditions so that the resisters didn't go astray to begin with" (p. 235). He *asserts* that inflicting punishment is an example of perpetrating evil, and that the willingness to inflict pain in excess of the "sum total of pain, suffering, and cruelty manifested in the created universe," whatever that might mean, would amount to "evil." He does not show how punishment and "evil" (the sense of which is not clarified) are related; how inflicting *punishment* and perpetrating *evil* are related (they could conceivably be different things); how inflicting pain *in excess* of the "sum total of pain suffering, and cruelty manifested in the created universe" entails "divine evil" (is it evil because it is "in excess," because it is eternal, because it is intentional, or translated into act? Or for some other reason?). Much that is questionable or unclear is again taken for granted.

Finally, Lewis asks, memorably, "appearances notwithstanding, are those who worship the perpetrator of divine evil themselves evil?' (p. 238). He answers that they "endorse the divine evil" (p. 239)—"the perpetrator's evil extends to them… [they] are tainted by it… Does the evil spread by contagion to us?" (p. 239). These "chains of contagion" can be severed because admirers are often "not fully informed about the attitudes of those they admire" (p. 240). It is significant that Lewis allows for this kind of ignorance at this step of the argument. It is a pity that the "glass" through which Lewis looks—at freewill, choice, justice, punishment, "evil," and indeed a kind of god, but not possible relations between freewill and forgiveness or mercy, or possible forms of justice—remains darkened, notwithstanding the sketchy nature of the original project. (Lewis died,

sadly, before he could develop the paper in full). It is in this "glass," shadowy and often indistinct, that his attempt fails to show that the argument from evil "succeeds conclusively."

V.

What Dawkins calls the "honest quest for truth" and what Dennett calls the "tradition of reason and open inquiry" are worthy banners and standards in our attempts to gain a clear understanding of the questions, the assumptions that enter into our questions and arguments, the key issues and challenges, the possible answers and alternatives, and so on pertaining to theism, atheism, "science" and "religion." Clarity, coherence, rigor, well-researched and well-informed argumentation and a balanced weighing up of the evidence as well as a careful fit between evidence and conclusions, are important. A number of essays that appeal, implicitly or explicitly, to certainty or truth with regard to atheism do need to ensure that the conclusions follow clearly and rigorously from the evidence (or from the premises); if deductive arguments cannot be provided, or if the conclusions go (well) beyond the evidence, an "honest quest for the truth" would demand a thorough critique. If one wishes to provide inductive or analogical arguments, it then becomes important to explain how their validity can be immune to doubts and challenges that are familiar in the tradition from Hume and Kant to Russell and Ayer, among others (see for example, Rescher, 1969 and 1980; Goodman, 1983; Howson, 2000; Maxwell and Anderson, 1975; Swinburne, 1974; von Wright, 1957; and so on). In the absence of such accounts, intelligibility is likely to become more problematic.

Similarly uncritical, un-elucidated appeals to probability—some have been noted already—require certain things if they are to convince. There is much research and debate on this and related topics and it would be unwise to ignore, overlook or forget the literature (see for example, Lucas, 1970; Ayer, 1973; Vickers, 1988; Prevost, 1990; Ambegaokar, 1996; Denny and Gaines, 2000; Lèassig & Valleriani, 2002; Stevens, 2003; Reichenbach, 2008; among many others). How, for example, do we draw conclusions about the factual likelihood of an occurrence in the future from an *a priori* calculus? What of the logic of the presumption that the explanations that

have worked until now, will continue to work in the future, let alone in ways which come *close to proof*? If probability, as Hume pointed out, is based on an analogy between objects which we have had some experience of, and objects that we have had no experience of, how then can presumptions of resemblance be justified? And how can such inferences be "rational" if they *cannot* be justified? Indeed, what precisely do we mean when we say "*x* is probable" (or "improbable")—that it is *reasonable* to believe this about *x,* or that we do not know if it is true that *x* exists, or that the statement is merely *performative* (as Ayer thought) and in no way implies anything about the actual existence of *x,* or something else again? Is Ayer not correct when he argues that we "measure likelihood in terms of the theories that we accept" and that "whatever the evidence, we always have some latitude in the choice of our hypotheses which we are going to project" (1990; p. 179)? In any case, these debates, and analogous ones, will need to be set out and argued through carefully and rigorously, just as the questions that arise from appeals to assertion, "explanation," "probability" and/or meaning will need to be answered clearly, coherently and conclusively, if the mountain we are to climb is to be other than Mount Unintelligible.

