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SURVIVALISM, CORRUPTIONISM, AND MEREOLOGY

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Abstract. Corruptionism is the view that following physical death, the human being ceases to exist (until Resurrection) but their soul persists in the afterlife. Survivalism holds that both the human being and their soul persist in the afterlife, as distinct entities, with the soul constituting the human. Each position has its defenders, most of whom appeal both to metaphysical considerations and to the authority of St Thomas Aquinas. Corruptionists claim that survivalism violates a basic principle of any plausible mereology, while survivalists tend to reject the principle, though without as much detail as one would like. In this paper I examine both the key exegetical issues and the mereological question, arguing (i) that Aquinas cannot be shown to have supported the principle in question, and (ii) that the principle should be rejected on independent grounds. If correct, some key planks in support of survivalism are established, with others to await further examination.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a vigorous and fascinating debate currently taking place in philosophy of religion, concerning the nature of immortality. Although both sides are almost without exception followers of, or inspired by, the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, the debate has interest for anyone who either believes in, or wants at least to make sense of, the idea of a life following physical death. Moreover, at least some of the issues that have been aired should be of interest to those with no special regard for Thomistic thought; indeed they have interest beyond philosophy of religion altogether.

Both sides make classical Thomistic assumptions, wholly in line with traditional Christian thought, concerning the immortality of the human soul and its fate of reward, punishment, or purgation following

a human's physical death. The debated question is the following: does the *human being*, i.e. human person, survive physical death along with his soul, or is it *only* his soul that survives his physical death? Following Patrick Toner, the philosopher who has contributed most to the debate and in many ways set its terms, I call those who believe that only the soul survives *corruptionists*, and those who believe the soul *and the person* survive *survivalists*.[1]

One might have thought this question settled long ago by some authority recognized by both sides. Surely, for example, Aquinas made it clear exactly what he thinks, this being just the sort of question he would have been minded to answer – as it were a question made in Heaven for a Christian Aristotelian? Or must it not be that some extra-philosophical source – Church dogma, the practically unanimous teaching of theologians, even Scripture itself – has at least supplied an answer worthy of acceptance by both sides, with only the philosophical mechanics of the correct view, so to speak, left to be worked out? Surprisingly, this seems not to be the case. I have not made an exhaustive search of relevant sources, nor is the matter of extra-philosophical authority something that deserves special attention in a philosophy article. That said, it does seem that the matter of survivalism versus corruptionism is still a wholly open philosophical question. And there is a significant number of philosophers on both sides.[2]

There are at least three major issues at the centre of this ongoing dispute. One is whether Aquinas himself was a survivalist or corruptionist. Corruptionists make a very strong case that Aquinas believed as they do, but my view is that although a compelling case for Aquinas's survivalism is hard to make, he can and should be interpreted in a way that is consistent with survivalism.[3] Another is whether corruptionism is as

[1] See Toner 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2012. Brown 2005 coined the term 'corruptionist'.

[2] Toner (2012): n.1 gives a long list. Apart from being the leading corruptionist himself, there are among others: Kenny (1993): 138; Pasnau (1992): 380ff.; Davies (1992): 215-20. The survivalists include: Stump (2003): 51-4; Brown (2005): 120-4; Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov (2006); Hershenov (2008). All of the corruptionists just listed claim both that corruptionism is correct and that Aquinas held it. The same goes for the survivalists apart from Hershenov (and Koch-Hershenov), who think Aquinas was a corruptionist and wrong about it. In Oderberg (2005) and (2007) I also defend survivalism and attribute the same view to Aquinas.

[3] For the strongest case in favour of a corruptionist reading, see Toner (2009a) and his other articles. Stump (2003) and (2006) offers a plausible reading of Aquinas as survivalist. See also Oderberg (2005).

well equipped as survivalism to account for the deserts that are meted out in the afterlife.[4] For the survivalist, since the person persists beyond physical death, it is they who are rewarded or punished. The corruptionist has the difficult task of accounting for what seems to be the unfairness of rewarding or punishing one thing (the soul) for what something else (the now non-existent person) did during its earthly life. A third issue is whether survivalism violates a putatively self-evident principle of mereology, called the Weak Supplementation Principle, since it seems to involve the view – assuming, along hylemorphic lines, that a person is not identical to their soul nor could ever *become* identical to their soul – that following physical death a person continues to exist with only one proper part, namely their soul. It is this third issue that will occupy the remainder of the present paper.

II. THE WEAK SUPPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLE: SOME BACKGROUND

Classical extensional mereology (CEM) is generally held to include the Weak Supplementation Principle (WSP) as one of its axioms.[5] Taken to be one of the minimal requirements of any adequate mereology, the principle states: if x is a proper part of y (i.e., any part of y other than y itself, y being an 'improper' part of itself), then there is some other proper part z of y that does not overlap x, that is, shares no part with x.[6] In other words, nothing can have a 'single' proper part in the technical sense of a proper part that is not 'supplemented' by another that is disjoint from it. WSP will evidently be violated if an object has a numerically single proper part. It will also be violated if an object has many disjoint proper parts but also has a proper part that overlaps – shares parts with, is not disjoint from – all of the others. For the part that overlaps all the others will itself exist without a supplement.

Kathrin Koslicki thinks WSP is 'pretheoretically plausible' and 'partially constitutive of the meaning of "is a proper part of"'.[7] Indeed

[4] For the argument that corruptionism has serious problems accounting for the fairness of post-mortem rewards and punishments, see Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov (2006). For a detailed and ingenious response (ultimately unsuccessful, in my view) see Toner (2012).

[5] Simons (1987): 28ff.

[6] No proper part, of course, and no improper part – which would be the case if x = y.

[7] Koslicki (2008): 183.

she appeals to WSP in defence of a neo-Aristotelian, hylemorphic theory of material constitution. Since, she argues, an object such as a statue can be constituted by a single lump of clay (a proper part of the statue, i.e. not identical to it) that has no other disjoint material parts, there must be a formal part (its structure) to supplement the lump, giving the statue two constitutive and non-overlapping parts. For Effingham and Robson, 'denying WSP is not a credible option' since it is 'not only eminently plausible and in accord with our intuitions, but it is also an axiom of just about every mereology available'.[8] Casati and Varzi note sympathetically that '[s]ome authors (most notably Peter Simons) regard [WSP] as constitutive of the meaning of "part" and would accordingly list it along with the lexical postulates of mereology'.[9]

Not everyone shares this intuition concerning WSP. Maureen Donnelly, in the course of a detailed examination of the role of WSP in Koslicki's theory, writes: 'I myself have no intuitions whatsoever regarding the truth or falsity of (WSP).'[10] She thinks the idea that WSP is in accord with general intuitions about parthood has not been shown to have any empirical support, and that there is no conception of parthood *in general* such that non-philosophers (or for that matter philosophers, since not all accept the principle) could appeal to it in defence of the idea that weak supplementation just is one aspect of what it is to *be* a part of anything whatsoever. Donald Smith expresses himself even more strongly, taking WSP to be plain false.[11] Effingham and Robson, to whom Smith is replying, propose the idea of a multiply located, time-travelling brick that composes an entire wall, arguing that the scenario requires four-dimensionalism in order to bring it into line with WSP. (No single brick, without supplementation, can compose an entire wall – only distinct, disjoint temporal parts can do so.) Smith, by contrast, denies the need for a four-dimensionalist interpretation, arguing that the scenario, bizarre though it may be, demonstrates the falsity of WSP. Indeed, the atypical nature of the thought experiment shows, for Smith, that WSP is routinely accepted by mereologists – and by non-philosophers who understandably

[8] Effingham and Robson (2007): 635.

[9] Casati and Varzi (1999): 39. They note that it fails in some mereologies that admit the existence of 'open' individuals, viz., entities with no boundaries as parts, as well as 'closed' entities that do contain boundary parts; but they, like Simons, are hostile to the very distinction (1999: 79).

[10] Donnelly (2011): 230.

[11] Smith (2009).

restrict their understanding to the familiar material objects of ordinary experience – precisely because they do not consider atypical cases when framing their formal axioms or foundational principles.

With this background in mind, we can see that an appeal to WSP is one of the weapons the corruptionist will use against the survivalist. For if, as survivalists claim, both the soul and the person survive physical death – the separation of the soul from the body – the only credible relation they can have in the afterlife is that of part to whole. The person survives, but only because he still has a proper part – the single proper part that is his soul. So, for example, Stump writes of Aquinas's position: 'a human being can exist when he is composed of nothing more than one of his metaphysical constituents, namely his form or soul. For Aquinas, in the case of human beings, the persistence of one metaphysical part of the whole thing is sufficient for the existence of that thing.'[12] Again, Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov defend the view that 'it is metaphysically possible for us to survive the loss of our body while remaining distinct from but intimately connected to our soul whose only ontological status becomes that of being our only proper part'.[13] I have expressed the same position, framed in terms of constitution (as does Stump).[14]

Here is the response of the leading corruptionist. Patrick Toner first claims that WSP 'is a deeply intuitive principle'. Secondly, he claims that 'St Thomas himself endorsed it, or something very much like it'.[15] By 'something very much like it', Toner means that Aquinas may not have had the disjointness aspect of WSP in mind, but he at least thought that any object with a proper part must have at least one other non-identical proper part, which is sufficient to make the anti-survivalist point. Clearly there is both an exegetical issue and a philosophical issue, though consideration of the former naturally leads to the latter. Since the authority of St Thomas is invoked on both sides, and getting clear on his view takes us to some of the metaphysical questions at hand, I will proceed by first examining Aquinas's position, discussing at the same time the philosophical matters it raises. I will then leave Aquinas to one side and examine both the corruptionist's anti-survivalist objections and the positive survivalist case.

[12] Stump (2003): 53.
[13] Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov (2006): 440.
[14] Oderberg (2005); (2007).
[15] Toner (2009b): 456 for both quotations.

III. WAS AQUINAS A DEFENDER OF WEAK SUPPLEMENTATION?

The textual evidence does suggest that St Thomas believed no object could have a single proper part, but it is not clear that he intended the principle to apply equally to the extra-mundane case of the separated soul. In other words, I read him as falling within the group (laymen and philosophers) Donnelly and Smith both envisage as not having exotic cases in mind when taking it as self-evident that nothing can have a single proper part. So, for example, Toner offers us passages in which Aquinas affirms the need for multiple parts of wholes, but which do not bear the weight he puts on them as enunciations of universal principle.[16] In one place, Aquinas gives the relation of 'a part ... to another part in order to make up the whole' as an example of union;[17] in another, he says that 'the parts of these substances are many, because since each whole is composed of many parts, there must be more component parts than composite wholes'.[18] The first quotation involves no more than a passing reference to a typical example of union given along with many others, and can hardly be read as the statement of a universal truth. The second is in the context precisely of a discussion by Aristotle of wholly material substances (in particular plants and non-human animals), and is part of the defence of the thesis that the parts of substances are not themselves substances. In neither context is there any evidence that St Thomas had the full gamut of cases in mind; rather, he was thinking only of material composition, as do most people when they consider the part-whole relation.

Since isolated references such as these achieve little, it is potentially more fruitful to look for a more official-sounding statement expressed in a context where the philosophical underpinnings are apparent. To be sure this is what Toner does, offering us a thesis Aquinas indisputably takes to be a 'first principle of demonstration': 'when it is known what a whole is and what a part is, it is at once recognized that every whole is greater than its part.'[19] To this Toner adds, on behalf of corruptionism:

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[16] Toner (2009b): 459.

[17] *Summa Theologica* (hereafter ST): I.II q.28 a.1, obj.2, Aquinas (1914): 326. ['pars toti vel alteri parti ad constitutionem totius ...']

[18] *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*: Book 7, Lesson 16, n.2, Aquinas (1995): 540 (para. 1632). ['partes esse plurimas harum substantiarum, quia, cum unumquodque totum ex pluribus componatur, oportet plures esse partes componentes quam tota composita.']

[19] ST: I q.2 a.1, obj.2., Aquinas (1920): 20. (My translation is a slight modification of the latter. Of course, by 'greater than its part' St Thomas means 'greater than each of its parts', as Toner also notes; otherwise it would be what is technically known as a 'slam

'If an object has just one proper part, then the object is no greater or lesser than its part.'[20] This, however, is *not* an assertion Aquinas makes, but a proposition to which Toner commits Aquinas on philosophical grounds. Why should we (or Aquinas) think an object with a sole proper part is no greater than that part?[21] We need to look first at what 'greater' may mean. Clearly, if 'greater' has a purely quantitative sense (e.g., spatial or material) Toner's claim won't apply to an immaterial soul sustaining the immaterial existence of a person. But then Aquinas's own principle that the whole is greater than its part will not apply either, and the survivalist *ought* to accept that principle as a universal truth. So we should accept, as Toner insists, that when St Thomas says 'greater' he does not restrict the meaning to quantitative part-whole relations. Since – at least in the case of substances, including persons – the part subserves the whole and is ontologically dependent on it (as Aquinas, following Aristotle, holds to be the case) 'greater', when it comes to substances, means something like: 'possessed of some quality or characteristic that marks the whole out as ontologically independent and the part as ontologically dependent and subservient to the whole.'

So for the survivalist, the obvious move to make is to point out that the soul is ontologically dependent on the person whose soul it is. Contra Platonism or Cartesianism, the soul is not a complete substance in its own right, however intimately it might be united to a particular body for all of its earthly existence. On the Thomistic view the soul *informs* the matter that makes up the body of the person. More precisely, the soul informs *prime* matter, a featureless material substratum, to produce a particular person's body. (That it is prime (or primary) rather than secondary matter the substantial form unites with in producing any substance is a key point to which I will return later.) For Aquinas it would be incoherent to suppose that a given person's soul should be capable – logically – of informing the matter of some other person's body. The soul, then, is wholly derivative from the person, as is the person's matter. The person is logically and ontologically primary, the soul secondary.[22]

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dunk' for survivalism.) ['scito enim quid est totum et quid pars, statim scitur quod omne totum maius est sua parte.']

[20] Toner (2009b): 456.

[21] It is not clear to me what Toner's 'or lesser' adds to the argument.

[22] To be sure, Aquinas believes that God creates each human soul (ST I q.90 aa.2-3, Aquinas 1922: 256-9) but this does not leave room for the hypothesis that the soul He created for one person He *might* have created for another. This is clear enough from

The soul, being made for the matter of a particular body, tends essentially to union with that matter again (as will occur at the Resurrection) in order to function fully as the soul it is – of a particular person. The person does not tend essentially to union with anything in order to have its full function. After death, the person exists in a diminished, highly reduced state, but that is because she *lacks* a body, not because she needs to *unite* with a body. Another way of putting the idea is that a person has the intrinsic tendency to *be* a hylemorphic compound; the soul, however, has no tendency to be a compound, only to *unify* with another part so as to constitute a complete person. And as to function and operation, Aquinas could not be clearer: the soul does not *think* or *understand* in any way other than that in which the eye *sees*. 'Man understands through his soul', he writes, just as man sees through his eyes.[23] This latter point itself should encourage the corruptionist to reconsider what they are committing themselves (and Aquinas) to: for if the soul exists without the person in the afterlife, and yet is still capable of intellectual operation, then on Aquinas's analogy it would be like the existence of an eye that is capable of seeing (in the derivative sense, since it sees in no other) without an organism to which it belongs, and which performs the very primary act of seeing in virtue of which the eye can even be truly said to see in the first place.

The survivalist, then, has a coherent and plausible story to tell about how the post-mortem person is greater than their singleton part – the soul. Yet Toner's response to this way of explaining the distinction between soul and person is to object: 'Saying that the two things differ in their properties doesn't *solve* the problem [of accounting for their distinctness]: it *states* it.'[24] To which the survivalist rejoinder ought to be that denying the possibility of a whole greater than its singleton part is just to *assume* WSP in the first place, which is precisely the principle in dispute! I submit that there is a misunderstanding of the dialectic here. The survivalist's objective is not – or at least should not be – to *prove* the truth of their position by showing how the person and

ST I q.90 a.4, Aquinas (1922): 259-61, where Aquinas argues that each soul is created at the exact same time that the body to which it is united comes into existence, fitted *for* that body alone. (How could it be otherwise if it informs the matter of which the body is composed?)

[23] ST I q.75 a.2, ad 2, Aquinas (1922): 8-9. ['Potest igitur dici quod anima intelligit, sicut oculus videt, sed magis proprie dicitur quod homo intelligat per animam.']

[24] Toner (2009b): 457.

their singleton proper part differ in properties.[25] The survivalist has *independent* grounds for believing both soul and person exist, grounds concerned mainly with justice and personal responsibility (issues that await a different discussion), but also purely metaphysical reasons having nothing to do with a difference of properties (such as the analogy with the eye just noted). The question at hand is: *if* survivalism is true, can the soul and person be distinguished? The corruptionist wonders what *could* distinguish them, in contrast with the case of there being more than one proper part – where it is clear that the whole must be greater than any of its parts. The survivalist offers various ways in which soul and person differ in their natures, showing that WSP is not the only way of guaranteeing a distinction between whole and part. What the survivalist appeals to is not a concoction of hypotheses about how the soul and person might differ, but claims about how they do and *must* differ given their essential natures, upon which latter both sides agree.[26] So, to clarify the dialectic: when it comes to WSP, the survivalist does not and cannot use its mere denial, however justified, to *prove* that soul and person must exist in the afterlife (pre-Resurrection). The corruptionist, on the other hand, wants

[25] It might be thought the survivalist *could* do this, since it would involve an uncontroversial appeal to the Indiscernibility of Identicals: if the soul can be shown to have/lack properties the person lacks/has, then of course they must be distinct. But this would not do. Take a more mundane case, where I convince a rather deluded you that Al Gore is not Bill Clinton because Clinton is from Arkansas and Gore is not. Here, we both agree that Bill Clinton and Al Gore exist; it's just a question of working out whether they are the same person. In the survivalism/corruptionism debate, the key issue is precisely *whether*, in the afterlife, both soul and person exist, or soul only. I cannot prove that both exist by distinguishing them since this would indeed be question begging. But as I note above, this is not the survivalist's argumentative strategy anyway.

[26] It might look as though the corruptionist also appeals to a Leibnizian principle, namely the more controversial Identity of Indiscernibles. Again, this is not quite what is going on. The corruptionist argues that the soul and person in the afterlife are indiscernible, but does not conclude that they must be identical. After all, both sides agree with Aquinas's famous statement, 'I am not my soul' ['anima mea non est ego'] (*Commentary on St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* 15: lec. 2; see <http://josephkenny.joyeurs.com/CDtexts/SS1Cor.htm#152> [last accessed 25.7.12]). So the corruptionist concludes not that soul and person must be the same since if they were distinct they would be indiscernible, but that either the soul or the person does not exist at all in the afterlife (as always, qualified by 'before the Resurrection'). Since everyone in this debate agrees that the soul does exist, it must be the person who does not. (Note, in passing, that the passage within which 'anima mea non est ego' occurs is commonly appealed to by the corruptionist as prime evidence that Aquinas is on their side. See, for example, Kenny (1993): 138 and note at 173. I will examine this and all the other relevant texts on another occasion.)

to use the truth of WSP to argue that corruptionism must be *true*, since otherwise the person would have to exist with a single proper part. And as part of their defence of WSP, they argue that any object with a single proper part could not be distinguished from that part; so, in the case of soul and person, the person cannot exist if the soul alone does (with no supplementary part). But all sides agree the soul does exist with no supplementary part, following physical death. The survivalist, by showing in a principled way how soul and person would differ in properties if they both existed in the afterlife, blocks the corruptionist move.

Before leaving St Thomas behind (not entirely), I want to close this section with another important text cited by Toner.[27] The passage from Aristotle on which Aquinas comments is as follows: '[I]f it [sc. something] is a compound [sc. of elements], clearly it will be a compound not of one but of more than one (or else that one will be the thing itself) ...'[28] Here is St Thomas's gloss:

> Therefore, if this something else when found is not an element but is composed of elements, it is evident that it is not composed of one element only but of many; because if it were not composed of many but of only one, it would follow that that element would be the same as the whole; for what is composed of water only is truly water.[29]

Now for Toner's gloss on Aquinas: 'What this quotation seems to tell us is that anything composed of only one thing must be identical with that one thing ... if a thing has only one part, that part must be an improper, rather than a proper part: the whole must be *the same* as the one part.'[30] Immediately, however, there is a wrinkle, for as Toner recognizes, Aquinas's example of water suggests that he had in mind a wholly different idea, namely that if something is composed of only one *kind* of element, then it must be the same *kind* of thing as the element. Toner makes two main points to shore up his interpretation.[31] The first is that 'the reason

[27] Toner (2009b): 458.

[28] *Metaphysics* VII: 1041b22, Ross (1928). The Greek reads: 'ei de ek stoixeiou, dēlon hoti oux henos alla pleionōn, ē ekeino auto estai ...'

[29] Aquinas (1995): 552. ['Si ergo istud aliud inventum, non sit elementum, sed sit ex elementis; palam est quia non est ex elemento uno tantum, sed ex pluribus elementis. Quia si non esset ex pluribus, sed ex uno tantum, sequeretur quod esset illud idem elementum totum. Quod enim est ex aqua tantum, est vere aqua.']

[30] Toner (2009b): 458.

[31] He also makes a third in a note: Toner (2009b): 470, n.21. It is that even if we allow that a whole could be composed of a single part with which it was not numerically

we find it so obvious that a whole composed of just one element must be the same *kind* of thing as the element is that we find it obvious that a whole composed of just one part is identical with that part'. I do not see the connexion, since only an equivocation over 'same kind' could generate one. Where Aquinas is clearly talking only about one thing's being *made of the same kind of stuff* as another, Toner uses this sense first and the second sense – *being the same kind/species of thing* – immediately following. The reason we find it obvious that something composed of only one kind of stuff must be made of the same kind of stuff as the stuff (tautologically) is itself has nothing to do with the specific identity of the thing and the stuff and everything to do with composition: if it's only got wood as the stuff of which it is made, it is wholly wood, and the same for water or any other stuff.[32] But if anyone – myself excluded – finds it obvious that an object with a single part must be numerically – and hence specifically – identical to that part, it cannot be because of something to do with the stuff of which they are/it is composed; otherwise, they would have to find it obvious that an object composed of *more* than one part must be numerically – and hence specifically – identical to all of the parts taken collectively, so long as those parts were themselves all made of the same stuff. Corruptionists should not want to accept that, assuming they allow – as I take it they do – for numerical identity of a whole through mereological change.

The second point is that 'if the compound must be of the same *kind* of thing as the one element in it, and the human being is composed solely

identical, we would be saddling Aquinas with the 'bizarre' view that two things of the same kind can wholly coincide. I think this point, like the first, trades on an equivocation over 'kind'. The two putatively overlapping things – say, the clay statue and the lump of clay – are indeed of *different* kinds: one is an artefact, the other is a lump of (let us suppose) naturally occurring matter. Yet both are made of the *same kind* of stuff, viz. clay. Or one will be an artefact of one kind and the other an artefact of another kind (say, a statue made out of a bicycle): they will be generically identical but specifically distinct. But they will both be made of the same kind of stuff (metal, say). For a watery example, suppose a large puddle of water and the water that composes it. The first is a puddle (a countable object), the second some stuff (non-countable) that composes and wholly overlaps with it. But both are made of water. Moreover, in Oderberg (1996) I give unrelated examples of two objects of the same kind wholly coinciding even in the *first* sense of 'kind', viz. specific identity; I call such examples 'Leibnizian cases'. So the view Toner labels as bizarre is in fact quite plausible.

[32] This is one reason why the so-called fallacy of composition does not apply universally.

of her soul, then she's the same kind of thing as her soul'.[33] But this would be absurd, since then the human being would be a proper part of herself which is impossible, or else this would simply mean she was identical to her soul, contrary to Aquinas's view, on which both sides are agreed. Again, however, it is the equivocation on 'same kind' which produces a specious objection. St Thomas's water example shows that he is speaking of compositional identity, not specific identity. So it should be with the soul and the person, and so it is: the person following physical death is made of a single immaterial proper part; from which it follows that just as the part is immaterial, so is the whole.

To conclude this section, I claim that the whilst the corruptionist puts forward an impressive-seeming case to the effect that Aquinas believed in the Weak Supplementation Principle (or something sufficiently similar to make the corruptionist's point), the truth is that the case rests on a combination of misreadings or tendentious interpretations of passages from St Thomas, coupled with references to brief passages that were never meant to be official statements of Aquinas's position on composition. Like most of us, he almost certainly took it as a general truth that wholes require more than one proper part. But he never takes on this specific question in the immediate context of a discussion of post-mortem survival. The survivalist certainly cannot contend that Aquinas anywhere *denies* WSP. But the survivalist case does not rest on this. A defensive reading of Aquinas that is both plausible and allows space for a view of mereology consistent with survivalism is all that the survivalist should ask from the Angelic Doctor.[34]

[33] Toner (2009b): 458-9.

[34] I also would like to note the following interesting passage, brought to my attention by Gyula Klima. In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas writes: 'Otherwise is the opinion of Aristotle, which all moderns follow, that the soul is united to the body as form to matter; whence the soul is a part of human nature, and not human nature itself. And since the essence of the part differs from the essence of the person, as it is said, so the separated soul cannot be called a person: since although, being separate, it is not actually a part, still it has the nature of being [the natural tendency to be] a part' (lib. 3 d. 5 q. 3 a. 2 co.; my translation). ['Alia est opinio Aristotelis quam omnes moderni sequuntur, quod anima unitur corpori sicut forma materiae: unde anima est pars humanae naturae, et non natura quaedam per se: et quia ratio partis contrariatur rationi personae, ut dictum est, ideo anima separata non potest dici persona: quia quamvis separata non sit pars actu, tamen habet naturam ut sit pars.' See <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/spd3004.html#92376> (last accessed 27.6.12).]

IV. SHOULD WE BELIEVE IN THE WEAK SUPPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLE?

Moving on from the more arcane reaches of Thomistic exegesis, I want to consider WSP in the light of general metaphysical considerations. It is understandable why its supporters speak as though it were a conceptual truth of parthood that wholes must have more than one part.[35] For material substances and the bits that compose them are the typical phenomena we have in mind when thinking about parts. It is the perceptually familiar that sets the framework within which we think about most of the core metaphysical concepts. This is why efficient causation is the model according to which most philosophers and layfolk think about causation in general, and why it is much easier, even for a highly trained philosopher, to ponder the concrete rather than the abstract. More specifically, a certain kind of spatial thinking dominates our grasp of parthood – the idea, that is, of a part as spatially smaller than the whole. If a material whole has a certain spatial extent, then any one of its parts must have a smaller extent. And if it is smaller, there must be at least one other non-overlapping part to make up the remainder. It is this idea of a remainder to which Koslicki appeals to defend the intuitive plausibility of WSP.[36] Although she does not explicitly put this in a spatial context, I think Donnelly is right to suggest that spatial thinking – in

Again, a quick first reading would suggest St Thomas is saying quite clearly that the separated soul is not a part of anything, so there is no whole (the person) in existence in the pre-Resurrection afterlife. What is really going on here, I submit, is nothing more than Aquinas's usual denial that the soul *is* the person (anima mea non est ego). The context ('otherwise is the opinion ...') is Aquinas's rejection of Platonic dualism and any metaphysic that has the person as an accidental unity of body and soul, with the soul a complete substance in its own right and the essence of the person being given wholly by the soul. As for 'it is not actually a part ...', I read this as meaning not that in the afterlife the soul is a part of nothing; rather, that it is not doing what it actually does on earth, namely compose with another part (matter) to constitute the complete person. In the afterlife it still has the *natural tendency* to unite with a body, which is why it is an incomplete substance: the soul's entire reason for being, as it were, is to inform matter. It can exist on its own, i.e. apart from matter, but neither it, nor the person it constitutes in the afterlife, functions perfectly (in full accordance with their natures). The soul lacks the performance of those functions, such as sensible memory, that rely on the body, and the person, in virtue of this, also lacks those functions. Further, the person cannot exercise any bodily functions, including those the soul never *could* do – walk, embrace, eat, and so on.

[35] From now on I will usually omit the adjective 'proper' when speaking of proper parts, and speak explicitly of improper parts when referring to the latter.

[36] Koslicki (2008): 168.

the sense of parts as spatially smaller than their wholes – lies behind the remainder idea. She comments: 'But once we allow that a whole can have a proper part which is spatially co-extensive with it, then I think that (WSP) loses its appeal.'[37]

Consider, then, three closely related examples of objects that seem to have a single part spatially co-extensive with the whole. One is the notorious statue and the lump of clay, which Koslicki discusses at great length to motivate her case. Another is proposed by a survivalist: a tree that has all its branches cut off until all that is left is its trunk.[38] A third, rather gruesome example that I have proposed in the past, is a person whose entire body is amputated below the neck, with their head maintained by futuristic technology.[39] All of these cases, I submit, violate WSP because they involve a whole's possessing a part that is not disjoint from any other part of the whole. The corruptionist should accept this way of interpreting the cases, and so cannot appeal to WSP as a universal truth that immediately blocks the survivalist account of the afterlife.

Consider the statue and clay. It takes, in my view, a leap of metaphysical thinking too far to suggest that these are not distinct objects with distinct persistence conditions.[40] If they are distinct, the question is what relation they have to each other apart from spatial coincidence. It is not enough to say that the lump's existence, assuming the lump to be appropriately configured, is sufficient for the existence of the statue, true though it be. The question is what relation holds between the *statue* and the *lump*, not between the statue's *existence* and that of the lump. Moreover, many objects can spatially coincide without the existence of one being sufficient for the existence of the other: two beams of light, emanating from distinct sources but perfectly overlapping, will not be such that the existence of one is sufficient for the existence of the other.[41] It is no surprise that so many metaphysicians adopt a 'constitution' view of the matter, according to which the lump constitutes the statue over the period of the statue's existence. In other words, if you think – as you should – that the statue and lump are distinct objects, then what other relation *could* there be between them during the time of their coincidence

[37] Donnelly (2011): 230.

[38] Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov (2006).

[39] Oderberg (2005); (2007): ch.10.

[40] The literature on this is extensive. For an overview, see Rea (1997). For a well-known debate on the topic, see Burke (1992), Lowe (1995), Burke (1997).

[41] See further Oderberg (1996).

than that of part to whole? The term 'constitution' as used in this context is clearly a philosophical term of art but should not mislead anyone into thinking it is not a mereological notion all the same.

The easiest way to think of a part that constitutes a whole is as either the single *or* the largest proper part of a thing:[42] single if the whole has no other proper parts because the single part is mereologically simple or the transitivity of proper parthood fails; largest if the whole has more than one proper part. 'Largest' need not be understood spatially. For example, suppose the soul were mereologically complex (an unorthodox view among traditional believers in immortality, but leave that aside). In the afterlife it would still constitute the person, being the person's largest proper part, but where 'largest' would be understood non-spatially, for instance in terms of asymmetric relations of entailment between the powers of the soul and the powers of any of its parts.

So if the constitution view is correct, there are parts that constitute and parts that do not. The ones that do not nevertheless *compose*, partially or completely, the whole. Moreover, there is no sharp division between compositional parts and constitutive parts, or better, between parts playing a compositional role and parts playing a constitutive role. Suppose, for instance, that our statue constituted wholly by a lump of clay nevertheless has some broken parts, and that these are repaired by a few lumps of plaster. The lump of clay still exists, we should say, but it no longer plays a constitutive role: it now plays a compositional role, composing with the lumps of plaster to produce the statue. Conversely, suppose the lumps of plaster fall off: now the lump of clay has reverted to its constitutive role and no longer plays a compositional role in the sense I mean. The survivalist takes this as an analogy for what happens at physical death: the soul, which previously played a compositional role in union with matter to produce the soul-body compound that is the person, now plays a purely constitutive role as the person's single proper part. This way of looking at constitution should dispel worries that there is something, as it were, ontologically 'spooky' about constitutive parthood. A constitutive part – one playing a constitutive role – can also be, or have been, a compositional part in the usual sense of 'part' at some other point in the history of the whole.

[42] Note: this definition is not supposed to *prove* that constitution occurs. Rather, if you have established on independent metaphysical grounds that constitution occurs, you can understand the part that does the constituting in the way defined above.

Next, although one might not regard constitution as a weird relation, still one might think it entails the problematic result that distinct objects can share all their parts. Now, as Toner recognizes,[43] this does not apply to the survivalist scenario, since the soul does not have parts in the first place, though he uses the point to cast overall doubt on constitution. Moreover, even if the soul has parts (as I noted, a heterodox view in this debate), soul and person will not share all their parts, since the person will have the soul as a part but the soul will not be a part – proper part, remember – of itself. Still, it is worth noting that the statue and lump of clay should *not* be regarded as sharing all their parts, even leaving aside the obvious fact that they don't both have the lump as a proper part.[44] The statue has a nose and arms, the lump does not, albeit some of its parts are nose- and arm-shaped. If I squash the statue's nose I have destroyed one of its parts, and probably reduced its artistic and monetary value at the same time. But I have not also destroyed a part of the lump: the lump is still all there, but the statue is not.

Still, classical mereology recognizes both a weak and a strong version of supplementation. The Strong Supplementation Principle says that if x is not a part of y, then x has a part (proper or improper) that is disjoint from y.[45] The SSP rules out two objects' sharing all of their parts, and with the anti-symmetry of parthood (if x is part of y and y is part of x, then x = y) entails WSP.[46] On a spatial reading of parthood, SSP is highly plausible: if my left arm is part of me but I am not part of my left arm, there, there will be parts of me beyond the spatial boundaries of, i.e.

[43] Toner (2009b): 458.

[44] Koslicki denies it (2008: 178, n.15), as does Baker (2000) although the latter makes a distinction between having parts derivatively and having them non-derivatively. She claims that the lump and statue do share all their parts if we include both derivative and non-derivative possession, but stresses that this is a significant metaphysical difference which requires the qualification of a phrase like 'x has part P' if we are to understand what is going on. I am not persuaded by the distinction, at least when it comes to *some* cases of possession of parts: to say that the lump has a nose derivatively is merely to say that it stands in the constitution relation to an object (the statue) that has a nose non-derivatively. It is hard to see what is gained by calling this the possession of a part, and the thought is counter-intuitive: as noted above, if I squash the statue's nose I have truly destroyed one of its parts, but have I also truly destroyed a part of the lump? Hardly: the lump is all there; it has not been mutilated, only reconfigured; but the statue really has been mutilated. (Thomson (1983; 1998) by contrast, does think the statue and clay share all their parts.)

[45] Simons (1987): 29.

[46] Donnelly (2011): 237.

disjoint from, my left arm. But there are more ways not to share parts than spatial ways: in the case of coincident objects like the statue and the lump, SSP is false: the statue is not part of the lump, but it has no parts that do not overlap any part of the lump. Yet the statue still has parts (like a nose) the lump lacks. So if we deny WSP, and retain anti-symmetry (as I think we should), we must deny SSP; but we do not thereby affirm that distinct objects can share all their parts.

Furthermore, even if we replace SSP with a broader non-sharing principle – if x is distinct from y then either x has a part that is not part of y or vice versa – we still do not capture all there is to the distinctness of coincident objects. If we suppose that the statue and lump do share all their parts, they are still distinguished by virtue of their different persistence conditions and modal properties: the lump came into existence before the statue and can persist beyond the destruction of the statue, and so on. A more difficult case is the tree reduced to its trunk. We cannot really say the tree and trunk come into existence at different times, nor that they could have, nor that one could outlast the other.[47] But the trunk was once spatially included within the tree and now is not. The tree can survive having, say, ninety percent of its matter cut away, but the trunk cannot. The tree can, say, grow fruit but the trunk cannot, albeit the trunk supports the growth of new fruit (as do the roots, but they do not grow fruit either). Again, as I noted earlier, the point is not to prove that there are distinct objects here, a tree and a trunk: rather, *if* there are distinct objects, they are capable of being distinguished – and this even if we suppose they share all of their parts.[48]

My claim is that the statue/clay, tree/branch, and head/person cases all violate WSP, and in a way that is far less exotic than the time-travelling brick albeit – in the second and third cases – involving some subtle considerations going to the root of hylemorphism. First, the

[47] Killing the tree cannot leave the trunk if, following Aristotle, we do not regard the dead wood that *was* the trunk as *still* a trunk – rather than just a trunk-shaped lump of dead wood – after the tree has died. On Aristotle's 'homonymy principle', see *The Parts of Animals* 640b35-641a5 (Ross 1912).

[48] Toner (2009b: 461) seems to misinterpret the mereological principle in play here. He claims that he can accept WSP while also accepting that two distinct material objects may share all their parts 'at some level of decomposition'. But levels of decomposition do not come into it. The worry about sharing of parts is not that the statue and lump, say, have all the same atoms. The worry is that if they have *all* of their parts in common, at all levels of decomposition, they cannot be distinct. I have argued against this, but it is important to note what the source of the concern is.

statue and clay. The lump of clay is wholly co-extensive with the statue. Although, as I have argued, they do not share all their parts, there is no proper part of the statue that is disjoint from the lump: the statue's nose, for instance, although not a part of the lump, shares some of the clay belonging to the lump. Now, Donnelly (2011) argues in detail that there are alternative systems of mereology that do not have WSP as an axiom yet give the parthood relation sufficient logical properties to distinguish it from other strict partial orderings (such as 'strictly less than'; all such orderings being asymmetric and transitive). In particular, she argues that in one alternative system, if we allow the statue and lump to be proper parts of each other (denying anti-symmetry), then there is no supplementation principle that applies. Only if one is not part of the other does an analogue of WSP come into play. Whilst I accept Donnelly's overall point that WSP does not have to figure as an axiom of every formal mereology capable of distinguishing parthood from other strict partial orderings, and that WSP is not self-evident anyway (except where proper parthood is understood solely in terms of smaller spatial extent), I find it a high price to pay that we should hold the statue to be a part of the lump. Rather, it may be that the nature of parthood cannot adequately be captured in a formal system. More precisely, it may be that all we can say about the agreed logical properties of parthood is that they make it a strict partial ordering, but in order to differentiate it from other strict partial orderings we have to say something purely metaphysical, not logical or formal.

To put some flesh on this idea, we need to examine a number of truths about the various relations between parts – all in the neighbourhood of WSP – that strongly suggest there is no universal principle of supplementation, let alone one that can be captured in any kind of formalization. Taken as a universal truth about parthood, WSP is false: the statue and clay, the tree and its trunk, the bodiless head and the person whose head it is, all violate WSP. On the other hand, there is something about the tree/trunk and head/person cases – and, I would add, the survivalist scenario – that requires, as it were, respect for the spirit of WSP though they violate its letter. Neither the tree reduced (constitutively) to its trunk, nor of course the person reduced to his head, function normally. Both are in a highly impaired state, the removal of which requires the reinstatement of mereologically non-overlapping parts: the head needs its body for the person to function normally, and the trunk needs branches and leaves for the tree it constitutes to function normally.

Similarly, as both sides of the survivalism/corruptionism debate agree, the soul needs a body for the person to function in his proper way, as a mereological compound. The soul has an intrinsic, essential tendency to unite with matter and is unable to carry out the functions it subserves that also require matter, such as sensation and of course the maintenance of bodily functions. Put this way, what we can say about the disembodied soul is weaker than WSP, which requires an actually existing disjoint part with which the soul must compose if the soul is to be a part of a whole at all. Though weaker, however, it is a far deeper metaphysical insight about the nature of certain kinds of part (those that belong to animate beings) that cannot be captured by a formal principle. This might be discomfiting for mereology as a purely formal system, but it means nothing untoward, and is indeed rich material, for mereology conceived as the metaphysical study of parts and wholes.

The corruptionist might, nevertheless, look for a principle weaker than WSP that is still formalizable and sufficient to undercut survivalism. Whether intentionally or not, Toner hints at this strategy when, in discussing the tree/trunk case, he insists that 'anything with a proper part must have at least two disjoint proper parts', going on to explain that 'both the tree and the trunk do have at least two disjoint proper parts (the tree has lots of molecules as parts, and so does the trunk)'.[49] But this is a misstatement of WSP and hence the explanation is not to the point. The principle that anything with a proper part must have at least two disjoint proper parts is what Cody Gilmore calls 'quasi-supplementation': if x is a proper part of y, then there are z and w such that z and w are disjoint proper parts of y.[50] QSP does not require that every proper part of a whole must *itself* have a disjoint proper part, only that any whole with a proper part must have disjoint proper parts. Clearly the statue, the tree, and the bodiless person all have multiple disjoint proper parts, but neither the lump of clay, nor the trunk, nor the head have any proper parts disjoint with *them*. The corruptionist might wish to say[51] that QSP neatly cleaves these cases from the survivalist one because the former all obey QSP but the latter does not: the post-mortem, pre-Resurrection person does not have more than one proper part. Like WSP, however, QSP does not have intuitive plausibility outside a specific context, that of

[49] Toner (2009b): 461.

[50] Gilmore (2009): 119, n.45. Cited also by Donnelly (2011): 231.

[51] I emphasize that I am not suggesting Toner *would* wish to say this.

material objects with parthood understood as smaller spatial inclusion. Gilmore claims that QSP does justice to the intuition Simons appeals to in defence of WSP, namely that 'if a universe is complex (i.e. has proper parts at all), then at least two of these parts will be disjoint'.[52] Perhaps, if the intuition is understood to be about mereological complexity in general rather than mereological composition in particular, and if our model of complexity is material.[53] What I mean by this is that to say the universe or something in it is complex is *only* to say that it has more than one part; but to say something more, specifically about how the parts fit together, is to speak about composition. It is hard to see how a complex universe can be consistent with everything's overlapping everything else, as Simons points out. So in the material world, thinking about the spatial chunks that are typically smaller in extent than their wholes, we should expect QSP to hold. There is no reason, however, to expect this to be the case with immaterial objects and their parts: hence, to suppose that QSP excludes the survivalist scenario is not to justify anything, only to note the difference between it and the material analogues.

I now want to raise a more important point, to the effect that WSP itself, though we might plausibly think of it as a principle of composition rather than (like QSP) a principle of complexity, does *not* say all that needs to be said about composition in this context, and what remains to be said cannot be formalized. Toner has a further objection to Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov's tree/trunk example, namely that their interpretation of it is incompatible with the proper hylemorphic account of the case, one with which hylemorphists on both sides should agree. If the tree and trunk do both exist and coincide spatio-temporally, the tree does have a part the trunk lacks, namely a substantial form (the classical version of Koslicki's 'formal part'). The trunk, being a material spatial part of the tree, is not a substance in its own right, following Aristotle. Like a person's arm or big toe, such a part is truly *informed* by the substantial form of the whole, but it does not have its own substantial form since that would make it a substance in its own right – contra its

[52] Simons (1987): 27.

[53] And if we take what Simons thinks is a truth about the universe to be a truth about the objects in it as well. Classical extensional mereology, taking parthood to be unrestrictedly transitive, treats claims about things in the universe and their parts to be claims about parts of the universe and vice versa. I let pass this dubious way of looking at the universe and its denizens, as well as putting aside the issue of transitivity, and simply take QSP (and WSP) to be a claim about anything that is complex.

ontological dependence on the whole. Hence, for Toner, 'the tree/trunk example does not help motivate the rejection of WSP.'[54]

Although he does not elaborate, I take it that Toner holds the substantial form of the tree to be a part that is disjoint from the trunk, thus verifying WSP in this case. The problem, though, is that on the classical hylemorphic view the tree is decidedly *not* a compound of trunk and substantial form. Even if one wished to distinguish between the tree with all its branches and leaves on the one hand, and the lump of plant matter (cellulose, etc.) *constituting* it on the other (doubtful at best, but let's assume it), the tree would not be a compound of substantial form and that lump. Rather, what the substantial form of any material substance unites with and informs is the underlying *prime matter* from which that substance, suitably informed, arises. If it were otherwise, the hylemorphist would be committed to the view that the lump of plant matter – *secondary* matter, for Aristotelians – gets its properties from something *other* than its substantial form. In other words, the properties of the trunk, wood, branches, bark, leaves, flowers, fruit, and so on, would have *nothing to do* with the form of the tree and everything to do with something else – if not *another* substantial form in addition to the tree's form, thus violating the unicity of substantial form (the impossibility of multiple substantial forms in the same substance; see the remarks above), then some other collection of accidental forms that impart to the plant matter its own independent reality and characteristics before (logically before) the substantial form has done any work at all. And with that, substantial forms should be dispensed with as idle explanatory wheels.