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Daniel Dombrowski. *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion: A Process Perspective.* **Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005.**

Daniel Dombrowski. *Rethinking the Ontological Argument: A Neoclassical Theistic Response.* **New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.**

Daniel A. Dombrowski addresses a wide range of topics in these two books, but ultimately his goal in both is to shed light on important ideas and arguments in the history of the philosophy of religion from a neoclassical or process theistic point of view.

In *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*, Dombrowski tries to reveal the dynamic aspect of Plato's theism and construct a new Platonic philosophy of religion. Chapter 1 considers Plato's cosmology, where God is viewed as the mind or soul for the body that is the whole natural world. Commentators on Plato, such as Richard Mohr, reject this World Soul thesis, arguing that it is either redundant or useless. Dombrowski responds to this allegation by appealing to a pantheistic interpretation that is informed by Charles Hartshorne's and Alfred North Whitehead's metaphysics. In chapter 2, Dombrowski focuses on Plato's idea in the *Sophist* according to which being is *dynamis* or dynamic power. He tries to show in his analysis that "it is plausible to suggest that Plato held a version of panpsychism similar to that which was held by certain process thinkers" (p. 42). In chapter 3, Dombrowski considers a central Platonic thesis, namely, the Theory of Forms. He rejects the troublesome view that the forms are free-floating ontological entities and defends instead the idea that the forms are items in the divine mind or divine psychical process. In chapter 4, Dombrowski addresses an interesting apparent inconsistency in Plato's position: on the one hand, Plato holds a dipolar categorical scheme but, on the other hand, he defends cosmological monism, according to which the World Soul subsumes everything. Dombrowski solves this problem by appealing to a neoclassical conception of God, which is based on the rejection of the classical concept of God as an unmoved mover. In chapter 5, Dombrowski discusses arguments for the existence of God: a version of the ontological argument found in the *Republic*, which Dombrowski thinks anticipates

Anselm's well-known argument in the *Proslogion*, and two different versions of the cosmological argument found in the *Laws* and the *Timaeus*, respectively. He argues that the distinction between the abstract existence of God and the contingent actuality of God, which was introduced by Hartshorne, is crucial here. In the final chapter, Dombrowski considers Plato's idea that the purpose of human life is to become like God as much as possible.

In *Rethinking the Ontological Argument* Dombrowski discusses, again from a neoclassical theistic perspective, Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God and its modern and contemporary variations. Dombrowski tries to defend the ontological argument from its critics by appealing to the distinction between divine existence and divine actuality, which, as I have mentioned, he also discusses in chapter 5 of *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*. Dombrowski argues that existing criticisms of the ontological argument can, at most, refute only the *a priori* derivation of the existence of God as defined by classical theism, while not similarly refuting such an argument when based on neoclassical theism, which Dombrowski finds more tenable.

In chapter 1, Dombrowski reviews the historical background of the ontological argument. He discusses the several versions of the ontological argument introduced by Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, Malcolm, Hartshorne and Gödel. Chapters 2 and 3 feature Dombrowski's most original contribution to the debate on the ontological argument. In these chapters he critically examines responses to the argument from the point of view of continental philosophy. He considers Richard Rorty's and Mark C. Taylor's challenges. Since the majority of contemporary analysts of the ontological argument are analytic philosophers, it is interesting to see how continental philosophers approach the argument and how Dombrowski responds to this perspective. In chapters 4 and 5, on the other hand, Dombrowski focuses on responses to the ontological argument from the analytic point of view. He examines Graham Oppy's claim that the ontological argument is dialectically ineffective and worthless. Dombrowski points out that Oppy's objection overlooks a powerful process defence of the argument. Dombrowski also examines two better-known responses to the argument: (i) Gaunilo's 'island objection,' according to which if the ontological argument were successful we could construct a parallel argument that proves the existence of such an absurd entity as the

perfect island; and (ii) Kant's idea that the ontological argument fails because it treats existence, erroneously, as a predicate. In the final chapter, Dombrowski argues against the classical conceptions of God defended by Thomas V. Morris, Katherin A. Rogers and Alvin Plantinga.

Dombrowski's books share two distinctive features. First, they exhibit the remarkably wide range of his philosophical knowledge and interests. In *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*, he analyses Plato's later dialogues, often overlooked by scholars of ancient philosophy, and relates their teachings to contemporary discussions in process philosophy of religion. In *Rethinking the Ontological Argument*, as I mentioned above, he demonstrates his knowledge of both the continental and analytic traditions by evaluating numerous responses to the argument. Very few philosophers are capable of surveying and linking thoughts in ancient philosophy, process philosophy, continental philosophy and analytic philosophy. Dombrowski's comprehension of such diverse approaches makes these books truly original. Second, Dombrowski's presentations are always succinct. Despite the variety of the topics that he addresses Dombrowski packs his discussions into two small volumes. *Rethinking the Ontological Argument* is only 154 pages in length excluding the bibliography and *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion* is only 112 pages in length, again, excluding the bibliography. Ironically, however, these positive features seem also to contribute to one of the books' weaknesses.

To take one example, Dombrowski's discussion of Oppy's objection to the ontological argument is quite shallow (chapters 4 and 5 of *Rethinking the Ontological Argument*). He responds to Oppy's arguments by referring to a number of brief reviews of Oppy's book written by other philosophers, such as Lucas, Gale, Oakes, Langtry, and Taliaferro. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in relying on book reviews, but Dombrowski merely repeats a series of relatively small points mentioned in these reviews without developing them further. To take another example, Dombrowski's discussion of the ontological argument and the cosmological argument in *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion* relies largely on interpretations of Plato's passages offered by such philosophers as J. Prescott Johnson, William Lane Craig and Norman Geisler without discussing Plato's original texts thoroughly. Dombrowski contends, following Johnson, that while Anselm is the one who first formulated the ontological argument clearly, "[a] consideration of the famous divided line in books 6 and 7 of the *Republic* …

shows that the argument is found in Plato in at least an implicit way"
(p. 81). Plato's argument seems, however, so different from Anselm's that
it is difficult to see how it can be construed legitimately as a version of
the ontological argument without a deeper analysis of their respective
elements. Indeed, Dombrowski's presentations in these slim volumes
would surely benefit from fuller exposition, but to provide that he would
have had either to have lengthened the books or narrowed their focus to
fewer themes and topics.

In what remains of this review I provide more substantive philo-
sophical criticisms of Dombrowski's treatment of the arguments for the
existence of God.

(a) Dombrowski on the cosmological argument

In *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion,* Dombrowski discusses William
Lane Craig's interpretation of a version of the cosmological argument
found in Plato's *Laws* and Norman Geisler's interpretation of another
version found in the *Timaeus* (pp. 85–88). He remarks, "To link this
[cosmological] argument with the dipolar theism of the previous chapter,
we should say along with Eslick that 'the abstract necessity of God's
existence … does not determine the concrete *actuality* of such existence.
The latter aspect, even of God, is contingent.' … That is, the argument
leads us to infer the existence of God, but it does not necessarily lead us
to Aristotle's or Thomas Aquinas' unmoved mover, rather to a Supreme
Self-Mover" (p. 88). It is difficult however to see how the cosmological
argument proves the existence of God without specifying His concrete
actuality.

Many contemporary theistic philosophers, including Craig himself,
think that the cosmological argument reveals very specific attributes of
God. If, as the cosmological argument says, God is the ultimate cause of
motion, events and goodness, He must be uncaused (because He is the
ultimate cause), personal (because He chooses to cause), timeless (because
He causes time as well), changeless (because He is the ultimate source
of change), immaterial (because He creates the material totality), and
extremely powerful (because He causes the whole universe). I do not
mean that the cosmological argument is obviously sound, but once we
assume that it *is* sound it is unclear how Dombrowski could demonstrate
that it proves only the abstract existence of God without leading us to
something more concrete, such as the actuality of Aristotle's and Aquinas's

unmoved mover, which has at least some of the specific divine attributes mentioned above.

(b) Dombrowski on the ontological argument

In *Rethinking the Ontological Argument* Dombrowski argues that classical defences of the ontological argument go wrong in persisting with the idea that the argument derives the concrete actuality of God. He contends that the force of existing objections can be eliminated once we affirm that the ontological argument derives only the abstract existence of God. This contention, however, raises a question that leads to a difficulty that is similar to the one mentioned above: what exactly *is* the abstract existence of God, which is independent of any of God's actual attributes? As Anthony Kenny says, "to say that God exists is to say that there is something that has the divine attributes"(Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 5). Thus, it seems that Dombrowski's talk of an existence of God that is free of any specific attributes fails to refer to anything ontologically meaningful. Kenny's claim is of course based on a classical conception of God, which Dombrowski rejects, but it is hard to see how anyone can talk about God's existence non-vacuously without mentioning any actual divine attributes. Therefore, while Dombrowski's neoclassical theistic response might succeed in undercutting existing objections to the argument, it does not seem to succeed in proving anything ontologically substantial.