To avoid this anti-hylemorphic destination, we must insist that substantial form never unites with secondary matter: it only unites with an underlying primary stuff in order to produce the finished substance. But this is something that is not captured by WSP, nor can it be formalized. WSP requires only that every part of a whole have a disjoint part: it says nothing about *how* the disjoint parts fit together, how they function in relation to each other. Since the model for WSP is materially filled spatial regions smaller than the whole, we already have a grasp of the metaphysic behind the principle: these regions filled with matter lie within the area or volume of the whole; we can appeal to topology and various kinds of material connexion to spell out, if only incompletely, the way the material parts fit together. But this is not the right model

[54] Toner (2009b): 461.

for the form/matter relation: the informing of matter is a different and distinctive kind of relation, one involving concepts of actuality and determinacy. The parts are not themselves bits of anything; rather, they are metaphysical *principles* (in the sense of *originating sources*) from which the material substance arises. The substantial form of the tree might be disjoint from the trunk, but it is not something that composes *with* the trunk; it composes only with prime matter. So to say that WSP is verified in the case of the tree/trunk is to apply a material model of composition to another kind of composition altogether, and to mix levels of parts in the process. Since the form of the tree does not compose with the trunk, its disjointness from the trunk is not something deriving its reality from the truth of WSP, which is a compositional principle about parts of the same level, and material ones at that. The disjointness of the form of the tree and the trunk is something that falls out of a general theory of form/matter composition, with the trunk as secondary matter and the form of the tree as an immaterial part – a universal – that composes with underlying prime matter, the union of which results in secondary matter – the trunk, if the tree is reduced to this, and also the roots, leaves, branches, and so on if the tree is in its complete state.[55]

The upshot of this rather abstract digression is that even if the tree has a substantial form disjoint from the trunk, this has nothing to do with WSP. The trunk still lacks a disjoint part *in the sense* in which WSP is supposed to apply. Similarly for the person and their bodiless head: the hylemorphist grants that the person has a substantial form – their soul – but this does not verify WSP either, since the full compositional story is that for all the understandably loose talk of man as a union of soul and body, souls do not compose with bodies. Bodies are secondary matter – the result of the soul's union with primary matter. The body has no life of its own, no identity save as the body of *this* particular human being: to speak of the soul's literally informing a body is, quite simply, to double-count the soul's function in the compound or else to deny that a substance – in this case, a human being – has exactly one substantial form. In which case the bodiless head does still falsify WSP inasmuch as

[55] Koslicki's approach to form, interpreting it as structure, is more congenial to the idea that the form of the tree, for example, is a disjoint part of any lump of matter that composes the tree at some time. This is because she understands form as *structure*, and the content that structure configures is, for her, what a classical Aristotelian calls secondary matter. In my view, however, there are serious problems with this new interpretation of form as structure: see Oderberg (forthcoming).

WSP offers a principle of composition that does not apply to these kinds of scenario: there is no *appropriate* disjoint part to be the supplement of the trunk or the head. In the statue/clay case, moreover, there is not even a substantial form to appeal to in the first place, since artefacts are not substances: they are constituted by substances – a single lump of clay, in the case under discussion – but are themselves ontologically dependent entities (dependent on an 'artworld', as is sometimes said, or on minds that impose functions or purposes on the artefacts).[56] And even if we do not say that WSP is falsified in such cases, rather than that it does not apply, the result is the same: WSP is not a universal truth about parts and wholes.

V. CONCLUSION

I have argued that there is no persuasive case to the effect that Aquinas believed in the Weak Supplementation Principle, so the corruptionist cannot appeal to this agreed authority in support of their case. For the survivalist, it would be convenient if a case could be made that Aquinas clearly believed WSP to be false. For that matter, it would be highly agreeable for either side if it could be shown he clearly asserted their position. But matters are more complicated than that. I doubt that Aquinas ever gave WSP the sort of consideration contemporary mereologists do, let alone applied it deliberately to the question of post-mortem survival. The more general, and important, question of whether Aquinas believed in survivalism or corruptionism is similarly a complex exegetical matter with no neat answer. My view is that he was a survivalist, but this must await another occasion.

[56] In fact the proper account of artefacts is a far more complex affair than I indicate here. In Oderberg (2007): ch.7 I argue that at least some artefacts – among which I count the typical philosopher's statue – should be thought of as identical to an accidental unity, to use the Aristotelian term, consisting of a substance and one or more accidental forms. So the statue is a lump of clay plus whatever accidents modify that lump to have a certain shape, texture, and various other qualities. This view does not prevent the lump from constituting the statue, however, since constitution is not identity in the sense in which the constitution view employs the term. So we can still properly say that the statue is indeed constituted by a lump of clay, yet is identical *not* to the lump itself, but to the plurality consisting of (identical to) the lump that constitutes the statue plus the accidents that modify the lump. Still, this account does not verify WSP. The accidents are not parts of the statue, although the constituting lump is, along with the smaller parts such as arms and nose that result from the accidents' configuring the lump; so there is no question of disjoint supplements.

The mereological issues at play in the survivalism/corruptionism debate also require careful analysis given the hylemorphic assumptions of both sides. For a non-hylemorphist, the cases discussed above should be seen as clear violations of WSP. But the hylemorphist should agree as long as they are attentive to how the form/matter union needs to be understood. One does not have to appeal to time-travelling bricks or other exotica of dubious plausibility to make a case against WSP. Given this, the soul/person case can be put in its proper context: it is a highly exotic case given mundane mereological thinking, but WSP's truth does not stand or fall with it. We can already cast doubt on WSP before looking beyond the material world, albeit we have to think of parthood in a broader way than is usually done outside metaphysics. With this in place, we can free the survivalist position from being shackled to principles that do not themselves stand up to detailed scrutiny.

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ANSELM'S METAPHYSICS OF NONBEING

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Abstract. In his eleventh century dialogue *De Casu Diaboli*, Anselm seeks to avoid the problem of evil for theodicy and explain the fall of Satan as attributable to Satan's own self-creating wrongful will. It is something, as such, for which God as Satan's divine Creator cannot be held causally or morally responsible. The distinctions on which Anselm relies presuppose an interesting metaphysics of nonbeing, and of the nonbeing of evil in particular as a privation of good, worthy of critical philosophical investigation in its own right. Anselm's concept of nonbeing does not resolve the philosophical problem of evil implied by Satan's fall from grace, but is shown perhaps more unexpectedly to enable Anselm's proof for the inconceivable nonexistence of God as the greatest conceivable intended object of thought to avoid Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* objection to the general category of 'ontological' arguments.

I. ANSELM'S CONCEPT OF EVIL

Anselm of Canterbury, in his dialogue *De Casu Diaboli* ('On the Devil's Fall'), maintains that evil is only a privation of good, and that God as the source exclusively of being or that which exists cannot be responsible in any sense for privations. Hence, also, God cannot be responsible for the existence of evil. The concept of privation or the nonbeing or nonexistence of things is thereby elevated to a place of explanatory importance in Anselm's metaphysics, as a consequence of his theological examination of the problem of evil and the fall of Satan.[1]

Anselm's understanding of nonbeing is worth examining in detail, not only as it appears in his *Three Philosophical Dialogues*, but also in

[1] References to and translations of *De Casu Diaboli* are from the Hopkins and Richardson edition of Anselm (1967).

the *Proslogion*. Anselm's famous 'ontological' proof for the existence of God, as Immanuel Kant later styled it, can best be explained against the background of his concept of privation and nonbeing, and the question of whether that than which nothing greater is conceivable can finally partake of nonbeing.

Kant's objection to Anselm's argument in his (1781/1787) *Critique of Pure Reason* similarly depends on the assumption that an intended object than which nothing greater is conceivable establishes at most only the existence of a certain concept of God. Kant denies Anselm's attempt to prove that God is an actually existent entity, notwithstanding our possessing an idea of something whose concept is supposed to imply its existence. Kant's criticism presupposes the possibility of there being genuine existent concepts to which nothing existent corresponds outside the mind. If Anselm's metaphysics of nonbeing is correctly interpreted, then the conventional Kantian complaint fails to demonstrate a deductive invalidity in Anselm's reasoning.[2]

II. ALL AND ONLY BEING OF THE GOOD FROM GOD

Anselm does not set out in *De Casu Diaboli* with the explicit purpose of articulating a metaphysics of nonbeing. Anselm addresses problems in philosophical theology by arguing that God confers all and only good things on human beings and righteous and wayward angels alike. The evil we suffer, according to Anselm, following a precept of Augustine, is never anything positive, and hence ultimately nothing whatsoever.[3]

In the process of demonstrating that God is not the source of evil in the world, Anselm is driven by default toward the basic principles of a metaphysics of nonbeing. It is the direction his thoughts most naturally incline him to develop, given his interest in answering the problem of evil as he does. The fact, moreover, that Anselm's metaphysics of nonbeing arises out of necessity actually strengthens his position and sustains its independent interest, despite appearing in the service of a cluster of religious and metaphysical assumptions that sceptics need not accept.

What is remarkable about Anselm's work in philosophy is his astute drawing of important distinctions in observing subtle linguistic nuances of more general philosophical application. Despite his medieval frame

[2] See below note 23.

[3] Augustine (2010), vol. 22. *De Natura Boni Contra Manichaeos* [c. 405].

of reference, Anselm's thought in this connection looks remarkably modern and even contemporary, when he is read purely in appreciation of the logical structure of his philosophical inferences. The dialogues represent an exercise of considerable philosophical ingenuity within the constraints of holy writ in support of Christian dogma.

Nowhere are these features of Anselm's philosophical abilities more conspicuously in evidence than in *De Casu Diaboli*, written by Anselm sometime between 1085-1090. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, in their edition and English translation of Anselm's dialogues under the title, *Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues*, appear to agree with this assessment when they write, in their insightful 'Editors' Introduction': 'Of the three dialogues, *De Casu Diaboli* is the most lucid, its argument the most consistent, its movement the most organized.'[4] We turn to this work for insight into Anselm's implicit metaphysics of nonbeing as a key to his efforts to solve the problem of evil and as reinforcing his conceivability argument for the existence of God.

III. DIMENSIONS OF ANSELM'S PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE

Anselm's *De Casu Diaboli*, like his dialogues *De Veritate* ('On Truth') and *De Libertate Arbitrii* ('On Freedom of Choice'), takes place between a Teacher and a Student. The dynamic is significant, because the dialectic is not presented as a discussion among equals, but as reflecting the Teacher's attitude of superior wisdom in relation to the Student. The philosophical conversations in Anselm are different in this respect, despite the obvious hero of the works, from Plato's dialogues, George Berkeley's (1713) *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, and even, where the principal triumphant voice is more difficult to identify, David Hume's (1779) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The master-disciple gradient in philosophical exchange in Anselm's dialogues is not unique, but found, for example, among other especially medieval sources, notably in Boethius's (c. 524) *Consolatio Philosophiae*, where lady Philosophy does not debate with the prisoner, but imparts her comforting wisdom *ex cathedra*. The difference might point toward a more general trend in medieval religious philosophy, wherein questions are encouraged and doubts entertained, but are always answered from a higher standpoint of epistemic and moral authority.

[4] Hopkins and Richardson, 'Editors' Introduction', in Anselm (1967), p. 44.

Again, like Anselm's other dialogues, *De Casu Diaboli* begins with a quotation from scripture. Anselm, in this case, cites 1 Corinthians 4:7:

> That it is even said to the angels, 'What do you have that you have not received?' And from God comes nothing except goodness and being; and every good is a being, and every being a good.[5]

Anselm's choice of opening Biblical verse is noteworthy in two ways. First, it is interesting to see that negation, nothing, and nonbeing are emphasized in the thematic citation before the dialogue even gets under way. The question posed is whether the angels have anything that they have *not* received, and we are told that *nothing* comes from God *except* goodness identified with being. Second, it is important to notice that Anselm's solution to the problem of evil is already prefigured in the passage from 1 Corinthians. The dialogue serves ultimately as a commentary on the gospel of Paul, and only needs to be spelled out more completely in order to exhibit its full implications for the problem of evil. If God creates only goodness identified with being, and evil as lack or deprivation is nothing or nonbeing, then evil, nugatory at best or at worst, cannot come from God.

Admittedly, this reply does not yet answer the second-tier problem of why God appears not to prevent evil from being visited upon the world from other sources. To *permit* evil to occur, or to stand by without preventing its occurrence, even without sanction, when it is putatively within God's power to do so, leaves more virulent formulations of the standard problem of evil untouched. This is precisely the version of the objection discussed at length by the early Church father, Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius, in *The Wrath of God* (*De Ira Dei*, c. 311-312), a source with which Anselm could have been familiar, since it was written, even if not widely circulated, already in the fourth century.[6]

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[5] Anselm (1967), p. 147.

[6] Voltaire in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* cites a classic form of the problem of evil directed against the existence of God, dialectically considered by Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius in his (318) manuscript, *De Ira Dei* (*The Wrath of God*), available to Voltaire in a number of editions, beginning with a Swedish collection of the *Lactantius Opera omnia* in 1465. Voltaire (1962) writes: '... I must quote Lactantius, Church Father, who in chapter 13 of *The Wrath of God* has Epicurus say this: "Either God wishes to expunge the evil from this world and cannot; or he can and does not wish to; or he neither can nor wishes to; or finally he wishes to and can. If he wishes to and cannot, that is impotence, which is contrary to the nature of God; if he can and does not wish to, that is wickedness, and that is no less contrary to his nature; if he neither wishes to nor

The argument itself, in a variety of forms, was in any case common coin in philosophical theology by Anselm's time. Versions of the argument are taken up later, among other sceptical writings, most conspicuously by Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* and Hume's *Dialogues*, emphasizing the conflict between God's supposed omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect benevolence, with the existence in the world of natural evil (Hume) or physical evil (*mal physique*, in the words of Voltaire).[7] In reply to Anselm and Paul, we might ask if there is evil that does not derive from God, whether God does not know about it, is unable to prevent it, or that God knows about and could forestall, but chooses not to prevent. If the answer to any of these questions is *yes*, and if only a negative answer mitigates the logical conflict that otherwise results from the joint affirmation of these propositions, then the existence and presumptive perfect nature of God remains logically incompatible with the existence of natural evil, *even if* God is not its source.

This pedestrian objection is anticipated early in Anselm's dialogue. Already in Chapter I, the Teacher explains to the Student: 'For since there are only two states of being, one which has created and the other which has been created, it is evident that nothing can exist, except the Creator and his creations.'[8] If this proposition is true, then it follows that, despite appearances, evil as literally nothing does not exist. There exists, in that event, only the Creator and whatever the Creator creates. Since evil is always the privation of good, and since privation as the absence or lack of something is not something created, evil simply has no being. Logically, then, evil does not and cannot exist, as long as the world is something that has been created. If, finally, there is no such thing as evil, then there is no basis in evil for challenging the existence or attributes of God as divine Creator.

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can, that is wickedness and impotence at the same time; if he wishes to and can (which is the only one among these choices appropriate to God), where does the evil in this world come from?'" (p. 117) Voltaire seems to relish quoting an august theologian on the problem of evil, particularly as Lactantius's solution is so unsatisfying, maintaining that 'God wishes evil, but has given us the wisdom with which to choose the good' (pp. 117-118). Voltaire comments not only on Lactantius's confused logic and concept of God as something less than perfectly benevolent, but also on the unintentional humour in delegating human wisdom to overcome evil.

[7] See Hume (1947), Part 11, on the distinction between moral and natural evil. Voltaire in (1993) distinguishes between physical and moral evil (p. 96): '*du mal moral et du mal physique*'.

[8] Anselm (1967), p. 147.

The stubborn problem that this kind of solution does not immediately resolve is accounting for the *appearance* of evil that seems so prevalent a feature of the real world, despite all rational inference to the contrary. Nor can it suffice blithely to invoke the appearance-reality distinction here, despite acknowledging the chain of philosophical debt that extends historically backward from Anselm to Augustine, from Augustine to Plato, and from Plato to the pre-Socratic Parmenides. These doctrinal lineages do not absolve Anselm of the need to provide a better answer to the remaining problem of explaining the manifest appearance of evil merely by arguing that evil cannot be real, cannot exist, and that therefore whatever we consider to be evil must somehow be apparent rather than existent. The pain and sorrow and other natural evils that seem to prevail in this vale of tears, the sufferings and woes as they are experienced at least by the sufferer, appear to be every bit as real as the good and harmonious things that we also experience in God's world. They are moments of appearance in the world of or as appearance, and the problem of evil is fully recoverable under the appearance-reality distinction as the challenge of understanding how such imperfect appearances can occur so conspicuously in a world that is supposed to be the production of a perfect Creator.

IV. SATAN'S FALL FROM GRACE

One of the dialogue's main purposes, as the title indicates, is to account for the fall of Satan, and to do so in such a way that God is left blameless in whatever Satan does to bring about his own descent from grace. There is a risk of God's being implicated in Satan's plunge, if God is truthfully credited with Satan's wrongdoing, interpreted by the Teacher and Student in Anselm's dialogue as a lack of perseverance in the ability to exercise the purely good will that Satan originally receives from God.[9]

Satan, as chief among the evil angels, would appear to lack perseverance in the good, because, as the Student in Anselm's dialogue expresses it, God did not give Satan a properly-directed will. If Satan had

[9] A tradition in popular religion that has sometimes been adapted for philosophical purposes tries to relate natural evil to the moral evil of distant ancestors (see *inter alia* Plantinga (1974)). The proposal is impeded when we reflect that moral evil is the result of natural dispositions in the exercise of decision and will for which the Creator of the universe is also presumably in some sense causally and morally responsible. Why were human beings so created as to sometimes choose moral evil?

only possessed adequate perseverance, a good thing, which God might have bestowed upon instead of withholding from Satan, then Satan would never have fallen. The Teacher immediately and quite reasonably replies that *not* receiving something is not always the result of its not being given. God gives Satan both the ability and the will to receive God's further gift of perseverance, but Satan resists God's offering, and does not persevere in willing to receive God's supplementary sustaining gifts. Satan in exercising free choice does not will the necessary perseverance God offers to resist entertaining a forbidden desire. God did not succeed in giving Satan a persevering will only because Satan refused and would not receive it from God. As Anselm's Teacher explains to the Student: 'When the will deserted [the] uprightness, it lost something noble, and it received nothing in place of it except the privation of it. And this privation, which we call injustice, has no being.'[10] Even so, we are naturally left to wonder how God, as a perfect being, Satan's Creator, on the assumption that Satan exists, could try and fail to endow Satan with the perseverance Satan would have needed to persist in resisting his wilful fall.

V. EVIL AS NOTHING AND THE METAPHYSICS OF NONBEING

The discussion in Anselm's dialogue now turns philosophically to the problem of what is meant by the term 'nothing'. It is supposed to signify literally nothing whatever, or nonbeing; yet it accepts qualifications in predicate attributions. Nothing seems paradoxically to be something after all, a subject capable of having properties. We can meaningfully think and say things *about* nothing, suggesting that it does after all have at least some type of signification. Anselm's Student accordingly asks:

> ... if people are right in saying that what is called nothing really is nothing and never is something, then what else could follow except that the word 'nothing' simply means nothing, i.e., it does not signify anything at all. So we come to this problem, how can the word 'nothing' signify not nothing, but something; and how can it signify not something, but nothing.[11]

The problem in a sense is the same as that addressed by Socrates in Plato's dialogues the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*, where Plato concludes that nonbeing in some sense 'is' in order to have the property of nonbeing.

[10] Anselm (1967), p. 162.
[11] Ibid., p. 164.

Anselm's Teacher in the dialogue responds rather differently, introducing an innovation that does not seem to have occurred to Plato, distinguishing between two different senses of 'signifying nothing'.

Teacher disambiguates one meaning of the phrase as implying *something removed*, leaving literally nothing behind, but still referring to what *had* existed; and another as implying *something determined*, ascribing a definite positive property to a thing, from which signifying nothing seems altogether precluded. In one sense of 'signify', 'nothing' signifies nothing; while in another, attenuated, sense, 'nothing' can be said to signify the sorts of things of which the Student's objection takes notice. The Teacher adds: 'So this word "not-something" ... in some sense signifies something [that which is missing or has been removed]. For it signifies by removing and it does not signify by determining.'[12] Teacher now continues:

> For this same reason, the name 'nothing', which negates whatever is something, signifies something rather than nothing by its removing, and it signifies nothing rather than something by its determining. For it is not necessary that nothing be something simply because its name somehow signifies something; rather, nothing must be nothing, because the word 'nothing' signifies something only in the sense we've mentioned. So in this way, it is not repugnant to think that evil is nothing or that the name 'evil' is significative; for this name is determinative of no thing when it signifies the negation of something.[13]

Anselm's answer to the problem of making sense of the phrase that 'nothing exists' or that 'something does not exist' is rather different than Plato's. Anselm cuts the Gordian knot by insisting upon a distinction according to which the word 'nothing' signifies in a peculiar sense only that which we say does not exist, leaving 'signifies' in its ordinary meaning for ordinary names other than 'nothing', that genuinely refer to objects conceivably standing as the bearers of properties. Teacher further illustrates the point by invoking a comparison between the terms 'nothing' and 'evil' with 'blindness' as a *lack*, signifying nothing, the not having of something (sight) or not-something, its predicative complement:

> Therefore, in this way, 'evil' and 'nothing' signify something; and what they signify is something not according to fact, but according to the form of speaking. For 'nothing' only signifies not-something, or the absence of

[12] Anselm's original Latin term is *constitutio*.

[13] Anselm (1967), p. 166.

> whatever is something. And evil is nothing else except not-good, or the absence of good where good should be, or where it is useful for it to be. But what is nothing other than the absence of that which is something is certainly not something. So evil truly is nothing, and nothing is not.[14]

In time-honoured polemical fashion, Anselm's Teacher further casts aspersions on colloquial terminological misapplications of a vocabulary about God's creation of a world in which natural evil occurs. 'For we say many things improperly in our ordinary way of speaking', Anselm's Teacher remarks. 'But when we wish to come to the heart of a matter, it is necessary to analyze, as far as the subject matter allows, the improper usage which is troubling us.'[15] Such abuses of language include the kinds of things we sometimes say that lead us into philosophical conundrums about God's existence and nature, as reflected specifically in the problem of evil. 'For just as we say that God leads someone into temptation,' Teacher continues, 'when He doesn't free him from it, so we say He gives an evil will by not prohibiting it when He can – especially since the ability to will anything at all comes only from God.'[16] We may question the extent to which Anselm's distinction accords with ordinary usage beyond the selected examples he considers. Contrary to Anselm's implication, to say that an all-purpose cardboard box purchased new at a store to house any number of appropriate size objects contains nothing at a certain time does not necessarily signify any, let alone all, of the things that might be placed in it, nor the absence or privation of any particular thing.

Ultimately, Anselm's imaginary Teacher argues that Satan falls by willing divine happiness. Satan wills to be like God in a free act of unjust willing for a kind of happiness that can only properly belong to God. Satan wills something other than he is entitled to will, and thereby brings about his own downfall, leading a train of other fallen angels guilty of the same offence away from eternal bliss. All this is pure speculation on Anselm's part, needless to say, projecting a history of events in heaven that preserves logical consistency with God's existence and perfection. The explanation, nevertheless, is driven by logical argument, without further appeal to authority beyond a scattering of scriptural verses taken as touchstones for discussion. Satan *must* have fallen in this way, Anselm concludes, since reason, as the dialogue is supposed to demonstrate,

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 176.
[16] Ibid., p. 183.

supports no other possible inference. The metaphysics of being and nonbeing, something and nothing, now come under scrutiny once again in direct application to the problem of understanding Satan's fall, and the question as to whether God had any moral responsibility in the event. Teacher maintains:

> So when Satan turned his will to what he should not, both that willing and that turning were something; and yet he had this something only from God and by the will of God, since he could neither move his will nor will anything except through the permission of the One who makes all substantial and accidental and universal and individual natures. Insofar as Satan's will and its turning, or movement, are something, they are good and they are from God. But insofar as his will lacks the justice that it shouldn't lack, it is something evil – though not purely an evil; and whatever is evil is not from God but from willing, or from the moving of the will.[17]

Student is convinced, and dutifully replies:

> I don't have anything to argue against this. For indeed, I am unable to deny actions in general to be something, and I do not wish to deny that whatever has being comes from God. Nor does your argument in any way accuse God or excuse Satan; rather, it completely excuses God and accuses Satan.[18]

That should be the end of their discussion, although there remains one further topic for the interlocutors to explore.

VI. WHY THEN IS EVIL FEARED?

As an unexpected reprise, Student, who has admitted to having had his difficulties satisfactorily addressed, still has a few unanswered doubts. He now rejoins: 'Although you have answered all my questions up to now,' Student proceeds, 'yet I await your explaining what it is that we dread when we hear the name "evil", and what causes things like robbery and lust, which injustice and evil seem to do, if evil is nothing?'[19]

A reasonable question. If evil is literally nothing, then why do we take up attitudes toward it as though it were something real? Why do we consider it something to be avoided, to prepare against, or in many

[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p. 184.
[19] Ibid., p. 193.

instances to be suffered, if we can endure, as the plain facts testify? Teacher's explanation is incomplete, Student respectfully implies, without a good answer to this problem. Teacher replies that we sometimes falsely though understandably attitudinize evil by misidentifying the *absence* of something important to our welfare *as though* it were something *real*:

> But we are to think that if justice were in the will and sight in the eyes, then neither the robbery nor the fall into the pit would have taken place. It is as if we were to say, 'The absence of a rudder drives the ship onto the rocks', or 'The absence of reins causes the horse to run wild'. In these statements we mean only that if a rudder or reins were present, then the winds would not drive the ship onto the rocks nor would the horse run wild.[20]

We learn that for Anselm, a cause of something must always be something *positive*, an *existent* thing or event, and not a mere lack or absence of something that permits other prevalent existent causes to bring about primarily unwanted occurrences, as incidents of natural evil. We cannot correctly say with Anselm, although we do frequently speak this way, that a horse stumbles because it lacks a shoe, or that it loses its shoe because the shoe lacks a nail.[21] Such a constraint is hard to reconcile with a more widespread appeal to true counterfactuals of just this kind as proof of causation. We generally expect that a causal connection obtains between two temporally distinct events E1 and later E2 when it is known on independent grounds that if E1 had not occurred, then E2 would not have occurred. Anselm seems to want to exclude such reasoning on the basis of several counterexamples, which he presumably considers representative of an unlimited field.

Looking into Anselm's argument, we can only evaluate his conclusions on the strength of the argument he presents. This methodological guideline follows upon a truism, since anything else would not concern but imaginatively go beyond Anselm's documented inferences. Unfortunately, Anselm's purported counterexamples are not very convincing as true counterfactuals that fail to support causal connections. The presence of a rudder by itself would not prevent a ship from being driven up on the rocks, say, in a tsunami. Although with reins we might better control a horse, it is not plausible or even very probable that the mere presence of reins would prevent horses from being driven wild by other causes.

[20] Ibid., pp. 193-194.

[21] I develop a semantics and discuss an accompanying ontology in which lacks and absences can reasonably be construed as causes in Jacquette (2010).

Anselm needs to show that there are true counterfactuals that do not imply a corresponding causal connection. However, in both of his supposed counterexamples, we do not have true counterfactuals to begin with, and it comes as no surprise that the events he describes are not judged to be causally related.

Finally, the explanation of how Satan as the leading evil angel first willed unjustly reveals something interesting about Anselm's concept of will and its causation. Student first asks: 'Why, then, did he [Satan] will?' To which Teacher answers: 'Only *because he willed*. For there was no other cause by which his will was in any way driven or drawn; but his will was both its own efficient cause and its own effect – if such a thing can be said!'[22] Will is to blame for Satan's fall, or rather the fatal content and intentionality of a particular moment in the exercise of will. We might accordingly conclude that when they are able to do so, spirits command nothing more powerful than their own sovereign wills. Anselm's Teacher concludes that Satan wrongfully wills to have a wrongful will. The event does not take place through Satan's having been created with a corrupt will, for that would indict God's blame in Satan's fall. Satan's simultaneous wrongful willing of a wrongful will is entirely self-creating, and hence something for which only Satan is causally and morally responsible.

If such a thing can be said, is exactly what alert philosophical critics should question. We must ask Anselm's Teacher how a perfect God could have created a spirit like Satan with the foreknowable propensity to self-create what in God's own righteous judgment is destined to be deemed a wrongful will. We are driven again to conclude that will is perhaps the most powerful and potentially dangerous force in the universe. Without trying to make better sense of Satan's wilful self-creating act of moral evil, and on Anselm's closing ambivalent note, we turn next to an unexpected application of Anselm's discussion of being and nothingness.

VII. CATEGORIES OF BEING AND THE 'ONTOLOGICAL' ARGUMENT

Anselm's argument for the existence of God, giving faith independent rational support, is too well known to require detailed exposition. Anselm presents the so-called second ontological proof in *Proslogion* III:

> For there can be thought to exist something whose non-existence is inconceivable; and this thing is greater than anything whose non-existence

[22] Anselm (1967), p. 195.

> is conceivable. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought could be thought not to exist, then that than which a greater cannot be thought would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought – a contradiction. Hence, something than which a greater cannot be thought exists so truly that it cannot even be thought not to exist. And You are this being, O Lord our God. Therefore, Lord my God, You exist so truly that You cannot even be thought not to exist.[23]

The inference maintains that God, defined as that than which none greater is conceivable, must exist. Otherwise, the argument implies, it would be possible to conceive of a being greater than God; which, namely, would be a being with all of God's properties that additionally also exists. An existent God is something at least conceivably greater than a nonexistent God.

Kant's objection to Anselm's argument is also well known, despite being frequently misinterpreted. The idea is that existence cannot be included among an object's object-individuating, identity-determining, or identity-constituting constitutive properties, as Anselm's proof is sometimes alleged to require. For otherwise we could not intelligibly affirm or deny that the very same identical object exists. Kant illustrates the limitation with the example of 100 gold Thalers, referring to individuating, identity-determining or identity-constituting constitutive properties excluding their existence or nonexistence as *predicates*.[24] Kant's criticism crucially depends on the assumption that the existence and nonexistence of God marks a dichotomy of possible ontic states that are just like or precisely parallel to those of any other object. What we discover in Anselm's discussion of nonbeing in *De Casu Diaboli* effectively blunts the force of Kant's objection, whether or not Anselm's *Proslogion* inference is rightly classified as an 'ontological' argument in the sense presupposed by Kant's criticism.

The question is whether, for Anselm, trying to conceive of God as not existing, having all of God's characteristic properties plus nonbeing, is properly described as an effort to think of nonbeing as a predicate

[23] Anselm (1974), I, p. 94. Anselm writes (1945-1951), I, pp. 102-103: '*Nam potest cogitari esse aliquid, quod non possit cogitari non esse; quod maius est quam quod non esse cogitari potest. Quare si id quo maius nequit cogitari, potest cogitari non esse: id ipsum quo maius cogitari nequit, non est id quo maius cogitari nequit; quod convenire non potest. Sic ergo vere est aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest, ut nec cogitari possit non esse. Et hoc es tu, domine deus noster. Sic ergo vere es, domine deus meus, ut nec cogitari possis non esse.*'

[24] Kant (1965), 'Ideal der reinen Vernunft', A599/B627-A600/B628.

in Kant's sense, which is to say, as a constitutive, object-individuating or identity-determining property. If Anselm does not propose this, then, however appropriately Kant's objection might apply to similar formulations of ontological arguments for the existence of God, such as Leibniz's in his (1765) *New Essays on Human Understanding*, or Descartes' in his (1641) *Meditations on First Philosophy* V, it can have no effect on Anselm's *Proslogion* statement of a significantly different form of the argument.[25] Anselm is reasonably understood as not regarding either being or nonbeing as object-individuating or identity-determining properties in the sense of Kant's predicates. There is no justification for such an attribution to Anselm that would inexplicably contradict his explicit contrary commitments in *De Casu Diaboli*. There, as now seen, Anselm emphatically declares that nonbeing is nothing whatsoever, and hence not an identity-determining or individuating property. Anselm says unequivocally in discussing the nonbeing of evil that it is neither Creator nor any part of creation, and hence not a part of the universe at any time or place. It is also worth recalling that Kant, in refuting a generic form of the ontological argument in the *Critique*, nowhere mentions Anselm by name, despite referring explicitly to both Descartes and Leibniz as particular exponents of the ontological argument. We can only speculate as to whether Kant means his objections to include the significantly different inferential form of Anselm's reasoning. It is clear nonetheless that Kant's objections apply more cogently if at all, not to Anselm's argument, but to Descartes' much later version that actually fits Kant's description, and to Leibniz's amendments of Descartes' ontological proof.

Although Anselm's inference is frequently but inaccurately included in the category of 'ontological arguments', as Kant later styles them, Anselm appears to be reasoning rather differently. Sufficient attention to the details and giving proper emphasis to and inquiring into the meaning of the differences between Anselm's and Descartes-Leibniz, reveals that Kant's sense of the concept includes all and only those inferences to establish the existence of God that depend on the proposition that existence is somehow included analytically in the concept of a perfect being. Anselm may also believe this, but his argument does not require the assumption that a perfect being must also possess the perfection of

[25] See *inter alia* Malcolm (1960); Shaffer (1962); Engel (1963); Plantinga (1966); Schufreider (1978); Brecher (1985); Bencivenga (1993).

existing. He maintains instead that God exists, because by 'God' we mean to designate the greatest thing we are capable of conceiving, and because we cannot conceive of the greatest conceivable thing as not existing.

Whatever the merits of the inference, Anselm's argument does not explicitly assume that the property of existing belongs to the nature or essence of God, even as that than which nothing greater is conceivable. The argument on this reconstruction does not really say anything about God, as opposed to the word 'God', until the very end, and does not mention God's nature or essence, or the properties attributable to God, but only to what we can and cannot conceive of as implied by the concept of being the greatest. What is great and what is not so great is not investigated, although we may expect to find such traditional monotheistic divine greatness attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and perfect benevolence. Anselm does not mention these or any other properties of the greatest conceivable being in the context of the argument, and he seems understandably unwilling within or as part of an inference to ascribe any properties to an object whose existence the argument itself is first supposed to demonstrate. Anselm, for the same reason, unlike Descartes and Leibniz, cannot be expected to maintain that existence as a constitutive identity-determining property is a *perfection* analytically included among all perfections in the nature or essence of a perfect being.

We may still wonder why Anselm would regard it as inconceivable for the greatest conceivable being not to exist, unless like Descartes and Leibniz he includes or tries anyway to include existence analytically among the properties and hence part of the nature or essence of a greatest conceivable being. The fact that Anselm might or even would probably also have agreed with these propositions should not be confused with what he explicitly includes in or excludes from his attempted proof for the existence of God, or even with what he would need to include in order to carry his inference. The weight of evidence is entirely on what can be deduced from the conceivability of the greatest conceivable being as of that than which none greater is conceivable. Anselm believes that the greatest conceivable being must actually exist, because to suppose otherwise leaves us with the possibility of conceiving something yet greater. Why, however, would such a conceivable being be greater by virtue of existing rather than not existing, if to exist were not a property contributing at least to an otherwise perfect conceivable being's greatness? Anselm can answer such questions easily by maintaining that in his argument

existence rather than nonexistence, being rather than nonbeing, does not need to contribute to a conceivable being's greatness, but only to whether or not when we try to conceive of such a thing we succeed in conceiving of what would actually be the greatest conceivable being. If we are conceiving only of something great in many ways, but that does not actually exist, then we are not yet conceiving of the greatest conceivable being or of a being that is as great as it would be possible for it to be.

Does this difference suffice to remove Anselm's argument from Kant's criticism of 'ontological' proofs like Descartes' and Leibniz's? Why does Anselm regard it as inconceivable for the greatest conceivable being not to exist, unless, like Descartes and Leibniz, he includes or tries anyway to include existence analytically among the properties and hence as part of the nature or essence of a greatest conceivable being? What else could set the limits on the conceivability of the greatest conceivable being, if not the properties essential to the greatest conceivable being's constitutive identity conditions?

Anselm believes that the greatest conceivable being must actually exist, because to suppose otherwise leaves us with the possibility of conceiving something yet greater. Perhaps so, but we may doubt whether such a conceivable being would be greater by virtue of existing rather than not existing, if to exist were not a property contributing at least to an otherwise perfect conceivable being's greatness, as in Descartes and Leibniz. Anselm can answer such questions by maintaining that in his argument existence *contributes* to the greatest conceivable being's greatness *without being a constitutive or identity-determining property* inhering in the greatest conceivable being's nature or essence. The conceived-of object is one predication subject, determined by its nature or essence of constitutive identity-determining properties, and its nonsupervenient greatness or otherwise is another matter. Anselm argues that if we conceive of anything that does not exist, then, whatever else we are thinking about, we are not conceiving of the greatest conceivable being. If we are conceiving only of something that is great in many ways, but that does not actually exist, then Anselm holds we are not yet conceiving of the greatest conceivable being or of a being that would be as great as logically possible. The fact that existence contributes to the greatness of a greatest conceivable being by itself does not logically imply that existence is a constitutive or identity-determining property in the nature or essence of a greatest conceivable being.

Does Anselm's proof, so construed and independently of its merits, fall under Kant's classification of 'ontological arguments'? The question can be approached in at least the following two ways. We can accept tradition and lump Anselm's argument together with what in Kant's sense are the more explicitly ontological arguments of Descartes and Leibniz (the latter of whom merely offers a relatively conservative correction to Descartes'). Or, given the content of Kant's objection, we can allow that Descartes and Leibniz, but not Anselm, offer ontological arguments in the intended sense. They assume in so many words that to exist is a perfection, and that God defined as having all perfections, all and only perfect properties, must therefore exist. We can then inquire as to whether or not Anselm's proof boils down to this same kind of ontological argument. If we follow the first alternative, then, if Anselm's argument is not subject to Kant's criticism, and, in light of the exception, Kant does not refute all ontological arguments. If we opt for the second, then, again, if, as we shall show in either case, Anselm's argument is not subject to Kant's criticism, then Kant's objection may be decisive with respect to all semantic and metaphysically-grounded ontological arguments like Descartes-Leibniz, but they do not refute Anselm's psychological-possibilities-grounded conceivability argument.

Evil is nothing, according to Anselm, and is therefore no part of God's causal or moral responsibility. Does it make sense, consequently, for Anselm to attribute the individuating or identity-determining property, or, speaking anachronistically, Kantian predicate, to evil, in saying that evil is nonexistent or partakes of nonbeing, that it is simply and absolutely nothing? Anselm in effect agrees with Kant across the centuries, maintaining that nonbeing, nonexistence, are not predicates, for it is nothing whatsoever, and as such it is incapable of qualifying any object in any positive way as to any of its properties, not even its categorically most general ontic status as nonexistent. All that is further needed to complete the argument is to observe that if nonbeing or nonexistence is not a Kantian predicate in the required sense, as Kant himself would also agree, then neither is being or existence. If evil were not nothing but a something, in the way that Anselm seems to regard the substantive import of these quantifiers, then, presumably, it could support such alternative ontic categorical properties as being or nonbeing. This is precisely what Anselm denies. We need only compare Anselm's implied difference of attitude toward the Taj Mahal with that of evil as altogether nothing, in order to appreciate the difference. Whereas a full size solid

glass Taj Mahal does not happen to exist, Anselm, presumably, like Kant, albeit for different reasons, would not attribute nonbeing to a solid glass Taj Mahal as one of its defining attributes. He would not consider there to be a Kantian predicate, object-individuating or identity-determining or identity-constituting property, of being a specifically *nonexistent* solid glass Taj Mahal. The nonexistent full size solid glass Taj Mahal is solid glass and a mausoleum, and hence a building of a certain sort with certain dimensions, among other things, but for Anselm as for Kant it does not have the property of nonbeing among its defining or characterizing properties. It is true that the object does not exist, so that the nonexistent object can be said to have the ontic property (*not* a Kantian predicate) of nonbeing, but this ontic property does not contribute toward making it the particular object it is, the (nonexistent) solid glass Taj Mahal. The reason why a full size solid glass Taj Mahal does not exist is instead just that, in fact, as world history has contingently unfolded, no one happens to have made one, nor has one occurred naturally.

We encounter, consequently, a final fundamental question: If Anselm does not assume that God is necessarily identified as a particular object by reference to God's possessing the property of existence, how, then, is Anselm's proof for the existence of God supposed to work? Seeing Anselm's *Proslogion* in relation to *De Casu Diaboli* enables us to refine our understanding of Anselm's conceivability argument for the existence of God, and reverse a centuries-old misinterpretation of the argument's intent. If we begin with the assumption, made for purposes of *reductio ad absurdum*, that God does *not* exist, then by saying that another being greater than God by virtue of existing rather than not existing would be *conceivable*, we are not encouraged by anything that Anselm says to suppose that existence is therefore among this entity's Kantian *predicates* or individuating or identity-determining *properties*.[26] Luckily for Anselm, we need make no such assumption about the essential *propertyhood* of existence in order to understand his reasoning. Indeed, as Kant argues eight hundred years after, it would be mistaken to do so, whether or not precisely this mistake is uncharitably laid at Anselm's door.

All that is required for Anselm's argument to make sense independently of the question of its deductive validity, soundness, and significance, is comprehending what Anselm means by saying that it is not possible to conceive of God as both that than which none greater is conceivable

[26] See also Jacquette (1997).

and as not existing. It follows only that Anselm regards existence or being in contrast with nonexistence or nonbeing as contributing to the conceivability of God's *greatness*, but not necessarily by making God's existence into one of God's individuating or identity-determining properties or Kantian predicates. An existent God is conceivably greater, if Anselm is right, than a nonexistent God. The reason is not because existence is among God's constitutive properties or Kantian predicates, contributing to God's greatness, but simply because as we conceive of the two scenarios, we judge that, if we do, God's existing is something 'greater' than God's not existing. The argument is that we conceive of something greater if we conceive of God as existing than as not existing, although God's identity conditions are logically independent of God's greatness.

This saving feature of Anselm's argument is notably not shared by kindred ontological proofs for the existence of God in Leibniz and Descartes. Descartes in Meditation V argues:

> ... when we attend to immense power of this being, we shall be unable to think of its existence as possible without also recognizing that it can exist by its own power; and we shall infer from this that this being does really exist and has existed from eternity, since it is quite evident by the natural light that what can exist by its own power always exists. So we shall come to understand that necessary existence is contained in the idea of a supremely perfect being...[27]

Leibniz subsequently offers an important but sympathetic amendment to Descartes' version of the argument, filling in what he perceived as a missing piece of the puzzle in the proof Descartes states, by showing that Descartes' concept of God is logically possible.[28] The difference between the 'ontological' arguments often mistakenly attributed on Kant's authority to Anselm, on the one hand, and Descartes and Leibniz, on the other, are seen from the standpoint of Kant's objection to this method of proof. We appreciate the impact on both Descartes' and Leibniz's arguments when we consider that what is essential to both is Descartes' conclusion that existence is necessarily *contained in the idea* of a supremely perfect being, against which Kant's objection is more plainly targeted. Anselm does not talk like this, but speaks instead of what we logically can and cannot conceive concerning the idea of a greatest

[27] Descartes (1984), vol. 2, p. 45. See also Crocker (1976); Beyssade (1992); Kenny (1997); Abbruzzese (2007).

[28] Leibniz (1981), Chapter 10, p. 438.

conceivable being, a 'supremely perfect being' in Descartes' terminology, which is supposedly to be none other than God.

An existent Anselmian God is not the same thing as a nonexistent Anselmian God. Their ontic properties are manifestly different, just as an existent solid glass Taj Mahal is not the same thing as a nonexistent solid glass Taj Mahal. Anselm's argument does not compel us to conceive of an existent God as *constituted* in part by the property of existing, thereby precluding the conceivability of a nonexistent God. Anselm's as yet unrefuted conceivability argument equally compels us in another way and for different reasons also to regard a nonexistent God or greatest conceivable being as impossible in the sense of being inconceivable. Existence, in Kant's distinction, is a property of existent things, but it is not a constitutive identity-determining property, not a predicate. Anselm has no need to disagree with any of this, nor does his text encourage dissent from Kant's main point. For Anselm it is the same independently identity-conditioned God that is conceived of as greater if conceived as existing rather than as not existing, from which Anselm concludes that God defined as the greatest conceivable being logically must exist. There is a crucial difference between Anselm's conceivability argument and Leibniz's or Descartes' 'ontological' 'proofs', that Kant's objection neither glosses over nor obscures, but leaves unmentioned as a possible alternative route to the rational demonstration of God's necessary existence. It is a vital distinction that Anselm's discussion of the metaphysics of nonbeing in *De Casu Diaboli* helps to reinforce, and enables us more clearly to appreciate.

The essential difference between Anselm's conceivability argument and the Kantian 'ontological proofs' of Descartes and Leibniz is that for Anselm existence is not part of God's identity as an entity, on the divine object side of things, but belongs exclusively instead to God's greatness and to the concept of God as that than which none greater is conceivable.[29]

[29] A version of the essay under this title was presented at the International Anselm Conference, University of Kent at Canterbury, England, 22-25 April 2009. I am grateful to Arjo Vanderjagt for insightful comments.

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AN INCONSISTENCY IN CRAIG'S DEFENCE OF THE MORAL ARGUMENT

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Abstract. I argue that William Craig's defence of the moral argument is internally inconsistent. In the course of defending the moral argument, Craig criticizes non-theistic moral realism on the grounds that it posits the existence of certain logically necessary connections but fails to provide an adequate account of why such connections hold. Another component of Craig's defence of the moral argument is an endorsement of a particular version of the divine command theory (DCT). Craig's version of DCT posits certain logically necessary connections but Craig fails to provide an adequate account of why these connections hold. Thus, Craig's critique of non-theistic moral realism is at odds with his DCT. Since the critique and DCT are both essential elements of his defence of the moral argument, that defence is internally inconsistent.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a variety of publications and debates, William Craig has defended a moral argument for God's existence. Craig's defence of the argument has recently been criticized by Wielenberg (2009) and Morriston (2012). Building on these criticisms, I argue here that Craig's defence of the moral argument is internally inconsistent. In the course of defending the moral argument, Craig criticizes non-theistic moral realism. One of his central criticisms of that view is that it posits the existence of certain logically necessary (in the broad sense; see Plantinga 1974: 44-5) connections but fails to provide an adequate account of why such connections hold. Craig claims that this is unacceptable. Another component of Craig's defence of the moral argument is an endorsement of a particular version of the divine command theory (DCT). Craig's

version of DCT posits certain logically necessary connections but Craig fails to provide an adequate account of why these connections hold. Thus, Craig's critique of non-theistic moral realism is at odds with his DCT. Since the critique and DCT are both essential elements of his defence of the moral argument, that defence is internally inconsistent.

II. CRAIG'S MORAL ARGUMENT

At the heart of Craig's moral argument is the contention that objective morality has a sound foundation if and only if God exists (Garcia and King 2009: 30). A moral claim is objectively true just in case it is true and its truth is independent of human mental states in a certain way. Craig explains:

> [T]o say, for example, that the Holocaust was objectively wrong is to say that it was wrong even though the Nazis who carried it out thought that it was right and that it would still have been wrong even if the Nazis had won World War II and succeeded in exterminating or brainwashing everyone who disagreed with them. (Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong 2004: 17)

Assuming that there are objective moral truths just in case objective morality has a sound foundation, it follows that there are objective moral truths just in case God exists. From the additional premise that there are some objective ethical truths (which Craig takes to be obviously true; see Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong 2004: 21), it follows that God exists.

III. CRAIG'S VERSION OF DCT

To support his contention that God provides a sound foundation for objective morality, Craig appeals to a version of DCT according to which (i) goodness = resemblance to the necessarily existing divine nature and (ii) moral obligation = being commanded by God (Garcia and King 2009: 30, 168-73; this type of view is developed at great length in Adams 1999). Critics of Craig's moral argument often appeal to the so-called 'Euthyphro problem' in an effort to refute the claim that God provides a sound foundation for objective morality (see e.g. Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong 2004: 350-6; Garcia and King 2009: 70-2, 108-9). There are a number of distinct objections that have come to be associated with the label 'the Euthyphro problem'. Among these is the objection that DCT implies that any action, no matter how horrendous, could be morally

obligatory. The thought is that God, being omnipotent, could command any act whatsoever. Since, according to DCT, for an act to be obligatory just is for it to be commanded by God, it allegedly follows that any act is at least possibly morally obligatory. The objector claims that this implication is implausible and hence DCT itself must be flawed; call this objection 'the arbitrariness problem' (the classic source of this particular worry is Cudworth 1996 [1731]: 14).

Craig is well aware of this objection; he notes that his version of DCT 'was formulated precisely so as to be immune' to this objection (Garcia and King 2009: 172). The foundation of Craig's answer to the arbitrariness problem is the claim that at least some of God's commands are 'necessary expressions' of His nature and hence are 'logically necessary' (Garcia and King 2009: 173); call such commands 'N-commands'.[1] Suppose, for example, that the command not to rape is an N-command. What this means is that the fact that the divine nature exists entails that God issues a command not to rape. Given the assumption that to be morally obligatory = to be commanded by God (the second component of Craig's version of DCT), it follows that the existence of the divine nature entails that there exists a moral obligation not to rape. Craig also maintains that the divine nature exists necessarily (Garcia and King 2009: 169-70); given this, it is also necessarily true that we are morally obligated not to rape. So, Craig's answer to the arbitrariness worry is that DCT does not imply that every action is possibly morally obligatory; the divine nature places necessary constraints on which commands God could issue, thereby placing necessary constraints on which actions could be morally obligatory. Thus, Craig's version of DCT entails:

> P1: There are some divine commands, $C_1 \ldots C_n$, such that the existence of the divine nature entails the issuing of $C_1 \ldots C_n$.

IV. CRAIG'S SHOPPING LIST OBJECTION TO NON-THEISTIC MORAL REALISM

Non-theistic moral realism is the view that there are some objective moral truths that are not somehow grounded in God. To the extent that this view is plausible, Craig's contention that objective morality has

[1] It is not clear whether Craig also means to advance the stronger claim that *all* divine commands are N-commands. For worries about this stronger claim, see Murphy (2002: 22-4), and Baggett and Walls (2011: 119-20).

a sound foundation only if God exists is undermined. Thus, refuting non-theistic moral realism is an important component of Craig's defence of his moral argument.

Craig often characterizes non-theistic moral realism as a 'shopping list approach', by which he means (at least in part) that it entails the existence of ungrounded objective moral truths. Wielenberg argues that 'both parties to the debate [Craig and non-theistic moral realists] are stuck with a "shopping list" approach; the only difference between them is the content of their respective lists' (2009: 38-9). Similarly, Morriston claims that '[n]o matter what story you tell about the ontological ground of moral value, you must at some point come to your own *full stop*' (2012: 29).[2] Craig sometimes concedes this point. For example, commenting on his and Sinnott-Armstrong's different explanations for the wrongness of rape, Craig observes that 'the difference between the theist and Sinnott-Armstrong is not that one has an explanatory ultimate and the other does not. It is rather that the theist has a different explanatory ultimate' (Garcia and King 2009: 173).

However, a closer look at Craig's 'shopping list' worry suggests that it is, at bottom, a worry about unexplained logically necessary connections. Craig at one point notes that the non-theist moral realist might hold 'that moral properties supervene necessarily on certain natural states' (Garcia and King 2009: 179). In response to this suggestion, he asserts that we have no reason to think 'given a naturalistic worldview [that] there are any moral properties or that they supervene on natural states' (Garcia and King 2009: 180). In the next paragraph Craig introduces the familiar shopping list objection:

> If our approach to metaethical theory is to be serious metaphysics rather than just a 'shopping list' approach, whereby one simply helps oneself to the supervenient moral properties ... needed to do the job, then *some sort of explanation is required for why moral properties supervene on certain natural states*. (Garcia and King 2009: 180, emphasis added)

Here, Craig seems to assert that any approach that posits supervenience relations without explaining them is in some way or another inadequate (see Morriston 2012: 31). Supervenience is a purely logical relation. One set of properties B supervenes upon another set of properties A just in case any pair of logically possible worlds that are identical with respect

[2] For an interesting argument for the inadequacy of Craig's favourite stopping point – a good God – see Koons (2012).

to the properties in A are also identical with respect to the properties in B.[3] Since supervenience is, at its core, a matter of the obtaining of various logically necessary connections, Craig's complaint about supervenience appears to be a complaint about the positing of unexplained logically necessary connections. In the quoted passage above, Craig speaks specifically of supervenience relations between *natural* and *moral* states and properties. But it is hard to imagine a plausible justification for the view that while positing unexplained logically necessary connections between natural and moral properties is unacceptable, positing unexplained logically necessary connections between other things is acceptable. At any rate, Craig nowhere offers any justification for such a view. So the most plausible reading of this and similar passages suggests that the central target of Craig's complaint is the positing of logically necessary connections which are then left unexplained. If this is right, then Craig's shopping list objection to non-theistic moral realism employs the following principle:

> P2: Any approach to metaethics that posits logically necessary connections without adequately explaining why such connections hold is unacceptable

V. THE INCONSISTENCY IN CRAIG'S DEFENCE

Consider some N-command. Craig at one point offers the following as an 'explanatory ultimate: God commands us to love and not to harm one another' (Garcia and King 2009: 173). Thus, this command is a likely candidate for an N-command. As noted above, Craig's DCT implies that N-commands are entailed by God's nature; this is P1. However, as I argue below, Craig does not provide an adequate explanation for the existence of such necessary connections. If this is correct, then P2 implies that Craig's DCT is inadequate.

Craig has relatively little to say about why any particular N-command might be entailed by God's nature; typically, he is content to claim that 'God's moral nature is *expressed in relation to us* in the form of divine

[3] Many varieties of supervenience have been distinguished (see McLaughlin and Bennett: 2011); the definition of supervenience given here is global, logical (again, in the broad sense) supervenience. This is the most relevant type of supervenience because this is the sort of supervenience that non-theistic moral realists typically maintain holds between natural and moral properties.

commands ... these commands *flow necessarily* from his moral nature' (Moreland and Craig 2003: 491, emphasis added). Such remarks tell us little about how or why any particular N-command is entailed by the divine nature. However, he does say this: '[T]he theist can agree that God forbids rape because it is bad.' (Garcia and King 2009: 173) But this fails to explain why God's nature *entails* that God forbids rape. Craig emphasizes the distinction between moral goods and moral obligations, offering this example:

> It is good that I become a wealthy philanthropist and support worthy causes throughout the globe; it is also good that I forgo the pursuit of wealth to become a medical missionary to Chad. But obviously I cannot do both, since they are mutually exclusive. I am not, therefore, morally obligated to do both, though both are good. Goods, then, do not imply moral obligations. (Garcia and King 2009: 172)

Just as it is possible to face a situation in which one cannot avoid failing to perform an act that it would be good to perform, it is also possible to face a situation in which one cannot avoid performing some evil act or other. In such cases, performing an evil act is morally permissible (see Adams 1999: 283). So, just as goods do not imply moral obligations, evils do not imply moral wrongness. Since, on Craig's view, for an act to be morally obligatory is for it to be commanded by God and for an act to be morally wrong is for it to be forbidden by God, it follows that the fact that an act is good does not entail that God commands it and the fact that an act is bad does not entail that God forbids it. Therefore, the fact that rape is bad cannot fully account for the alleged necessary connection between the divine nature and God's command against rape.

Craig sometimes lists some of the character traits that he thinks God has: '[God] is by nature loving, generous, just, faithful, kind, and so forth.' (Garcia and King 2009: 30) It might be thought that such a list provides the materials for explaining the connections between the divine nature and at least some N-commands. Consider the following: because God is loving, He necessarily commands that we love one another. This claim has a certain ring of plausibility to it, but notice that it posits a logically necessary connection between being loving and issuing the command that we love one another. P2 implies that unless Craig provides an explanation for this necessary connection, his meta-ethical approach is unacceptable. To my knowledge, Craig nowhere provides such an explanation.

It might be suggested that explanation has to come to an end somewhere; don't we eventually arrive at a fundamental necessary connection, one such that we can see *that* it is true even if we cannot explain *how* or *why* it is true? I am sympathetic to this reply. However, it is not a reply that is available to Craig, for P2 sets a very high bar of adequacy for meta-ethical theories: they must not posit *any* unexplained necessary connections. The bar is so high, in fact, that Craig's own meta-ethical theory falls short.

At this point, one might wonder: what would count as an adequate explanation of a logically necessary connection? From Craig's perspective, one likely answer is that one can explain a logically necessary connection between A and B if one can plausibly claim that A *just is* B. Recall that on Craig's view, goodness *just is* resemblance to God, and moral obligation *just is* being commanded by God. That is why Craig thinks he can adequately explain the logically necessary connections between God and goodness and between divine commands and moral obligation. It may be that Craig thinks that no corresponding strategy is available to the non-theist because there are no natural properties that could plausibly be claimed to constitute goodness and moral obligation. If Craig is right about that, then the non-theistic moral realist must posit logically necessary connections between natural properties and distinct moral properties – but since the non-theist cannot adequately explain these connections, her view runs afoul of P2. What Craig seems not to notice is that while his brand of DCT may avoid positing unexplained necessary connections between God and goodness and between moral obligation and divine commands, it does posit other unexplained necessary connections, thereby running afoul of P2. In this way, Craig is hoisted by his own petard.

Finally, it is worth noting an obstacle to explaining the alleged necessary connections between the divine nature and divine commands that emerges from traditional Christian theism itself. The obstacle is suggested by, for instance, the well-known declaration in Isaiah that '[f]or as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are [God's] ways higher than your ways and [God's] thoughts higher than your thoughts' (Isaiah 55:9), as well as Paul's remark that God's judgments are 'unsearchable' and His ways 'inscrutable' (Romans 11:33).[4] Such passages suggest a substantial gap between human and divine knowledge. Stephen Wykstra says:

[4] Also relevant here are Job, and Ecclesiastes 8:17.

'A modest proposal might be that [God's] wisdom is to ours, roughly as an adult human's is to a one-month old infant's.' (1984: 88) One area in which our understanding of reality may be notably inferior to God's is knowledge of good and evil. Michael Bergmann suggests that 'it wouldn't be the least bit surprising if [axiological] reality far outstripped our understanding of it' (2001: 284) and that for all we know, there are lots of goods, evils, and connections between good and evil of which human beings are unaware (Bergmann 2009). This collection of ideas is the basis of the so-called 'sceptical theist' response to the evidential problem of evil. Craig appeals to sceptical theism himself in addressing the problem of evil (Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong 2004: 116-9). These ideas suggest that there is much about the divine nature that we do not know, particularly when it comes to God's moral nature. And this suggests that there is likely an insurmountable barrier to our understanding of whatever necessary connections may obtain between the divine nature and at least some divine commands. I noted earlier that Adams has provided the most developed version of Craig's brand of DCT. Adams emphasizes the transcendence of the divine nature, one of the implications of which is an inevitable limit to human beings' ability to grasp it. Here is a particularly striking expression of this view:

> The Holy [= the Good = the divine nature] is fascinating; the Holy is beautiful; the Holy is bliss; the Holy is just, the Bible claims, though we may not understand its justice ... From a human point of view, the Holy has rough edges. It screams with the hawk and laughs with the hyenas. We cannot comprehend it. ... We are not the measure of all things, and have at best a very imperfect appreciation of the full dimensions of the good. (Adams 1999: 52)

This bodes ill for the prospects of providing adequate explanations for the necessary connections between the divine nature and any putative N-command.

VI. CONCLUSION

If the argument of this paper is correct, then Craig faces a dilemma. To provide an adequate defence of his moral argument, Craig must defeat non-theistic moral realism. Many of Craig's criticisms of non-theistic moral realism have been ably criticized by Wielenberg (2009) and Morriston (2012). When pressed, Craig typically resorts to the 'shopping list' objection described above; this is often his final critique

of non-theistic moral realism (see, for example, Craig and Moreland 2003: 493; Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong 2003: 171; and Garcia and King 2009: 180). However, once we see what lies at the heart of the shopping list objection, we see that this objection applies equally to Craig's favoured version of DCT. Moreover, it is precisely those aspects of Craig's version of DCT that, according to Craig, enable that view to avoid the arbitrariness problem that make it susceptible to the shopping list objection. Craig's dilemma, then, is this: to provide an adequate defence for his moral argument, Craig must both defeat non-theistic moral realism and answer the arbitrariness problem for DCT. But if I am right, he cannot accomplish both of these tasks – at least, not with the arguments and claims he has advanced so far.[5]

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OMNISCIENCE, THE INCARNATION, AND KNOWLEDGE *DE SE*

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Abstract. A knowledge argument is offered that presents unique difficulties for Christians who wish to assert that God is essentially omniscient. The difficulties arise from the doctrine of the incarnation. Assuming that God the Son did not necessarily have to become incarnate, then God cannot necessarily have knowledge *de se* of the content of a non-divine mind. If this is right, then God's epistemic powers are not fixed across possible worlds and God is not essentially omniscient. Some options for Christian theists are discussed, including rejecting traditional theism in favour of some version of pantheism or panentheism.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I offer a knowledge argument that presents unique difficulties for Christians who wish to assert that God is essentially omniscient. Specifically, I will argue that, if we assume that God the Son did not necessarily have to take on a human nature and become incarnate, God cannot necessarily have knowledge *de se* of the content of a non-divine mind. If this is right, then some of God's epistemic powers – in this case, the power to have knowledge *de se* of the contents of a human mind – are not possessed essentially and divine omniscience is not omniscience *simpliciter*.

Toward the end of this paper I will consider a few options Christians may have in light of the problem raised for traditional Christian theism from orthodox Christology. My guess is that none of these options will be very appealing to orthodox Christian theists.

I will proceed as follows. First, I will discuss an unsuccessful knowledge argument against omniGod theism (the metaphysics of theism on which

God is understood as essentially omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent). Next, distinguishing what is known from how it is known and focusing on Christian theism, I offer a new knowledge argument. I then address some objections. Finally, I discuss some options for Christian theists in the face of the problem raised in this paper.

I. GRIM'S KNOWLEDGE ARGUMENT AND NAGASAWA'S REPLY

Patrick Grim has argued against generic traditional theism[1] from knowledge *de se*.[2] Grim argues that no one else, including God, can have knowledge *de se* of another person. Ergo, divine omniscience is not omniscience *simpliciter*. If divine omniscience is not omniscience *simpliciter*, then, assuming that omniscience is an essential attribute of God's, God does not exist (see Nagasawa 2008: 17-18).

Yujin Nagasawa argues that Grim's argument is not sound.[3] Nagasawa's strategy in response to Grim's argument is to first restate statements about divine omniscience in terms of divine epistemic powers. Epistemic powers *qua* powers are subsumed by omnipotence. On the most widely accepted view of divine omnipotence, God's failing to be able to do what it is necessarily impossible to do does not undermine divine omnipotence. Because God is not another person (e.g., me or you), God cannot know what that person knows in having knowledge *de se*. If God could know, then God would be that person. Since God is distinct from that person, it is necessarily impossible for God to have the epistemic power necessary to have such knowledge. So Grim is requiring that God be able to do what it is necessarily impossible to do. This does not undermine God's omnipotence, including God's epistemic powers. So Grim's argument fails (Nagasawa 2008: 21-25).[4] Given the assumptions expressed by both Grim and Nagasawa about the nature and object of knowing in having knowledge *de se*, Nagasawa's reply to Grim is a success.[5]

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[1] By 'theism', Grim clearly means to refer to omniGod theism in his work.

[2] Grim's arguments appear in Grim (1983), (1985), and (2000).

[3] An earlier version of his argument against Grim's argument is in Nagasawa (2003).

[4] Nagasawa considers five objections to his argument that I will not list here. Successful or not, his replies display an impressive concern for rigour that is characteristic of all Nagasawa's arguments in his book.

[5] In chapter three of his book, Nagasawa considers arguments from concept possession based on concept empiricism against traditional theism. Such arguments go from the inability of God to experience states such as fear to the claim that God cannot have the concept of fear.

II. DIFFICULTIES POSED BY THE INCARNATION AND KNOWLEDGE *DE SE*

In this section I offer an argument against divine omniscience from knowledge *de se* that does not share the liabilities of Grim's argument that make it susceptible to Nagasawa's critique. My argument focuses on difficulties that result from orthodox Christology. I will argue that given certain assumptions about the doctrine of the incarnation, God as understood by traditional Christianity cannot be omniscient *simpliciter*. Non-Christian theism and variants of Christian theism that do not endorse the orthodox doctrine of the incarnation will not be susceptible to this argument, nor will those that allow for God to relate to the universe differently from how God does on traditional Christian theism. Hence, most Christian pantheists and panentheists who wish to accept some variant of the traditional doctrine of the incarnation will be able to avoid the problem I present. (And in the last section of this paper I briefly discuss how and why at least some possible variants of pantheism and panentheism would be able to avoid the problem generated by the argument presented here.)

2.1. Knowledge *de se*

Suppose we distinguish between *how* a person believes a proposition from *what* a person believes (Perry 1994: 182-83). What Ichiro believes when he believes that he is making a mess is the same thing Maria believes when she believes of Ichiro that he is making a mess. Only *how* they believe what is believed differs from Ichiro to Maria. That is, Ichiro and Maria may both believe the same thing, but in different ways. If we assume this distinction is a correct one to make, then, turning to God and Ichiro, the object of God's knowledge can be the same as the object of Ichiro's knowledge when he believes 'I made a mess'. The intentional object of both God's belief and Ichiro's belief is the same. But while God can know what Ichiro knows when Ichiro knows he made a mess, God knows it in a different way. Furthermore, assuming that God and Ichiro are different persons and neither one is a proper part of the other, there are ways in which God cannot know what they both know. How God knows that Ichiro made a mess is restricted by God's being distinct from Ichiro.

The following two assumptions are worth making clear before proceeding further. First, I am assuming that John Perry (1994) is correct that the object of knowledge in cases of knowledge *de se*

includes a sentence. So knowledge *de se* is a species of knowledge *de dicto*. Second, I am assuming that the object of knowledge in cases of knowledge *de se* is a singular sentence. More specifically, I assume that the object of knowledge can be understood as a Russellian proposition, where a Russellian proposition is not a *sui generis* Platonic entity that is somehow more than what is represented in a representation token such as a sentence. Rather, a Russell proposition 'contains the entities indicated by words' (Russell 1903: 47). So a proposition on this view is a state of affairs that has as its constituents some object or objects and relations and/or properties. The proposition expressed by 'My car is blue' is a state of affairs involving my car and its being blue, and the proposition expressed by 'Andrei is married to Lara' is a state of affairs involving Andrei and Lara standing in the symmetrical relationship of being married to one another. I assume that a sentence is false when what it represents is not made true by anything in the world, and it is true when what it represents is made true by something in the world. Both assumptions are consistent with Perry's views. And they deliver the result that we can distinguish between what is known and how it is known.[6]

The foregoing distinction between what is known and ways of knowing can be further illuminated by the following example. Suppose that you do not speak German. You have a German friend who does not speak English. You both know the same thing, *viz*., the state of affairs represented by 'Snow is white' and 'Schnee ist weiß'. But the *way* that you and your friend know the same thing is different. The way you know the proposition in question is through the English sentence above. She knows it via a German sentence. If you were both bilingual, speaking German and English, you would both know it in two different ways. Suppose we add further that you have never actually seen snow. You have seen photos of snow and you have been told that snow is white. Your friend first came to know the colour of snow by direct acquaintance with snow. Thus, how you know what you know is different in yet another way.

2.2. The incarnation and knowledge *de se*

Traditional Christianity asserts that Jesus of Nazareth is one person with two natures. According to the formula of Chalcedon, Jesus is a person

[6] Nagasawa (2008) mentions strategies in the debates over knowledge arguments that invoke Russellian propositions briefly in a footnote. But since Grim does not express a commitment to such entities, Nagasawa does not consider such strategies (see Nagasawa 2008: 18, note 7).

who is fully God the Son and fully human.[7] And God the Son freely took on a human nature in becoming incarnate. The incarnation was not metaphysically or logically necessary according to Christian orthodoxy.

If the two minds account of the incarnation, most recently and thoroughly articulated and defended by Thomas V. Morris (1986) and Richard Swinburne (1994), is correct, then Jesus Christ has two minds, a divine mind and a human mind. On this view, the human consciousness of Christ is contained in his divine consciousness. Timothy Bayne (2001) has referred to this understanding of the incarnation as 'inclusionism'.[8] I will follow Bayne in employing this locution in what follows.

On inclusionism, there is an asymmetrical relationship between the divine and human consciousness such that Jesus *qua* God the Son has unrestricted first-personal epistemic access to the consciousness of Jesus *qua* human, but not vice versa. More importantly, as just noted, the divine consciousness contains the human consciousness within it, but not vice versa. Such a relationship allows God to have knowledge *de se* of what is experienced by Jesus *qua* human.

As noted above, Christian theism does not assume that God the Son is necessarily incarnate. It was possible for God not to become incarnate. So, to employ the language of possible worlds, there are possible worlds in which God the Son can have knowledge *de se* of a human consciousness and worlds where God cannot have such knowledge. And whether or not God can have such knowledge depends upon God's relationship to the world – specifically, it depends upon whether God the Son is incarnate in that world.

Consider the following. Suppose that at world w_1 Jesus is God the Son incarnate. Jesus is in the wilderness, fasting for forty days. Jesus knows that he is hungry. Suppose that the belief component of Jesus's knowing takes as its intentional object the proposition expressed by 'I am hungry right now'.[9] In w_1, when God is aware of Jesus's hunger, God's knowledge

[7] I write in the present tense because traditional Christians take this to be true of Jesus of Nazareth even now (since they believe that he literally ascended to heaven after being resurrected from the dead).

[8] Bayne critiques standard inclusionism and offers a restricted inclusionism as an alternative. I will not worry about his critique of inclusionism here or the details of restricted inclusionism. For a reply to Bayne, see Sturch (2003). Bayne responds in Bayne (2003).

[9] I here assume that knowledge is justified true belief that is reliably produced by some belief-producing mechanism. However, some epistemologists, e.g., Timothy Williamson (2002), argue that knowing is a mental state. Whether knowing is a mental

of Jesus's hunger can also be expressed as knowledge *de se*. This is the case because God the Son, *qua* incarnate divine mind, has the same sort of access relationship to the body of Jesus that the human mind of Jesus bears to the relevant human organism that is in need of food. God the Son knows from the inside that Jesus is hungry. And the way God the Son knows it can be expressed in the same way it is expressed in the human mind of Jesus of Nazareth. Both the divine mind and human mind of Jesus have knowledge *de se* of the hunger of Jesus. So in w_1 God has the epistemic power requisite to have knowledge *de se* of the content of a human mind.

While in w_1 Jesus Christ is God the Son incarnate, there is some possible world w_2 in which Jesus does not exist and the incarnation does not occur. So, using the inclusionist framework, in w_2 we do not have one person with two minds (as we find in w_1). Rather, God the Son is not incarnate in that world. So while in w_1 God has the power to have knowledge *de se* of the content of a non-divine mind, in w_2, since God the Son is not incarnate in that world, God lacks that epistemic power. If this is right, then God's power to have knowledge *de se* of the contents of a non-divine mind is not a power God necessarily possesses. So God's epistemic power in w_1 is greater than what God has in w_2. If that is right, then God's epistemic power is more limited in w_2. Therefore, God is not essentially omniscient *simpliciter*.

A summary of the reasoning of this paper thus far is in order before proceeding. I have assumed that if God is omnipotent, God is necessarily omnipotent. I have also assumed that omniscience can be understood in terms of epistemic powers and, hence, in terms of omnipotence. If these two assumptions are correct, then God should have the same epistemic powers in every possible world if God is essentially omniscient. Assuming that God the Son is not incarnate in w_2, God cannot have knowledge *de se* of the content of any non-divine mind in that world. But in w_1, where God the Son is incarnate, God can have knowledge *de se* of the content of a non-divine mind. If God lacks the epistemic power in w_2 that God has in w_1 (where God the Son is incarnate), then God is not essentially omniscient (again, assuming that we can cash out omniscience in terms of epistemic powers).

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state or includes a mental state, viz., belief, among its components is unimportant for my purposes here.

III. SOME OBJECTIONS

In this section I consider four objections. None proves fatal to the line of reasoning offered above.

Objection 1: God's epistemic powers do not need to hold fixed across possible worlds in order for God to be necessarily omniscient. Omniscience can be relative to possible worlds. So while God's actual epistemic powers may shift from world to world, so long as God is maximally epistemically powerful in each world, God will be omniscient in that world.

Reply to Objection 1: If God is necessarily omniscient (as traditional theists claim), then the set of God's epistemic powers are fixed across possible worlds. To deny this will get us omniscience on the cheap. If we deny that the set of God's epistemic powers is not fixed across possible worlds, then there would be worlds where God is considerably less epistemically powerful than God is in another world, yet God would still be omniscient in the less powerful world. To say that such a being is omniscient would strain credulity. Moreover, from the standpoint of w_1 (where God has the power to have knowledge *de se* of a non-divine mind), the God of w_2 who has less epistemic power than the God of w_1 would fail to be omniscient.

If this is right, then it looks like God's having the epistemic power to have knowledge *de se* of the content of a non-divine mind is not an essential power of God's. So God's epistemic powers are diminished in one world vis-à-vis another because of God the Son's being incarnate in some worlds but not all worlds. If this is right, then God's actual epistemic powers are not held fixed across possible worlds. So God is not necessarily omniscient.

Objection 2: Someone may argue that the epistemic powers God must possess in order to be omniscient does not have to be the same across possible worlds. Rather, there is a set of *essential* epistemic powers God must possess. The size of that set is determined by what epistemic powers remain stable across possible worlds. So since the power to have knowledge *de se* of a non-divine mind is not an essential epistemic power that God possesses, that particular epistemic power is not essential for God to be omniscient.

Reply to Objection 2: The proponent of the second objection does not offer any criterion for determining what is or is not an essential power. So the defender of such an objection would need to provide us with

a criterion for determining what count as essential powers, including epistemic powers. If one is not careful, one may so narrow the set of essential epistemic powers (and powers more generally) that one winds up with something that is hardly worth regarding as omniscience (or omnipotence, for that matter).

Objection 3: This objection is closely related to the previous objections. Someone may hold the following view of powers. An agent *S* has a power *P* to do *A* in the actual world if *S* does *A* in some other possible world. So while Ian does not speak Russian in the actual world, Ian has the power to speak Russian because in some possible world he speaks Russian.[10] Similarly, since there is some world in which God has knowledge *de se* of the contents of the human mind of Christ, God has this epistemic power in every possible world.

Reply to Objection 3: Such a conception of powers is far too generous. It turns out on this view that a person born blind from birth (suppose she has neither eyes nor visual cortices) has the power of sight in the actual world because there is some possible world where she sees. Consider another example. Suppose that Margaret is very small and weak. She has difficulty lifting anything over 25 kg. On the conception of powers under consideration, Margaret has the power to lift 500 kg because in some world she is a body builder. If we were to say to a normal person that Margaret actually has the power to lift 500 kg, that person would most likely (justifiedly) laugh in our faces. Margaret has the power to acquire the power to lift 500 kg. But she does not actually possess the power in question. And, in the case of Ian having the power to speak Russian, he has the power to learn to speak Russian. But absent learning to speak Russian, he does not have the power to actually speak Russian.

Similarly, if in w_2 God the Son is not incarnate and, hence, lacks the power to have knowledge *de se* of a non-divine mind, then this is a metaphysically more salient fact about God in w_2 than the fact that God does have the power to have knowledge *de se* of the content of a non-divine mind in w_1 because God the Son is incarnate in that world.

Objection 4: While God the Son is not necessarily incarnate, according to orthodox Christology, Jesus Christ is necessarily God the Son incarnate. That is, it was possible for God the Son not to take on a human nature, but Jesus Christ is essentially divine. So in every world in which Jesus exists, Jesus is God. For those worlds in which Jesus does not exist, if Jesus had

[10] Yujin Nagasawa suggested such an objection as well as the response that follows.

existed in those worlds, then God the Son would be incarnate in Jesus in those worlds. If that is the case, then God would have the power to have knowledge *de se* of the content of the human mind of Jesus in every possible world. Even if there are possible worlds in which the universe has no other persons, God possesses the relevant epistemic power in those worlds. But those are worlds in which God simply has no opportunity to manifest the relevant epistemic power that God, nonetheless, possesses. Much as H_2O possesses the power to dissolve NaCl even in worlds where it never manifests this power because of the absence of salt, so also God possesses the epistemic power in question even in worlds where God cannot manifest the power because God the Son is not incarnate in those worlds.[11] Hence, God's failing to have knowledge *de se* of the human mind of Christ is not indicative of a difference between God's powers across possible worlds.

Reply to Objection 4: God's ability to have knowledge *de se* of a non-human mind is a radically contingent power. God can only possess this power (even if never manifested) if God the Son is actually incarnate (i.e., only in a world in which Jesus exists).

Consider the following analogy. Suppose the only thing necessary for transworld identity is something like sameness of first-person perspective. In the actual world, David Beckham has the ability to kick a ball because he has a body with that power. But there is a possible world in which he was born without legs. He does not have the power to kick a ball in that world. It is not a latent power Beckham possesses but just cannot manifest because of his condition. Moreover, in a world without the technology necessary for Beckham to acquire functioning legs with which he can play football, it is not a power that Beckham can come to possess.

Similarly, whether or not God has the epistemic power required to have knowledge *de se* of the contents of a non-divine mind depends upon whether God the Son is incarnate in that world. God's epistemic powers vis-à-vis the universe are restricted by how God relates to the world. And since God the Son is not necessarily incarnate, then God does not necessarily possess the power to have knowledge *de se* of the contents of a non-divine mind. Hence, God is not essentially omniscient if orthodox Christology is correct.

[11] For more on the distinction between possessing and manifesting powers, see Martin (2007).

IV. OPTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN THEIST

Traditional Christian theists who find the foregoing argument compelling have at least three options. Each successive option takes the Christian further from orthodoxy than the previous one.

4.1. First option: God is not essentially omniscient

Some Christian theists may find this acceptable. After all, they may argue, what matters is what God is *actually* like and, they assert, God is *actually* omniscient, even if God is not essentially omniscient. Some, however, may find the cost of such a move to be too high. But given their other theological commitments, this may be the only viable option for the Christian theist who wishes to endorse orthodox Christology.

4.2. Second option: reject Chalcedonian Christology

I suspect that fewer Christian theists will find this option attractive. If one rejects Chalcedonian Christology, there are numerous options. Some are more extreme than others. For instance, one may endorse Apollinarianism, and deny that Jesus had a human mind. This move would result in God lacking knowledge *de se* of the minds of any created persons. Some may reject the doctrine of the incarnation entirely. But those who wish to at least approximate historical Christianity will find this move unacceptable.

4.3. Third option: endorse a version of pantheism or panentheism

The final option is one at which many Christians would balk. But it is worth considering. It is perhaps the most radical solution.

If we accept some version of pantheism or panentheism (and assume the necessary existence of God), then God has knowledge *de se* of the contents of every mind in every possible world in which there are minds. This is so because the divine consciousness contains the consciousness of the myriad individual minds that populate the universe within it. And because of God's relationship to the universe on this view, this is a power God has in every world since the universe constitutes, is identical with, or is a proper part of God. In some worlds, the universe has no conscious inhabitants. But if there were conscious inhabitants in that universe, God would have knowledge *de se* of the contents of their minds. God has the power to know the minds of the conscious inhabitants of a world because of how God relates to the universe in that world. The relevant epistemic power in such worlds is simply never manifested, but it is still

a power possessed much as H_2O in a universe without NaCl still has the power to dissolve NaCl.

One worry that some may have is that the uniqueness of the incarnation is lost on this view. Everyone is divine, it might be argued. Of course, any such response would involve committing the fallacy of division. The parts of my Honda Fit are not themselves a Honda Fit. This is clearly the case if an object is a complex substance (such as my car) and the parts are substantial parts, but it is also the case with merely spatial parts. A location in a simple substance is not identical with every location in a substance and it is definitely not identical with the entire substance.[12] Assuming that God is a substance, whether God is a complex or simple substance, it does not follow that the proper parts (whether substantial if God is complex or merely spatial if God is simple) are also God if pantheism or panentheism is correct. Moreover, it does not follow that God is united to every conscious being in the way God the Son is described as being united to Jesus of Nazareth according to orthodox Christology.

That said, if pan-inclusionism is true, then every created mind would stand to the divine mind as Christ's mind does to God the Son's mind according to inclusionist interpretations of orthodox Christology. Of course, this fact alone would not be enough to establish that all created persons stand in the same sort of relationship to God that Christ does on orthodox Christology (the access relationship between God's and Christ's mind is only one aspect of the incarnation). However, if I am right, then God can have knowledge *de se* of the contents of every conscious mind, human and non-human, whether or not Jesus exists in a world.

At this point, orthodox Christians will no doubt worry that the doctrine of the incarnation has been effectively thrown out the window. This is not obviously the case. Some work must be done to account for how God could relate uniquely to Jesus of Nazareth in a way suitable to provide the truthmakers for the creedal statements about the incarnation. And most versions of pantheism and panentheism will not fit the bill. Moreover, some variants of pantheism and panentheism that do not conflict with the Chalcedonian formula may still be vulnerable to the sort of knowledge argument presented in this paper.[13] In any case, the

[12] See Heil (2012) for more on spatial versus substantial parts.

[13] For instance, Forrest (2007) presents a variant of panentheism on which individual aware agents are like so many holes in God. God fills one of the holes in the incarnation.

third option for Christians may imply the second option. If they accept some version of pantheism or panentheism, they may have to give up Chalcedonian Christology (and much more).

None of the foregoing is meant to suggest that the task of reconciliation is impossible. It may just require that Christians who accept the third option be as creative and open to resources from outside of the Christian tradition as their early forebears were who first articulated Christian doctrine using the resources provided by Platonism. In any case, such a task goes well beyond the scope of this paper. But I think it is a worthwhile one for Christian philosophical theologians to consider. It requires, however, that they be open to new ways of thinking about the nature of God, especially God's relationship to the universe. If the price is too high to pay for some (and I suspect that most traditional Christians will find accepting any version of pantheism or panentheism to be too high a price to pay), there are always the other options I mentioned. In any case, there are no free lunches in philosophical theology.

CONCLUSION

My purpose in this essay has not been to attack orthodox Christology. My chief goal was to offer a knowledge argument that presents a unique challenge to orthodox Christian theists. If I am right, then Christians who endorse orthodox Christology and take God to be omniscient must accept one of the options I mentioned in the previous section. This includes, but is not limited to, rethinking how Christians should think about the relationship of God to the universe.[14]

This account of the nature of God can deliver a Christology consistent with orthodoxy, but it falls prey to the sort of knowledge argument presented in this paper.

[14] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2010 Central Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Thanks are due to Andrew Cullison, Robert Garcia, Wes Morriston, and especially Yujin Nagasawa for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. My work on this paper was generously supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation (Yujin Nagasawa is my co-investigator) supporting research on 'Alternative Concepts of God'. The views expressed in this paper do not reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

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INFALLIBLE DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE CANNOT UNIQUELY THREATEN HUMAN FREEDOM, BUT ITS MECHANICS MIGHT

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Abstract. It is not uncommon to think that the existence of exhaustive and infallible divine foreknowledge uniquely threatens the existence of human freedom. This paper shows that this cannot be so. For, to uniquely threaten human freedom, infallible divine foreknowledge would have to make an essential contribution to an explanation for why our actions are not up to us. And infallible divine foreknowledge cannot do this. There remains, however, an important question about the compatibility of freedom and foreknowledge. It is a question not about the existence of foreknowledge, but about its mechanics.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, my main goal is to argue that infallible divine foreknowledge (IDF) cannot uniquely threaten human freedom. Successfully arguing for this claim will help to explain why some, like David Hunt (1999), have found it 'preposterous' to think that IDF by itself could undermine freedom.[1] Hunt writes, for example, that 'the supposed incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom lacks all prima facie credibility' (1999: 20). At the same time, however, I believe that there remain interesting and significant questions about the compatibility of IDF and human freedom. I will highlight one such interesting question in particular, a question about the mechanics of IDF, arguing that debate about freedom and foreknowledge would profit from focusing more

[1] Another writer who has made this same point is William Lane Craig (1987). See also (Hunt 1998).

directly on this question than on those arguments typically forwarded to show that IDF poses a significant threat to human freedom.

In the first section of the paper, I will explain more carefully what it would take for IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom. What we will see is that for IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom, it must be that IDF makes an essential contribution to an explanation for why what humans do is not up to them. I will argue in section two, however, that IDF cannot make this sort of essential contribution. So, IDF cannot uniquely threaten human freedom. In section three, I attempt to re-focus the debate on freedom and foreknowledge by moving this debate away from the question of whether the existence of IDF by itself undermines human freedom and toward a related question about whether the mechanics required for explaining IDF threatens human freedom. This latter question, I contend, is one concerning which there is more fruitful future discussion to be had.

I. WHAT IT WOULD BE FOR IDF TO UNIQUELY THREATEN HUMAN FREEDOM

In section two, I will argue that mere IDF alone could not pose a unique threat to human freedom. Before doing so, I need to explain what this claim amounts to. I need to explain, that is, what it would be for IDF itself to uniquely threaten human freedom. I will do that in this section by presenting a version of the freedom-foreknowledge argument commonly used by philosophers to argue for the incompatibility of IDF and human freedom and by comparing this argument with two other, similar arguments. What we will see is that for IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom IDF needs to make an essential contribution to an explanation for why what humans do is not up to them.

We can start by building a simple version of the freedom-foreknowledge argument typically used by philosophers to argue that IDF undermines human freedom.[2] To present this argument, we will make use of some claims about God's foreknowledge, some claims about what philosophers call 'accidental necessity', and some claims about freedom. Begin with the theological claim that:

(1) God believes at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100}.

[2] The presentation here follows roughly that outlined in (Zagzebski 2011a). Another classic contemporary source for this argument is (Pike 1969).

Let t_1 be a past time long, long, before t_{100}, and let Joe be an ordinary human agent and let his lawn-mowing be pre-theoretically as good a candidate as any for a free action. (1) is secured by the assumptions that God has exhaustive foreknowledge and that Joe in fact mows his lawn at t_{100}.[3] Now, given traditional assumptions about God's infallibility, the following claim is also true:

(2) Necessarily, for all times t and propositions p, if God believes at t that p, then p.

Thus, God's believing at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} entails that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100}. These are all of the theological claims we need for our argument.

Next, we need to make three claims about what philosophers call 'accidental necessity'. Accidental necessity is a kind of necessity which propositions about the past have in virtue of being about the past.[4] Since what these propositions report is over-and-done-with, there is nothing that can now be done about it. This is a quality, our arguer claims, which all propositions about the past have. Thus,

(3) Necessarily, if p is a proposition about the past relative to a time t, then p is accidentally necessary at t.

A second important feature of accidental necessity is the following:

(4) For all agents S, actions A and times t and t', if it is accidentally necessary at t' that S does A at t, then at t' it isn't up to S whether S does A at t.