Suppose, however, that Dombrowski's response does somehow succeed in proving something ontologically substantial. In this case, ironically, Dombrowski's view of the ontological argument turns out to be essentially the same as the traditional view: the ontological argument proves *a priori* the existence of something ontologically substantial. If so, Dombrowski's defence does not seem any better than classical defences.

Despite the above-mentioned weaknesses, Dombrowski's discussions are refreshingly original. His books represent some of the most unique recent contributions to the philosophy of religion.

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Virtue's End: God in the Moral Philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas, ed. Fulvio Di Blasi, Joshua P. Hochschild, and Jeffrey Langan, South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008.

Virtue's End is a collection of nine papers exploring the role of God in the moral philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas. The topic is approached from a variety of perspectives, but central to the volume as a whole is a concern with two closely related questions. Firstly is knowledge of God necessary for a fully moral life? Secondly, is God an essential part of a fully developed moral theory? These questions are, as the title suggests, approached from within the Aristotelian/Thomistic perspective. And these questions naturally arise within such a perspective. Aquinas is, of course, explicitly and unabashedly a theistic philosopher, and so we would expect him to address these questions about God and morality. Aristotle has more often than Aquinas been embraced by naturalists, but he, too, does not shy away from theistic talk in his ethical treatises. One has only to read through to Book X (esp. chapter 8) of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to find the divine occupying an apparently prominent place in Aristotle's moral philosophy. Whatever we may judge about whether Book X fits happily with the preceding nine books, even in the preceding books, as well as works like the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle does not shy away from talk of the divine. Given the influence of Aristotle on Aquinas, together with the fact that each is happy to talk about God in the context of doing moral philosophy, it is a useful project to consider just what God's role is in Aristotelian and Thomistic ethics. The essays in *Virtue's End* should mostly be found to be a helpful contribution to this project. Some posit a more fundamental role for God, and some a less fundamental role. I think the arguments presented on the side of the less fundamental role are much the stronger in Aristotle's case, and I more tentatively venture to say that they are somewhat the weaker in Aquinas's case. But I haven't the space to make the case here, and the reader will have to judge the matter for herself. Below, I briefly summarize these essays.

Kevin Flannery's essay "Can an Aristotelian Consider Himself a Friend of God?" is only indirectly related to the two central questions of the volume, though he does give a brief argument that Aristotelian ethics cannot be separated from religious belief (p. 10–11). Flannery notes the Aristotelian distinction between friendship according to equality and friendship according to preeminence. For Aristotle, only the latter is possible between a human being and God. Aquinas holds that the virtue of charity requires friendship with God. Flannery argues that Aquinas thinks that both types of friendship are possible between a human being and God. On the one hand, God is vastly superior to us and so is a friend according to preeminence. But at the same time, through Christ we have become children of God, and so, as the Apostle John tells us, are called God's friends—the friendship of equality.

On my reading, *contra* some of the authors in *Virtue's End*, the central features of Aristotle's moral theory are not dependent on theism. Christopher Kaczor, in his essay "The Divine in Thomas's Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: In What Sense Can We be Good without God?" argues that the same is true of Aquinas's moral theory, at least as it is presented in the *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*. Kaczor establishes his thesis primarily by arguing that wherever Aquinas employs God in an argument for a central ethical principle, he provides alongside that argument a non-theistic argument for the same principle.

Antonio Donato treats the same work in his essay "Contemplation As the End of Human Nature in Aquinas's *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*." He argues that Aquinas's theory of contemplation goes beyond Aristotle's. Whereas for Aristotle the highest human activity—and so perfect happiness—is contemplation *in this life* of the noble and divine, for Aquinas this is only imperfect happiness. Perfect happiness involves contemplation of God *in the next life*, with immediate cognitive awareness of God that goes beyond our current capacities. Donato suggests that Aquinas arrived at this view by assimilating some philosophical commitments of the Neoplatonists. Donato's conclusions are, at least on the surface, in tension with Kaczor's, since it is not clear how there could be a non-theistic argument for this conception of perfect happiness. But perhaps this merely amounts to a question about the scope of moral theory. Kaczor seems to take moral theory to be concerned only with human actions and happiness in this life, whereas Donato seems happy to extend it into the next.