The support for (4) is that, intuitively, we can't do anything about what is necessary. Because we can't do anything about what is necessary, what is necessary isn't up to us. If, at our time, something is necessary at another time, then we can't make it otherwise than it is – its being so is not under our control. This appears to be paradigmatically the case for the sort of

[3] I am oversimplifying a bit here. In order to secure (1) it must also be the case that (i) God knows by having beliefs, that (ii) God's beliefs are in time, and that (iii) propositions about the future don't change their truth-values such that, for instance, at t_1 Joe will mow at t_{100} but at t_2 Joe will not mow at t_{100}. (i) has been denied by (Alston 1986) to which (Hasker 1988) replies. (ii) has been denied by, *inter alia*, (Stump and Kretzman 1981), though it has been argued that the timelessness solution is not sufficient to address the philosophical problem of freedom and foreknowledge in, *inter alia*, (Zagzebski 2011b). (iii) has been denied by (Todd 2011), to which (Byerly forthcoming c) replies.

[4] Zagzebski (2011a) is especially clear about this.

over-and-done-with necessity that 'accidental necessity' is supposed to constitute. If S's doing A were now over-and-done-with, for instance, then it would not now be up to S whether S does A. The final important claim we need about accidental necessity is that it works like certain other kinds of metaphysical necessities in that it obeys axiom K contained in all five classical systems of modal logic. Applied to accidental necessity, this axiom tells us that:

(5) If p is accidentally necessary at t, and p entails q, then q is accidentally necessary at t.

(3), (4), and (5) are all of the principles about accidental necessity we need for our argument.

The final principle we need for our argument is a principle about freedom. The principle says:

(6) For all agents S, actions A and times t, if it isn't up to S at t whether S does A at t, then it is not the case that S does A freely at t.

(6) is supposed to be simply an analytic truth about the nature of free action. From (1)-(6) it follows that it is not the case that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} freely. For, by (1), God believed at t_1 that Joe would mow at t_{100}. And, by (3), that God so believed is accidentally necessary at t_{100}.[5] But, by (2), that God so believed entails that Joe mows at t_{100}. Thus, given (5), Joe's mowing at t_{100} is accidentally necessary at t_{100}. (4) then implies that it isn't up to Joe at t_{100} whether Joe mows at t_{100}. And, by (6), this implies that Joe doesn't mow freely at t_{100}.

Since Joe was an arbitrarily selected human agent and his mowing was just as good a candidate for a free action as any, the argument here presented generalizes. IDF, the argument attempts to show, presents a significant problem for human freedom. This is because of claims about foreknowledge, claims about accidental necessity, and claims about freedom. Thus, we have a powerful argument for the conclusion that no human beings ever perform actions freely that is motivated by claims about IDF.

[5] This step assumes that God's believing at t_1 that Joe will mow at t_{100} is a proposition about the past relative to t_{100}. Of course, the Ockhamist response to the argument for theological fatalism denies this claim. See, e.g., (Warfield 2010). Nonetheless, the claim that propositions like (1) are not propositions about the past has proven difficult to defend. See, e.g., (Todd forthcoming).

Let the above argument suffice for a presentation of the freedom-foreknowledge argument as it is typically found in the philosophical literature. The argument attempts to show that IDF threatens human freedom. Our question here, though, is whether IDF *uniquely* threatens human freedom. In the remainder of this section, I want to consider what this claim amounts to – what it would take, that is, for IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom. I then argue in the next section that IDF *cannot* do this.

To get clear on what it would take for IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom, it will be helpful to highlight how the freedom-foreknowledge argument just presented bears certain significant similarities to two other arguments. In fact, following Linda Zagzebski (2011a and b), we might think of these three arguments as forming a family of three fatalistic arguments. They are all fatalistic arguments because they all provide arguments for the conclusion that no person ever performs any action freely.

The freedom-foreknowledge argument presents an argument for fatalism by appealing to exhaustive IDF. The claims this argument makes which will distinguish it from our other two fatalist arguments are (1) and (2). (1) is a supposition justified by the presumption of exhaustive divine foreknowledge, whereas (2) is secured by the doctrine of divine infallibility. These two claims, when combined with (3)-(6), make trouble for human freedom.

But, we can generate arguments that threaten human freedom which parallel this argument for theological fatalism by replacing (1) and (2) with non-theological claims. First, we can replace (1) and (2) with claims about truth-values of propositions about the future. By doing so, we will get what is typically called the argument for 'logical fatalism'. Here we will replace (1) with

(1') It was true at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100}.

and we will replace (2) with:

(2') Necessarily, for all times t and t' and all events e, if it was true at t that e occurs at t', then e occurs at t'.

With (1') and (2') in place, the rest of the argument trots on as before. The argument now purports to show that the mere fact that there are propositions about the future actions of humans which are true in the distant past threatens to undermine human freedom.

Similarly, we get an argument for causal fatalism by replacing (1) and (2) of the argument for theological fatalism with claims justified by causal determinism. Causal determinism is typically defined as the thesis that the state of the world at any time together with the laws of nature entails the state of the world at all other times.[6] In accordance with causal determinism, we might replace (1) with

(1") The state of the world at t_1 is S and the laws of the world at t_1 are L.

and we might replace (2) with

(2") Necessarily, if the state of the world at t_1 is S and the laws of the world at t_1 are L, then Joe mows his lawn at t_{100}.

Here, 'S' is a placeholder for a complete description of the state of the world w we are imagining in which Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} and 'L' is a placeholder for the laws of w. (2") simply reports a consequence of the causal determinist's thesis – namely, that in any world with the past and laws of w, Joe does as he does in w. Thus, we have a third fatalist argument, this one generated by claims justified by causal determinism.

We have seen, then, that the freedom-foreknowledge argument as it is typically presented has much in common with these two other fatalistic arguments – the argument for logical fatalism and the argument for causal fatalism. Given the similarity of these arguments, what we must now consider is the following: What would it be for the freedom-foreknowledge argument to show that IDF poses a *unique* threat to human freedom?

If IDF is to pose a threat to human freedom which is to be distinct from the threats posed by the logical and causal fatalist arguments, then it must be that premises (1) and (2) make a significant difference over premises (1') and (2') and premises (1") and (2"). For (1) and (2) to make a significant difference over (1') and (2'), and (1") and (2"), it must be that there is some reason for thinking that actions are never up to us, given claims like (1) and (2), which reason is not supplied given only either claims like (1') and (2') or claims like (1") and (2"). For, each of these three fatalist arguments is supposed to show that freedom is threatened because claims like the first two premises of the argument in view imply that our actions are not up to us. Thus, for IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom, IDF must supply *unique* reason to think that our actions are not up to us. It must be that claims like (1) and (2) support

[6] See, e.g., (Hoefer 2010)

this conclusion in a way that it is not supported by claims like (1') and (2') or (1") and (2"). To use the specific example referred to in (1) and (2), it must be that God's infallibly forebelieving at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} provides special reason for thinking that Joe's mowing at t_{100} is not up to Joe – reason which is not supplied by (1') and (2') or by (1") and (2").

Now, what is it for claims like (1) and (2) to supply special reason for thinking our actions are not up to us in this way? I submit that it is for claims like (1) and (2) to make an essential contribution to an explanation of why our actions are not up to us. It is for claims like (1) and (2) to make a contribution to an explanation of why our actions are not up to us which contribution is not made by any other claims – like (1') and (2') or (1") and (2"). In our example, it is for God's infallibly forebelieving at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} to make an essential contribution to an explanation of why Joe's mowing at t_{100} isn't up to him – a contribution not made by (1') and (2') or (1") and (2"). It may be, of course, that the fact that Joe's mowing isn't up to him is explanatorily overdetermined – that there are, in addition to God's infallible forebeliefs about Joe, other equally good explanations of why Joe's mowing isn't up to him. But, if IDF is to make a difference – if it is to supply special reason for thinking that Joe's mowing isn't up to him – then it must contribute to an explanation for why Joe's mowing is not up to him, and it must do so in a way that its contribution is irreplaceable. Thus, to claim that IDF poses a unique threat to human freedom is to say that IDF makes an essential contribution to an explanation for why our actions aren't up to us – that, e.g., God's forebelieving at t_1 that Joe mows at t_{100} makes an essential contribution to an explanation for why Joe's mowing at t_{100} isn't up to Joe. In what follows, instead of saying that IDF 'makes an essential contribution to an explanation for' why what we do is not up to us, I will sometimes simply say that IDF 'uniquely explains' why what we do is not up to us. In the next section, I will argue that IDF *cannot* uniquely explain in this way why what we do is not up to us. IDF cannot, then, uniquely threaten human freedom.

II. WHY FOREKNOWLEDGE CAN'T UNIQUELY THREATEN HUMAN FREEDOM

What we saw in the previous section was that if IDF is to pose a unique threat to human freedom, then God's infallibly forebelieving at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} must uniquely explain why Joe's mowing isn't up to

him at t_{100} – God's infallible forebelief must make an essential contribution to an explanation for why Joe's mowing isn't up to Joe. I now want to argue that God's infallibly forebelieving at t_1 that Joe mows at t_{100} cannot uniquely explain why Joe's mowing at t_{100} isn't up to Joe. More generally, IDF cannot uniquely explain why our actions are not up to us. So, IDF cannot uniquely threaten human freedom.

To see why God's infallible forebelief about Joe cannot uniquely explain why Joe's mowing isn't up to him, we must attend to a question I will call *the explanation question*. The explanation question asks about the explanatory relationship between God's forebelieving at t_1 that Joe mows his lawn at t_{100} and Joe's mowing his lawn at t_{100}. This is subtly, but importantly, different from asking about the explanatory relationship between God's forebelieving and whether Joe's mowing is up to him. What the explanation question asks about is the explanatory relationship between God's infallible forebelieving and Joe's *mowing*, not whether Joe's mowing is up to him. I see four options for answering this question. But, the two which are most independently attractive will not permit God's infallible forebelief to uniquely threaten Joe's freedom. And, the two which might have a chance at defending the claim that God's infallible forebelief uniquely threatens Joe's freedom are independently very unattractive.

Begin with the two more independently attractive options for answering our explanation question. The first alternative for answering our explanation question is to affirm that Joe's mowing at t_{100} explains God's infallibly forebelieving at t_1 that Joe will mow at t_{100}. This answer to our explanation question has been almost universally affirmed by those who think that creaturely freedom and infallible divine foreknowledge are consistent.[7] It is an independently attractive option for answering our explanation question. But, this alternative will not permit infallible foreknowledge to pose a unique threat for human freedom. For, strikingly, if this answer to our explanation question is given, then the supposition that God's infallible forebelief about Joe uniquely threatens Joe's freedom leads to an absurdity, given the plausible assumption that explanations are transitive.

[7] To see this, consider what a wide variety of solutions to the freedom-foreknowledge argument have endorsed this idea that divine (fore)beliefs are explained by what makes their contents true: Augustinian solutions (see Hunt 1999), Boethian solutions (see Rota 2010), Molinist solutions (Merricks 2011), and Ockhamist solutions (see Plantinga 1986).

To say that explanations are transitive is to say the following: for all explanations e, e', and e", if e explains e' and e' explains e", then e explains e". The claim that explanations are transitive, like the claim that causes are transitive, has enjoyed widespread support, and it seems to make good sense of many ordinary examples.[8] For instance, if I was late for the morning session because I felt sick, and I felt sick because I ate some bad fish last night, then I was late for the morning session because I ate some bad fish last night. If my moving my arm in a certain way explains why the marker moves in an 'R' pattern in contact with the board, and the marker's moving in this pattern explains why there is an 'R' pattern of ink on the board, then my moving my arm in a certain way explains why there is an 'R' pattern of ink on the board. Transitivity appears to hold even when some of the explanations involved are (at least apparently) backwards explanations.[9] If the volcano is smoking because it is going to explode, and the people are leaving because the volcano is smoking, then the people are leaving because the volcano is going to explode.

Suppose, then, that explanations are indeed transitive. We now run into an absurdity, given this first option concerning the explanatory relationship between God's infallible forebelief and Joe's mowing, if we wish to maintain that IDF poses a unique threat to human freedom. For, on this first option, Joe's mowing at t_{100} is said to explain God's infallible forebelief at t_1 that Joe mows at t_{100}. But, if IDF is to pose a unique threat to human freedom, then it must be that God's infallible forebelief at t_1 that Joe mows at t_{100} uniquely explains why it isn't up to Joe whether he mows at t_{100}. Thus, given the transitivity of explanations, it follows that Joe's mowing at t_{100} explains why it isn't up to Joe whether he mows at t_{100}. That is, it isn't up to Joe whether he mows at t_{100} because Joe mows at t_{100}. But, this is absurd! It cannot be that Joe's freedom with respect to mowing is threatened by his very mowing – that by the very act of mowing Joe makes it the case that his mowing isn't up to him. So, we must reject one of the suppositions which got us to this conclusion. Given that explanations are transitive, we must either reject the claim that God's infallible forebelief poses a special threat to Joe's freedom, or we must reject the claim that Joe's mowing his lawn at t_{100} explains

[8] For the transitivity of causation, see (Hall 2000). For the transitivity of explanation, see (Hasker 1997).

[9] For a defence of the ubiquity of legitimate backward explanations, see (Jenkins and Nolan 2011). For criticism of this defence, see (Byerly forthcoming a).

God's infallible forebelief that Joe mows. This first option for answering our explanation question, then, while independently attractive, cannot be offered by someone who wants to defend the idea that IDF poses a unique threat to human freedom.

There is a second option for answering our explanation question which is still somewhat independently attractive. On this option, Joe's mowing and God's forebelieving that Joe mows share a common explanation. What explains God's forebeliefs about Joe's mowing and what explains Joe's mowing is one and the same, though neither Joe's mowing nor God's forebelief explains the other. Apart from the first answer to our question above according to which Joe's mowing explains God's forebelief about his mowing, this way of pursuing this third strategy may be the most popular response to our question.

There are at least two ways of pursuing this answer to our question of which I am aware in the philosophical literature – a Molinist account of divine foreknowledge and a theological determinist account of divine foreknowledge.[10] After briefly characterizing these accounts here, I wish to show that if one answers the explanation question by appealing to one of them, then one cannot claim that IDF presents a unique challenge for human freedom. Indeed, more generally, on this second option, IDF will not make an essential contribution to an explanation for why what humans do is not up to them.

Begin with a brief characterization of Molinism. The key to Molinism is counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. These are subjunctive conditionals whose antecedents specify circumstances that God might bring about and whose consequents specify what creatures would freely do in these circumstances. Thus, these counterfactuals have the form < were C the case, then S would do A freely > where C is a circumstance, S is a creature, and A is an action.[11]

On a standard Molinist account, the law of conditional excluded middle holds: for every circumstance C, agent S and action A, either < were C the case, S would freely do A > or < were C the case, S would not freely do A > is true. Further, whichever of these conditionals is in fact true is eternally true such that long before S is ever born, this conditional

[10] For standard defences of Molinism, see (Flint 1998) and (Craig 1990). Standard defences of theological determinism are lacking in the philosophical literature; though, see (Wainwright 2001), (Rudder-Baker 2003), and (McCann 1995).

[11] For more details on what goes into these counterfactuals, see (Wierenga 2011).

is true. Thus, this conditional is something which is a possible object of knowledge even prior to creation, and the Molinist tells us that it is known by God.

God's knowledge of these conditionals is what allows God to have infallible foreknowledge of what creatures will freely do. For instance, for an agent S, God can know whether S will do A freely or will freely do something else by knowing all of the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom pertaining to S and by knowing which circumstances God himself wills to bring about. The explanation, then, for how God knows that Joe will mow at t_{100} has to do with the circumstances C that obtain up to the point of Joe's decision to mow together with the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom which report what Joe would do in these circumstances. God knows that Joe will mow, then, because God knows these subjunctive conditionals and because God knows what circumstances he himself wills to bring about.

But, on at least one version of Molinism, the explanation for why Joe mows at t_{100} is just the same as the explanation for how God knows that Joe will mow.[12] Joe mows at t_{100} *because* some subjunctive conditional of the form < were C the case, Joe would freely mow > is true and God has willed to bring about circumstance C. Thus, on this version of Molinism, the same facts that explain how God knows what his creatures will freely do explain why those creatures do what they do.

The theological determinist view of divine foreknowledge I have in mind says that creatures behave freely in the way they do because God has willed them to behave in this way, and his willing them to behave in this way causally brings it about that they behave in this way. In the same way, God knows what his creatures will freely do because he knows what he has willed for them to do, and he knows that what he wills them to do they will do. Thus, on this theological determinist view, God knows that Joe will mow at t_{100} for the same reason that Joe mows at t_{100} – because God has willed for Joe to mow at t_{100}.

Unfortunately, neither of these models for answering our explanation question will permit IDF itself to pose a unique threat to human freedom. For, on neither of these models does IDF make an essential contribution to an explanation of why human actions are not up to them. For each

[12] Though unpopular, a version of Molinism which might take this approach would be one which views the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom as brute facts. For discussion of this view, see (Adams 1977).

model, although there may be a threat posed to human freedom by the model, it is not a threat that depends in any way on the existence of IDF. Rather, the conditions required for the existence of IDF, and not IDF itself, are themselves what pose the unique threat to human freedom.

Take the Molinist model. If this model provides a unique explanation of why our actions are not up to us, it does so because the model requires the existence of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom together with divine willings – not because of IDF. If Joe's mowing is not up to him because of the conditions required for this model, for instance, this is because of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom reporting that he would mow under certain circumstances together with facts about divine willings. If these facts uniquely explain why Joe's mowing isn't up to him, they do so whether or not they lead to IDF. These facts would continue to explain why Joe's mowing wasn't up to him, for instance, even if God didn't hold any beliefs about Joe's mowing. So, on this Molinist model, IDF itself makes no essential contribution to an explanation for why Joe's mowing isn't up to him. And the same goes for the relationship between IDF and human actions more generally on this model. On this Molinist model, the existence of IDF does not make an essential contribution to an explanation for why our actions are not up to us. Its contribution is at best a non-essential by-product of such an explanation. So, this Molinist model will not permit IDF to pose a unique threat to human freedom.

Similar comments are in store for the theological determinist model. Here too, if there is a threat posed to human freedom by the model, it is a threat posed independently of the existence of IDF. For, if there is a threat posed to human freedom by this model, it is a threat posed by the relationship between human action and divine willings. On this model, what humans do they do as a result of God's willing them to do so. If this relationship between divine willings and human actions uniquely explains why human actions aren't up to humans, then it does so quite independently of whether IDF also exists. So, here too IDF cannot make an essential contribution to an explanation for why human actions are not up to us. And, so, IDF cannot here pose a unique threat to human freedom.

What goes for the Molinist and theological determinist iterations of this second strategy plausibly goes for other imaginable iterations as well. On any version of this second strategy, what explains the existence of IDF also explains what humans do. But, for any such strategy, that which explains what humans do could explain what they do without explaining

the existence of IDF. Thus, for any iteration of this second strategy, it will not be the case that IDF itself makes an essential contribution to an explanation for why what humans do is not up to them. If models which follow this second strategy do uniquely explain why what humans do isn't up to them, they will do so independently of the existence of IDF.

So much for the two answers to our explanation question which have some independent plausibility. The other two answers to this question, while they might allow for more hope concerning IDF posing a unique threat to human freedom, nonetheless suffer because they are independently implausible as answers to the explanation question.

Suppose, first, that one answers our explanation question by claiming that God's infallible forebelief explains why Joe mows. Joe mows at t_{100} because God believes at t_1 that Joe mows at t_{100}. This response to our explanation question has perhaps the best shot at permitting IDF to uniquely explain why human actions are not up to us. For, it has a good shot at permitting IDF to make an essential contribution to an explanation of why these actions aren't up to us – a contribution which isn't made without it. Unfortunately, this answer to our question about the explanatory relationship between God's forebelief and Joe's mowing has not been popular at all.[13] And, its unpopularity is for good reason. I will briefly discuss two problems for this account here which help to show why it is not an independently plausible response to our explanation question.

First, this account succumbs to a suspicious form of anti-realism. On this response to our explanation question, God's beliefs determine how reality is. For, presumably, it will not be just Joe's mowing that occurs because God believes it will occur, but *any* event is like this. For every event that occurs or doesn't occur in the history of the world, it occurs because God believed it would occur or it doesn't occur because God believed it wouldn't occur. This view is objectionable, however. For, it seems that, even if *per impossibile*, were God to have decided *not* to hold a belief about whether Joe will mow at t_{100}, Joe still would have either mowed or not mowed at t_{100}.[14] Insofar as the defender of the freedom-

[13] This is not to say, however, that it has not been endorsed by some. Aquinas appears to have thought that this answer got the explanatory order of divine beliefs and human acts correct, at least. See *Summa Theologica* I, Q.14.A8. Aquinas, of course, did not think that God's beliefs were in time. Thus, his view would escape the overdetermination problem highlighted in the text.

[14] I say 'even if *per impossibile*' because some, including myself, think that it is metaphysically impossible for God to fail to have a belief about whether Joe will mow.

foreknowledge argument finds this sort of anti-realism unattractive, as this author does, she will not want to advocate this answer to our question about the explanatory relationship between God's infallible forebelief and Joe's mowing. This answer to our question is independently implausible.

A second difficulty with this response to our explanation question has to do with its commitment to massive explanatory overdetermination. Joe mows at t_{100}, according to this response, because God believed *at* t_1 that he would mow at t_{100}. But, why is t_1 so important? Why not pick some other time at which God believed that Joe would mow at t_{100}? Why not, for that matter, pick t_{100} itself? Presumably, at t_{100}, God believes that Joe mows at t_{100}. Why think that it is God's beliefs at t_1 that explain why Joe mows and not God's beliefs at t_{100} instead? Of course, it could be that God's beliefs at *both* these times – indeed, at *all* of the times – explain why Joe mows. But, here again this answer to our question seems to have, if anything, gotten things backwards. Given this answer to our question, when we ask why Joe mowed at t_{100}, our answer will be that he mowed at t_{100} because of what God believed at t_1 and because of what God believed at t_2 and because of what God believed at t_3 and so on for every other time (perhaps including even the future times). But, this highlights a second unattractive feature of the present response to our explanation question. For this response unnecessarily adopts massive explanatory overdetermination. Joe's mowing at t_{100}, and any event at any time for that matter, will be massively explanatorily overdetermined by God's beliefs at every time. A response to our explanation question, like the first two responses we considered, which didn't require such massive explanatory overdetermination is far more independently attractive than this third answer.[15] Thus, despite its

They think that it is necessary that either Joe will mow or Joe will not mow, and that it is necessary that if Joe will mow God believed this and if Joe will not mow God believed that. If this is correct, then the conditional claim <were God to have decided not to hold a belief about whether Joe will mow, Joe still would have either mowed or not mowed> has an impossible antecedent. But, many, including myself, think that not all counterpossible claims like this are trivially true, though on some semantics for counterpossibles this is the case (see, e.g., (Lewis 1973)). Instead, we think that some counterpossibles are non-trivially true and some are false. The counterpossible claim in the text, I contend, is non-trivially true. Yet, given the response to our explanation question we are considering in the text, this conditional cannot be true. I take this as an objection to that answer to our explanation question. For more in defence of the non-trivial truth and falsity of counterpossible conditionals, see (Merricks 2003), (Berto 2009), and (Vander Laan 2004).

[15] That a view countenances massive and unnecessary explanatory overdetermination is commonly thought to be a significant reason for rejecting that view. For some

potential promise for defending the idea the IDF poses a unique threat to human freedom, the present response to our explanation question should be rejected as independently implausible in light of its commitments to anti-realism and unnecessary explanatory overdetermination.

There is one final available response to our explanation question: claim that there is simply *no* explanatory relationship at all between God's infallible forebelief that Joe will mow and Joe's mowing. God doesn't believe that Joe will mow because Joe will mow, nor will Joe mow because God believes Joe will mow, nor is there a common explanation for both God's belief and Joe's mowing. This answer to our explanation question, I submit, is woefully independently unattractive. It is woefully independently unattractive because it implies that something which should be explicable is inexplicable. For, what this response says about the relationship between God's infallible forebelief about Joe and Joe's mowing its advocates will also need to say about the relationship between any of God's infallible forebeliefs about what humans will do and what these humans will do. Thus, for any proposition p concerning what a human being will do, the advocate of this solution will say that God will believe p if and only if p is true, but there will be no explanation of why this is so. The correspondence between divine beliefs about what humans will do and what humans will do is left entirely unexplained. It simply happens to be that for every claim p about what a human will do, God believes p if and only if p is true. He doesn't believe it because it is true, nor is p true because he believes it, nor is there some common explanation for why both p is true and God believes p. It just happens to be that divine beliefs and human acts correspond. This commitment to the inexplicability of what cries out for explanation makes this final alternative woefully independently unattractive. There must be some kind of explanatory relation between IDF and what humans do. The only explanatory relationships there might be, however, have already been surveyed. And for each of these relationships, either the relationship proposed is independently unattractive or it will not permit IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom. Thus, I conclude that there is no independently attractive response to our explanation question which will permit IDF to uniquely threaten human freedom. Plausibly, then, IDF cannot uniquely threaten human freedom. Human freedom is not

representative samples of arguments which invoke explanatory overdetermination in this way, see (Merricks 2003), (Kim 2005), and (Korman 2011).

threatened by IDF itself; if it is incompatible with IDF, there must be some further explanation for this. In the next section, I briefly address this possibility.

III. FROM THE EXISTENCE OF IDF TO THE MECHANICS OF IDF

If the argument of the preceding section is sound, then the existence of IDF cannot uniquely threaten human freedom. This result would go some distance toward vindicating the intuition that some, like David Hunt, have had to the effect that mere IDF couldn't possibly on its own threaten freedom. As Hunt queries, 'How could a third-party's knowledge of my future action, just by itself (and without special assumptions about the conditions under which such knowledge is possible), have any effect at all on the action, let alone transform it to such an extent that it no longer qualifies as free?' (Hunt 1999: 20) If the argument of the preceding section is sound, then the answer to the query is of course that it cannot. The existence of IDF cannot uniquely threaten human freedom.

And yet this does not imply that IDF and human freedom are compatible. For, as the parenthetical remark in Hunt's query indicates, there is more to ask about than the simple existence of IDF. We must also ask about *how* IDF is achieved. We must ask about the *mechanics* of IDF; to use Hunt's idiom, we must ask about those 'conditions under which such knowledge is possible'. For, it may be that while the bare existence of IDF does not pose any unique threat to human freedom, the existence of IDF requires some conditions which do pose such a threat. If the argument of the previous section is sound, then the existence of IDF cannot uniquely explain why what humans do isn't up to them. But, human freedom could still be incompatible with IDF if the mechanics whereby IDF is achieved did uniquely explain why what humans do isn't up to them. Thus, while IDF itself might not uniquely threaten human freedom, the mechanics required for securing it might.

To see just how such a mechanics-based threat to freedom might come about, we should consider again the views which fell under the second response to our explanation question above. That response was to affirm that while neither God's infallible forebeliefs nor human actions explain the other, they share a common explanation. We considered two iterations of this response – a Molinist iteration and a theological determinist iteration. Consider here again the theological determinist iteration. On this view, God has infallible foreknowledge of what humans

do, and humans do what they do, because God wills for human beings to do certain things. Human acts are, on this view, causally determined by divine willings. Now, according to many – libertarians, chiefly – this sort of account of the mechanics of IDF provides a very plausible example where the mechanics required for IDF, but not IDF itself, uniquely threatens human freedom. Even on this theological determinist view, as we saw earlier, IDF itself cannot uniquely threaten human freedom. For, IDF won't make an essential contribution to an explanation for why what humans do isn't up to them. Yet, if the conditions required for the existence of IDF are the conditions specified by this theological determinist model, then it may well still be that IDF and human freedom are incompatible. For, it may be that the existence of IDF requires the existence of some conditions – here, infallible divine willings concerning creaturely acts – which themselves uniquely explain why what humans do isn't up to them. These conditions, and not IDF itself, make an essential contribution to an explanation for why our actions are not up to us. Thus, we have a plausible illustration of how the mechanics of IDF might uniquely threaten human freedom, even though the bare existence of IDF cannot.

The observation that the mechanics of IDF may uniquely threaten freedom even though IDF itself cannot tells us something important about a promising future direction for discussion of freedom and foreknowledge. For, surprisingly, the arguments most commonly forwarded to demonstrate the incompatibility of IDF and human freedom – arguments like that presented in section one – do not say a word about the mechanics of IDF. They attempt to show that IDF is incompatible with human freedom quite apart from any claims about the mechanics of IDF. Yet, if the argument of this paper is sound, this approach fails to capitalize on an important facet of what is most pressing concerning the relationship between IDF and human freedom. For, whether IDF is compatible with human freedom depends at least in significant part on the sort of mechanics required for the existence of IDF. As we have seen, IDF itself cannot uniquely threaten human freedom; but, the conditions required for the existence of IDF – the conditions which account for the mechanics of IDF – may indeed uniquely threaten human freedom. Thus, it would be profitable for future discussion of freedom and foreknowledge to focus squarely on this very issue. Instead of focusing on arguments which would attempt to establish the incompatibility of freedom and IDF independently of engaging the question of the mechanics of IDF,

philosophers of religion would be well-served to focus on an argument which might attempt to establish the incompatibility of IDF and human freedom by focusing on this very question about the mechanics of IDF.

One way to help focus discussion of freedom and foreknowledge on the mechanics of IDF would therefore be to provide an argument for the incompatibility of freedom and foreknowledge which would require the compatibilist about freedom and foreknowledge to pursue further work on the mechanics of IDF in order to adequately respond to it. In this vein, I propose the following dilemma (though of course I am not *defending* this dilemma here – I am simply offering it for the purpose of guiding future discussion of IDF and human freedom). Either the mechanics whereby IDF is supposed to be achieved is some mechanics for achieving foreknowledge with which human beings are familiar or it is not. If the mechanics whereby IDF is supposed to be achieved is a mechanics for achieving foreknowledge with which human beings are familiar, then this mechanics uniquely threatens human freedom. For, the only way of achieving foreknowledge – particularly, foreknowledge of distantly future events – with which we are familiar involves believing claims about the future on the basis of what is known about the past and laws of nature. And, if this is how IDF is achieved, then we will have a significant threat to human freedom because the mechanics required for IDF will require that human actions are causally determined.[16] If, however, the mechanics whereby IDF is supposed to be achieved is not a mechanics for securing foreknowledge with which humans are familiar, then we cannot be confident that it indeed makes possible IDF. For, we will not be in a position to judge whether it is a mechanics which can secure foreknowledge. Thus, either the mechanics whereby IDF is supposed to be achieved is one which uniquely threatens human freedom or it is not one which we can be confident makes possible IDF. Either way, we cannot be confident that IDF is compatible with human freedom.[17]

The argument challenges the compatibilist about freedom and foreknowledge to articulate and defend an account of the mechanics of IDF with two central features. First, the account must provide a mechanics for divine forebelief with which we humans are familiar enough to make an informed judgment about whether it can in fact secure

[16] At least, human actions will be the causal consequences of the past and laws of nature. It may be that these laws are indeterministic.

[17] For a related presentation of such an argument from the mechanics of foreknowledge, see (Byerly forthcoming b).

foreknowledge. Second, the conditions required by the account must not uniquely threaten human freedom. Articulating and defending such an account of the mechanics of IDF is extremely difficult, and very few have taken up the task.[18] Instead, what one typically finds compatibilists about freedom and foreknowledge doing is defending one or another response to arguments for the incompatibility of IDF and human freedom like the argument discussed in section one of this paper which don't require the compatibilist to say anything about the mechanics of IDF. As has been argued here, there is a more interesting and important challenge for the compatibilist to address. That is the challenge of providing a mechanics for divine foreknowledge with the features articulated here. My hope is that the argument for the incompatibility of freedom and foreknowledge articulated here could serve as a helpful starting point for this promising direction of future discussion in the freedom-foreknowledge debate.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this paper has been to argue that infallible divine foreknowledge cannot uniquely threaten human freedom. This is because infallible divine foreknowledge by itself cannot make an essential contribution to an explanation for why our actions are not up to us. Yet, this fact alone does not show that infallible divine foreknowledge and human freedom are compatible. For, it may be that the mechanics whereby infallible divine foreknowledge is achieved uniquely threatens human freedom. This paper has suggested that future discussion of freedom and foreknowledge focus on this latter issue, and has provided an argument which will help to lay a foundation for such discussion.

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[18] The primary attempt to do so is of course the Molinist attempt discussed earlier. This attempt, however, arguably fails. See, again, (Adams 1977).

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ON DETERMINING HOW IMPORTANT IT IS WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A GOD

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Abstract. Can the issue of how important it is whether or not there is a God be decided prior to deciding whether or not there is a God? In this paper, I explore some difficulties that stand in the way of answering this question in the affirmative and some of the implications of these difficulties for that part of the Philosophy of Religion which concerns itself with assessing arguments for and against the existence of God, the implications for how its importance may best be defended within secular academe.

The question that I am addressing in this paper is as follows: Can the issue of how important it is whether or not there is a God be decided prior to deciding whether or not there is a God? In answering this question, our first task must be to obtain clarity over what we mean by importance. A useful distinction to draw at the outset is one between impersonal importance and personal importance.[1]

Suppose, by way of an example, that we're considering how important it is whether or not a relatively small meteorite will hit and kill a given person in five minutes time; this person is in themselves entirely average, i.e. they are not some 'world-historical' individual. This issue has a certain level of importance from what we might roughly think of as 'the point of view of the universe', what I shall call 'impersonal importance'. It has it in virtue of its being the sort of issue that in itself affects the value of the world to a certain extent. If such a meteorite does hit, the world

[1] A couple of points by way of forearming the reader against misunderstanding: this is not going to be the distinction between what one might call 'objective' importance (where that is understood as a matter of really having importance) and subjective importance (where that is understood as a matter of appearing to have objective importance) and all cases of impersonal importance might necessarily be person-affecting.

will be a worse place than if it does not but the world is in all other respects the same. It may be that, in addition, the issue of whether or not such a meteorite will hit has what we might call by contrast 'personal importance' for all of us individually - through the principle that no man is an island, entire unto himself; every man's death diminishes every other. It probably has personal importance for the given person's family; and it certainly has personal importance for the given person (unless, perhaps, he or she is indifferent over whether or not he or she lives or is about to die anyway). Be all that as it may, whatever it is that gives this issue the level of impersonal importance that it has must surely give the following issue even more impersonal importance: the issue of whether or not a relatively large meteorite will in five minutes time hit the Earth and kill *all* its inhabitants. This issue certainly has personal importance for each of us (or at least each of us who isn't indifferent over whether or not he or she lives and isn't about to die anyway). If you are the given person who'd be hit by the first meteorite, then it's arguable that the first issue could have as much personal importance to you as the second. But even if it could in principle, it wouldn't in practice for most because most aren't that narrowly egoistic – we'd prefer to be hit by a meteorite that killed just us (leaving those others we care about alive), rather than be killed by a meteorite that simultaneously killed everyone else. But most of us probably would personally prefer a meteorite to kill several hundred people in a far off country of which we know nothing than for a smaller meteorite to kill us. We would prefer this whilst not being so deluded as to our own grandeur as to think that a small meteorite taking us out would leave the world impersonally a worse place than would the larger one taking out several hundred.[2]

Now obviously whether or not there is a God is an issue which is personally important through being personally interesting to some – professional philosophers of religion, in particular. But it's a fair assumption that the vast majority of those who take a great personal interest in the subject and thus generate for themselves its personal importance only do so because they think that it is impersonally important. And thus a discovery that it wasn't impersonally important would make it considerably less personally interesting to them. It

[2] Thus it is that Victorian Englishmen were in the habit of reading with a certain sort of detached excitement – 'Impersonally, this is going to be important; personally, it's not' – articles under newspaper headlines, characteristic of their time and place, such as the following: 'Earthquake Kills Thousands in China. No Englishmen Affected.'

wouldn't immediately make it less personally important to them, but it would with time make it so.

Consider, by way of illustration of all this, the philosopher who is the most personally important to me: me. I've devoted the majority of my working life to considering the issue of whether or not there's a God, but I've done so on the assumption that the issue of whether or not there is a God is a very impersonally important issue. There are other areas of Philosophy I could have specialised in and to which I could even now switch. If the issue of whether or not there's a God is – contrary to my working assumption – not impersonally important, then the fact that it's not impersonally important is very personally important to me. It means that I've spent my working life looking at an issue which is not impersonally important when that's precisely what I wanted *not* to do and when I could have spent my working life looking at an issue which *is* impersonally important. (This is assuming *some* issue in Philosophy is impersonally important; surely there must be one![3]) But of course the discovery that the issue of whether or not there is a God is not an impersonally important issue would, in relatively short order, cease to be of pressing personal importance, as I resultantly shifted my attention to other areas of Philosophy. 'Discovering the subject matter of my earlier work didn't have impersonal importance *was* very personally important to me', I would soon say, 'in that it redirected me to more impersonally important issues, those on which I now dwell. But that it didn't have impersonal importance isn't of continuing great personal importance; *that*'s not something on which I now dwell.'

So, the interpretation of the question which I'm addressing - 'Can the issue of how important it is whether or not there is a God be decided prior to deciding whether or not there is a God?' - on which we should focus takes the notion of importance in the impersonal way. Taking it in the personal way affords an answer which is too easy – 'Yes, of course; after all, it's just obvious that some people take a great personal interest in the issue, so great an interest that it must be accorded personal importance to them and it's obvious that some such people are theists whilst some are atheists.' It is too easy, but it is also an answer which reveals, on reflection, something cogent to the question as we should interpret it. Most of these people only take a personal interest in the issue (and thus generate this personal importance) because they suppose it to

[3] Though see last note.

have great impersonal importance. Thus, if we cannot settle the issue of how impersonally important it is whether or not there's a God in favour of its having great impersonal importance prior to settling the issue of whether or not there is a God, we cannot reasonably hope philosophers will personally interest themselves in the issue regardless of where they fall on the theist-agnostic-atheist spectrum. From henceforth then, when I speak simply of importance I shall mean impersonal importance.

The second task is to understand what it is that fixes the importance of an issue raised by a whether-or-not-hypothesis-A-obtains question. And it seems to me that the correct answer to this is one that pictures the importance of such an issue as a function of the extent to which and manner in which the world would be better or worse if the particular hypothesis under consideration were true relative to how it would be if the hypothesis were false. That is to say, it pictures the importance of the issue as fixed by the differences in value between possible worlds. This manner of thinking seems relatively non-problematic for everyday, contingent, issues. We might reconsider our two meteorites for an example. For another example, we could consider the following. We learn from the newspaper that ours is a world with a certain disease and we ask ourselves how important it is whether or not there's a cure for this disease. To find out the answer, we look into the nearest world in logical space in which there is a cure and see how much better that world is relative to the nearest world in which there's not. The better the first world is than the second, the more important is the issue of whether or not there's a cure. Thus I take it that we'll readily agree that the issue of whether or not there's a cure for a disease that affects relatively few and causes only minor skin blemishes in those whom it does affect is less important than the issue of whether or not there's a cure for cancer. Recently, Guy Kahane has addressed the issue of God's importance in just these terms, telling us that it 'turns on the comparative value of possible worlds; of worlds in which God exists ... and worlds in which He doesn't'.[4]

Now this immediately sounds more problematic than Kahane seems to allow with these comments.[5] Both theist and atheist will agree that God's existence is either necessary or it is impossible - the theist saying it's

[4] Guy Kahane, 'Should We Want God to Exist?', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Volume 82, Issue 3 (May 2011), 674-696.

[5] In fairness to him, it should be noted that he *does* discuss this issue elsewhere in this paper.

necessary; the atheist, it's impossible.[6] In either case, one of the required sets of comparator worlds is judged to be impossible, i.e. is judged not to exist anywhere in logical space. Thus theist and atheist alike should insist that no comparison of the sort necessary to judge the importance of the issue of whether or not the 'God hypothesis' is true can be made. It looks then as if *neither* theist *nor* atheist can say that the issue of whether or not there's a God is an important one as neither theist nor atheist can consistently think that much 'turns on' it, that the world would be a much better or a much worse place depending on whether or not there's a God. *Nobody* should think that whether or not there's a God is important. That would be, to me anyway, a surprising result and an implausible one; and, in a moment, I'm going to sketch a way in which one may avoid it. But, before I do so, it is worth pausing to note that even if we were to let this conclusion stand, its implications should not be overstated.

This conclusion is compatible with the theist consistently saying that the fact that there is a God is a very important fact. Indeed he or she can say that plausibly it is the most important fact in the actual (and every possible) world, in virtue of its bringing to the actual (and every possible) world various valuable properties. It's just the issue of *whether or not* there's a God that's not important; it's not important for the comparators necessary for fixing the importance of the 'whether or not issue' are not all available. Similarly, the atheist who accepts this conclusion may say, consistently with that acceptance, that the fact that there's not a God is a very important fact – though it's hard to see why he or she would say the most important fact – in the actual (and every possible) world. He or she can maintain this in virtue of maintaining that it brings to the actual (and every possible) world various valuable (or 'dis-valuable') properties. It's just the issue of *whether or not* there's a God that's not important, not important as again, he or she must say, the comparators necessary for this sort of issue to be important are not all available.

In other words, one could accept that the issue of whether or not there's a God is not an important one, yet still think that one (but only one) of the more 'partisan' sets of thoughts going on in seminaries and going on in atheist think-tanks and the like is non-problematically directed towards an important fact. And one could still think that the discipline of reflecting on the question of which of these sets is the one that's focused on something important can find a place in secular

[6] Of course there are honourable exceptions, but I ignore them in what follows.

academe, agreed across the theist/atheist divide on what one might call '*extrinsic*' grounds. In virtue of the extrinsic benefits of thinking about it, both theist and atheist could then agree that *thinking* about whether or not there's a God may be important without whether or not there is a God being important. But the conclusion that whether or not there's a God isn't important (and through its importance thereby worth thinking about 'intrinsically', as one might put it), even if it leaves all that in place, is still surprising. How best to resist it?

What seems to me the most promising way to seek space within which to say that the issue of whether or not there is a God is important is by taking a view of the modal landscape whereby one construes metaphysically possible worlds as a proper subset of the logically possible. On this view, worlds in which people use the sorts of time-machines that H.G. Wells introduced to science fiction, for example,[7] are logically possible, but they are not metaphysically possible. (Careful science-fiction writers can write consistent stories about such machines, but the fact that these stories can't be true is more than a contingency of the laws of nature.) So viewed then, when we enter in on the business of comparing the actual world with the closest possible world in which the claim that God exists has the opposite truth value, we should consider ourselves to be crossing the boundary between the metaphysically possible and the metaphysically impossible. But we can consider ourselves not yet thereby to have ventured outside the logically possible; there's still something to be doing the comparing with. How would this play out?

As a theist, I take it that in assessing in this manner how important it is whether or not God exists I must look to the closest world in which God does not exist, which is of course a long way out – past the last metaphysically possible world - and then judge of it whether it is significantly better or worse than the actual world. The border between those worlds which are metaphysically possible and those which are metaphysically impossible (whilst still being logically possible) is rather epistemically vague and, one must fear, arbitrarily drawn. If we put that batch of worries to one side for a moment and continue to have some confidence in our intuitions about what to say about happenings close to the border as responsive to the objective truth of what is happening there, we could see things in following fashion.

[7] Of course one doesn't have to think that this particular thing is an example, just that something is. Another plausible contender for an example would be an actually infinite past.

As a theist, it's most natural for me to say that in the closest world in which God doesn't exist, nothing else does either because it's a metaphysical necessity that there's a God and it's a metaphysical necessity that everything that's not God depends on God for its existence. So, get rid of the metaphysical necessity that there's a God (that's in itself taking me outside the metaphysically possible, of course), and I'm still left with the metaphysical necessity that anything that's non-God needs God if it's to exist. If so then, when I'm looking in logical space for the nearest world in which there's no God, the first one I'll come to is strict nothingness. Now, if I have the view that value depends for its existence on God, then I'll say that there won't be any value in this world either. It won't, for example, be bad of nothingness that it doesn't have any free creatures in it basking in the beatific vision. If I hold a person-affecting view of value, such that nothing can be good or bad unless there's someone for whom it's good or bad, then I'll again say that the world of nothingness won't have any value in it, for good or bad. But a theist who takes this view of the modal landscape; who holds one of the 'right' meta-ethical views (and there are several that would meet the bill here); and who has one of the right (and there are several again) first-order value judgements, e.g. that nothingness is worse than 'somethingness', can consistently think of the issue of whether or not there's a God as impersonally important.

And the atheist of course will be in a similar position. In order to make the comparison, he or she can adopt this view of the modal territory, locating the nearest world in which there's a God outside the realm of the metaphysically possible, but yet inside the realm of logical possibility. And he or she too can have one of the 'right' meta-ethical views and a suitable first-order value judgement. The worries we put on one side earlier, that the border is epistemically vague and our judgements about it somewhat arbitrary, are cogent. And we may add to them the more basic worry that these metaphysical; meta-ethical; and first-order evaluative views seem 'under-motivated'. But despite all that, this is, I think, the best way to preserve the intuition that whether or not there's a God is an impersonally important issue. Of course the views necessary to make it a way are - most of them anyway – the sorts of things that, if wrong, are wrong of necessity, and thus, if they are wrong, it isn't really a way, *a fortiori* it's not the best way; it's just epistemically a way to those who haven't yet seen that it's not. So, unless you share these views, you should *not*, for the sake of consistency, after all think that this *is* a way to make the issue of whether or not there's a God come out as impersonally important.

Before I close by recapping, I shall say a little bit about what motivated me to think about the problems there might be in determining the importance of the issue of whether or not there is a God prior to determining whether or not there is a God, i.e. what motivated me to ask the question that's been the focus of this paper: Can the issue of how important it is whether or not there is a God be decided prior to deciding whether or not there is a God? And I shall locate some of the implications of the answer that I have given to that question for the discipline of the Philosophy of Religion.

My desire when first thinking about these issues was to come up with an argument that would secure agreement across the theist/atheist divide about how important it is whether or not there's a God. Indeed, I wanted us to be able to reach this agreement and for the agreed verdict to be that the issue of whether or not there's a God is very important. That would have secured that part of the discipline of the Philosophy of Religion that looks at this issue within secular academe. I haven't got what I wanted. First, I established that the issue of whether or not there's a God is only really going to be taken as important by theists and atheists alike if it can be shown to them to be impersonally important. Personal importance (which is easier to establish) just won't do the job, long-term anyway. But, I argued, at least initially it seems that we cannot reach agreement on the issue's impersonal importance across the theist/atheist divide because neither theist nor atheist can come to any answer (unless the last way I sketched really is a way) as to how important it is. To decide that it's important whether or not A obtains, we have to find a significant value difference between worlds in which A is true and worlds in which not-A is true, which means we have to conceive of both A worlds and not-A worlds as possible. But theists will think of worlds in which there isn't a God as impossible and atheists will think of worlds in which there is a God as impossible. Neither theist nor atheist then can do the comparison between worlds in which there is a God and worlds in which there isn't, the comparison required of them if they're to judge that whether or not there's a God is an important issue. Nor of course can an agnostic, who'll say of the relevant worlds that whilst they're all epistemically possible to him or her, of course at least one set must really be impossible. As I went on to point out, the implications of this result should not be overstated. Accepting it is consistent with the theist maintaining that it is nevertheless absolutely valuable that there is a God. God's existence brings value, perhaps even all value, into

the actual world and all possible worlds. It's just that the theist cannot consistently say that it is 'relatively' good that God exists, in that it would have been worse if God hadn't existed. And similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, for the atheist. The implications of this result then, as I say, should not be overstated; and neither is it clear that we should accept the result.

The view that we can think of the metaphysically possible as a proper subset of the logically possible offers some hope (at least for those epistemically uncertain about its impossibility, if it is impossible) for an alternative answer. It allows both worlds in which there is a God and worlds in which there is not inside logical space and thus allows them to be compared. With this sort of understanding of the modal landscape, one can in principle make the sort of comparison that is a prerequisite to judging that the issue of whether or not there is a God is an impersonally important one. But one needs to adopt in addition other controversial views, about trans-world value, and the right sort of first-order evaluative view. All of this will seem to many 'under-motivated'. Of course, if one has as one's starting point the 'obvious' truth that whether or not there's a God is a very impersonally important issue, one can run this part of the argument in reverse precisely to motivate these views, concluding that the modal landscape and value is as it would need to be to make it come out true that whether or not there's a God is very impersonally important.[8]

So, in short, the answer to the question 'Can the issue of how important it is whether or not there is a God be decided prior to deciding whether or not there is a God?' is 'Yes' only on controversial assumptions and thus one cannot expect in fact to secure agreement on it amongst all theists, agnostics and atheists. One could perhaps hope to get more widespread agreement on another - closely related – issue and hope that agreement on this related issue would be enough to defend that part of the Philosophy of Religion which focuses on whether or not there's a God within secular academe. Even though it cannot be said (without relying on controversial assumptions) that the issue of whether or not there's a God is important, one might hope that it can be said (without such assumptions) that *thinking* about the issue is important: it's important to think about the issue of whether or not there's a God because thinking about it leads beyond it, to something of importance. One thing one might suppose theist and atheist can readily agree reflection on the issue

[8] Or one could use the argument to put pressure on my assumption that if God exists, His existence is necessary and if He does not exist, His non-existence is necessary.

of whether or not there's a God brings people closer to is knowledge of the truth-value of the proposition that there is a God. (Indeed what else could bring one closer to knowledge rather than just true belief?[9]) Thus they can perhaps agree that the Philosophy of Religion facilitates people (perhaps of necessity better than anything else?) in knowing something which they may also maintain is intrinsically worthy of being known. The theist will identify this as the fact that there's a God (or possibly even just identify it as God). The atheist will identify it as the fact that there's not a God. The necessary first-order value judgement – that it's impersonally important that people be brought to know this - seems to me easier for the theist than the atheist. Theists have better (and more universally believed to be so within their community) arguments for the claim that, given theism, it is impersonally important to know the fact that there's a God. They have better arguments than atheists have for the claim that, given atheism, the fact that there's not a God is one it's impersonally important to come to know. So there'll be trouble reaching consensus spanning the theist/atheist divide this way. But then there are other – less troublesome if more mundane - extrinsic benefits of thinking about the issue to which one can point. The Philosophy of Religion hones skills in analytical reasoning; it introduces students to important thinkers; and so forth. Be all that as it may, I confess to finding this way of proceeding somewhat depressing. In particular, I confess to having found the conclusion that writing this paper has driven me to – that it's not impersonally important whether or not there's a God unless various controversial theses are true - somewhat dispiriting; that's certainly not what I'd *hoped* to show.

I'd hoped to show that all theists and atheists alike, not just ones who were willing to grant various controversial assumptions, could consistently count the issue of whether or not there's a God as very impersonally important. Thus I'd hoped to show that we who engage in this area of the Philosophy of Religion have no need to enter into the tawdry business of 'selling' our discipline on account of the extrinsic benefits it brings. We wouldn't just be left with the activities of seminaries and the like on the one hand and atheist think-tanks and the like on the other, the enterprise of investigating whether or not there's a God being justifiable to the wider body of theists and atheists alike solely

[9] Of course controversial assumptions about the nature of knowledge are creeping in here, again making consensus unlikely.

through a consideration of what I've been calling its extrinsic benefits. But this hope has not been vindicated; it has been dashed. I have found what I have found and must reconcile myself to it. And I can do so – as yet only partially – by reflecting as follows. My hopes were based on a confusion (if my argument's right). The so-called 'world' in which it is important whether or not there's a God for theists and atheists alike without what are actually controversial assumptions needing to be true is an impossible world, logically so, i.e. is no world at all. My hoping that ours would turn out to be such a world was a bit like my hoping – as I did in fact hope when the conjecture was first put to me - that ours turns out to be a world where Goldbach's conjecture has a proof.[10] By my own logic, it can't then be impersonally important whether or not my hope is vindicated; and now I've made that discovery, it will become increasingly personally unimportant to me that my hope is dashed. Or at least that is what I must now hope.[11]

[10] I am assuming that Goldbach's conjecture has no proof.

[11] I am grateful to Brian Leftow, Guy Kahane, Klaas Kraay, and Richard Swinburne, for their comments on a draft of this paper and I am grateful to those attending the 'Ethics and the Challenge of Secularism' conference at Notre Dame for their comments on some of the ideas in it as I presented them there, particularly to the chairperson of my session, Robert Audi. All of these people have improved this paper in many ways. Obviously, many of the points made in this paper apply *mutatis mutandis* to other metaphysical theses, *viz.* all those which are held to be necessary.

A THEISTIC, UNIVERSE-BASED, THEODICY OF HUMAN SUFFERING AND IMMORAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract. In what follows I offer an explanation for the evils in our world that should be a live option for theists who accept middle knowledge. My explanation depends on the possibility of a Multiverse of radically different kinds of universes. Persons must pass through various universes, the sequence being chosen by God on an individual basis, until reaching God's goal for them. Our universe is depicted as governed much by chance, and I give a justification, in light of my thesis, for why God would have people pass through a universe of just such a sort.

Here I am going to present something between a defence and a standard theodicy to help explain human suffering and immoral behaviour. A defence is an argument purporting to show that it is logically possible for God to exist together with the evils of our world. A standard theodicy purports to provide a true explanation for why God allows the evils of our world. At its most successful, a theodicy will satisfy everyone, even atheists, who will then admit that if God exists, it is reasonable to think God would allow our world's evils. More limited success will come when a theodicy is only theistically reasonable, that is, is reasonable only on grounds taken from standard theistic traditions, together with what else compatible with that most people would find reasonable. Now, in what follows, my aim is not to present simply a logically possible scenario where God and our evils exists. So it is not a defence that I propose. Yet, what I present is not what an atheist is going to accept, nor even what is grounded solely in standard theistic ideas together with what most people find reasonable. So what I am presenting is not a standard theodicy, not even a theistically reasonable one. Yet, it is something close to a theistically reasonable theodicy. That is because my theodicy

uses some standard theistic ideas, and other ideas which I urge as a live possibility from a theistic point of view. A 'live possibility' is one whose truth is attractive to a theist, even if not included in standard theism. This will include attractiveness due to being an extension or further development of extant theistic ideas, and due to ideas consistent with theism that will be attractive to the theist because they help solve the problem of evil and are not implausible on theistic grounds. I will consider my theodicy successful to the extent theists will agree that it is a live possibility for why God would allow at least much of the world's evils, and thus help remove the sting from the problem of evil.

At the start, my theodicy is limited in its attractiveness to those for whom it is a live option that God has what is called 'middle knowledge'.[1] God having this knowledge means that God knows not only what will happen, but also knows for every possible person that God could create, what that person would do of his own free will in each situation were God to create him. So God knows that if God creates Pharaoh, that when faced, in specific circumstances, with the choice whether to free the Israelites, whether Pharaoh will freely choose to free them. On the basis of such knowledge, God can decide who God wants to create and not create, depending on whether the free actions they undertake if created are what God wants to exist. In what follows I assume God has middle knowledge, a common theistic belief.

Psalms 97:2 tells us that God is surrounded by 'clouds and thick darkness'. The same verse informs us that, 'righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne'. So even though we face God within a dark cloud of unknowing, we theists know or believe that God is supremely good – righteous and just. God's 'goodness' includes that (a) God radiates all and only goodness to others, to the extent of God's capability, which is considerable, and (b) God does so only for the sake of others, nothing for God's own sake. So, God creates, in an act of goodness pouring out of God to that which is other than God, for the sake of others.

The greatest possible good God can do is arrange it so that creatures freely become good, like God is. Becoming good like God has supreme intrinsic value, and has extrinsic value in bringing creatures close to God. Being good, as God is, is to be close to God. So that is what God

[1] For defences of middle knowledge see Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), and Eef Dekker, *Middle Knowledge* (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2000).

wants, and does. Of course, goodness in the created order is finite as opposed to God's infinite goodness. So in that respect no created being can be good quite like God. Also, being a creature entails having minimal creature-needs that must be satisfied in order to become and continue to be good. So in that respect as well no created being can be good like God. To be good like God in my sense, then, will be to radiate all and only goodness to others, doing so only for the sake of others, nothing for one's own sake, to the extent possible within one's creaturely status and individual capacity. One who does good to others for the pride of being good is not like God. Also, one who is good in order to enjoy – for his own sake - the divine beatitude everlasting, will not be like God. To be like God one must be and do good for the sake of others, not for one's own sake. This includes wanting to be like God not for one's own sake, but for God's sake, that is, because that is what God wants you to be. If one (ostensibly) wants to be like God for one's own sake, then one falls short of wanting to be like God. That is because there is nothing God wants for God's own sake.

Now, God might be able to create some creatures that from the very first moment are like God, in my sense. Various religions claim to have sited such creatures among us. However, God creates others as well, those who God knows will be close to God only through a process of becoming close to God. God does so because God is good and wishes to confer this good on as many creatures as possible.

There are constraints on which creatures God can create so that they will come close to God. Let us call 'persons' those creatures who have the capacity to come close to God. These include human persons. Of these, God instantiates a maximal set of possible persons of which God knows that if God creates them they will fulfil God's goal of becoming close to God, with God providing environments and the degree of divine assistance that God knows will lead to success. (Here God uses middle knowledge.) If there is no one such maximal set, God selects one set of such persons to instantiate.

Secondly, recall that in my sense a 'person' is a creature who has the capacity to come close to God by becoming good, like God. However, God will not create just any maximal co-possible set of persons. God will create persons God knows will become like God only when the process of their becoming like God will be morally justified, in terms of the cost/benefit of good and bad. God, then, creates only persons that fulfil these requirements, to increase the good of creation as far as

possible. Universal salvation of persons is the worthy goal for God to have in becoming a creator, and God guarantees this from the start while honouring creaturely freedom, consistent with behind the scenes divine assistance. By selecting whom he creates, God guarantees the outcome.

In creating persons who must undergo a process of growth to become like God, God gains an extra value over creating only persons it is possible to create ready-made good like God. There are two kinds of values in the existence of goodness. One is the value of having goodness. The second is the value of obtaining goodness.[2] Overcoming a lack of goodness is itself a value, in addition to the resultant good. When a person cannot walk because of injury and she, her family, and her medical caretakers persevere until she walks, the resultant good is twofold: the good of now being able to walk, and the good of having achieved the ability to walk, to have overcome adversity and discouragement. Developing a good character possesses value above the value of having a good character from the start. So when God creates persons who must develop into being close to God, God gains the value of one's becoming like God, in addition to the goodness of being like God. God will do this in the best cost/benefit way possible for each person. The value of becoming close to God is so great that it will massively trump the amount of evil God will allow for the process of each person becoming like God to succeed.

The universe we inhabit seems to present a story very much at odds with the idea that every creature that God creates who can be like God eventually becomes like God, a source of goodness and goodness only. There are children who die young, never having had a chance to develop beyond their first years. There are people who suffer lives of pain and suffering, their consciousness so filled with adversity that no room remains to even think about much else. There are people who are crushed by life, dying in sadness and defeat. Then there are those whose entire life is a grasping for self-advantage and self-survival. There are those who predicate their lives on harming other people in criminal and immoral behaviour; and those who have been so wronged and so hurt by life that hate and fear are their motto. Finally, there is the great bulk of humankind who seem to achieve some degree of goodness in their lives but who we cannot by any means think of as having become like God. Our universe seems pretty clearly to defeat my theodicy.

[2] This is a basic tenet of panentheism, where both the achievement of value as well as original value are assigned to God. However, this principle applies equally to theism.

That might be the case were we to suppose that our universe is the only one God creates. Yet, there is no good a priori reason for a theist to assume this. This is a narrowness of vision. God's creative abilities are vast. Accordingly, my theodicy posits a plurality of universes, universes with diverse laws and substances, some with make-ups and structures beyond our imagination. This posit gains support from recent scientific advances that have led some to posit the existence of a 'multiverse', parallel universes independent from one another, diverse in ways I have indicated.[3] My theodicy posits the existence of a multiverse as what would be in keeping with God's unlimited creative capacities and God's infinite goodness.

Save for the rare few, persons must occupy a variety of universes in succession. God has designed these universes just so, and places persons in those universes just so, so as to further God's goal of bringing persons to their ultimate goodness and closeness to God. Persons progress toward God's goal by passing from universe to universe. A person does not have to pass through every universe, and any two people need not go through the same universes. All depends on which types of universes they need to go through to in the end emerge being like God. There will be persons who will never appear in our present universe, their trajectory going through other universes. Persons who do exist in our universe might appear here more than once. Some might appear in one universe, then in another, and then return back to the first. You and I might cross each other at one universe in our journey toward being like God. Otherwise we might occupy different universes.

So our universe is only one of a multiplicity of universes, a possibly immense number of universes, available for persons to inhabit. These universes can be different from one another in their laws, material, composition, and in the kinds of persons they have in them. There can be universes with very few people, or even with only one, solitary person. Universes provide the transition conditions, natural and social, necessary for all persons who are to become like God.

Here I must mention two dimensions of human goodness to be achieved. The first is the goodness a person has as an individual toward others. You ask me to help you apply a bandage to a cut in your arm, and I do so. The second is the goodness displayed by a person-inhabited

[3] On the evidence for a multiverse, see: Max Tegmark, 'Parallel Universes', Scientific American, May 2003.

society in its structure and functioning, the result of a cumulative and cooperative effort by individuals. We, as a society, make hospitals to treat people when they get severe cuts in their arms. God has created us as social-political beings so as to increase the kinds of goodness that will result from our being like God. As a result, there are further determinants of what universes a person can inhabit. That is because the goodness that must come forth from a person must also be expressed in the creation and functioning of worthy societal structures. Hence, souls must be selected for universes so as to progress in them in tandem in creating societal goodness. God, in His great wisdom, knows how to choreograph the whole to achieve a God-worthy degree of goodness in the end. For each person the goal is to become like God both in her life as an individual and in her role in a God-reflecting society.[4]

For that reason the end-point of universes cannot be isolated individuals who become like God in emptying out self-concern and replacing it with concern for others. The end-point must include persons in an overarching social-structure to which they all contribute and which is a supreme expression of their goodness. These 'final' universes (no reason to suppose only one) are collectively the 'Messianic Age', where all persons will abide in a Messianic canopy of societal perfection - as much as is possible for created beings - in close companionship with God.[5] The Messianic Age will be of such value that all the journeys of all the people through the universes, to come to that point, will be understood for what they were and will be appreciated for their having been worth the effort. In the end God will cure all the morally and spiritually sick, will ultimately free all who are morally and spiritually imprisoned, and will keep faith with those, morally and spiritually, asleep in the earth.[6]

[4] A Jewish kabbalist might add that God has created us as social beings so that ultimately we can imitate the goodness reflected by the supreme unity and harmony in the supernal divine realm. A Social Trinitarian might want to say that God has created creatures as social beings as a necessary condition of their becoming like God. Since God, in the Trinity, participates as a constituent in a supremely good society, so persons must come to constitute a supremely good society, if they are to be like God.

[5] The term, 'Messianic Age', I borrow from Jewish tradition, where it refers to a future time in our universe. The vision of the tradition was limited to only this universe, hence the place of ultimate redemption was necessarily limited as well. I take my multiverse version of the Messianic Age to be an application of the insight of tradition to a wider vision than possible long ago.

[6] This is a paraphrase from the traditional Jewish prayer book.

The diversity of universes means that (as it were) 'all the time' parallel universes are going on in serving parallel tracks for successive universe-progressions for individuals. Two persons can occupy the same universe while being at different stages in their careers of developing likeness to God. And two persons can be at the same stage of development towards God yet be in different universes. God the creator and redeemer knows which universe suits each person in their journey to God and places them accordingly.

Personal identity is consistent with variations in the degree to which a person is self-centred or other-centred. It is the same person who was a self-centred sinner in the past and who now is a true repentant, dedicated to the good of others. This is an axiom of multiple universe progressions to God. It follows that God (for almost all persons) can choose to create a person initially, in her very first universe, at various places on the continuum of self-centredness or other-centredness which preserve her self-identity.

God must create a person at a level from which she will succeed eventually to reach the goal of becoming like God. Some persons might be such that if God creates them with a high degree of self-centredness, say, they will not reach the goal freely, even with some assistance from God. So God must create each person from the start at a level from which they will eventually turn out to be close to God. Furthermore, God will want to create a person at the minimum success-promising level for that person that God can, so as to increase as much as possible the value of becoming like God. This level is not necessarily the same as the minimum level from which a person, when initially created, will reach success. That is because God might not be able to implement that level. And the reason for that would be that starting from that level the process of becoming close to God will not produce a good/bad cost-benefit that God can allow. So, the entry level for each created person will be the minimum possible level insuring success that at the same yields a trajectory of becoming like God properly proportioned between good and bad.

I have been carrying on about a person existing in successive universes until reaching the end-point of becoming like God. What sense can be given to sameness of individual identity through these universes?

To pin down individual identity through universes we should think of living through a universe as something like being totally absorbed in a film. While absorbed in a film, I can become bereft of all memories of

the past, with no or only the barest self-consciousness. My consciousness is full of what transpires at the present time. When coming out of the total absorption in the film I again connect with my memories. I remember having come to the cinema, starting to watch the film, etc., and know it was I who was totally absorbed in the film and who then came out of it to be here this very moment. My individual identity runs through from beginning to end. Just so, when we are living in a universe, we might be totally absorbed in living in that universe. We might not be aware of any self-identity outside of our existence in that particular universe. (On the other hand, there might be universes where our memories of prior universes are quite alive, or dim, these enough to insure a self-identity consciousness throughout.)

Concentrating on those universes where a person has no memory of other universes she has inhabited, personal identity across universes can be secured in various ways. Here is an example. When one dies, or otherwise exits a universe (we should not assume that death is universal in alternative universes), one undergoes a transfer to outside of that universe. At that point, one has an immediate memory of life in the universe one has left and of all previous universes one has inhabited. The extent of the memory will depend on how much has to be remembered to fill God's purposes. One knows previous lives as her life, thus able to integrate the latest universe into her accumulated trans-universe memories. A person is now able to look back on that life and draw lessons from it for the future. God has created only people who will in fact draw conclusions from the way life was back then. Taking it all to heart, the person is now placed in another universe with a personality consequently different from that of the previous universe to the extent of having been able to learn from the past lives as remembered. One might start out in a new universe closer to God than before or it might take several universes for a person to start to become closer to God.

On my theodicy, one does not go from one universe to the next as a result of having 'failed' in the previous universe. One does not continue to go from universe to universe as a result of having been unsuccessful in extricating oneself from the chain of universes. And one does not get off the universe-chain by extinguishing of self. One goes from universe to universe in an educational process that has not yet fulfilled itself. At the end the educational process is complete. The chain of universes is not an evil, but a good that God has created for our benefit. And we need not think of there being a fantastic number of successive universes each

person must inhabit in order to become redeemed from self-centredness. We can be assured that God would not allow more suffering than necessary. The number of universes a given person must live through might be quite small in number.

God, Ruler of the universes, gives life to the dead. God, Ruler of the universes, brings death (or its equivalent), the condition of our entering into new universes in which we will come yet closer to God. We are to praise God for death for its being the condition for the following life.

My theodicy leaves open whether religious doctrines about historical events in our universe are to be confined to our universe or are valid in other universes as well, or whether such events are instantiations of metaphysical principles enjoying different instantiations elsewhere. The application of my theodicy to Judaism need not assume that something equivalent to the Jewish people and the Torah exist in more than our universe. A Christian might want the Word to be a trans-universe reality. But she better be cautious about claiming that the Word becomes exactly 'flesh' in every universe, rather than some other material of which persons can be made. For that matter, in some universes the Word might instantiate simply as a spiritual being in fellowship with other spirits. Becoming 'one of us' could amount to something very different in universes other than ours.

In light of the above, how are we to understand the nature and purpose of our present universe in the scheme of things? How does my multiverse theodicy scale-down to a theodicy of this universe in particular?

A theodicy can be either event-based or universe-based, or a combination of both. An event-based theodicy for a universe, U, offers a justification for evil in U that applies to the specific evils in U. For example, one might propose an event-based theodicy in which everything bad that happens in our universe is punishment for a sin committed in this universe or in previous universes. Or, one might propose that all the natural evil in Universe #8 is due to the free-willed rebellion of angels. In a universe-based theodicy for U, in contrast, one would explain why God is justified in creating U, by reference to global features of U, without giving specific justifications for the specific evils in U.

My theodicy for our universe is universe-based, giving a live possibility of what justifies God in having created a universe like ours.[7] Our universe

[7] In this I follow a similar tack taken by Van Inwagen when he writes: 'Do not attempt any solution to this problem [of evil] that entails that every particular evil has a purpose,

appears to be one in which persons and societies are subject to much chance, and are affected by impersonal forces taking no account of merit and demerit. There seems to be little ratio between being a victim and the degree to which the victim deserves such treatment. The fate of so many people seems to depend on the whims of other people, or haphazard occurrences in nature with no apparent logic to the results.

One could reply that this is all mere appearance, while the truth lies on the side of believing that every evil event in our universe is just and proper for reasons one would be prepared to venture in a theodicy. My universe-based theodicy does not go that way. Instead it acknowledges the possibility that chance does reign in our universe to a notable degree, while being consistent with higher-order divine teleology. Accordingly, I offer a reason why God would create a universe like ours, one 'governed' so much by chance.

Interestingly, several Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages thought of our world as heavily 'governed' by chance. In The Guide of the Perplexed Maimonides wrote:

> I do not by any means believe that this particular leaf has fallen because of a providence watching over it; nor that this spider has devoured this fly because God has now decreed and willed something concerning individuals. ... For all of this is in my opinion due to pure chance.[8]

And:

> Divine providence for human beings is graded according to the degree of human perfection: Accordingly divine providence does not watch in an equal manner over all the individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded. ... As for the ignorant and disobedient, their state is despicable ... and they have been relegated to the rank of the individuals of all other species of animals.[9]

Nachmanides (1194-1270) took an even more restrictive view of divine providence, restricting it to the 'saintly' only:

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or that, with respect to every individual misfortune...God has some special reason for allowing it.' See Peter Van Inwagen, 'The Place of Chance in a World Sustained by God', in Van Inwagen, God, Knowledge & Mystery: Essays in Philosophical Theology (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 42-66 (p. 65). See also my, 'God and Chance', in Joseph Seckbach, ed. Divine Action and Natural Selection (NY: Springer Publishing, 2008), pp. 449-462.

[8] Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, translated by Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), p. 471.

[9] Maimonides, *Guide*, p. 475.

> God's knowledge, which is His Providence in the lowly world, pertains to the preservation of species. And also human beings are given over in [the world] to chance, until their time of judgment. However, to His saintly ones He gives attention to know him as an individual, to have His protection cling to him always.[10]

Similarly, Bahya ben Asher (13th century) writes that:

> The providence to save one from chance events does not exist for all humans, even in Israel, except for the saintly among them, whom God saves from chance events, to which other people are given over.[11]

Similarly, my theodicy asserts the prevalence of chance in our universe.

So here is a description from the point of view of my universe-based justification of evil for the sector of our universe we know, earth. If persons exist elsewhere in this universe, matters might be different. On earth, persons are to a strong degree driven by self-centred needs. Persons here are the result of a long evolutionary process the key to which is survival and reproduction. Persons have central, strong drives connected to these which also lead to secondary drives for security, self-importance, status, livelihood, identity with one's family, city, country, and the like. While the degree of self-centredness lies on a continuum, the continuum is bottom heavy. Our evolutionary past has also endowed us with some reciprocal altruism interspersed with our 'selfish genes'. Yet, scattered throughout the earth (past, present, and future) are persons of high other-centred characters who float far above the sea below that extends from self-survival to self-indulgence. In addition, other persons often are able to act with a degree of genuine altruism, generally far outmatched by their self-absorption.

Self-centredness on earth is the cause of suffering in two ways. Persons cause suffering to others because of (what they take to be) their own self-interest. Thoughtlessness, indifference, jealousy, cruelty, anger, and violence are symptoms of a self-regard that acts without adequate concern for others. Wars and social upheavals are the same on a large-scale. Economic and political institutions, even when designed not to, inflict great sorrow and unhappiness, not to speak of abuses of economic and political power, as further consequences of self-absorption. Other

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[10] Moses Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1994/5), on Genesis 18:19. (My translation.)

[11] Bahya bar Asher, *Midrash Rabbi Bahya on the Five Books of the Torah* (Israel: np. n.d.), on Genesis 18:19. (My translation and my emphasis.)

persons and social structures surround persons that hurt them in a variety of ways or do not sufficiently protect them from suffering, largely because of the self-centred thrust of society. Nationalism, an extension of self-centredness, makes for wars and misery. For too many people on earth, 'Hell is other people'.

Because God has created us we know that such immoral behaviour can be overcome, to the extent possible for created beings, and to an extent God deems worthwhile.

The second way self-centredness causes suffering is in the manner in which persons experience life. Ordinarily, we react to events from a perspective of self-absorption. When things do not go their way, humans will react in disappointment, sadness, or defeat. When experiencing pain, humans will respond by wanting only to escape the pain – often futilely. They will suffer from pain. The phenomenology of pain is distinct from that of suffering, the latter an overlay on the former. Yet, we standardly will take pain in as suffering. Suffering is a sign of one experiencing pain from the perspective of self-absorption.

Sickness, floods, storms, earthquakes, and all the rest, can bring chaos to human lives, and are experienced almost exclusively in suffering and defeat. Human reactions to adversity, in principle, could be very different from what they are in fact. Yet, we are not generally capable of different reactions because of the level we are at in our self-absorption in this world.

Now, I am not intending to advocate looking with indifference on human suffering, nor am I about to suggest blaming people for the way they react to occurrences in their life. Suffering is real and we must do all we can to alleviate it. I have argued elsewhere that there being a divine justification for evil is perfectly consistent with a human obligation to eliminate suffering.[12] Here, I remind the reader that the whole point of a person being placed in our world is to advance in the transformation to being other-directed, rather than self-absorbed. Persons who inhabit this world of ours are the way they need to be at this station of their trans-universe journey to pure altruistic goodness.

Examples of a different way of reacting to pain are sprinkled throughout earth's history. Prime examples are religious martyrs. The Jerusalem Talmud (Berachot, 14b) tells the story of first century Rabbi Akiva, who was being tortured to death by the Roman Officer Rufus.

[12] See, Jerome Gellman, 'On God, Suffering, and Theodical Individualism', European Journal of Philosophy of Religion, 1 (2010), 187-191.

The latter saw that Rabbi Akiva was reciting the Shema prayer, a prayer saying we must love God with all our soul, while he was oblivious to the pain. Rufus thought Rabbi Akiva a magician who could nullify pain, or thought that he was simply immune to pain. But what Rabbi Akiva had achieved was immunity to reacting to pain in the usual way. He had conquered his self-absorbed response to pain, to offer his life to God at that very moment. Rabbi Akiva was in pain, but he did not suffer. Whether the story is true or only a legend is not the point. The point is that the Talmud holds up this story as an ideal in response to pain, an ideal, to be sure, not of this world, but an intimation of worlds to come.

Early Christian martyrs displayed victory over self-absorbed reactions to pain. Cast to wild animals, put on the rack, burned alive, roasted, beheaded, or stoned, they chose severe torture and death rather than denounce their Christian faith. Later, some Jews were to display similar religious loyalty facing the Catholic Inquisition. Famously, Zen Buddhists have cultivated an absolute indifference in the face of death. The Zen Master Bokoju, so it is told, stood on his head to await death, wanting to turn his death into an amusing, novel event in human history.

We do not have to go so far away in history or from our everyday experience for paradigm examples of experiencing pain without suffering. When a woman gives birth to a child she might have much pain. However, normally she would not say she had suffered when in labour. The immediate self-absorption of suffering will have been replaced utterly by what is only an enduring of pain, or even perhaps a joy in the pain, for a purpose beyond the woman's present self-concern.[13]

In all these cases, humans overcome the category of suffering when enduring pain. So, in principle, to the extent possible for created beings, human suffering would be overcome were we to be less self-absorbed than we are. However, generally we are not capable of standing on our heads to turn things around. In this universe, except for those souls far ahead of the rest of us, spread here and there, we might be a mixture of first time stream-enterers and others not too far ahead of those.

On earth, we learn what it is like to live dominated by chance, while being equipped with a robust quantity of self-concern and self-indulgence. We come to know what it is to experience pain as suffering. We become acquainted up close with how it is to respond to events as

[13] I thank David Shatz for this example, which he attributes to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.

disappointments, and causes of paralyzing sadness. We understand what it is to be driven by an inborn need to survive and reproduce. And we know all too well the anxiety, fear, and anger when we feel that these are threatened, either realistically or potentially. Many of us discover what it is to experience an entire life in defeat.

Our lives include visibly immoral persons on their own trek to God, who image for us the horror of immorality we are able to detect in others more easily than in ourselves. From them too we learn the price of severe self-absorption. They too have what to learn from their own self-absorption. These others, alas, might be me.

Yet, we also experience intimations of a different way, which turns aside from egotism. Reciprocal altruism (although not genuine altruism, which is for the sake of others) opens a window onto genuine love of others. Also, God provides human models of true altruism so that the rest of us can witness what God desires for us. Genuine love of mothers and fathers for their children models for us both the love of God for us and the love we are destined to have for God and for all others. Many of us manage at times to rise above the mundane to perform acts of true altruism, acts that hold a mirror before us of what we will be like in a future life.

Our life on earth is one, perhaps among many, in which we are shown the consequences of self-absorption and the ideal of self-giving. It is one in a series of universes from which, looking back at it from the vantage point of what follows, a person gains an appreciation of quite to what extent his suffering is in his hands, both as perpetrator and object of evil. With new understanding as the starting point, one continues on to the next universe-station, where one might be inclined to do more good and less evil, and where natural evils will be less numerous and less severe, to the degree one has learned his lesson in previous universes. Some universes along the way will be over-brimming with goodness and closeness to God, with only small amounts of evil. Such universes will be so in part because of their inhabitants having gained from living in earlier universes. The amount of good and freedom from suffering that accumulates at an accelerated rate through the universes we occupy, together with the rich goodness of the future Messianic Age universes, justifies the journey in the best way possible.

My theodicy does not explain animal suffering. One possibility would be to maintain that animals have human souls and so their suffering assimilates to the suffering of persons. It is most strange, though, to

imagine an animal with a human soul. However, there is a way around this strangeness, and that is to say that souls that humans possess are not human in essence, only human in accident. Think of souls as generic, neither human nor animal in themselves, that can inhabit, indifferently, human beings, animals, or whatever bizarre forms exist for them to inhabit in other universes. Then for an animal to have a human soul would mean for it to have a soul the likes of which humans also have. Run through my earlier script for personal identity and think of animals – generally – as having yet a fuller dose of self-absorption than do human beings. The result: a theodicy for animal suffering.

A more radical solution for animal suffering would be to relinquish the ontology of discrete individuals altogether, in favour of a 'broad-soul' ontology. A 'broad-soul' would be a unitary entity that can have – temporarily - a divided consciousness. While consciously separated experiences are of the one broad-soul, the latter integrates all of them only later when a unified consciousness returns to absorb them all. This would be kind of like disconnected right and left lobes of the brain with resulting parallel consciousness. What we take to be ontologically separate human souls would be phases of broad-souls, or even of a single broad-soul. Then, we not need think of animals as suffering pain qua isolated consciousnesses, but as segments of broad-soul experiences. Animal consciousness would be phases of broad-souls, and even of a single broad-soul. Everything I have written as a theodicy for discrete persons can be transferred mutatis mutandis to broad-souls without loss. Broad-souls are persons, in my sense. It might be that our attachment to an ontology of thin-souled individuals has no more to ground it than an attachment to a sense of our own separate self, due to a dominance of 'self'-absorption, an illusionary part of this universe of ours (and of others as well, most likely).

For me, a remaining question for my theodicy of evil is Hitler, and the human demons of history like him. On the one hand, as emotionally difficult as it might be to acknowledge, the horrendous evil Hitler caused could be incorporated into an ongoing story of multiple universes and of each person coming to God within societies of supreme goodness in many universes, after utter adversity and brutal suffering in this universe. You would have to believe that the process, and the totality of good in all the universes, and the end-points, being the Messianic Universes containing each person's redemptive attachment to God, are of such supreme value as to justify the multiverse God has created. This

should be an acceptable theistic position. Still, a problem with Hitler is my difficulty in entertaining the idea that there exists a Messianic Universe in which one such as Hitler is fully redeemed. To deny this would violate my principle of universal redemption of persons, that God creates only persons who will become good like God. I admit, though, that my difficulty imagining this might stem from my particular level of egocentric existence in this life, and that in another life I might learn to love advanced versions of those who have harmed so many in such gruesome a fashion in this life. Another possibility for me would be to declare that although Hitler is human, Hitler was not a person. Recall that in my sense a 'person' is a creature who has the capacity to come close to God by becoming good, like God. If Hitler was not a person, then God would have created him for reasons other than for Hitler's ultimate redemption. Then Hitler would play a role in God's scheme like that of natural disasters.

Does a cloud of parallel universes and does a population of universe-hopping persons exist? Are there really Messianic Ages in universes to come? I do not know. I do propose that it would be fitting and proper for God, of perfect goodness, perfect knowledge, including middle knowledge, and perfect power, to create them. Hence, a theistic, universe-based theodicy.[14]

[14] I am greatly indebted to David Shatz for his excellent suggestions on how to improve this paper.

HEDENIUS' SOTERIOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FROM EVIL

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Abstract: In this paper I explicate and assess a logical argument from evil put forth by the Swedish analytic philosopher Ingemar Hedenius in his book *Tro och vetande* (Eng. *Faith and Knowledge*) (1949), by far the most famous and influential critique of Christianity in Swedish intellectual history. I seek to show that Hedenius' argument is significantly different from, and indeed stronger than, the paradigmatic logical argument from evil in the analytic tradition, i.e. that of John Mackie (1955). Nevertheless, Hedenius' argument is, I argue, ultimately unconvincing.

This paper has three parts. In the first part I offer an explication of a logical argument from evil put forth by the Swedish analytic philosopher Ingemar Hedenius[1] in his book *Tro och vetande* (Eng. *Faith and Knowledge*) (1949), by far the most famous and influential critique of Christianity in Swedish intellectual history.[2] In the second part I compare Hedenius' argument with the paradigmatic logical argument from evil in the analytic tradition, namely that of John Mackie (1955),

[1] Hedenius (1908-1982) was Professor of Practical Philosophy at Uppsala University in 1947–1973, and one of the most influential Swedish intellectuals of his time. He was strongly influenced by David Hume, and wrote numerous philosophy books and papers in Swedish, and a few also in English, e.g. *Sensationalism and Theology in Berkeley's Philosophy* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1936) and *Studies in Hume's Ethics* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1937).

[2] To this day Hedenius is viewed by Swedish intellectuals as the chief 'prophet' of Swedish secularism; see e.g. P.C. Jersild, 'Bör man skilja på tro och vetande?', *Dagens Nyheter* (Nov. 9, 2002), Hans Ruin, 'Ingemar Hedenius: "Tro och vetande"', *Dagens Nyheter* (Jan. 25, 2010), and Johan Lundborg, 'Den ständiga konflikten mellan tro och vetande', *Svenska Dagbladet* (Aug. 1, 2010). There is even a well-known saying in Swedish popular culture that goes: 'There is no God, and Hedenius is his prophet.'

and seek to show that Hedenius' argument is significantly different from, and indeed stronger than, Mackie's argument. In the third part I examine some objections to Hedenius' argument put forth by Sebastian Rehnman (2002), and argue that these objections are unsuccessful, largely because they assume that Hedenius' argument has the same structure and content as Mackie's. Toward the end of the paper I seek to identify a main problem with Hedenius' argument.

I. HEDENIUS' ARGUMENT

Hedenius' argument from evil in (1949) aims at showing that the presence of evil in the world is logically inconsistent with the existence of 'the God of orthodox Christianity', and, hence, that the God of orthodox Christianity 'does not exist'.[3] (By 'orthodox Christianity' Hedenius is not referring to Eastern Orthodoxy, but to traditional Christian theology as found, e.g., in traditional Lutheran theology.) In seeking to achieve this aim, Hedenius draws heavily on considerations pertaining to the Christian doctrine of salvation (as he understands it), and his argument could accordingly be described as a 'soteriological' argument from evil.

1.1. The main passages

I will begin by offering a survey of the main passages in which Hedenius states his argument. He begins his presentation by saying:[4]

> (A) [Leibniz] believed that what is essential in Christianity could be defended against all purely logical objections. [...] He was of course aware of the intellectual difficulties that thinking people have always thought themselves to find in the Christian doctrine of redemption [...]. He also invested all his energy into solving these difficulties and declaring them void. But as to the failure of these attempts [...] there is little doubt. No critical person nowadays thinks that Leibniz once so famous solution in his *Theodicy* provides a satisfactory answer [...]. Is there any other and better answer? Not that I know of. Until a change comes about on this point I must be satisfied with formulating these

[3] 'den ortodoxa kristendomens Gud [...] existerar [inte]'; Ingemar Hedenius, *Tro och vetande* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1949), p. 120. (All translation from Swedish into English in this paper are my own.)

[4] I will refer to the passages to be cited from *Tro och vetande* by the letters 'A', 'B', 'C', etc., so as to facilitate subsequent references.

> purely logical objections as clearly as I can and let the reader make a decision as to their cogency [...][5]

Having made it clear that he takes the problem of evil to be a *logical* problem attaching specifically to the Christian doctrine of salvation, Hedenius goes on to develop his argument as follows. He first draws attention to Christianity's understanding of God's attributes of almightiness and perfect goodness:

> (B) According to Christianity God is almighty [...] nothing occurs in the universe without having been willed or permitted by God. [...] Furthermore, God is perfectly good [...] [he] does [not] use his almightiness in a way that all fairly sensitive and enlightened people would unquestionably consider cruel and deeply unloving had a being in this world acted in the same way.[6]

Hedenius then proceeds to state the argument as follows:

> (C) An obvious absurdity emerges when these two points of the Christian faith are joined to that part of the same faith that deals with the condition and state of human beings. The decisive feature of the condition and state of human beings is supposed to be [...] that humans have sinned against God and can only be saved from this horrible guilt of sin – the consequences of which must otherwise be horrific for the sinner because of God's unappeasable wrath – by a plan of salvation that depends on intervention by God himself.[7]

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[5] '[Leibniz] trodde, att det väsentliga i kristendomen kan försvaras mot alla rent logiska invändningar. [...] Naturligtvis var även han underkunnig om de tankesvårigheter, som tänkande människor alltid tyckt sig finna i själva den kristna försoningsläran [...] Han lade också ner hela sin energi ... på att lösa dessa svårigheter och förklara dem obefintliga. Men om det misslyckade i detta försök [...] torde det inte råda något tvivel. Ingen kritisk människa uppfattar numera Leibniz' en gång så berömda Théodicée som ett tillfredsställande svar [...] Finns det något annat svar som är bättre? Intet som jag känner till. Intill dess en förändring härutinnan uppkommit måste jag nöja mig med att formulera dessa rent logiska invändningar så klart jag kan och låta läsaren ta ställning till dem själv.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, pp. 90–91.

[6] 'Enligt den kristna religionen är Gud allsmäktig ... ingenting sker i universum utan att vara velat eller medgivet av Gud. [...] Vidare är Gud fullkomligt god [...] [han] använder [inte] sin allmakt på ett sätt som av alla någorlunda känsliga och upplysta människor utan tvekan skulle betraktas som grymt eller grovt kärlekslöst, om en varelse av denna världen betedde sig på ett liknande sätt.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, pp. 91–92.