In "Aristotle vs. the Neo-Darwinians: Human Nature and the Foundation of Ethics," Marie George argues that Aristotle rightly differs from neo-Darwinians in holding the following: (i) nature acts for an end; (ii) reason is not just another sense power, but an immaterial faculty capable of grasping immaterial goods (iii) we are truly free; (iv) human nature is in some sense fundamentally unchanging. George also argues that, while Aristotle does not make fundamental reference to God in building up his ethics, his theism aids him in getting to (i). While I am sympathetic with some of George's conclusions, I remain unconvinced that theism plays an important role here, not least because Aristotle's main argument for teleology, *Physics* II, does not presuppose theism.

Anthony Lisska's essay "The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas: A New Look at Some Old Questions" explores the metaphysical foundations of Thomistic ethics. Lisska argues that an ontology of natural kinds is required to ground Thomistic ethics. Furthermore, from two key facts, two happy results follow. The facts are these: (i) for Aquinas, the natural kind *human* is defined by a certain set of capacities or dispositional properties; (ii) the good is the development of these dispositional properties. The happy results are these: (a) the naturalistic fallacy is avoided; (b) the derivation of a theory of obligation becomes possible. Finally, and to the point of our central questions, Lisska argues that one can get to a natural kind ontology, as well as our two happy results, without bringing God into the picture. Though Aquinas thinks that, in fact, God is the ontological ground of everything else, this need not be established for ethical theory. This question of God's status is one belonging to the highest flights of metaphysics rather than to ethics.

In "Knowledge of the Good as Participation in God's Love," Fulvio Di Blasi returns to the question whether knowledge of God is necessary for a moral life. He approaches this through the concept of *participation*. According to Aquinas, non-essential goods are goods by participation in the essential good (God). Through our knowledge of participated goods, we have knowledge of God as the essential good. But we may have this knowledge in one of two ways: (i) by recognizing in a confused way that there is a highest good; (ii) by recognizing God as the highest good. Di Blasi suggests that an atheist, by knowing God only in the former sense, may be moral but will fall short of complete moral goodness. For that, we must know God in the latter sense.

Giacomo Samek Lodovici picks up the same question in his "The Role of God in Aquinas's Ethical Thought: Can an Atheist Be Moral?" and gives a similar answer to Di Blasi's. While many of the proper aims of ethics can be identified without awareness of God's existence, two of these—to know the truth (including the truth about God) and to live in society with God—cannot be identified or achieved without knowledge of God. Since achieving these two aims is essential to the completely good life, only one with knowledge of God can be completely good.

Moving back from the question of practice to the question of theory, Robert Gahl argues in "Who Made the Law? God, Ethics, and the Law of Nature" that a partial account of the moral life can be given without reference to God. An adequate account of natural law, however, resists any non-theistic articulation. But Gahl goes even further. Though a coherent Thomistic ethical theory can be articulated given general theistic principles, Aquinas holds that the consequences of original sin involve a "radical need" for grace, without which we will not be able rationally to orient ourselves to our proper aims.

In "Hierarchy and Direction for Choice," Daniel McInerny addresses an issue related to our main questions. McInerny takes Aquinas to hold that God is the ultimate human end, that human goods are arranged in a natural hierarchy, and that this hierarchy provides direction for choice. Indeed, obligation depends on the guidance provided by the hierarchy of goods. The guidance is provided for because there is an ultimate end, because lower goods are for the sake of and regulated by higher goods, and because many non-ultimate goods are nevertheless intrinsically good and so choiceworthy in themselves. Though he does not focus explicitly on our main questions, McInerny's argument suggests that one cannot identify the appropriate hierarchy of goods, and so cannot consistently identify one's obligations, without recognizing God as the ultimate end.

Virtue's End is simply but attractively produced and at $19 will be an affordable and welcome addition to the libraries of ethicists, philosophical theologians, and scholars of Aristotle and Aquinas. Most, and I among them, will find much to cheer and much to disagree with, but the arguments are careful and stimulating throughout.

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27–30 June 2011 – Krakow, Poland

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Keynote speakers: Eleonore Stump, Linda T. Zagzebski, William J. Wainwright, Richard Swinburne, et al.

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The abstracts are to be submitted by e-mail, as an attachment in a common format (preferably pdf or doc).
Please send abstracts and requests for further information to Dr. Janusz Salamon: society@philosophy-of-religion.eu

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Selected papers will be considered for publication in the European Journal for Philosophy of Religion and in an anthology.

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