[7] 'En uppenbar absurditet kommer emellertid i dagen, när de nu återgivna två delarna av den kristna tron sammanförs med den delen av samma tro, som närmare handlar om

The above conclusion, i.e. that there is an 'obvious absurdity' in the Christian doctrine of salvation in view of God's almightiness and perfect goodness, recurs repeatedly in the passages following the above quotation (although in different words):

> (D) Irrespectively of how one views it, this religion seems to be a mistake, simply because it appears to be an incoherent mess from a logical point of view as soon as we remind ourselves what kind of being this God is supposed to be. He is supposed to be not only almighty but also perfectly loving towards people.[8]

> (E) Even if one, as is often the case nowadays, chooses not to believe in the idea of Adam and the Devil [...] who through Eve engaged in deception and hereby caused the passing on of sin against God to all mankind [...] our wickedness remains from a religious perspective a state that God in his almightiness allows us to be in. At the same time God could, if he had *wanted* to, have created all and only friends unto himself instead of sinners and criminals.[9]

> (F) There is a saying that stems from antiquity and which Leibniz' opponent Voltaire also used. It goes like this: if God is almighty, it follows that he is not perfectly good, and if he is perfectly good, it follows that he is not almighty. In precisely this way one can bring to mind that basic idea of Christianity which makes this religion contradict eternal truth.[10]

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människornas villkor och öden. Det avgörande i människans villkor och öden skulle ju [...] vara att alla människor har syndat emot Gud och att enda sättet att få befrielse från denna syndaskuld, vars konsekvenser på grund av Guds oblidkeliga hat mot synden annars måste bli fruktansvärda för den enskilde, är en frälsningsprocedur, som beror på en rad ingripanden av Gud själv.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, p. 94.

[8] 'Hur man än vrider och vänder på denna åskådning tycks den vara ett misstag, helt enkelt därför att den framstår som ett sammelsurium ur logisk synpunkt, så snart vi erinrar oss vad slags väsen denne Gud samtidigt skall vara. Han skall ju inte bara vara allsmäktig utan också fullkomligt kärleksfull mot människorna.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, pp. 94–95.

[9] 'Även om man, som numera ofta sker, avstår från föreställningen om Adams av djävulen [...] anstiftade förförelse genom Eva och hela människosläktets på grund därav nedärvda synd mot Gud [...] så blir vår ondska ur religiös synpunkt ett öde som Gud i sin allmakt låter påvila oss. Samtidigt innebär denna allmakt att han mycket väl hade kunnat ge oss ett annat öde. Om han hade velat det, och han *kunde* ha velat det, så skulle han i stället för ett släkte av syndare och brottslingar, som blivit hans egna fiender, ha skapat idel vänner till sig.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, p. 95.

(G) That the God of orthodox Christianity does not exist can be proven from the circumstance that this God has contradictory attributes; he is both loving and unloving, almighty and not almighty.[11]

As can be seen, the above passages countenance the conclusion that orthodox Christianity is 'a mistake', 'an incoherent mess' (passage D), 'inconsistent with eternal truth' (passage F), and 'logically contradictory' (passage G) – simply put, that orthodox Christianity is false.

1.2. The structure of the argument

The main structure of Hedenius' above argument seems to be as follows. Christianity claims that God is almighty and perfectly good. An almighty God *could* have prevented the fall of mankind into sin and its consequent need of salvation (passage E). And, assuming that we understand the term 'good' in a fairly sensitive and enlightened way, a perfectly good God *would* have prevented mankind's fall into sin (passages B and D). But according to Christianity, God has not prevented this, so either God is not almighty or he is not perfectly good (primarily passage C). However, Christianity holds that God is both almighty and perfectly good; hence, Christianity is contradictory (primarily passage G). In brief outline:

(1) Christianity claims that (i) God is almighty and perfectly good, and that (i) mankind has fallen into sin and can be saved only through God's plan of salvation.
(2) God's plan of salvation entails that God is not both almighty and perfectly good, for an almighty being could have prevented the Fall, and a good being – provided the term 'good' is understood in a fairly sensitive and enlightened way – would have prevented the Fall.
(3) Hence Christianity entails that God is almighty and perfectly good *and* that God is not both almighty and perfectly good. (From 1 and 2.)
(4) Hence Christianity is contradictory, and hence false. (From 3.)

[10] 'Det finns ett från antiken härstammande talesätt, som redan Voltaire, Leibniz' opponent, använde. Det lyder: om Gud är allsmäktig, så följer att han inte är allgod, och om Gud är allgod, så följer att han inte är allsmäktig. Just så kan man påminna om den grundtanke i kristendomen, som gör att denna religion strider mot vad som är evig sanning.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, p. 101. (By 'eternal truth' Hedenius is referring to the laws of logic.)

[11] 'Att den ortodoxa kristendomens Gud inte existerar, det kan visserligen bevisas, emedan denne Gud har logiskt oförenliga egenskaper; han är ju både kärleksfull och icke-kärleksfull, allsmäktig och icke allsmäktig.' Hedenius, *Tro och vetande*, p. 120.

The core claim of Hedenius' argument seems to be that the almighty and perfectly good God of orthodox Christianity could and would have prevented the Fall, and that, therefore, the God of orthodox Christianity does not exist, since the Fall has not been prevented. A core assumption, moreover, is that the term 'good' (or 'goodness') is understood in a fairly sensitive and enlightened way when orthodox Christianity predicates perfect goodness of God.

II. THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF HEDENIUS' ARGUMENT

I proceed now to compare Hedenius' argument with Mackie's logical argument from evil, intending hereby to show that Hedenius' argument is the stronger one. Mackie's argument is no doubt the most famous logical argument from evil in modern analytic philosophy. It is drawn upon by recent defenders of the logical argument from evil such as Michael Martin,[12] and is also the chief argument to which Alvin Plantinga responds in developing his famous Free Will Defence[13] (a defence which many contemporary philosophers of religion consider decisive).[14]

2.1. Mackie's argument

Mackie's argument from evil finds succinct summary in his claim that the three propositions

(5) 'God is omnipotent',
(6) 'God is wholly good',
(7) 'evil exists'

constitute a 'contradiction'. He says:

> There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions; the theologian, it seems, at once *must* adhere and *cannot consistently* adhere to all three.[15]

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[12] Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 362-391.

[13] Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 12-24.

[14] See e.g. William Alston, 'The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition', in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 97-125 (p. 97); William Rowe, 'In Defense of "The Free Will Defense"', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 44 (1998), 115-120 (p. 115); and William Peterson, *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), p. 47.

This, then, is the basic idea of Mackie's argument from evil. (In order to derive a contradiction from (5)–(7) Mackie makes use of the principles 'a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can' and 'there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do'.[16] These additional principles have no impact on the comparison of Mackie's and Hedenius' arguments that I shall make, however, and shall therefore be left aside.)

2.2. Comparison with Hedenius' argument

There are both similarities and differences between Hedenius' and Mackie's respective arguments. A similarity is that both arguments seek to point out a logical contradiction between certain propositions pertaining to God and a proposition pertaining to evil. Both arguments are thus so-called *logical* arguments from evil (as opposed to, say, evidential arguments from evil).

A difference, however, concerns the conclusions of the respective arguments. Whereas Mackie's argument issues in the conclusion that 'God' does not exist, Hedenius' argument issues in the more specific conclusion that 'the God of orthodox Christianity' does not exist. Hedenius' argument is accordingly explicitly anti-Christian in a way that Mackie's is not.

A further and related difference is that Hedenius' argument draws heavily on themes pertaining to Christian soteriology, whereas Mackie's argument says nothing at all, and presupposes nothing at all, with regard to Christian soteriology. All that Mackie presupposes that overlaps with Christian theology is that God is 'almighty' and 'perfectly good'.

In the next section I shall argue that Hedenius' argument is stronger than Mackie's.

2.3. The relative strength of Hedenius' argument

As was noted above, a core claim of Hedenius' argument is that the almighty and perfectly good God of orthodox Christianity could and would have prevented the Fall, and that, since the Fall has not been prevented, the God of orthodox Christianity does not exist. This claim makes Hedenius' argument very different from Mackie's, which does not presuppose any theology of the Fall, but relies instead on the simple proposition that 'evil exists'. This difference, I believe, renders Hedenius'

[15] John Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind*, vol. 64, no. 254 (1955), 200.
[16] John Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence', p. 200.

argument stronger than Mackie's, for in this way Hedenius manages to avoid two controversial presuppositions of Mackie's argument.

The two controversial presuppositions of Mackie's argument that I have in mind are:

(i) that it presupposes a controversial ontology of evil; and
(ii) that it presupposes that God's almightiness entails an ability to rule over the actions of free agents, which many consider logically impossible.

In what follows I show that Hedenius' argument presupposes neither of these two things.

Consider first the presupposition of an ontology of evil. According to such an ontology there *are* such things as evils, that is, among the things that exist and make up the 'furniture of the universe' there are such things as 'evils' (be they abstract or concrete and particular makes no difference). This presupposition is rejected by a significant strand of Christian theologians from Augustine onward, according to which evil is a privation or absence of good (*privatio bono*) rather than a positive existence.[17] Since Hedenius' argument does not use the premise that 'evil exists', it does not presuppose an ontology of evil, and so cannot be objected to on the ground that evil is not a positive existence. This, then, is a first strength of Hedenius' argument over against Mackie's.

Consider next the presupposition that God's almightiness involves an ability to rule over the actions of free agents. Mackie's argument presupposes that God's almightiness entails an ability to prevent 'evil' (*any* evil), and hence an ability to prevent the evil that may result from the actions of free agents. This entailment has long been considered a chief weakness of Mackie's argument by critics of the argument such as Plantinga, who argue that God 'can't cause or determine' creatures who 'are significantly free', for 'if He does so, then they aren't significantly free after all'.[18] Hedenius' argument does not presuppose that God's almightiness entails that God is able to rule over the actions of free agents, it only presupposes that God was able to prevent the occurrence of one particular historical event, namely the Fall, and God's ability to prevent the Fall need not be tied to any ability to rule over the actions of free agents. (After all, the Fall might have been prevented in numerous

[17] On the *privatio bono* view, see John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: The MacMillian Press, 1988), pp. 38–58.

[18] Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, p. 30.

ways other than ruling over the actions of free agents.) So for this reason too, Hedenius' argument seems to be the stronger one.

III. CRITICISMS OF HEDENIUS' ARGUMENT

I turn now to criticism of Hedenius' argument. I begin by considering some objections to Hedenius' argument put forth by Rehnman in (2002), and argue that these objections are unconvincing. After that I propose a new objection, which I think identifies a problem with Hedenius' argument.

3.1. Rehnman's explication

Rehnman's main contention in (2002) is that Hedenius never succeeds in formulating or proving the presence of an inconsistency in Christianity.[19] However, contrary to the explication given in Section 1.2, Rehnman does not treat Hedenius' argument as containing any premises pertaining specifically to Christian soteriology (although he does say, in passing, that themes pertaining to Christian theology are a part of Hedenius' understanding of the problem of evil).[20] Instead, Rehnman understands Hedenius' argument as consisting in an attempt to derive a contradiction from the following three propositions:[21]

(8) God exists and is almighty.
(9) God exists and is perfectly good.
(10) There is evil in the world.

Rehnman says:

> Taken together [8]-[10] are held to give rise to the logical problem of evil; two of the propositions in this set can be thought to be compatible, but not together with the third one. Hedenius accordingly holds that it is necessary for the Christian to deny the conjunction of these propositions.[22]

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[19] Sebastian Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara: Kunskapsteori och metafysik hos Ingmar Hedenius* (Nora: Nya Doxa, 2002), p. 297.

[20] Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 193.

[21] '(1) Gud existerar och är allsmäktig (2) Gud existerar och är allgod och (3) Det förekommer ondska i världen.' Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 194.

[22] 'Sammantagna anses (1)–(3) ge upphov till det ondas logiska problem; två av i denna mängd ingående påståenden kan tänkas vara förenliga, men inte tillsammans med det tredje. Hedenius menar följaktligen att det är nödvändigt att för den kristne att förneka konjunktionen av dessa påståenden.' Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 194.

(10) here takes over the role played by (2) in Section 1.2, i.e. the role of pushing the Christian concept of God to a contradiction. Interestingly, (10) is extracted from the same passage from which (2) is extracted, i.e. passage E. Rehnman seems to think that the soteriological themes in passage E do not figure in Hedenius' argument as such, but merely provide the context for extracting the claim that there is evil in the world.

This is a mistake, however, for Hedenius makes it clear that his argument from evil pertains specifically to Christian soteriology – as is seen e.g. in passages A, C and E. The soteriological themes in these passages are crucial to Hedenius' argument, whereas, on the other hand, the proposition that 'there is evil' does not figure in Hedenius' argument at all. This fact is also noted by Johan Lundborg in his book on Hedenius:

> Hedenius' theodicy [by which is meant Hedenius' argument from evil] does not take its vantage point in the presence of evil in the world, but in the circumstance that God's attributes are incompatible with salvation history.[23]

Rehnman's misunderstanding of the basic structure of Hedenius' argument from evil results in corresponding mistakes in his objections to the argument, as we shall see below.

3.2. Rehnman's first objection

A first objection of Rehnman's is as follows:

> In contrast to Mackie (1955: 26), Hedenius' position in *Faith and Knowledge* is that there is an 'obvious absurdity' among the elements of the set OLP [i.e. the set of premises (8)–(10)]. But the incompatibility or *incompossibilitas* is not, as e.g. Pike (1963: 40) and Plantinga (1967: 115–30; 1974a: 12–24; 1985: 38) have pointed out, obvious in first-order logic, nor is it explicit or formal.[24]

Rehnman seems here to assume that Hedenius, in using the expression 'obvious absurdity' in the above passage C (see Section 1.1), intends to say either

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[23] 'Hedenius teodicé har således inte sin utgångspunkt i att det finns ont i världen utan i att Guds egenskaper inte går ihop med frälsningshistorien.' Johan Lundborg, *När ateismen erövrade Sverige: Ingemar Hedenius och debatten kring tro och vetande* (Nora: Nya Doxa, 2002), p. 72.

[24] 'Till skillnad från t.ex. Mackie (1955: 26) menar Hedenius i *Tro och vetande* att det föreligger en "uppenbar absurditet" mellan elementen i mängden OLP. Men incompossibilitas eller oförenligheten är inte, såsom bl.a. Pike (1963: 40) och Plantinga (1967: 115-30; 1974a: 12-24; 1985: 38) påpekar, uppenbar i första ordningens logik, ej heller vare sig explicit eller formell.' Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 194.

(i) that there is an obvious contradiction between (11)–(13) in *first-order logic*; or that
(ii) there is an *explicit or formal* contradiction between the propositions (8)-(10), i.e. a conjunction of the form '*p* and not-*p*'.

(Apart from this assumption, there would be no point in introducing Pike's and Plantinga's contrasting observation with the word 'But'.)

But why think that Hedenius by 'obvious absurdity' had in mind a contradiction in first-order logic, or an explicit or formal contradiction? This assumption seems groundless. The term 'obvious' is ordinarily used in many ways other than to call attention to something that is clear in first-order logic or that is stated explicitly or formally. Why not think, say, that Hedenius in using this expression simply meant to say that the presence of a contradiction among the relevant propositions *is not difficult to see*? That it is not difficult to see a contradiction does not mean or entail that the contradiction is either explicit or formal, or that it is clear in first-order logic. For example, it is not difficult to see that the proposition that my only car is red contradicts the proposition that my only car lacks a colour; but there is nevertheless no explicit or formal contradiction here, nor do we get a contradiction if we assume a first-order logic setting.

A deeper problem with the above objection, however, is that it simply gets Hedenius' argument wrong. Nowhere in the passages A-G in Section 1.1 does Hedenius ever explicate his argument from evil in terms of propositions of the sort (8)–(10), nor does he ever state that his argument from evil consists in pointing out a contradiction between such propositions. Rehnman's objection is therefore not merely unconvincing, it is *irrelevant*.

How are we to account for Rehnman's misunderstanding of the basic form of Hedenius' argument from evil? I believe the answer is indicated in the above quotation. Rehnman there assumes that Hedenius' argument from evil is essentially the same argument as Mackie's. And, indeed, the argument that Rehnman gives in terms of (8)–(10) *is* essentially the same argument as Mackie's (as should be clear from the survey of Mackie's argument in Section 2). But the argument of Mackie is, as we have seen, *not* that of Hedenius. By failing to note this, Rehnman ends up objecting to a straw man.

3.3. Rehnman's further objections

Apart from the above objection, Rehnman levels various further objections to Hedenius' argument on the assumption that the argument from evil in (1949) is identical to one of Hedenius' later arguments from evil put forth in *Om människans moraliska villkor* (Eng. *On the Moral Conditions of Man*) (1972). In what follows I show that this assumption is mistaken, and that it once again renders Rehnman's objections to Hedenius' argument from evil in (1949) irrelevant.

In (1972) Hedenius presents the following argument from evil:

(11) If God exists, then our universe is the best possible *U*.

(12) With regard to any state of affairs *S* which is such that there is some evil in *S*, it is the case that *S* is not the best possible state of affairs, for another state of affairs *S*' such that *S*' contains just as much good (0 or > 0) as *S* and less evil than *S*, is always possible, and *S*' would be better than *S*.

(13) *U* is a state of affairs;

(14) There is a large amount of evil in *U*.

(15) Hence *U* is not the best possible *U*.

(16) Hence God does not exist.[25]

Rehnman takes this argument to be basically identical to the argument from evil in (1949). This is clearly a mistake, however, for the *premises* of the two arguments are very different from each other. In particular, the argument in (1949) involves no claims about a best possible world.

Unsurprisingly, Rehnman's objections to the argument in (1972) are simply irrelevant to the argument in (1949). The objections are:

(i) that the concept of the best possible world is logically contradictory;

(ii) that it is not 'essential to Christianity'[26] to hold that God has created the best possible world;

[25] '(1) Om Gud existerar, så är vårt universum det bästa möjliga *U*. (2) Beträffande varje sakförhållande, *S*, som är sådant att det finns något ont i *S*, gäller att *S* inte är det bästa möjliga sakförhållandet, ty ett annat sakförhållande, *S*', som är sådant, att *S*' innehåller lika mycket gott (0 eller > 0) som *S* och mindre ont än *S* eller inget ont alls, är alltid möjligt, och *S*' skulle vara bättre än *S*. (3)*U* är ett sakförhållande. (4) Det finns en stor mängd ont i *U*. (5) *U* är inte det bästa möjliga *U*. Följer av (2), (3), (4). (6) Gud existerar inte. Följer av (1), (5).' Hedenius, *Om människans moraliska villkor*, p. 267. (I have changed the numbering of Hedenius' premises in my translation so as to fit the numbering of the present paper; the same has been done with regard to the numberings of all passages from Hedenius and Rehnman quoted in this paper.)

(iii) that it is not obvious that God is obliged to create the best logically possible universe or that God is not good if God does not create it;[27] and

(iv) that the idea that the best possible universe must lack evil is highly doubtful.[28]

Neither of these objections are relevant to the argument in (1949) for the simple reason that that argument does not involve any premise about a best possible world.

I conclude, then, that Rehnman misunderstands Hedenius' argument from evil in (1949), and that his objections are impacted by this in a way that renders them largely irrelevant.

3.4. A new objection

I proceed now to develop a new objection to Hedenius' argument. The objection is directed at the argument's assumption that we understand the term 'good' in what Hedenius calls a 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense. This assumption was inserted into premise (2) of the argument given in section 1.2, i.e.:

(2) God's plan of salvation entails that God is not both almighty and perfectly good, for an almighty being could have prevented the Fall, and a good being – *provided the term 'good' is understood in a fairly sensitive and enlightened way* – would have prevented the Fall.

It seems that there is an important ambiguity here. The ambiguity concerns whether this assumption (italicized above) is the assumption that

(i) *we* are to make in stating that orthodox Christianity claims that God is perfectly good, but which orthodox Christianity need not be assumed to make, or that

(ii) *orthodox Christianity* makes when it claims that God is perfectly good.

I believe it can be plausibly shown that if Hedenius understands the assumption in sense (i), his argument turns out logically invalid, whereas if he understands it in sense (ii), a crucial assumption of the argument turns out deeply problematic. In either case, then, the argument is in trouble.

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[26] 'väsentlig för kristendomen.' Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 200.

[27] 'Men det är inte uppenbart att Gud är förpliktigad att skapa det logiskt bästa möjliga universumet eller att Gud inte är allgod om Gud inte skapar det.' Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 200.

[28] 'Tanken att det bästa möjliga universumet måste sakna ondska är därför en ytterst tveksam premiss.' Rehnman, *Gud, kunskap och vara*, p. 202.

I seek first to show that if the assumption is to be understood in sense (i), the argument turns out logically invalid. This is so inasmuch as the argument is concerned with showing that 'orthodox Christianity' is self-contradictory, i.e. that orthodox Christianity entails, as in the inference (3) of the argument of Section 1.2, that God is almighty and perfectly good and *not* almighty and perfectly good. In order to make this inference – i.e. the inference of (3) from (1) and (2) – the sense in which God is 'good' (or 'perfectly good') in (1) and (2) must be *the same*, for otherwise we have a fallacy of equivocation. Since (1) simply reports what orthodox Christianity claims, the sense of 'good' in (1) is the sense of 'good' assumed by orthodox Christianity. Accordingly, if the sense of 'good' assumed in (2) – i.e. the 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense – is not that of Christianity but of Hedenius' readers, then the argument is equivocal, and hence logically invalid. Hence to be logically valid, the argument must rest on the assumption as understood in the sense (ii), that is, on the assumption that orthodox Christianity, in predicating perfect goodness of God, is using the term 'good' in what Hedenius calls a 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense.

I seek next to show that if we are to understand the assumption in the sense (ii), Hedenius' argument turns out problematic. This is clear from the following two considerations.

First, Hedenius provides us with no evidence that 'orthodox Christianity' understands the term 'good' in the relevant 'sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense when predicated of God. Hedenius refers to no Biblical texts, creeds, canons or influential theologians in support of this assumption. Instead, he simply takes the assumption for granted.

And secondly, there appears to be counter-evidence to Hedenius' assumption. That is, there is evidence for the counter-claim that orthodox Christianity understands terms like 'good' as having a special meaning when predicated of God, and, in particular, as *not* meaning what we would ordinarily mean when using the terms. As Thomas Aquinas argued, and as many traditional Catholics and Protestants have repeated after him, terms applied to God have *analogous* meanings; 'no name', says Aquinas, 'is predicated univocally of God and creatures'.[29] The notion of 'analogous

[29] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1933), p. 64. (*ST* I, q13, a5.) For Protestant endorsements of the doctrine of analogy, see Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), pp. 39–45.

meaning' is notoriously difficult to make precise, but it is at least clear that it is meant to entail that a term with an analogous meaning means something *different* from what it ordinarily or non-analogously means. 'Univocal predication', says Aquinas, 'is impossible between God and creatures.'[30] Now, since Hedenius' argument presupposes that orthodox Christianity understands the term 'good' in the relevant 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense when predicated of God, and since, as we have just seen, this appears to run counter to the doctrine of analogy endorsed by many traditional Christian theologians, it follows that we have reason to think that Hedenius' argument rests on a mistaken presupposition, at least insofar as the relevant traditional Christian theologians are taken as representative of orthodox Christianity.

It could, of course, be questioned whether the relevant traditional Christian theologians should be taken as representative of orthodox Christianity. But then again, Hedenius has given us no reason to question this. So given this, and given that Hedenius provides us with no evidence for the assumption that orthodox Christianity understands the term 'good' in the relevant 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense when predicated of God, it would seem that Hedenius' argument turns out problematic and unconvincing.

SUMMARY

In this paper I have offered an explication of Hedenius' argument from evil in (1949), and have argued that this argument is stronger than the paradigmatic logical argument from evil in the analytic tradition, namely Mackie's argument in (1955). It is 'stronger' inasmuch as it presupposes fewer controversial assumptions than Mackie's argument.

A core claim of Hedenius' argument was seen to be that the almighty and perfectly good God of orthodox Christianity would have prevented the Fall, and that, therefore, the God of orthodox Christianity does not exist, since the Fall has not been prevented. A core assumption was moreover that the term 'good' is understood in what Hedenius calls a 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense when predicated of God.

I have argued that although the objections levelled at Hedenius' argument by Rehnman in (2002) are mistaken, Hedenius' argument is

[30] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, p. 64. (*ST* I, q13, a5.)

still problematic. It is problematic in that the contradiction which it seeks to locate in orthodox Christianity can only be derived from orthodox Christianity on the assumption that orthodox Christianity uses the term 'good' in what Hedenius calls a 'fairly sensitive' and 'enlightened' sense when it predicates perfect goodness of God, and this assumption was seen to be problematic partly because it is left unargued and partly because it fits ill with the traditional theological doctrine of analogy. If this is right it would seem that Hedenius' argument, in spite of its strong points, is ultimately unconvincing.

REDEFINING RELIGIOUS TRUTH AS A CHALLENGE FOR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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Abstract. One of the most important features of contemporary Western societies is the rise of (religious) pluralism. Whereas (philosophical) theism used to serve as a common ground to discuss the truth-claims of religion, this approach seems to have lost much of its plausibility. What I want to argue in this article is that philosophy of religion as a critical intellectual activity still cannot do without the notion of religious truth, but also that it needs to redefine this truth in an existential way, i.e. by interpreting religions as concrete ways of life. In this paper I develop this idea of religious truth by interpreting religions as traditions of wisdom, being a kind of truth that is able to orientate humans' lives without being swayed by the issues of the day. In order to substantiate my interpretation I discuss three fundamental aspects of wisdom, viz. the fact that it rests on a broadened idea of reason, the way in which it discovers the universal in the particular, and the insight that all life-orientations are based on a principle that is subjectively adequate, but objectively inadequate (Kant).

I. INTRODUCTION

For many philosophers, the rise of (religious) pluralism is one of the most important features of contemporary Western society. This phenomenon has resulted in an enormous boost of the philosophical interest in religious matters, far beyond the traditional disciplinary borders of philosophy of religion. But the rise of religious pluralism has in its turn changed the agenda of philosophy of religion quite dramatically: in order to participate in the current academic and public debate philosophy of religion has to give up one of its traditional theorems, viz. that all Christian denominations are eventually nothing but the offspring of

one and the same natural religion, whose truth can be demonstrated unambiguously by human reason. According to Habermas and Rawls this foundationalist approach of religion belongs to a metaphysical past, in particular that of natural or rational theology, and needs to be replaced by a more descriptive approach that departs from religion as a social reality. These authors brand the idea of religious truth as intrinsically authoritarian and resulting in oppressing the essential pluralist character of modern societies, and hence this idea needs to be replaced by notions like an (overlapping) consensus or by a post-metaphysical justification of political rule.

However, in my view the notion of religious truth cannot be dismissed so easily at all; on the contrary, I expect it to dominate, often in the form of fundamental rights and essential values, the academic debate, including that among philosophers of religion, as well as the public debate in the years to come. First of all, the notion of religious truth has always been fundamental in at least two world religions, Christianity and Islam; hence it is very unlikely that their present-day adherents will be willing to drop it altogether. Secondly, far beyond the intra-confessional disputes about religious orthodoxy, the idea of religious truth is obviously at odds with the pluralism of contemporary society. Hence the latter cannot escape the question which public expressions of these truths are contradicting its own essential values, and which ones are to be tolerated or even welcomed as a contribution to what holds society together. Thirdly, although Habermas and Rawls reject the idea of religious truth, they explicitly recognize that all great religious traditions are treasuries of true wisdom, thereby implicitly referring to another dimension of religious truth than the authoritarian or oppressive one.

So, in view of these intricate issues I think that one of the most important challenges for philosophy of religion in the years to come consists in redefining the notion of religious truth in such a way that it makes sense and can be discussed in the context of pluralist democracies. Interestingly, the question of the truth-claims of Christian religion has been a shared point of interest between analytical philosophy of religion (especially theism) and those continental philosophers, who are convinced that these kinds of metaphysical questions rather have to be redefined than dismissed altogether. In this paper I shall first give an analysis of the theistic idea of religious truth and explain why it has lost a great deal of its plausibility. Thereafter I shall try to redefine religious truth as an expression of wisdom, and argue that such an approach may

offer a new common ground that is compatible with the pluralism of our times. In the course of my paper it will become clear that a redefinition of religious truth inevitably implies that philosophy of religion needs to take a new direction too.

II. THE LOSS OF PLAUSIBILITY OF THE THEISTIC IDEA OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

In this paper I use the term 'theism' not in its general sense, namely the belief in the (Christian) God, but in a much more specific way as a *philosophical* theory about God's existence and his essential attributes. It originated in the 16th century as an intellectual attempt to help put an end to the religious controversies that resulted from diverging interpretations of Scripture on purely doctrinal grounds. Furthermore theism was to serve as a philosophical reply to the rise of atheism and scepticism during the Renaissance and early Enlightenment.[1] The central claim of theism concerns the existence of God as 'a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who is eternal, free, able to do everything, knows everything, is perfectly good, is the proper object of human worship and obedience, the creator and sustainer of the universe'.[2] These sentences are not to be seen as expressing attitudes or commending ways of life, but make 'claims about how things are'.[3] Precisely this aspect highlights the philosophical and in particular cognitive character of theism, implying that its concept of religious truth rather belongs to the domain of natural or rational theology than to that of revealed religion. Even more so, in a theistic sense the truth or falsehood of the statement 'I believe in God, Creator of heaven and earth' differs not qualitatively but only in degree from the statement 'I believe it is not going to rain this afternoon' being true or false.[4] The basic components of theism are threefold. First it presents

[1] Ingolf Dalferth, 'The Historical Roots of Theism', in Svend Andersen (ed.), *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives* (Acta Jutlandica LXX:1 Theology Series 18), (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1994), p. 15. See also: Christoph Schwöbel, 'After "Post-Theism"', in ibid., pp. 173-178; and Peter Jonkers, 'Religious Truth in a Globalising World', in Philip Quadrio and Carol Besseling (eds.), *Religion and Politics in the New Century: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), pp. 182-189.

[2] Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 1.

[3] Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, p. 37.

[4] Han Adriaanse, 'After Theism', in: Svend Andersen (ed.), *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*, p. 132.

a philosophically coherent concept of God, being the true common ground of all particular religious confessions, so that this concept can bridge the gap between the opposing doctrinal views and convictions of the latter.[5] Second, the coherence of this concept of God serves as the point of departure for demonstrating the existence of God, which is necessary for the truth of some further theistic beliefs; in particular that God is the unique creator and sustainer of the universe. A third characteristic of theism is its preoccupation with finding a solution to the problem of evil. Because theism claimed to offer a theoretical explanation of all states of affairs in the world, the problem of evil and its solution became a central issue as well, which was dealt with by theodicy. It is important to note that the solutions offered by theodicy were strictly theoretical, thereby showing their fundamental difference from more existential approaches of the perennial question of how to deal with evil.[6]

Ever since its origin the project of theism has been confronted with criticisms stemming both from philosophy and theology. From the perspective of the history of philosophy one can refer to the epistemological critique of Hume and Kant, stating that human understanding's aim to *know* the supersensible only produces (transcendental) illusion. Furthermore there is the critique stemming from contemporary continental philosophy, interpreting theism as the apex of onto-theology, i.e. as having reduced the discontinuous and contingent history of being to an all-encompassing and coherent grand narrative. From a theological perspective theism has been accused of negating the unbridgeable gap between the concept of God as a philosophical principle and the living God of religious traditions, between the truth or falsehood of a cognitive principle and the existential commitment of religious people to the truth of their faith.

However, in this paper I want to focus on another factor explaining the fate of theism in our times, viz. the gradual decline of its plausibility. Taking this approach means that I want to situate theism in a larger social context, in particular the rise of more radical forms of (religious) pluralism as well as the so-called expressivist turn. This means that I do not agree with those authors who situate theism's plausibility-loss against a still more general background, viz. as an aspect of the decline of religion in Western societies, commonly known as the secularisation-process.[7]

[5] Ingolf Dalferth, *The Historical Roots of Theism*, pp. 28-31.
[6] Christoph Schwöbel, *After 'Post-Theism'*, pp. 177-8.

In my view such a very general explanation does not hold, since it is at odds with the current rise of the enduring importance of religions in contemporary society, comprising such divergent phenomena as the popularity of fundamentalism in some Islamic and Christian communities, the growing influence of non-Christian religious traditions, the astonishing popularity of the World Youth Days and the millions of people attending the beatification of the late Pope John Paul II. Hence the reasons of theism's loss of plausibility have to be more specific and to be found elsewhere.

The most important feature of theism is its 'foundationalism', the idea that it rests on the solid foundation of conclusive, rational argumentation, and thus sees itself entitled to make universal truth-claims about God as the ultimate foundation of the universe. By doing so theism was able to transcend what it considered to be the historical contingencies of the various confessions and provide them with a common ground. It is important to note that this ground is primarily cosmologically orientated. This implies, however, that theism de-contextualises the religious idea of God by abstracting from the various practices of faith and their socio-historic context: the God of theism does not function and does not have to function in the concrete contexts of personal piety or communal worship.[8]

In my view this specific form of foundationalism is responsible for theism's loss of plausibility. By taking a dominantly cosmological approach, i.e. by focusing on God as the creator and sustainer of the universe, it was able to discuss with the dominant scientific interpretations of the cosmos, which were by and large atheistic. But by doing so it has lost out of sight so many other, particularly existential aspects of religion that it is not considered any more as offering an adequate common ground for religious and secular worldviews. First of all theism is, just like modern science, a product of modern rationality. In our times however, there is a growing awareness of the reductionist and even oppressive flip-side of this type of rationality, and its disenchanting effects upon the lives and social environment of people. Secondly, whereas it was one of the most fundamental convictions of modernity that reason, with its characteristics of unity and universality, was able to contain the rise of

[7] Han Adriaanse, 'After Theism', pp. 137-139. Adriaanse refers in this context to the influential book of Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* from 1967, re-edited as: Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

[8] Christoph Schwöbel, 'After "Post-Theism"', p. 179.

pluralism, this belief seems to have dissipated in our times, thus making any appeal to a common, reasonable ground a priori suspicious. Even without going as far as to accept Rorty's radical perspectivism, resulting from his rejection of the idea of objective truth as a common ground for all 'final vocabularies',[9] one has at least to admit, with Rawls, the reality of a plurality of conflicting and irreconcilable 'comprehensive doctrines', religious and secular, which are affirmed by reasonable people. This leads to the idea of a *reasonable* pluralism, which means that one has to address all these doctrines as reasonable, even though they may be fundamentally different from one's own. But accepting the reality of pluralism implies that a public and shared basis of justification that applies to all comprehensive doctrines is lacking in democratic society, implying that any judgement as to their truth is doomed to fail. Hence, according to Rawls one has to accept that 'the idea of the reasonable is more suitable as part of the basis of public justification for a constitutional regime than the idea of moral truth'.[10] This means that Rawls still accepts, just like theism, the importance of reasonable argumentation as a common frame of reference for all religions, but also that he accepts the dramatic rise of new forms of radical pluralism as a basic characteristic of advanced modernity; consequently, the universal truth-claims of theism can no longer be accepted as offering the substance of a common ground. Thirdly, theism's aim to abstract the notion of God from its socio-historical context worked quite well as long as the philosophical debate between theists, deists and atheists was focused on the cosmological question of the existence of God as creator and sustainer of the universe, and on theodicy as a theoretical attempt to reconcile the idea of a benevolent God with the existence of evil. But due to the affirmation of ordinary life and the expressivist turn (Taylor) the focus of the philosophical debate has shifted from a theoretical approach, which many people nowadays experience as far-off from their daily lives, towards an analysis of the self-involving and existential character of religious beliefs.[11]

All in all, the growing uneasiness with the reductionism of modern rationality, the effects of the new rise of radical forms of (religious)

[9] For a more extensive critique of the consequences of Rorty's position for the idea of religious truth see: Peter Jonkers, 'Religious Truth in a Globalising World', pp. 189-197.

[10] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism. Expanded edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 129.

[11] Christoph Schwöbel, 'After "Post-Theism"', p. 185.

pluralism upon the ideas of religious truth and the universality of reason, and the shift from a theoretical to an existential approach of religion are largely responsible for theism's loss of plausibility. What implications does this have for the future of philosophy of religion? First of all theism is not identical with philosophy of religion as such, so that the decline of the former does not necessarily mean the end of the latter. On the contrary, as I showed before there is a growing interest among philosophers, including secular ones, in religious issues, especially concerning its role in a public space. Secondly, against all odds and contrary to a widespread (philosophical) conviction, the idea of religious truth, being a fundamental insight of theism, remains very topical. Fundamentally, religions, including their truth-claims, discourses, rituals and practices must be open to critical interpretation. What has changed since the rise of modernity is that this interpretative process is not limited to the members of a specific religious community, but also concerns those belonging to other religious or secular traditions.[12] Whereas theology traditionally has taken up responsibility for the first kind of interpretation, a philosophical interpretation of religion nowadays has to include the attempt to translate it into a language that can be understood by people who are not familiar with a specific religious language.[13]

Philosophy of religion's focus on a *critical* interpretation of religions implies that the idea of religious truth is still of crucial importance in the current debate albeit mostly in an implicit way. However, in comparison with the heyday of theism any such attempt has to depart from the reality of an insurmountable pluralism instead of abstracting from it; only by accepting the fundamental character of this reality can philosophy of religion try to re-establish a common ground for the great variety of religious and secular worldviews. Furthermore it has to accept the fact that the dominant language of contemporary society has become more existential instead of theoretical. Obviously this shift influences the way in which philosophy of religion approaches its subject: nowadays religion is primarily seen as a concrete way of life that is essential for our identity in the sense that it gives an answer to fundamental existential questions, in other words that it helps to put our lives in perspective. In sum, one of the most important challenges for philosophy of religion is to redefine

[12] Christoph Schwöbel, 'After "Post-Theism"', p. 186.

[13] Interestingly, Habermas, as well as Rawls, argues that this translation of religious insights into a secular language is essential for their philosophical projects. I refrain from commenting on the discussions that have followed their proposals.

the idea of religious truth in such a way that it takes into account the changing cultural context of our times.

III. REDEFINING RELIGIOUS TRUTH AS A FORM OF WISDOM

Redefining (religious) truth within the context of a plurality of existential ways of life means first of all that this kind of truth can only be discovered through a reflection that is closely connected to these ways of life. It comes to the fore through the lives of people for whom expressions like 'God is my Saviour' and 'I place my life under the sign of the risen Christ' really orientate their lives. It is important to note that defining religion in such a way does not mean that it is something completely contingent, standing on the same level as our private funny habits and cultural peculiarities. In spite of the inevitable contingency, implied in all religions and secular worldviews, it is essential to recognise that they all claim truth and that they, in these claims, show major *qualitative* differences. Hence defining religion as a way of life cannot be used as a way to keep off a critical examination of its truth-claims; this is all the more true since Christianity as well as some other religions and secular worldviews, is essentially a religion of conversion.[14] Furthermore, especially because the proposed approach takes religion not so much as a theoretical doctrine, but as embedded in concrete existence, it is all the more necessary to be aware of the fact that every way of life, religious as well as secular, is inevitably a mixture of truth and falsehood. But in contrast to the predominantly doctrinal approach of theism an existential approach of religious truth focuses on notions like truthfulness and faithfulness. Finally, although my examples are taken from Christian religion, it is important to note that other religions and secular worldviews can also be treasuries of existential truth and actually claim to be so.

If one wants to determine the notion of existential truth further, the term that is most commonly used is wisdom. In general wisdom can be defined as an encompassing, theoretical and practical kind of knowledge, which is able to give an orientation or perspective to human existence. Wisdom strikes us as an extraordinary kind of knowledge, resting on human experience, but also having a divine origin.[15] All religions and

[14] For a more detailed analysis of this problem see Peter Jonkers, 'Contingent Religions, Contingent Truths?' in Dirk-Martin Grube and Peter Jonkers (ed.), *Religions Challenged by Contingency: Theological and Philosophical Perspectives to the Problem of Contingency* (Star-series) (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 161-181.

secular worldviews can to a large extent be defined as traditions of wisdom. As to Judaism and Christianity one can refer to the Books of Wisdom and to the sayings of Jesus; but secular world-views too are treasuries of wisdom, and they can be found in the classical works of world-literature and conventional wisdom. Hence wisdom can be qualified as having a trans-cultural, universally human character,[16] which is founded on the fact that all humans have to deal with the perennial questions of their origin and destiny and want to respond to them in an authentic and truthful way. But although this explains that wisdom is indeed universal, it does not mean that all that presents itself as such turns out to be true wisdom. This is where philosophy comes in, which since Socrates has been defined as the quest for wisdom.[17] Precisely because it strives for true wisdom, it has to examine every pretension of wisdom critically in order to liberate it from self-conceit, ideology, etc. The double, divine and human origin of wisdom means also that philosophy stands always in a relation of approximation with regard to wisdom. Finally, in order to be able to fulfil its task philosophy has to approach wisdom in close relation to the tempo-spatial context in which people live their lives, and not as an abstract kind of knowledge.[18]

Obviously, my proposal to redefine religious truth as wisdom is still very vague. My aim in the remainder of this section is to discuss some of its features as well as their implications for philosophy of religion.

3.1. Reason and understanding

First of all, wisdom is based on a much broader kind of rationality than the one that is predominant in modern science, including the social sciences; it also tends to see reality from a broader perspective. In other words, wisdom is the fruit of reason, whereas the scientific truth is the product of understanding. Building on the origins of this distinction in the philosophies of Kant and Hegel one can say that reason is capable of producing 'a self-subsistent unity, in which [...] every member exists for every other, and all for the sake of each, so that no principle can safely be

[15] Andreas Speer, 'Weisheit', in Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer und Gottfried Gabriel (Hrsg.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, Band 12* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), p. 371.

[16] Andreas Speer, 'Weisheit', p. 371.

[17] Plato, Apology 20 d-e

[18] Willi Oelmüller, 'Der kritische Weg ist allein noch offen', in Willi Oelmüller (hrsg.), *Philosophie und Weisheit.* Kolloquien zur Gegenwartsphilosophie, Band 12. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), p. 179.

taken in *any one* relation, unless it has been investigated in the *entirety* of its relations to the whole employment of pure reason'.[19] In Hegel's philosophy, this unifying and integrating function of reason is extended to all domains of being. Whereas he defines understanding as 'the capacity to set limits'[20] and hence to produce all kinds of dichotomies, 'the sole interest of reason is to suspend such rigid antitheses'.[21] Obviously, it is not Hegel's intention to play off reason and understanding against each other: on the contrary, in order to avoid a kind of vague, undifferentiated knowledge or to remain entangled in the irrationality of immediate intuitions and edifying talk it is essential to start with the definitions and distinctions of understanding.[22]

When we apply this distinction to the existential approach of religious truth, as exemplified in traditions of wisdom, it is obvious that wisdom rather belongs to the domain of reason than to that of understanding. Wisdom does not compete with scientific rationality, but asks for the significance of the latter's results for human existence. This insight puts the contemporary debate between science and religion in a completely different perspective: the Christian belief that God is the creator of heaven and earth does not present an alternative to the big-bang theory, but encourages people to believe that our life-world is a place of justice, that this justice is not a human invention or construction, but is willed by God, thus inspiring people to cooperate in fulfilling the ultimate goal of His creation. Obviously, philosophy of religion as a reasonable endeavour has to examine whether this expression of religious wisdom is true. It has to ask why one should refer to a divine kind of justice in the first place instead of relying solely on the justice of established human laws, if the appeal to a transcendent authority does not pave the way for new forms of dogmatism, and if the connection between justice and an all-embracing purposiveness does not lead to totalitarianism, thereby excluding people with other religious or secular convictions.

[19] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B XXIII.

[20] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 'Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie', in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke, Band 4: Jenaer kritische Schriften* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1968), p. 12.

[21] Ibid., p. 13.

[22] Cf. Hegel's famous metaphor in which he criticizes the result of this kind of knowledge as the night in which all cows are black. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke, Band 9: Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1980), p. 17.

All these questions are existential ones, related to religion's pretension to be a source of true wisdom. In order to be able to answer them it is imperative that philosophy of religion accommodates its approach to the reasonable kind of rationality that is characteristic of wisdom. Only then it can find out if the Christian faith in creation succeeds in giving a truthful orientation to human existence, in other words if it can legitimately claim to offer true wisdom. Anyhow, it is clear that, since religious wisdom and its philosophical examination refer to the whole of human existence as an integrated unity, they are founded on reason and reach far beyond the scope of understanding and scientific rationality.

In a similar vein, redefining religious truth in an existential way and examining its claim to true wisdom philosophically gives a new input to the hotly debated issue if and how religious insights and doctrines can be introduced in the public debate, and if and how they can be translated into a language that can in principle be understood by contemporary, secular society. According to Rawls, 'reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious and nonreligious, may be introduced in the public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons – and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines – are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support'.[23] In this context, I am not so much interested in discussing 'when' or 'by whom' Rawls's famous *proviso* is to be satisfied, nor whether it puts unequal burdens on the shoulders of religious citizens in comparison to secular ones. Instead, I want to focus on the question of what kind of public reasons are required for the political debate and if they are indeed reasonable. Rawls summarizes them as 'a family of reasonable political conceptions of justice', meant to make religious views acceptable to a broader audience.[24] But it is highly questionable if, in the current climate of a growing dominance of scientific rationality over all sectors of the life-world, Rawls's proposal can avoid the risk that religions are forced to comply with the standards of scientific rationality in order to be accepted by a broader audience, which would exclude a fair discussion about their acceptability as *reasonable* comprehensive doctrines. Moreover, this risk not only applies to religions, but also to secular traditions of wisdom. In my view Rawls

[23] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism. Expanded edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 462.

[24] Ibid., p. 463.

underestimates the disenchanting and distorting effects of scientific rationality on religious as well as secular ways of life. When put in this situation, people who consider these traditions as sources of wisdom feel disrespected and not taken seriously, since they are forced to justify themselves before a tribunal that is biased, because it is based on a kind of rationality that is completely at odds with the existential truth that these traditions express. One only needs to refer to the tendency of scientific rationality to 'naturalise' human existence, which makes it almost impossible for these traditions of wisdom to reasonably argue what it means to see humans primarily as persons.

In sum, the distinction between understanding and reason may prove to be helpful to enable religions and secular world-views presenting themselves not as irrational ways of life, but as expressions of wisdom, claiming to give a truthful orientation to human life. Obviously, philosophy of religion has to examine whether these claims are legitimate, but without laying them on the Procrustean bed of scientific rationality. Rather, it interprets them as reasonable, i.e. as offering an integral perspective on human existence, thereby enabling these traditions to be discussed on their own terms. Finally, approaching religions and secular world-views as expressions of wisdom provides them with a common ground, which is essential to prevent reasonable pluralism from degenerating into its arbitrary, postmodern variant.[25]

3.2. Particularity and universality

Secondly, defining religious traditions as (particular) ways of life that claim to express (universal) wisdom requires reconsidering the conception of the relation between these two concepts. Trying to make sense of religious truth in a context of radical plurality presupposes first of all that one refrains from lumping together all these expressions of (religious) wisdom as equally contextual and hence particular without any discrimination as to the legitimacy of their respective truth-claims. Apart from the fact that such an approach is philosophically very dissatisfying it fails to contribute in a meaningful way to the current debate of the role of religion in the public sphere. But on the other hand, the approach of traditional metaphysics, including theism, consisting in laying bare the universal, theoretical truth-claims of religions and secular

[25] Rawls too distinguishes between reasonable pluralism and pluralism as such. See: John Rawls, *Political Liberalism. Expanded edition,* pp. 36-7.

world-views by abstracting as much as possible from the particularity and contingency in which they are embedded, does not work either. As we have seen above, this approach has contributed largely to theism's loss of plausibility. Hence it is a major challenge for philosophy of religion to try out an alternative approach of the relationship between particularity and universality. This could lie in developing a kind of metaphysics, which starts hermeneutically, that is from the recognition that religions and secular world-views are primarily concrete ways of life, embedded in the particular history of (religious) communities. But as metaphysics it remains loyal to the idea of religious truth, trying to approximate it by critically examining how these traditions respond to the perennial questions about the origin and destiny of humankind. To give only one historic example of this approach among many others: in his moral philosophy F.H. Jacobi sets out to depart from concrete life-stories, in which persons do not so much demonstrate, but rather testify to the truth of their basic beliefs, thereby criticising the abstract universality and the impersonal character of Kant's moral philosophy.[26]

How does this hermeneutical metaphysics deal with the relation between particularity and universality in connection to religious truth? In accordance with the nature of this approach, let us start with a concrete example of Christian wisdom, viz. the prayer for forgiveness in the Our Father: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'[27] The question then is if this particular expression of wisdom relates to existential truth, and hence can legitimately claim (a certain degree of) universality. The existential truth of the prayer for forgiveness lies in the fact that it links the horizontal moral obligation to forgive one's debtor to a vertical dimension, the beneficial experience that humans, however sinful they may be, can trust on the promise that God forgives their debts against him, which are infinitely greater. This inspires Christians to go as far as to forgive the unforgivable. According to a contemporary secular philosopher as Derrida, this is basically what forgiveness is all about: a pure gift without the guarantee of a return. In other words, the basic experience that our sinful existence is mercifully accepted by God makes it legitimate that he demands from us, not to forgive our brothers and sisters seven times, 'but seventy times seven times', that

[26] Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke. Gesamtausgabe, Band 1: Schriften zum Spinozastreit* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1998), pp. 131-2.

[27] Matthew 6:12.

is to forgive infinitely.[28] Thus, the existential truth of this expression of Christian wisdom lies in the fundamental anthropological insight that the vertical dimension of forgiveness (the experience of God's mercy) may be essential for humans to be able to forgive even the unforgiveable or to forgive infinitely (the horizontal dimension). This is not to say that only Christians are able to forgive, but points to the universal meaning of a particular tradition.

In a similar vein Habermas has argued that particular religious traditions often express normative truths, in which a secular society can recognise universal moral intuitions, with which it has lost contact in the course of time. He illustrates this by means of the biblical story of God's creation of man: 'God created man in his own image; in his own image He created him.'[29] This religious belief expresses the idea that God, as a God of love, created Adam and Eve as free beings, similar to, but at the same time absolutely different from Him: 'God remains a "God of free men" only as long as we do not level out the absolute difference that exists between the creator and the creature.'[30] Habermas takes this particular religious insight to express a fundamental normative truth, the dignity of every human being, and uses it to criticise the social and moral effects of gen-technology. When this technology is applied to humans, it indeed erases this difference between creator and creation, thus entailing fatal consequences for humanity as such:

> One need not believe in theological premises in order to understand what follows from this, namely, that an entirely different kind of dependence, perceived as a causal one, becomes involved if the difference [between God and man] assumed as inherent in the concept of creation were to disappear and the place of God be taken by a peer – if, that is, a human being would intervene, according to his own preferences and without being justified in assuming, at least counterfactually, a consent of the concerned other, in the random combinations of the parents' sets of chromosomes. [...] Would not the first human being to determine, *at his own discretion,* the natural essence of another human being at the same time destroy the equal freedoms that exist among persons of equal birth in order to ensure their difference?[31]

[28] Matthew 18:21.

[29] Genesis 1:27.

[30] Jürgen Habermas, 'Faith and Knowledge', in Idem, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 114-5.

In my view both the above examples are illustrations of a promising approach of the relation between the particularity of religious traditions and their claim to express true wisdom. Apparently, religious wisdom not only orientates the lives of the members of a specific religious community, but can also have a fundamental significance for other people, including secular ones. Far from suggesting that this approach solves all problems regarding religious truth in the context of a radical plurality of religions and secular world-views, it at least enables the latter to participate in the public debate without being marginalised a priori as a particular, biased position. This gives an interesting twist to the statement that contemporary society is post-secular: it is not only post-secular because religion, as a matter of fact, has not disappeared from the public scene, but also because particular religious traditions are the bearers of fundamental moral intuitions, which otherwise could be lost: 'Philosophy has good reasons to be willing to learn from religious traditions.'[32]

3.3. Wisdom and truth

A final and perhaps most fundamental aspect of the suggestion to redefine the idea of religious truth in an existential way concerns the question of how exactly it is related to (religious) traditions as expressions of wisdom. As already pointed out above, Plato defined philosophy as a critical examination of the truth of wisdom, a definition which has become paradigmatic. However, since the rise of science and its impact on philosophy the latter's relation to wisdom has changed dramatically. Since then philosophy's only remaining option to examine the truth of wisdom has been to apply the critical and methodological rigor of science. The conclusion of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* offers an excellent illustration of this shift:

> Science (critically undertaken and methodically directed) is the narrow gate that leads to the true doctrine of practical wisdom [...]. Philosophy must always continue to be the guardian of this science; and although the public does not take any interest in its subtle investigations, it must take an interest in the resulting doctrines, which such an examination first puts in a clear light.[33]

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[31] Ibid., p. 115.

[32] Jürgen Habermas, 'Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State', in Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), p. 42.

Although some contemporary philosophers agree with Kant's thesis that science is the indispensable 'organon' for philosophy in order to be able to separate true wisdom from fanaticism (*'Schwärmerei'*),[34] I have shown above that the type of rationality that predominates science is too restricted to be able to critically account for the truth-claims of wisdom.

Instead of following Kant's suggestion to use science to pass a massive and final judgment about the truth of wisdom I want to take another approach and focus on the life-orientating character of wisdom. The advantage of this approach is that it explicitly links wisdom to the concrete existence of humans, thereby accepting that there is a plurality of ways to give orientation to one's life, but at the same rejecting the idea that every orientation is all the same, in other words that there would be no *qualitative* differences between various traditions of wisdom, and that one could not argue reasonably about their truth. In order to develop the idea of a reasonable discussion concerning the truth of various life-orientations I want to start from a text of Kant's in which he explicitly addresses this issue, viz. *What Does It Mean: to Orientate Oneself In Thinking?*.[35] Kant wrote this essay as a reaction to the pantheism-controversy of 1785, opposing Mendelssohn, the most illustrious representative of the German Enlightenment, and Jacobi, who was generally seen as defending the position that truth is the result of immediate revelation. It is not my intention here to offer a detailed historical account of the ins and outs of this controversy and Kant's position in it, but to examine from a systematic perspective how he answers the question of how one can orientate oneself truthfully in moral matters.[36]

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[33] Immanuel Kant, 'Kritik der praktischen Vernunft', in Immanuel Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, Herausgegeben von Wilhelm Weischedel, *Band 6: Schriften zur Ethik und Religionsphilosophie: Erster Teil* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), p. 302. See also: Immanuel Kant, 'Logik', in Immanuel Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden. Band 5: Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik*, p. 449: 'For science is of an intrinsic value as an organon of wisdom only. But, as such, it is indispensable to it; so that it may well be maintained that wisdom without science is a shadow of a perfection which we never shall reach.'

[34] Ludger Honnefelder, 'Weisheit durch den Weg der Wissenschaft. Theologie und Philosophie bei Augustinus und Thomas von Aquin', in Willi Oelmüller (hrsg.), *Philosophie und Weisheit: Kolloquien zur Gegenwartsphilosophie, Band 12* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), p. 77; Willi Oelmüller, 'Der kritische Weg ist allein noch offen', in Willie Oelmüller (hrsg.), *Philosophie und Weisheit,* pp. 174-177.

[35] Immanuel Kant, 'Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?' in Immanuel Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden. Band 5: Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik*, pp. 267-283.

In his search for a principle that could orientate us in (our thinking about) moral matters Kant agrees neither with Mendelssohn nor with Jacobi: common sense is unable to guide us in moral matters, since it is too ambivalent (against Mendelssohn), but renouncing reason completely by relying on an 'effusive intuition under the name of faith to which tradition or revelation can be grafted on without the consent of reason',[37] as Jacobi did, is even more problematic, since it only leads to fanaticism. On the contrary, being able to reasonably examine the truth of one's orientation in life is an essential and necessary human capacity. So he calls on everyone to 'accept whatever seems most credible to you after careful and honest examination [...]; but do not deny reason that prerogative which makes it the greatest good on earth, namely its right to be the ultimate touchstone of truth'.[38] However, the kind of reason that Kant has in mind is not the pre-critical, dogmatic reason of the Enlightenment-philosophers (including Mendelssohn), which claimed to possess an objective, quasi scientific knowledge of truth in moral issues; herewith he rules out a theistic answer right from the start. Instead of the two aforementioned extremes Kant suggests that 'the extended and more precisely defined concept of *orientating oneself* can be helpful to elucidate the maxim of healthy reason in its activities to attain cognition of super-sensible objects'.[39]

Kant's argument about orientating oneself in thinking is especially relevant for the current debate because he accepts the reality of (religious) pluralism: orientation is always linked to the specific, subjective position of a person or a community in a given moral landscape. But at the same time he holds on to humanity's fundamental need to reasonably examine the truth of their life-orientations, thereby admitting that they are not all the same. Moreover the concept of orientating oneself in thinking qualifies in a most interesting way what it means to reason about moral issues in concrete, lifelike situations. Although the content of the idea of moral orientation will be developed in the next paragraphs, it is already clear at this stage that every orientation, because of the subjective aspect it involves, differs from the conviction that the objective truth of one's faith is guaranteed, because it is the result of an immediate inspiration

[36] For an historical analysis of this essay cf. Gerd Irrlitz, *Kant-Handbuch. Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), pp. 419-422.

[37] Immanuel Kant, 'Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?', p. 268.

[38] Ibid., p. 283.

[39] Ibid., pp. 268-9.

of the divine, as well as from the position that claims to be able to demonstrate the truth of life-orientations with the help of a completely disengaged, so to speak, scientific rationality. Reasoning about the truth of one's life-orientation is fine and even necessary, but has to depart from the existential situation one finds oneself in.

Every kind of orientation requires a subjective principle: if one wants to orientate oneself geographically, the awareness of the difference between one's left and right hand is essential to find out, when one knows that it is midday, where the sun has risen. By analogy, to orientate oneself in thinking means 'to be guided, in one's conviction of truth, by a subjective principle of reason where objective principles of reason are inadequate'.[40] Such a guidance is especially necessary in existential or moral situations, because we feel on the one hand an urgent (subjective) need to pass a true judgment about our life-orientations, while on the other we are painfully aware of the lack of objective knowledge that would make such a judgment univocally and universally true. In other words, to orientate oneself in moral questions is neither a matter of just doing whatever come to one's mind, nor of objective science. Therefore, just as in a geographical orientation we then need an orienting principle, in the light of which a judgment can be passed. But characteristic for an orientation in thinking is that this principle is not a sensuous one, but is inherent in reason itself. Obviously philosophy has to examine critically if this principle is not contradictory and if it, as a supersensible principle, can suitably be related to our reasoning about the experienced world. So, whenever we orientate ourselves in thinking '*the right of the need* of reason supervenes as a subjective ground for presupposing and accepting something which reason cannot presume to know on objective grounds, and hence for *orientating* ourselves in thinking [...] purely by means of the need of reason alone'.[41]

As said, the need of this subjective guiding principle is above all pressing in moral or existential matters; that is, whenever we are confronted with the *necessity* to judge about e.g. the possibility of reconciling virtue and happiness, freedom and nature. According to Kant this need can only be fulfilled by accepting the objective reality of an original archetypical being, both as the supreme intelligence and the highest good. Although the existence of this being cannot be demonstrated objectively, its

[40] Immanuel Kant, 'Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?', p. 270, footnote.
[41] Ibid., p. 271.

acceptance is nevertheless essential in order to prevent the highest good as well as morality as a whole from being regarded merely as an ideal. Kant calls this attitude a reasonable belief; it consists in the subjective conviction of the truth of a being on purely reasonable grounds, while at the same time being aware that the existence of this being cannot be demonstrated objectively. This reasonable belief is a conviction of truth which is subjectively adequate, but objectively inadequate. It thus holds an intermediary position between an opinion (which is a subjectively and objectively inadequate conviction of truth) and knowledge (which is a conviction of truth on subjectively and objectively adequate grounds). Thus, 'a pure faith of reason is the signpost of a compass by means of which the speculative thinker can orientate himself on his reasonable wanderings in the field of supersensible objects'.[42]

Kant's analysis of orientating oneself in thinking offers a fascinating elucidation of religion and secular world-views as traditional forms of wisdom and their relation to truth. First of all, the subjective character of the need for wisdom does not mean that every individual could invent or construct it high-handedly, but that it is a basic characteristic of all humans: we have a fundamental need for wisdom, because knowing how to orientate ourselves is essential in all moral, i.e. existential, matters. Because this need is so deeply embedded in our spiritual nature, it is subjectively adequate. In my view this insight in the 'subjective universality' of the need for wisdom offers the common ground in order to understand the basic anthropological dynamic of religions and secular world-views. The debate between religions and secular world-views it not between irrational faith and objective reason, but between diverging traditions of wisdom, each of them offering its own way to orientate one's life. However, the subjective universality of the need for wisdom does not by itself mean that the objective counterpart of this need is demonstrably true. In this respect Kant says that the best we can reach is a reasonable faith in the reality of the highest good, which is exemplified in the highest being. This being serves as the point of reference, with the help of which we judge the existential truth of our concrete orientations in life. But because of its objective inadequacy it can never serve as a standard that is always at our disposal and can be read unambiguously. Furthermore, from a contemporary perspective it is clear that the object of the pure faith of reason cannot be identified with God as supreme

[42] Ibid., p. 277.

intelligence and highest good, as Kant does, since this would rule out secular forms of wisdom a priori. Instead I want to suggest the idea of human dignity as constituting the substance of this subjective principle, since it unites secular as well as religious traditions. It is essential to stress the objective inadequacy of the idea of human dignity, implying that it cannot be identified with the (rather Western and secular) declaration of human rights, but remains open to approaches from various religious and secular, Western and non-Western traditions.

Anyhow, the gap between subjective adequacy and objective inadequacy is essential for all kinds of human wisdom, religious and secular, as it is a consequence of the fact that we are finite beings, lacking a divine knowledge of the world in which we live. But although the truth of human wisdom cannot be demonstrated unambiguously, a reasonable examination of it is nevertheless essential, since from our own experience we know that there are orientations in life that lead us astray. As said above, the basic reason for this approach is that reason and not some divine illumination is the ultimate touchstone of truth.

Following the terminology of the second section of this paper one can call this combination of subjective adequacy and objective inadequacy the plausibility of religion, since plausibility concerns the reasonable acceptability (as distinct from the demonstrable truth) of religion for a subject or community. In sum, as I argued above philosophy of religion should focus on a reasonable argumentation in favour of the plausibility of religion, thereby starting from the common insight that religious and secular ways of life are attempts to orientate people in existential questions.

CONCLUSION

If philosophers of religion want to try the existential approach to religious truth presented in the previous section, they first of all need to be familiar with what a religious way of life means, just like philosophers of art are required to have some familiarity with art. By accepting this condition, they somehow continue the pre-modern tradition of faithful thinking, of faith searching for understanding, albeit in a totally different context than the one of Anselm, who was one of its founding fathers. This difference primarily concerns the dominance of secular ways of life and the growing presence of non-Christian religious traditions. They make the position of contemporary religious philosophers look similar to the one of the apostle Paul on the Areopagus. Just as Paul had to explain the

truth of the Christian way of life to epicurean and stoic philosophers, who did not at all share his basic convictions, the task of contemporary philosophers of religion is also to explain the substantially true in the religious way of life they are familiar with, as reasonably as possible, so that it is also intelligible to people not sharing it.

SCIENCE, RELIGION AND COMMON SENSE

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Abstract. Susan Haack has recently attempted to discredit religion by showing that science is an extended and enhanced version of common sense while religion is not. I argue that Haack's account is misguided not because science is not an extended version of common sense, as she says. It is misguided because she assumes a very restricted, and thus inadequate, account of common sense. After reviewing several more realistic models of common sense, I conclude that common sense is rich enough to allow various kinds of extensions. Just as science can be correctly seen as an enhanced version of common sense, so also religion.

These last decades, the vast literary output on science and religion has concentrated on cutting-edge developments in science, mainly in theoretical physics, cognitive science, and evolutionary biology. Philosophy of religion in this area has therefore struggled with various intricate arguments that are often heavily interlaced with the technical language of these sciences. Against this background, a new kind of argument is now emerging, a form of argument that cuts across these well-established debates because it refers not to scientific discoveries but to the rather mundane idea of common sense. If science is an elaborate, extended, or enhanced version of common sense, while religion is not, can we conclude that science is better than religion? An answer to this question has crucial repercussions in a number of areas of philosophy. For instance, it would throw light on the impact of a new form of naturalism that is gaining popularity, a form of naturalism less associated with positivism and more with pragmatism. It also would redraw attention to the philosophical centrality of common sense as a possible source of justification.

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Hence it is timely to deal directly with this question, and a good way to situate the discussion is to start with Susan Haack's book *Defending Science Within Reason*, where she articulates this issue very clearly. I will first give an overview of her main arguments, especially those that deal with religion, and then will proceed with a sustained analysis of the nature of common sense and of its alleged role in justifying science and discrediting religion.

I. SUSAN HAACK'S POSITION

Haack's overall view of scientific inquiry is pragmatic. She explains her agenda early on in the book as one of articulating a healthy middle way between two opposed extreme views. She calls these two views the Old Deferentialism and the New Cynicism. Old Deferentialism is the position according to which science progresses mainly inductively by accumulating true or probably true theories confirmed by evidence. This procedure of science, and variations of it, have been clarified by logical analysis and defended against a number of logical paradoxes that have been wedged against it these last decades. The overall impact of this position is over-optimism, a kind of scientism. The other position, the New Cynicism, is diametrically opposed to this. Blatantly anti-scientific in tone, this New Cynicism rejects the value of inquiry. It endorses relativism, and sometimes even tries to accomplish the logically impossible: it tries to talk intelligently about the rejection of all rationality. Susan Haack stays clear of both these positions and seeks the middle ground because she thinks that both positions not only are extreme positions but also suffer from the same deficiency. They both suffer from a lack of serious engagement with the world. They both are incapable of explaining how through science we can affect the world and be affected by the world. What she means here is explained by the use of an analogy: the analogy of a crossword puzzle. Scientific practice, including evidence and method, is very similar to the entering of words in a crossword puzzle, the entering of the correct words and not just any words, entering words that intersect with others already written, words that are partially supported by previous entries, and words that are themselves partial support for future entries. She calls her middle way *critical common-sensim*, a term she draws from Charles S. Pierce.

Following the lead of many prominent scientists, she holds that science is the long arm of common sense.[1] By this, she means that scientists are not employing some special method of inquiry unavailable to non-scientists. Science is a refinement of everyday thinking. In line with this, she adopts a direct form of realism. She holds that there is one correct description of the world, whether we know it or not, and that the scientific method is our way of discovering more and more details about this correct description. In all this, she remains modest. She acknowledges not only the achievements of science, but also 'the pervasive fallibility, the imperfections and flaws, the sheer untidiness, of this remarkable but thoroughly human enterprise' (Haack 2007: 123). Once she establishes in this way the general features of her overall approach, she proceeds by discussing various peripheral issues related to science, such as the strengths and weaknesses of sociological studies of science, and the tension between scientific and literary cultures. In all this, her position is similar to that of C. S. Pierce.

As regards the specific area of religion, which is our main interest in this paper, she starts by recalling the considerable differences that exist between science and religion. They not only have very different conceptions of the universe; they even have very different views on what constitutes a good explanation. One the one hand, there is science, which has developed ways of extending the power of our senses and ways of enhancing our faculties of reasoning, remembering, and calculating. Science does all this by carefully eschewing appeals to supernatural forces and by resorting only to empirical evidence. And on the other hand, there is religion, which, according to Haack, is not primarily a kind of inquiry at all, but a creed built around one core idea, the idea that 'a purposeful spiritual being brought the universe into existence, and gave human beings a very special place. This spiritual being is concerned about how we humans behave and what we believe, and can be influenced by our prayers and rituals' (Haack 2007: 267). Admittedly, theology, as a rational expression of religion, is indeed a form of inquiry, but, like religion, it differs radically from scientific inquiry because it welcomes explanations that involve supernatural features. One needs to note at this point that, when Haack is expressing this difference between science and theology, she does not do so in terms of how these two disciplines

[1] She refers, for instance, to Albert Einstein who held that 'the whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking' (Einstein 1934-1954: 290).

function, but in terms of how they relate to everyday empirical inquiry. She writes: 'unlike scientific inquiry, theological inquiry is discontinuous with everyday empirical inquiry, both in the kinds of explanations in which it traffics and in the kinds of evidential support on which it calls' (Haack 2007: 267). The effect of this discontinuity is evident in the way theology, in the course of history, retreated at the same rate as science advanced. In Haack's way of putting it, theology retreated to 'higher ground'. By this, she means that theology kept readjusting its claims and diminishing their content until little or nothing factual is now left.

She turns then to address the debate between creationism and intelligent design theory. Protagonists on both sides of this debate think that there is no compatibility whatsoever between science and theology. She does not spend much time with Biblical literalists. She turns her attention to those scientists who defend religion by allegedly proving that evolutionary explanation is incomplete. Such a defence usually refers to parts of the organism, such as the eye or the DNA molecule, which are considered too internally complex to be producible in stages through natural selection. The argument, in short, is that, since evolutionary changes, by definition, occur only when they confer some survival advantage, and since the internal relations between the parts of such complex units are mutually dependent for the efficiency of the whole, a change in one of these parts can never result in conferring a survival advantage to the organism as a whole. This means that an evolutionary explanation cannot be correct for such cases. The parts must change all together for any survival advantage to be possible. And postulating a synchronized change of a group of variables all together goes against the idea of random mutations, which is a basic feature of any evolutionary explanation. Haack's refutation of this argument is interesting. Instead of entering into the intricate details of such arguments, as many others on both sides of the debate have done, she highlights the virtues of scientists. She concedes that there is no clear answer yet, and then describes how the occasional gaps in scientific explanation do nothing to diminish the determination of scientists, who are perfectly capable of admitting that some given question is not answered yet, and that they are therefore still working on it – the most natural way to proceed in such matters. Theologians are totally different. They can only reiterate: 'It was God who did it.' But this is not an explanation. It is a mere admittance of ignorance. It is just acknowledging that the explanation will remain forever inaccessible. For Haack, this attitude is very cheap;

it is no substitute for the scientist's determination to dig further and further. She therefore feels perfectly entitled to reiterate her basic insight: 'supernatural explanations are as alien to detective work and history or to our everyday explanations of spoiled food or delayed buses as they are to physics and biology' (Haack 2007: 279). At this point, a religious believer may want to press the objection that religion is not as alien to human living as this quotation is implying. Religion is as deeply rooted in the history of humanity as any of these simple explanations that Haack is referring to, and has certainly deeper roots in history than science as we know it. To this possible objection, Haack's answer is typically pragmatic. She admits that, because of the ubiquity of religion within human society since earliest times, we need to concede that there must be something in it. She thinks however that, at this day and age when science has progressed so much, people must choose between science and religion – and her choice is clear: 'Religion is no less quintessentially human an enterprise than science; it is much older, and its roots in our psychological makeup perhaps deeper. But its fundamental appeal is to the side of the human creature that craves certainty, likes to be elevated by mysteries, dislikes disagreeable truths, and clings to the flattering idea that we are not just remarkable animals, but the chosen creatures' (Haack 2007: 293).

By now, Haack's overall attitude towards religion should be clear. For her, science is a respectable, extended version of common sense while religion is not. The solid grounding of science on common sense is what science has and what religion lacks as regards justification. Undoubtedly, the crucial factor in her argument is common sense. But what is common sense? Can it really offer Haack the leverage she needs to sideline religion?

II. COMMON SENSE

As a first approximation, we can start with the idea that common sense is the set of rational features common to all human beings. The basic idea behind this preliminary definition is that the word 'sense' within the expression 'common sense' is associated not with the concept of perception but with the concept of reasonability. The principles of common sense understood in this way can be manifested in the way people reason things out in normal circumstances. To make a list of these principles in detail is not at all straightforward. Consequently, although many people agree that it is perfectly correct to talk about common

sense and even that the expression 'common sense' refers to something, not many would be capable of articulating even the major principles it consists in. Some prominent philosophers have had a go at this task, because they were motivated by the conviction that a lot of what we do in our intellectual activity depends on common sense. The result however has never been a complete list of principles. Aristotle and Thomas Reid, for instance, assumed the existence of common understanding, and they even considered it something like a platform on which elaborate philosophical arguments can be built.[2] They went so far as to consider it a foundational source from which conclusions can be drawn about what can be said and what cannot be said, what can be deduced and what cannot be deduced. In the words of Thomas Reid, philosophy 'has no other root but the principles of Common Sense; it grows out of them and draws its nourishment from them. Severed from this root, its honours wither, its sap is dried up, it dies and rots' (Reid 1983: 7). These philosophers did all this however without ever coming close to producing a full list of constitutive principles of common sense. Some may think that this verges on the irresponsible. How can a philosophy be sound if it is based on common sense when the nature of common sense is not clarified first? Although this is an important question, it is not directly related to my aims in this paper. Suffice it to say that I do not think there is any major fault here. The basic assumption is simple. These philosophers, and others like them, assume that common sense includes foundational principles that are universally held and are consequently inviolable and unavoidable. Denying these principles would be self-contradictory, either because these principles can only be denied in artificially construed contexts, far from any real life situation, or because these principles are always being assumed tacitly in the very process of denying them.[3]

[2] When we are discussing Aristotle, the expression 'common sense' can lead to ambiguity. He often uses the expression 'common sense' to refer to that mental faculty that brings to unity what is perceived in different ways by the different senses. What we nowadays refer to by 'common sense' is not this. For us, 'common sense' refers to those aspects of rationality that are common to all, for instance the principle of non-contradiction. Having said this, however, it is good to recall that this relatively modern use of the expression 'common sense' is also present in Aristotle, even though he does not refer to it by that expression.

[3] Useful explorations of the interface between common sense and science include: Gavin 1984, Musgrave 1993, and Rescher 2005. For a more general epistemological account, see Moore 1959, Chisholm 1977, Chisholm 1982, and Lemos 2004.

For the argument I am focusing on in this paper, the main interest is the understanding of common sense by contemporary philosophers like Susan Haack. The way she appeals to common sense is typical of the philosophical tradition she belongs to, namely pragmatism. A typical pragmatist like Charles Sanders Peirce assumes that 'there are indubitable beliefs which vary a little and but a little under varying circumstances and in distant ages; that they partake of the nature of instincts [...] they are very vague indeed (such as, that fire burns)' (Peirce 1931-1958: 498). Peirce adds that these vague beliefs, which are constitutive of common sense, 'have the same sort of basis as scientific results have. That is to say, they rest on experience – on the total everyday experience of many generations of multitudinous populations [...] all science, without being aware of it, virtually supposes the truth of the vague results of uncontrolled thought upon such experiences' (Peirce 1931-1958: 522).[4] The basic idea here is that human beings are all endowed with the elements of common sense and that they express these by vague propositions like 'fire burns'. Through the use of sophisticated scientific methods, such propositions are not falsified but refined. They are stripped of their vagueness, and thereby clarified. For Peirce and his followers, therefore, the continuity between common sense and science is clear and fundamental. And Haack is building her argument precisely on this continuity. For her, science is an enhanced version of common sense as described by Peirce.[5]

But now we have to face the crucial issue. Is common sense correctly exemplified by the belief that fire burns? In other words, is common sense limited to explanation of physical effects in terms of physical causes? Can people appeal to common sense when dealing with issues that go beyond the empirically verifiable? These questions are very important for Haack. She is arguing that there is continuity between science and common sense, and that this continuity justifies science as a legitimate mode of intellectual activity. Science is acceptable, she claims, because it is the long arm of common sense. Anyone who attempts to discredit science

[4] For further insight into Peirce's views, see his two papers 'Pragmaticism and Critical Common-Sensism'; and 'Consequences of Critical Common-Sensism' (both in Peirce 1931-1958, vol, 5). I discuss these issues in Caruana 2000, chapter 8.

[5] It is good to indicate here that Haack does not follow Peirce all the way. She seems to think that if one is a pragmatist one is obliged to be a religious unbeliever. Peirce himself, however, defended religious belief in his own way. The climax of his philosophy of religion is probably his 1908 paper 'A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God' (Peirce 1931-1958, vol. 6).

will be discrediting common sense, and thereby sliding into irrationality. But could it be that common sense is a broader platform than she thinks? If it is, the justification she thinks is reserved only for science may in fact be available also for other modes of intellectual activity.

So my main contention with Haack should now be clear. I want to argue first that common sense is broader than instrumental reasoning, and secondly that, because of this, religion is justified as an enhanced version of common sense just like science.

III. MULTIDIMENSIONAL COMMON SENSE

The first step is to ask: how can common sense be broader than instrumental reasoning? To explore some possibilities, let us start with an example. Consider Aristotle's two famous claims: that all people desire to know, and that all people are driven by wonder. Such claims indicate that, for Aristotle, a person who does not desire to know, or who is not driven by wonder, would be lacking in something that is fundamental, lacking in something that is common to all humans. Of course, there are many features that humans share in common, such as having one heart and two lungs. But the features Aristotle is referring to in this context are not biological features; they are mental. A person who does not desire to know or who is not driven by wonder would be lacking in what pertains to the rational or to the conceptual dimension of being human in just the same way as an individual whose reasoning violates the principle of non-contradiction. Consequently, if I am reading Aristotle correctly, we have here an indication that there is more to common sense, understood as common rationality, than just principles that are embedded within explanation in terms of cause and effect.[6]

To explore this further, consider the set of concepts indispensable for inter-personal relations. These concepts are associated directly with the conceiving of other humans as persons: they are associated directly with the conceiving of others as irreducible units that are bearers of a specific

[6] I pick Aristotle as an example because of his particular affinity with today's scientific attitudes, an affinity that can best be seen in his method. He does not begin with being sceptical. He trusts our perceptual and cognitive faculties, and assumes that they put us in direct contact with reality. Starting from experience, he reflects deeply on any puzzles that such experience presents. And yet he does not limit his reflection to any one area of human activity. For him, what humans do by nature is broader than the science of production (see *Metaphysica*, 982b: 11-27).

group of predicates, predicates associated with love, hate, sympathy, resentment, trust, suspicion, forgiveness, revenge, honesty, hypocrisy, and with other concepts like these. These concepts can function only once the concept of person, as a basic category, is in place. Can we consider this set of concepts dispensable? We cannot. Anyone who tries to live without them would simply drift away from the community that makes meaning possible. Moreover, any attempt to discredit the centrality of these concepts involves an instance of using them – because the very discrediting has to be carried out within a community of persons. Language itself is a communal activity. It is therefore clear that, if common sense is taken to be the set of all that is universally held and that is inviolable and unavoidable, it includes more than just the principles involved in instrumental reasoning in terms of cause and effect. Haack's argument is one-sided because she emphasizes only one dimension of common sense, and thinks that that is all there is to say about common sense.

My second step now is to show that just as science is an enhanced version of the instrumental dimension of common sense (which is just one of the many dimensions of common sense) so also religion is an enhanced version of another dimension of common sense, more specifically an enhanced version of the dimension that involves concepts associated with interpersonal relations. My argument here starts with a couple of observations concerning Haack's reasoning. What is it that convinces pragmatic philosophers like Haack that science can legitimately be called an enhanced version of common sense? First, I would guess, such people are impressed by the fact that the logical form of explanation within science is also found in common sense. It does not require much thought and self-reflection to realise that common sense involves observation, inductive generalizations (most of which are tentative), falsifiability tests, inference to the best explanation, and so on. All these features constitute the engine of sophisticated scientific research. Moreover, philosophers like Haack are also impressed by the fact that science generates the building of instruments that enlarge the range of observation, increase the speed of seeing correlations, and enhance other such operations. Such enhancement is essentially equivalent to enlarging the range of the simple explanations of everyday life.

Now consider religion. The list of basic concepts at work within a religious way of life includes not only the central concept of maximal greatness or infinite perfection, which is usually expressed by the word 'God'. It includes also concepts related to acting rightly and acting wrongly,

to attributing praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, to honesty and hypocrisy, to love and hate, to consolation and desolation, to wonder and fear – all these basic concepts are the same in essence as those constituting the dimension of common sense associated with inter-personal relations. We may even add here that in some religious traditions, most notably in Christianity, even the concept of maximal greatness is associated with inter-personal relations. And this fact explains why even children can already have a basic sense of religion, a very simple but genuine sense of religion, from an early age. Moreover, religion is expressed through practices and rituals, both personal and communal, which enlarge or deepen the understanding of the interpersonal relations of everyday life. The sense of personal commitment and fidelity is highlighted, community ideals of goodness and beauty are deepened, global fraternity and personal self-giving are enhanced, ideals concerning loyalty and self-sacrifice are purified.

So the parallelism should now be noticeable. What justifies the idea that science is an enhanced version of common sense justifies also the idea that religion is, in its own way, an enhanced version of common sense as well. Common sense is rich enough to allow various genuine extended and enhanced versions of it. Science enhances common sense in one direction while religion enhances common sense in another direction. Science and religion are not competing extensions of common sense, but extensions of different dimensions of common sense. Science is an extension of the instrumental and explanatory dimension. Religion is an extension of the dimension of common sense that is associated with inter-personal relations.

One might object here that I am naïvely taking religion to be a force for the good. I seem to be arguing that religion enhances inter-personal relations in the sense of making them better. But if we think of the adverse effects religion has had on civilization in the course of history, we will never be tempted to see it as enhancement at all. This objection introduces an important point. Religion emerges within human culture in various ways, and not all these ways are positive. But this fact does nothing to undermine the main line of argument. Concepts associated with interpersonal-relations come in various kinds. If there is love, there is also hate; if there is honesty, there is also hypocrisy. Religion can enhance both the good ways we relate to each other and also the bad ways. And, within the major religions, this ambivalence is well recognized. It is dealt with

by self-corrective mechanisms inscribed within their moral traditions. Notice that we can argue in a parallel fashion about science. Although it is agreed that science is an enhanced version of common sense, as defended by Haack, we cannot thereby deduce that science has always been a force for the good. We cannot thereby argue that science has been, and will always be, beneficial for genuine human flourishing. Being based on common sense is no guarantee that things cannot go wrong.

Some may want to object that my line of argument has stretched Haack's understanding of common sense beyond all recognition. She is talking about a set of common rules for inquiry, while I am talking about the set of concepts and presuppositions that are necessary for what might be called successful navigation through life. I concede that this is a legitimate observation, but I add that the distinction between the two accounts is not a weakness in my overall argument. The two accounts are intimately related. Since I am ready to accept that navigation through life, as understood here, is indeed helped by correct strategies of inquiry, my understanding of common sense is broader than Haack's and includes it. What justifies the broader view is the fact that human beings are not characterised only by skills regarding inquiry. They are characterised also by other species-specific dimensions of their activity, including all that is semantic, symbolic, personal, and interpersonal. These dimensions are as foundational a fact of human natural history as the fact that humans reason things out deductively and inductively, and have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes.

In highlighting this fact, I am in fact presenting an argument that is in line with an important trend in current biological thinking, a trend associated with the idea of the extended phenotype. The expression 'extended phenotype' is used by those who claim that considering an organism solely in terms of its constitutive microphysical and chemical processes is seriously limited. The basic proposal is that the phenotype of an organism, in other words its characteristic outward, physical appearance as distinct from its genetic makeup, is not limited to biological processes only; it should include also all the effects that that genetic makeup has on the environment. In other words, we need to accept that the specificity of any organism, when correctly understood, extends way beyond the individual microstructure and even beyond its surface features. For instance, we need to realise that the way beavers build their nest is as much part of the nature of beavers as the colour

of their fur, the flatness of their tail, and the structure of their DNA.[7] My broad view of common sense is similar to this. It is an extension of Haack's view just as the idea of the extended phenotype is an extension of the previous limited view of phenotype. In other words, I am urging that, to obtain a correct view of the specific rational nature of human beings, we cannot limit our considerations to how humans deal with simple inquiry of the form 'Why *P*?'. We need to broaden our range of vision, as it were, and acknowledge also how humans have an important species-specific side to their nature that arises from their complex symbolic way of relating interpersonally, from their appreciation of time, value, and personal commitment, and from the way in which they do not just exist but are infinitely interested in existing (Kierkegaard 1992: 302).

So to conclude, the main question addressed to Haack was this: can common sense be an efficient tool to justify science and discredit religion? I argued that the answer is no. The answer is no not because there is no such thing as common sense, and not because Haack has given a wrong characterisation of common sense. The answer is no basically because common sense is much broader than what Haack thinks it is. Of course, more work needs to be done. Perhaps there are objections I have not considered. Perhaps some would say that, as regards this issue, Haack's work is not a good place to start. And perhaps there is some argument that shows that religious activity is not in fact related to interpersonal relations after all. Given the strength of the pragmatist tradition, and the impressive philosophical skills of many within that tradition, it seems reasonable to predict that my argument will not convince everyone. Still, it remains to be seen why not. At the very least, I hope to have shown that those who adopt Haack's nuanced naturalistic approach to religion run the risk of ending up with a severely skewed view of what common sense can and cannot support.

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[7] The idea of extended phenotype was popularized by Richard Dawkins (e.g. Dawkins 1999). Here I am referring to the basic features of this idea only. I am not endorsing his controversial view that genes are the fundamental units of evolutionary selection.

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IN QUEST OF AUTHENTIC DIVINITY: CRITICAL NOTICE OF MARK JOHNSTON'S *SAVING GOD: RELIGION AFTER IDOLATRY*

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Mark Johnston. *Saving God: Religion After Idolatry,* Princeton University Press, 2009.

Johnston describes *Saving God*, in a preface, as 'the expression of a certain sensibility' that 'contains some philosophy but is not a work of philosophy' (p. xi). It is true that the main negative thesis of *Saving God* is the rejection of 'supernaturalism', with its conception of God as a personal agent who creates the Universe *ex nihilo* and intervenes in its history to salvific purpose. And it is also true that, for Johnston, 'the crux of supernaturalist belief' is 'belief in life after death'. For his critique of this belief, and thus what he himself counts as his '*philosophical* defence of the spiritual irrelevance of supernaturalism' (p. xi), Johnston directs the reader to his subsequent book, *Surviving Death*.[1] It by no means follows, however, that *Saving God* is not a work of philosophy. I found reading *Saving God* an exhilarating experience and I refuse to agree that such an unputdownable book is not an authentic work of philosophy! In this article, I hope to show, to the contrary, that *Saving God* should be taken seriously as a significant original contribution to the Philosophy of Religion, even though it may also serve as its author's spiritual manifesto.

[1] Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Johnston's attempt in this book – the Carl G. Hempel lecture series – to provide understandings of the self and personal identity that support a purely naturalistic account of surviving death is a work of great philosophical interest. Here, however, I confine myself to discussing *Saving God*.

Conceptions of God and the fear of idolatry

One source of my exhilaration is Johnston's focus on *what can count as an adequate conception of God*, while 'bracketing out' the question of the justifiability of believing that God exists. This is a breath of fresh air for debates that simply assume the *personal omniGod* conception of the divine, according to which God is 'an all-powerful, all-knowing, wholly good person (a person without a body) who has created us and our world'.[2] God has, of course, been thought of differently: classical theism conceives of God as atemporal, immutable, impassible, necessary and simple, and treats talk of God as 'a' personal agent as analogical. But many would think that whatever can be retained of classical theism must be *religiously*, and not merely metaphysically, adequate: an adequate conception of God has to fit the relevant 'forms of life'. On that score, many would suppose, the personal omniGod conception is the best we can do.

A second occasion for exhilaration, therefore, is that Johnston challenges supernaturalist theism *on religious grounds*. He does this by emphasising the fear of idolatry intrinsic to theistic consciousness. Not only have the theistic traditions historically used a 'rhetoric of idolatrousness' to challenge their rivals, they are also subject to potential *self*-criticism since what they take to be God ('their god', with a small 'g') *may not actually be* the true God (with a capital 'G'). There is no privileged access to the knowledge that one believes in God: 'the best thing a believer can say in response to the question "Do you believe in God?" is "I can only hope that I do. I can only hope that I actually stand in a tradition in which God has genuinely revealed himself"' (p. 10).

'God', then, is not a proper name, but a descriptive name, a 'compressed title' (p. 6), and there is a real question whether whatever one takes to deserve that title actually deserves it. Under his 'phenomenological approach', Johnston considers whether specific candidates for what we might call the 'God-role' would, if they existed, be fit to play that role. Any such candidate that does not fit that role would then, if it existed, be an idol, and worshipping it, whether it existed or not, idolatry.

Characterising the 'God-role': the Highest One, who brings salvation

How is this 'God-role' to be characterised? Johnston settles on descriptions that result from considering what it is that an idol counterfeits – namely,

[2] The description is Plantinga's (*Warranted Christian Belief*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) , p. 3): 'omniGod' connotes the 'omni-'properties, omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing) and omnibenevolent (all-loving).

a proper object of worship. God is 'the Most High' or 'the Highest One', and the One 'from whom (or from which) flows our salvation' (p. 12).

Johnston offers a religiously 'neutral' account of salvation as properly coming to terms with the 'large scale structural defects in human life that no amount of psychological adjustment or practical success can free us from', including 'arbitrary suffering, aging (once it has reached the corrosive stage), our profound ignorance of our condition, the isolation of ordinary self-involvement, the vulnerability of everything we cherish to time and chance, and, finally, to untimely death' (p. 15). *Properly* dealing with these defects requires self-transformation, with the development of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Johnston contrasts such authentic salvation with the 'spiritual materialism' that simply extends egotistic self-involvement into a 'supposedly spiritual realm' (pp. 15-6). Johnston allows that there may be several 'orientations' – including atheistic ones – that enable one to live authentically while neither denying nor resisting the 'structural defects' of human existence. What he insists upon, though, is that authentic belief in God must be such an orientation: for believers 'the Highest One comes into view, with salvific effect' (p. 16), and does so, as Johnston emphasises at the outset, through God's own self-revelation: 'God is transcendent; that is, God can come into view, if he comes into view at all, only as a result of his self-presentation.' (p. 1)

With this apparatus in place, Johnston's essay seeks to explain and motivate (if not 'philosophically' defend) both the negative claim that a supernatural being would not be fit for the God-role and a positive, 'process panentheistic', proposal about what would.

The supernatural God as idol?

Consider, first, Johnston's negative claim. One might complain that a supernatural personal agent is anthropomorphic. That would not suffice to show that it could not be the Highest One, however. *Some* degree of anthropomorphism in our understanding of God may be inevitable: the question is where to draw the line. Perhaps Marcion and the Gnostics were right: the Yahweh-character of the Hebrew Bible cannot be the Highest One given the ruthless tyrannical behaviour he sometimes exhibits. And Johnston may be right that the involvement of a supernatural God in a 'demonic mix' concocted by a priestly caste who exercise social control through fear of God's power over an 'afterlife' yields idolatrous worship and the 'spiritual materialism' that blocks

the self-transformation needed for salvation (see pp. 24-5). We may, however, conceive of a perfectly good supernatural personal agent as purified of his ancient role as tribal champion, and as granting eternal life to all who will receive it. A personal omniGod may thus still be the best candidate for the Highest One: what else, after all, apart from truly benign supernatural power could liberate us from those 'large scale structural defects'?

Criteria for authentic divinity

As noted, we do not get, in this book, Johnston's full argument for the inevitability of idolatrousness when a supernatural God is worshipped. But we do get a helpful discussion of a vital methodological issue raised by the need to determine whether a particular god is the true God. From where do the relevant criteria arise? Johnston cites Psalm 82 as 'set[ting] out a criterion of godliness, a criterion that in its turn applies to the Highest One'. ('Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute, Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hands of the wicked.') Johnston then aptly asks: 'But to accept it as a correct criterion, do we not have to take the psalm as expressing the view of the Highest One himself? If so, it is an enclosed circle, into which we cannot break, unless we have some antecedent conception of the Highest One.' Johnston therefore concludes that we must have such a conception: knowledge of the divine – negative knowledge, at least – 'could be the deliverance of some antecedent religious sense of things' (p. 56).

From a theistic perspective an 'antecedent religious sense of things' would, of course, itself be a gift of God's grace. But theism standardly distinguishes between God's special revelation and his general revelation, and a prior sense of what makes for – or, anyway, falls short of – authentic divinity may belong to the latter. Johnston argues that '[t] he logic of seeing and hearing *as* makes some antecedent religious sense of things a *precondition* of the revelation of the Highest One. Yes, God is transcendent, and so known *de re* to us only by his revelation; but for that revelation to occur, there must be *de dicto* knowledge of something of the nature of the Highest One' (p. 69). The kind of knowledge presupposed seems to be, or, at least, to include *moral* knowledge – witness the Psalm 82 criterion, for example, and the reasons for denying that the tribalist Yahweh or the God who rules by fear of the loss of eternal reward could be the Highest One.

Counting such moral knowledge as part of God's general revelation appears to depend on that knowledge being widely, even universally and innately, held. But, in fact it is not. Yahweh's tribalist championing of 'his people' to the point of commanding them to perform acts of genocide (see, for example, Joshua 6:20-1) surely *was* seen as compatible with Yahweh's greatness in the relevant historical context. The idea that 'God has no favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him' (Acts 11:34-5) *had to be developed*. From a theistic perspective, then, much of our moral knowledge must ultimately be attributable to God's *special* revelation. So perhaps the circularity is not easily avoided: perhaps the very knowledge presupposed by the possibility of recognising experience *as* revelatory of the Highest One must itself arise from just such experiences of revelation?

Internal criteria of religious falsehood: a requirement of substantive rationality?

Purely *external* criteria for authentic divinity and genuine revelation will not be religiously acceptable, so the question is – as Johnston expresses it in the title of his Chapter 5 – whether there can be 'an *internal* criterion of religious falsehood' (my emphasis). Johnston makes two proposals as to how the needed criteria may arise within the religious traditions.

The first is to adopt Pope Benedict's reasoning in his notorious Regensburg lecture. Benedict follows the Byzantine emperor Manuel II in holding that 'God acts, *syn logo*, with *logos*', where, as the Pope puts it, '*Logos* means both reason and word – a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John [the Evangelist]', the Pope continues, 'thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis' (quoted by Johnston, p. 72). Benedict, Johnston explains, 'interprets *Logos* as publicly accessible reason understood as an objective constraint on all actual reasoning and communication' (pp. 72-3), and treats 'the insertion of [this] Greek theme ... into biblical faith ... [as] ordained' – as '*a new step in the ongoing revelation of God's nature!*' (Johnston's emphasis, p. 73). 'From the very heart of Christian faith, and at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act "with *logos*" is contrary to God's nature' – a quotation from the Pope again (p. 73). We may be sure, then, that trying to spread the faith 'by the sword' cannot accord with the divine will. Placing God somehow 'above

reason' is a serious mistake – and one which, as Johnston observes, the Pope attributes as much to key thinkers in Protestant Christianity as to important strands in Islam.

How robust a criterion of authentically revealed truth do we get from accepting 'that the deliverances of reason are an ineliminable part of the full revelation itself ... and have a kind of veto power over other purported Judeo-Christian revelations ...' (p. 75)? Johnston emphasises that the rationality here appealed to is *substantive* rationality, not merely formal rationality. Torturing heretics to save their immortal souls (for example) does not involve any 'mistake in mathematical logic' nor 'failure to apply the canons of decision theory'. 'Still it is perverse. ... to require torture for salvation could not lie in the nature of the Highest One.' (p. 76) This is something we know, Johnston says, 'by the light of natural reason'. He adds: 'The truly remarkable element in Benedict's lecture is that these naturally knowable propositions, propositions known to Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, form part of full Christian revelation, rather than merely providing an extraneous criterion for religious falsity.' (p. 76)

One may sense a conjuring trick here. If the substantive constraints on authentic revelation are 'known by the light of natural reason', then they *are* external to, and independent of, whatever is claimed to be known through *special* divine revelation. The incorporation of what is known by the light of natural reason within an *overall* theistic epistemology makes no difference to that. Of course, the theist will need to see 'revelation through natural reason' as part of God's *general* providential dispensation: but these constraints will still be an external corrective over what may be accepted as specially revealed.

More disturbingly, though, a little reflection casts doubt on the claim that it is 'the light of natural reason' that makes it clear that the Highest One could not will salvation through torture. Patently, it is not the case that every properly functioning human agent has accepted the substantive irrationality of torturing people for their own supposed ultimate good – and Johnston's discussion, it seems to me, is not sufficiently sensitive to this, disconcertingly chilling, fact. Our consensus (such that it is) that torture is absolutely uncontemplatable is something that has had *to develop*. In general, claims about what is substantively rational are in principle contestable and often contested: consider, for instance, the Pope's views on same-sex relations or the use of certain methods of contraception. In fact, then, what constrains claims to special revelation are *moral* claims, in so far as they are endorsed. And, although some basic

moral claims may be so entrenched – even, perhaps, innately so – that our not endorsing them is just not an option (they seem given 'by the light of natural reason'), this, perhaps lamentably, does *not* apply to claims forbidding torture nor the use of violence to spread conformity to 'the true faith'. Nevertheless, we surely do want to say that the endorsement of moral claims such as these has vital weight in determining that the voice of one who urges torture or violence for noble ends cannot be the voice of the Most High. But how may such moral constraints be accepted from a perspective that rests ultimately on *special* revelation? Johnston has a second proposal for an 'internal criterion of religious falsehood' that suggests a promising answer.

Discerning authentic divinity: a matter for judgment?

Johnston reminds us that scientific knowledge develops under conditions of fallibility. That explains 'the open-ended and self-critical orientation of the best science, in which the practice is not to defend the best theory we have so far, but to look for new observations that will falsify [that] theory and so force [it] to undergo evolution towards (what we hope is) a better approximation to the truth' (p. 77). Science has an agreed internal criterion of the falsity of scientific theories, 'namely, their implying something ultimately at odds with observation' (p. 77). We may thus, by analogy, think of the theistic traditions as developing their knowledge of God and God's will under conditions of fallibility, with their internal criterion for the falsity of putative special revelations having, as its germ (to use Johnston's term), the requirement that the One who supposedly thereby reveals himself must not be an idol. But where do we obtain the criteria relevant to *that* requirement? Whence arise the criteria of non-idolatrousness? As we have been arguing, they seem to have to come by means of special revelation itself.

The comparison with science shows us that this looming circularity need not be vicious. Johnston observes that, 'as Pierre Duhem famously pointed out', judging whether a given scientific theory meets the internal requirement of '[not] being ultimately at odds with observation is no simple matter' (pp. 77-8). Given the ineliminability of 'auxiliary hypotheses that bridge the gap between theory, experimental design, and human observation' (p. 78), there is never a pure, unmediated, clash between what theory predicts and what is observed. It is *a matter for judgment* whether any such apparent clash is a genuine counter-instance or attributable to some hidden variable that leaves the theory intact.

Johnston reports C.G. Hempel as observing that 'part of the training in any given science, and in its characteristic art of generalization, is acquiring knowledge, often largely tacit knowledge, of what would count as an irrelevant confounding variable, as against a genuine counterexample' (pp. 78-9). This knowledge, Johnston argues, 'falls outside the purview of any formal theory of induction or probabilistic reasoning' (p. 79). It is knowledge that may be acquired only through the developing collective practices of particular sciences. It is neither imposed from outside these practices, nor able to be precisely formulated within them. Yet it provides real and meaningful constraints on whether given scientific theories are, or are not, properly accepted.

Similarly, then, it may be maintained that a long-standing collective practice of distinguishing between authentic and spurious revelations has developed, and continues to develop, *within* the theistic religious traditions. Johnston does not make this point explicitly, but it does seem implied by his comparison with the practice of science. Admittedly, Johnston's notion of an 'antecedent religious sense of things' will now need to be clarified: there may be no sense of what does and does not deserve worship *generally* antecedent to theistic religion, only a sense of authentic divinity *developed within religious traditions* that stands antecedently to *particular* claims to special revelation. No such particular claims can ever be, baldly, self-certifying.

Discerning authentic divinity: 'honest ecumenism' and the wider moral consensus

The constraints against idolatry and specious revelation need not, then, be imposed on a religious tradition from outside, nor be open to precise formulation within it. Yet the required discernment is a high art, and a continually developing one, that belongs to the heart of the tradition. As the comparison with the conduct of fallible science may suggest, however, wise practitioners of this high art must be catholic in their openness to potential sources of improved discernment. For a start, receiving insight from neighbouring Abrahamic traditions should not be excluded. Johnston is rightly critical (see pp. 29-33) of a superficial ecumenism that too easily proclaims that Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God (as if 'God' were an established proper name), when each faith affirms distinct and mutually incompatible descriptions of Who that God is. But he does allow, I think, an 'honest ecumenism' (p. 77) that accepts the absolute unity of the Highest One and treats

revelations of his Nature as partial and fallible, even when entrenched in a specific tradition.

To be truly honest, however, 'honest ecumenism' may not limit its inclusiveness to the theist traditions – not, anyway, if it is motivated by desire to worship 'in spirit and in truth'. If it is to grow, wisdom in discerning idols must take account of (while also, of course, contributing to) the widest moral consensus, and be informed by our best scientific understandings of human individual and social existence, and by compassionate historical understanding, especially of misplaced religious or 'ultimate' commitment.

Overcoming self-centredness: a feature of the God-role

The need for idol-busters to appeal to our widest moral consensus raises the question why commitment to that moral consensus is not good enough, without religious trappings. Johnston claims a link between God and authentic moral practice by arguing that secular morality lacks an account of how humans may be properly ethically motivated. Something has to overcome 'our fallen natures' (p. 81), 'the centripetal force of the self' (p. 82). Johnston offers a notably Pauline and Lutheran account of our nature as 'deeply curved in on itself (*incurvatus in se*)': 'each sets his own interest up as an overriding principle of his will, so that each is really an enemy of the others and the ethical itself' (p. 91). But the ethical ideal, Johnston argues, is *agape*, which he identifies as a life of radical altruism, in which 'the legitimate interests of others, in so far as you can anticipate them, will figure on a par with your own legitimate interests in your practical reasoning' (p. 90).

Kant thought that actually achieving the ethical ideal requires believing that all and only those deserving happiness ultimately possess it – and, therefore, in freedom of the will, immortality, and a God who is our judge. But believing in these things, Johnston says, 'cannot redeem us from the condition of being *incurvatus in se*' (p. 91). 'Is it not the case,' Johnston asks, 'that the existence of a redeemer, a source of grace – that is, something transformative entering from outside our fallen natures – is also in need of being deduced as another "postulate of practical reason", a belief required if we are to avoid moral despair?' (p. 93) Authentic moral life would then require openness to such sources of grace – many and various as they may be. If the Highest One is 'to be of salvific interest', Johnston concludes, it must be the 'common source' (p. 94) of

transformative grace, and submission to it will be necessary if we are to live well.

Johnston is surely right in holding, in effect, that moral philosophy should concern itself, not only with the content and nature of moral ideals, but with the possibility of our really achieving them. Arguably, only when this latter question comes in view does the role of religious belief in ethical living become clear. Redemption may be needed, however, not only from individual self-centredness, but also from whatever blocks our *collectively* achieving the highest *social and ecological* ideals. Collective and institutional 'original sin' may need to be the focus of a contemporary soteriology, and the role of the 'saving God' filled by something great enough to transform our corporate, political and environmental life.

The search for alternatives to (assumedly) idolatrous supernaturalism

In sum, then, Johnston's discussion of the fear of idolatry as the spur to religious thinking provides a good basis for a working account of the 'God-role'. Such an account will explain how belief in God functions in the religious life, and point the way to religiously acceptable criteria of authentic divinity. As noted, Johnston believes that the supernatural personal omniGod is an idol – through its entanglement with an economy of personal immortality, whose rejection Johnston defends elsewhere. But even if an afterlife *is, contra* Johnston, accessible to us, there may still be grounds for rejecting the personal omniGod. It may plausibly be argued, for example, that the notion that God is a personal agent who first causally sustains and then wonderfully redeems participants in horrendous evils (as depicted, say, in a sophisticated theodicy such as Marilyn Adams's) places God in an overall relationship with created persons that cannot be perfectly loving, and so ensures that such a God is not the Highest One. Let me here set aside, however, the attempt to justify the claim that a non-idolatrous God must differ from the personal omniGod, and just assume its truth in order to consider Johnston's suggested alternative conception of the divine.

Can there be a naturalist theism?

Johnston rejects supernaturalism. Whatever conception of God he favours, then, must be 'naturalist' – but in what sense? Theism can be a form of naturalism, Johnston thinks, without succumbing to the 'scientism' that interprets God as a postulate in a scientific theory, the egregious error of that 'undergraduate atheist' Dawkins (p. 38). For science to

refute religion, as Dawkins supposes, we would need 'the singular scientific result that there is no authentic source of existential strength' (p. 44). Of course, there can be no such result. It is the 'methodological naïveté' (p. 47) of scientism to forget that natural scientific knowledge can achieve its explanatory generality only by abstracting away from the more concrete but 'less tractable aspects of reality' (p. 46).

If God 'as authentic source of existential strength' is real, what ontological status does his reality have? If he does not inhabit a separate supernatural realm, he must somehow belong to the one 'natural' realm. What feasible criterion do we have of belonging to the one natural realm, however, other than being ultimately describable in physical terms and being governed by physical laws? As Johnston puts it, 'every event will admit of a description of its *ultimate material constituents* in a vocabulary that allows those constituents to be brought under the aegis of natural laws' (p. 49). Meeting this criterion is quite inclusive: natural ontology is not reduced to the bare fundamentals of physical theory, but includes biological entities and – on a physicalist view – psychological states and events and intentional actions.

Could God belong to the one natural realm according to this criterion? Would we not land back in 'scientism' if we supposed so? Not necessarily, as reflection on the ontology of intentional agency suggests. It is arguable that intentional actions are ultimately constituted by complex physical events, yet are not the proper object of any natural science, since they are explicable by intentional explanations which differ, in their implicit normativity, from scientific explanations. The modest claim that this Davidsonian view is at least possibly true is enough to show that something can belong to the one natural order through its physical constitution without necessarily being intelligible within an ideally completed natural science. That could also in principle be the case with a 'natural' God.

Johnston's process panentheism

Any such naturalist conception may seem inevitably pantheistic. However, Johnston's positive account is, he claims, not a pantheism but a 'process panentheism'. It develops by correcting and building upon the view Johnston attributes to Aquinas, of God as '"Ipsum Esse", that is Being or Existence Itself'. Johnston thinks Aquinas understands Existence Itself as 'something like a Platonic *eidos*', and takes Tillich to 'captur[e] the same thought' more concretely with his claim that God is the Ground

of our Being (see p. 97). This identification of God with Existence Itself, Johnston says, fits the requirement that God's existence be *a se*. And God's aseity, Johnston thinks, gives rise to Aquinas's argument for divine simplicity: the Highest One is not dependent on anything else, so cannot be composite, since it would then depend on its parts and not be *a se*. God's existence, essence and essential attributes are thus one and the same. This paradoxical 'identity theory of God's nature', Johnston argues (following Plantinga), 'entails that God is a single property or attribute', and thus 'breaks all connection with the monotheistic faiths' (p. 103). Yet Aquinas emphasises that we apply predicates such as 'good' and 'exists' to God *analogically*. This doctrine of analogical divine predication is important, since, as Johnston says, 'it provides a semantic and cognitive framework for any positive thought about God' (p. 109). Johnston argues, however, that this doctrine clashes with the 'identity theory of God's nature' to which he thinks Thomas is committed: God's goodness, not his existence, is analogous to creaturely goodness; and God's existence, not his goodness, is analogous to creaturely existence; therefore, God's existence and God's goodness are *not* the same. Johnston concludes: 'if I have not distorted Thomas's intentions too much, we have here a profound flaw in Thomas's profound theology of Existence Itself' (p. 110).

But, arguably, Johnston *has* distorted Thomas's theology. So far from being inconsistent with it, the need for analogical predication may actually be entailed by divine simplicity! That is so, anyway, if divine simplicity (that is, along with other classical divine attributes) is understood *apophatically* – as affirming that God is *not* composite in the way in which a substance is 'composite' (through being the subject of attributes, and the instantiation of an essence). The message is that God is logically in a different category from beings and their properties, and *that* is why analogical use of predicates is needed for meaningful, though limited, knowledge of God.[3]

Johnston does nevertheless agree that God is not in the logical category of substance. For Johnston, God belongs to the category of *activity*. Rejecting divine simplicity – and atemporality and immutability along with it – Johnston proposes that the Highest One be identified with 'the outpouring of Existence Itself by way of its exemplification in

[3] I am much indebted to Thomas Harvey (personal communication, and in conversation) for this perspective on Aquinas's doctrine of simplicity and its relation to his doctrine of divine analogical predication.

ordinary existents' (p. 113). The Highest One is thus, he says, 'a certain kind of activity that could be analogically described as Loving, for it is *the self-giving* outpouring of Existence Itself ...' (my emphasis, p. 113). He then specifies the purpose of this 'outpouring': 'The Highest One = the outpouring of Existence Itself by way of its exemplification in ordinary existents *for the sake of the self-disclosure of Existence Itself*' (my emphasis, p. 116). This account is pan*en*theistic because it shows God to be 'wholly constituted by the natural realm[, but] ... numerically distinct ... by virtue of having this different form' (p. 127), that is, the form specified on the right hand side of the above identity. It is a *process* panentheism because the divine is not an abstract *eidos*, but concrete activity. And it is a *naturalist* theology because it accepts that the domain of the natural sciences is complete on its own terms: every causal transaction ultimately consists in some wholly natural process.

Could loving God be 'affirming existence'?

Some will urge that taking God to be 'wholly constituted by the natural realm' is, by definition, pantheistic. While there's no point disputing over a term, the usual theist complaint about pantheism *is* salient – namely, mistaking the creative activity of the divine for the divine itself. Johnston holds *the outpouring* of Existence Itself to be divine: but won't that activity depend on its agent, and so Existence Itself be a fitter candidate for the Highest One? Or do we have here, uniquely, an activity that is ontologically prior to its agent?

What *is* 'Existence Itself', the supposed agent here? Presumably Johnston continues to use the term in the Platonic sense he (questionably) attributes to Aquinas. But, then, what is the difference between, say, a gnat's existing exemplifying Existence and Existence outpouring Itself in the exemplification which is the existing gnat? And how could the outpouring of Existence in the gnat – together with its outpouring in absolutely every ordinary existent throughout all time and space – be worthy of worship, and trustworthy for salvation from the 'large-scale existential defects' Johnston lists?

Johnston claims that the outpouring of Existence Itself 'seems well suited to command total affirmation by one's will', and adds that '[i]t is a process that makes up all of reality, and, arguably, to affirm this process and thoroughly identify with it is to truly love God' (p. 116). 'Affirming' and 'identifying with' existence seem to amount to *accepting* that what is, is. Such acceptance – especially when directed upon the awesome

vastness of the Universe as a whole – may in some shatter the selfishness of *homo incurvatus in se*, though equally, in others, it may generate feelings of meaninglessness and despair. After all, *every* ordinary existent will, on this view, be a manifestation of the divine outpouring, including the horrific sufferings of sentient animals. With such existents, it takes a stretch to 'analogise' Existence's outpouring 'as Loving', or to give them 'total affirmation by one's will'. Certainly, it is a part of a theist's orientation not to be 'in denial' about what is, including the reality of gratuitous suffering – but surely there is more to the 'love of God' than such acceptance?

God's goodness and the divine purpose

How, then, does God, understood as the outpouring of Being, count as good and powerfully able to save? Just before proposing that God is, not Existence Itself, but Existence's *outpouring*, Johnston notes that 'Aquinas explains the goodness of God as God's being eminently desirable, desirable in a way that is more complete and coherent than the way in which any other object of desire could be desirable'. Thus, he adds, 'God can be said (analogically, of course) to rightly command the total affirmation of his nature by our wills' (p. 115). This does not fit, however, with attributing to Aquinas the Platonic view that God is Existence Itself – as Johnston himself remarks: '[h]ow could an unchanging *eidos* be maximally desirable?' (p. 116) Rather, in this account of divine goodness, Aquinas seems to place God in the category of *ends* – which fits both with Aquinas's view that God *is* his goodness, and with his counting as analogical and transcategorial the predication of 'commanding' to God. Johnston, however, does not follow this clue, choosing rather to amend the 'Existence Itself' account by emphasising its *activity*. Why that should yield something 'maximally desirable' is unclear, however: the outpouring of Existence *just happens*, it hardly makes sense to *desire* it (what we desire is that Existence should 'outpour' in certain ways rather than others).

Johnston's conception of the Highest One does have a teleological element, however, and this may be, perhaps, the key to understanding Johnston's account of divine goodness. For Johnston, the outpouring of Existence Itself *has a point*, namely *its own self-disclosure*, and, in particular, its self-disclosure *to us*. Johnston calls this the '"doubly donatory" character of reality' (p. 156): 'First, I am an expression of Being Itself, ... Second, all of THIS is made available to me, gratis.' (pp. 156-7)

If this account of the divine purpose seems too anthropocentric, we may allow (as I think Johnston would) that other sentient and cognising beings *also* receive Existence's disclosure. But disclosure to humanity is essential to the theist traditions: ' ... the Highest One', Johnston says 'does not want us to be just *in* him, as elements in his reality; the Highest One wants us to be *with* him', where 'being with him' amounts to 'participat[ing] in his own self-disclosure' (p. 116).

To understand our participation in the self-disclosure of the Highest One, Johnston maintains, we must reject 'representationalist' philosophy of mind as '... blindness to the gift, a profoundly impious theft, an attempt to appropriate to oneself the source of intelligibility' (pp. 127-8). Johnston summarises his positive view thus: 'All the manners of presentation or disclosure of things, all the ways of thinking of them, and experiencing them, *come with the things themselves*. What we call an individual consciousness is no more than a particular history of sampling from this vast realm, a history of accessing manners of presentation.' (my emphasis, p. 152) This 'vast realm' Johnston describes, following Frege, as 'the realm of sense', 'the totality of objective modes of presentation', or 'Objective Mind' (p. 154). Now, if our 'experience of presence' is a sampling from what is already *there*, Objective Mind must include inadequate and partial modes of presentation – otherwise illusory experience would, on this model, be impossible. Johnston grasps this nettle, accepting a hierarchy of modes of presentation, according to how accurate and complete they are. In the course of evolution, he thinks, minds first access primitive and limited modes of presentation, but gradually ascend to more adequate modes. '[A]t the idealized limit of deepening understanding,' he says, 'we would come to grasp those modes of presentation of reality that are fully adequate and complete, and so reveal the nature of what they present. In this sense, we would be conforming our minds to the Divine Mind, which may be construed as the totality of fully adequate and complete modes of presentation of reality.' (p. 155)

One may have more or less sympathy with Johnston's acknowledged Heideggerian theme here – namely, of the need to overcome 'a historic forgetfulness of Being-making-itself-present' (see pp. 128-9). But the contrast between minds as 'producers of presence' and as 'samplers of presence' seems a false one: consciousness depends, surely, *both* on the cogniser *and* on the object? And Johnston's idea that modes of presentation may constrain the evolution of conscious beings (see p. 154) seems suspect. The objective structure of modes of presentation

is surely counterfactual (that is, the existence of a particular mode is the existence of that which *would* appear thus and so to a certain sort of perceiver/cogniser suitably related to it). What objective modes of presentation there are, then, seems to depend conceptually on what forms of consciousness are possible, and that is determined by causal factors governing the development of the kinds of physical complexity from which consciousness can emerge.

A deeper concern arises from the need to connect Johnston's account of the purpose of the outpouring of Existence Itself with the Highest One's status as perfectly good, and powerful to save. Taking it to be self-disclosure may yield too passive and insufficiently practical an account of our participation in the divine purpose. And this account of the purpose seems too thin: 'sampling' modes of presentation, at least when they are accurate and complete, is *a* good, but it is not the whole of the good. As well, there is the problem of evil as it arises on Johnston's model. Some experiences of presence are experiences of serious suffering, but it is far from clear that they must, just for that reason, count as inadequate or incomplete, and so, disturbingly, there may not be anything on Johnston's account to prevent their belonging to the Divine Mind. Arguably, then, what Johnston takes the object of theistic worship to be, though it may be shorn of the idolatrous features of a supernatural God, is yet unfit to count as authentic divinity.

What appears missing from – or insufficiently accented in – Johnston's account, I suggest, is that divine self-disclosure needs to be *for the sake of revealing and achieving the Good*, and our participation in the divine needs to include our participation in that ethically supreme practical work. To qualify as the Highest One, then, the outpouring of Existence Itself would have to be ultimately for the sake of realising the Good, and enabling our participation in the Good through overcoming our fallenness and giving grounds for hope that commitment to the Good is indeed ultimately important. Furthermore, the Good must belong to the nature of the Highest One, otherwise its status as such is undermined by its seeking and serving what it itself lacks.

Conclusion: other options?

In *Saving God* Johnston brilliantly brings the quest for authentic divinity into the heart of philosophical thinking about theism, demonstrating the importance of the epistemology of discriminating the gold of God-hood from the glister of idols. Whether Johnston hits gold with his own positive

account of divinity as the outpouring, self-disclosing, activity of Existence Itself in ordinary existents may be doubted, however. As I have in effect been suggesting, the worship of the outpouring of Existence may yet be an idolatry, albeit more pleasingly refined and austere than the idolatry of spiritual materialism that may beset personal omniGod theism.

Where should we look, then – those of us who agree that the supernatural omniGod, taken with metaphysical seriousness, is indeed an idol? There are some hints of alternatives to his 'official' position in Johnston's discussion. Consider, for example, his urging those who 'quest for meaning' to '[l]ook instead to the self-disclosure of the Highest One as outpouring Life, Intelligibility and Love, and find your life-ordering demands there' (p. 179). God as outpouring *Love*, I suggest, may connote more than the 'self-giving' of Existence Itself, found in all existents, which Johnston earlier (p. 113) describes as 'Loving', using what is surely a rather weak analogy. Can there be a 'God is Love' theology, further removed from pantheism than Johnston's version of the theology of Being?

A further, related, alternative is to try to do fuller justice than Johnston does to the teleological aspects of theism. God may be the supreme Good itself, the ultimate *telos* of our existence, revealed as Love. If this account is to avoid reducing God to an abstract supreme ideal, it will need – somehow! – to explain how God, the Goal of existence, can also, as Creator, be the Source of all that is, and, furthermore, the Saving Enabler of our actually reaching the Goal.

There is, of course, an underlying issue to be considered: may idolatry be inherent in the very ambition to understand authentic divinity by completing an identity of the form, 'The Highest One = ...'? Perhaps any claim intellectually to grasp the divine nature is *ipso facto* idolatrous? That thought motivates the view that our theology can only be negative, apophatic. But if a purely apophatic theology is unsatisfactory, and for reasons better than our 'fallen' desire to 'get things clear' on our own terms, there remains an important question about how non-hubristic understanding of the positive nature of the Highest One can be possible, and what general form it may properly take.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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Timothy O'Connor. *Theism and Ultimate Explanation: The Necessary Shape of Contingency.* Blackwell, 2008.

The contingent features of our world amaze us. As Peter Unger has indicated, this happens most profoundly when we notice the contingent aspects of the fundamental physical reality. For example, the speed of light in a vacuum is about 299,792,458 meters per second. However, are there any at least logically possible worlds where the speed of light in a vacuum is a bit faster or slower? If there are some, then the actual speed of light is contingent. This consideration poses questions. Why is the speed of light *this* value? What makes this contingent state of affairs the case? This question can be generalized. Why do the particular contingent states of affairs obtain? The central aim of Timothy O'Connor's *Theism and Ultimate Explanation* is to provide an answer to this question.

This book is divided into three parts. An outline of each part is provided below. (This is only an outline, as I shall stress below.)

The first part discusses the general topics of modality. Its main claim is that we should commit ourselves to *substantial* modal truths in order to explain the world. To defend this view, O'Connor responds to the challenges posed by the sceptics about modal truths, both negatively and positively. Negatively, he criticizes several types of philosophers who intend to do without substantial modal notions, for example, Quinean eliminativists and Lewisian reductionists. Positively, he attempts to construct a theory of modal knowledge that would convince the sceptics that we can reach justified beliefs about modal truths. The positive task of modal epistemology will be completed at the end of the next part.

The second part tackles the main problem of this book: *Why do particular contingencies exist?* O'Connor calls a possible answer to this fundamental question 'an ultimate explanation'. He tries to give us the

true ultimate explanation in two steps. I will sum up the central claims, omitting the rationales. (I will come back to the arguments later.) The first step, which he calls 'The Existence Stage', suggests that the formally adequate explanation must posit a necessary being as the ground of the contingencies, and that the personal-creator model of a necessary being is coherent. This stage claims that the true explanation requires the existence of some necessary being, which might be a personal agent, without saying what exactly this being is. The second step, which O'Connor calls 'The Identification Stage', argues that the necessary being is not immanent to the world but transcendent, and that its way of creating reality is not chaotic but well-planned. This stage concludes that the necessary being is transcendent *Logos*, that is, God.

The ultimate explanation that involves God solves the problem of modal knowledge, argues O'Connor. The problem concerns the way to modal knowledge. If we admit, along with O'Connor, that there are *objective* modal truths, then we should explain how we access such truths. This question should be answered by everyone who commits to substantial modal truths. Now, if there is a God (i.e. the rational creator of all reality), then we can be given a possible answer: In designing and making the universe, God ensures that we correctly think about modal relationships. On the contrary, if, for example, the ultimate ground of the reality is not *Logos* but *Chaos*, it will be doubted whether such a chaotic 'creator' can bridge the gap between the range of our cognitive capacity and the objective structure of modality. Is there any way to explain our having modal knowledge without drawing on God? This is O'Connor's point. In this book, he proposes as a possible answer to the question about modal knowledge 'that it is a divine intention that human cognitive abilities are disposed to modalize reliably in accordance with modal fact', and adds the following: 'Our typical naturalist will be scandalized at this Leibnizian solution, but can he do any better?' (p. 129)

The third part is meta-theoretical. It reflects on the relationship between philosophy and theology. While this book eventually identifies the necessary being with God, several theologians will oppose such identification by rejecting the necessary-being conception of God as a mere *God of philosophers*. The orthodox revealed theologians would claim that the abstract conception of God as necessary being is just aping Hellenistic intellectual (possibly, over-intellectual) fashion, and that it has no essential connection with the Christian tradition. However, according to O'Connor, this is a rather simplified and probably distorted

understanding of the relationship between the content of Christian revelation and the role of philosophical or natural theology. He argues that even the typical revealed theologians, whom he calls 'de-Hellenizers', are, *malgré leurs*, doing a bit of natural theology. His reason is that, because the revealed characterizations of God (e.g., God is the Lord, the absolute sovereign), ontologically imply that He necessarily exists, (for, if in some world He didn't exist, He would not be the governor of that world) the revelation theologians also need the philosophical conception of a necessary being in order to *fully* understand what God the Lord is. Warning against the recent overreaction to the research program of philosophical theology, O'Connor concludes that philosophical reflection *is* beneficial to the theological understanding of God.

Because this is only an *outline*, I have skipped over several significant points. However, I suppose that what is very interesting in this book lies in its articulated way of supporting the central claims. Therefore, the details of O'Connor's arguments are worth considering, whether or not you agree with O'Connor's conclusions summed up above.

I conclude my review with two comments on the main part of this book.

Why might the necessary being, who is required to ground the contingent reality, be a personal agent? Further, *a fortiori*, why would it be better if the necessary being was a personal agent, as O'Connor argues? His reason in this book is as follows. If we admit that a necessary being that is the basis of all reality exists, we will be additionally required to avoid the 'absurd conclusion' that there are no contingencies (p. 79). If 'grounding' means 'necessitating' as the ordinary understanding of the word seems to suggest, the necessary ground of the world does not exclude any contingent feature of reality. Therefore, we should find a 'tricky' explanatory framework such that the necessary being does not necessitate, but does ground, all the contingent states of affairs. That is, if you like to say, 'search for a narrow middle way'. One such framework is the personal-creator model. In this model, the necessary being *freely* creates reality in the libertarian sense. In this case, all the contingencies are sufficiently grounded, but not necessitated. Although the libertarian conception of agency is relatively mysterious, O'Connor's solution seems to be one of the best, because I have been unable to find any other 'trick' to go the middle way that does not draw on the likes of a libertarian agency. However, I doubt whether we *should* go the middle way. Certainly, it feels counter-intuitive that there are no contingencies.

But, is it inconsistent to say that the apparently contingent states of affairs are, in reality, only apparent? The counter-intuitiveness of this view does not imply that it is wrong. O'Connor did not justify the requirement that we should avoid the above-mentioned 'absurd' conclusion that there are no contingencies. Therefore, his remaining task is to clarify the motivation for seeking the middle way.

In what sense is the necessary being necessary? Ordinarily, modalities are analyzed in terms of quantifications over worlds. O'Connor himself mentions this analysis (p. 70). However, it is not obvious that the necessity of O'Connor's necessary being can be explained in the ordinary way, because the necessary being is not immanent to any world, but transcendent. Probably, the modal status of an entity can only be analyzed in the possible-world framework when the entity exists inside the worlds. Therefore, I believe that O'Connor cannot say that the necessary being is necessary *because* it exists in every world. Perhaps O'Connor might realize this subtle point because, with regard to the necessary being, he says that it 'exists necessarily *a se* (of itself, rather than having its necessity rest in connection to something else that necessarily exists)' (p. 128). However, he does not give a more detailed analysis on the notion of '*a se* necessity'. Therefore, a consideration concerning the modal status of the necessary being itself might be needed.

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Georg Gasser (ed.), *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?* Ashgate, 2010.

Personal Identity and Resurrection offers thoughtful and critical solutions to the problem of personal survival after somatic death. The authors, who participated in the University of Innsbruck 2008 summer conference, rigorously engage in ways to make sense of the conjunction of both personal identity and persistence from somatic death, the possible intermediate state, and the physical resurrection. Yet it offers more than a defense of survival in Christian philosophy of religion and moves beyond the foundations to construct theology. Thus, a careful, yet dense, treatment contributes to the discussion and provides many avenues worthy of further research.

A brief summary is in order. Stephen T. Davis offers an intriguing account of personal identity in the resurrection by arguing for the Divine will as a necessary and essential property of a person's identity in the resurrection. Persistence, on this account, requires a person's intrinsic properties plus Divine sustenance. One might be inclined to think Edwards has come back from the dead because of the similarity Davis has with an Edwardsian metaphysic of persons. Davis begins his essay by laying the groundwork of God's conservation of the world, the problems associated with personal identity, the traditional conception of the resurrection, and contemporary problems associated with it. Davis ends by responding to objections raised against his model. In this section, Davis responds to van Inwagen's objection from immanent causation by suggesting that the causal chain passes through the mind of God. His explanation of this defense is terse and has an arbitrary feel. Is it that the body is real when it exists, yet when it dies it still exists in the mind of God? Confusingly, Davis argues that persistence of identity requires one's intrinsic properties plus Divine conservation but it seems plain that the body does not exist; and by extension, a future body is not causally connected to the former body. Other questions emerge that deserve attention. Can the body be a real object that is later co-assimilated into the mind of God as an idea that is made real again at a later point? With all of its virtues, Davis's solution is a bit perplexing.

Chapters 2, 3, and 5 seem to build on a discussion that emerged from van Inwagen's body-snatching model of the resurrection. In chapter 2, Zimmerman supplies an alternative solution to the body-snatching model with his falling elevator model. Later bodies are causally connected to their original bodies through an in-built pattern. A "budding" mechanism in the dead body gives rise to a later existing body. One intriguing contribution this model provides is its development of an emergent substance dualist position. Emergent substance dualism, made famous by William Hasker, says that properties of a conscious sort give rise to a person, but it is difficult to see how upon somatic death that person would persist given its supervenience upon the bodily organism. Zimmerman's model presents one possible explanation. It also has the virtues of positing a robust and morally coherent theological story contrasted with the deceptive body-snatching model. Apart from the virtues, it encounters multiple problems from closest continuer, the problem from duplication, and the problem from momentum-like properties. In chapter 3, Eric Olson argues based on the irreversibility

principle that three solutions remain for personal survival from somatic death: body snatching, immaterialism or a Divine-command model with a 4D ontology. In chapter 5, Hud Hudson responds to the Animalist charge of a material organism's inability to survive somatic death. Hudson argues for a perdurantist conception of persons as satisfying the requirements for survival. I tend to agree that Hudson's solution is superior to other materialist alternatives.

Godehard Brüntrup, in chapter 4, explores a mediating view between 3D conceptions of persons and 4D conceptions of persons. Interestingly, he argues that 3D conceptions are irreducible to 4D conceptions, but that process ontology with gen-identity accounts for realist ontology of events, yet also presumes an idealist ontology of subjects that perdure in a similar fashion as found in stage theory.

Chapters 6 and 7 offer attractive constructions of persons by drawing from analytic thought and fusing it with what is often associated with continental thought. In chapter 6, Thomas Schärtl disputes the likelihood of the reassembly view, but argues instead for a phenomenal self-surviving somatic death without the original body. The question emerging, in the reader's mind, from his discussion is *what* in fact is surviving? Johannes Haag, in chapter 7, argues for a transcendental 'I' similar to that of Immanuel Kant.

The next set of chapters, from 8-11, center on hylomorphism or Constitutionalism or both. In chapter 8, Niederbacher reflects on disparate statements found in Thomas's hylomorphism and concludes that Thomas is working with two understandings of physical matter – one is prime matter and informed matter. With this ontology, Aquinas is able to account for the persistence of bodies from death to resurrection. In chapter 9, Baker argues for a constitution view of the resurrection, which has the attending benefit of a unified natural world. In chapter 10, Quitterer demonstrates the similarities between hylomorphism and the constitution view and argues that hylomorphism has the advantage of construing the soul as inclusive of mental and bodily predicates. Kevin Corcoran, in chapter 11, argues that a constitution view does not contradict a healthy relational self, but in fact provides the ontological ground for a relational self.

The final chapters give a helpful constructive treatment of theological and scientific issues. In chapter 12, Christian Tapp explains Ratzinger's view on the resurrection. In chapter 13, Wandinger re-considers the logic of purgatory and the possibility of universal salvation. Finally, in

chapter 14, Russell assembles various positions on the conjunction of eschatology and cosmology by considering both their continuity and discontinuity.

The contributions are numerous, and, as such, I will limit myself to three movements in relation to the contemporary philosophical/theological literature. First, the book contributes by carrying the discussion forward on materialism and the resurrection. The synthesis of recent materialist understandings of the resurrection makes for a useful synopsis in one volume. Particularly helpful is Hudson's five rejoinders to the threat of Animalism. As noted earlier, if one considers emergent substance dualism as a form of materialism then Zimmerman takes it one-step forward in offering a *natural* design plan for survival. Furthermore, the constitution view as a form of materialism receives ample treatment. Baker offers a clear account of the constitution view of the resurrection where persons just are identical with first-person perspectives constituted by their body. In lieu of this, persons can persist from death to resurrection, but this requires a Divine miracle whereby God recreates the body (pp. 168-169). The difficulty that is not mentioned is the notion that a first-person perspective is identical with the person, which seems to presuppose a distinct substance. On the constitution view the first-person perspective is an impure relation/property to the body, thus it cannot be a substance – arguably. Relative properties require some sort of substance for the first-person perspective to exist, thus either the first-person-perspective supervenes on the bodily organism or there is another substance accounting for first-person perspective – i.e. a new entity.

Secondly, the respective ontologies emphasizing either relation or substance are wisely considered. Theologically, a treatment of persons must consider objective and subjective matters that pertain to persons as dynamically interacting with reality. The reader will be introduced to this in Davis's discussion of the Divine will as a constituent of the person. More explicitly, Brüntrup S.J. offers an ontology that construes the objective and subjective as intimates in contrast to a Cartesian ontology, whereby on Brüntrup's view the subjective is rooted in an objective ontology of events. Creatively, both Schärtl and Haag seek to bring the objective and subjective closer when considering the brute nature of phenomenal selves. Haag seems to assume a transcendental version of substance dualism. Corcoran's essay offers another contribution to the discussion where he distinguishes between *metaphysically necessary conditions* and *causal necessary requirements*. Persons have necessary

conditions for being a certain kind of thing, but are also social beings that emerge by causal necessity. Corcoran argues that substance ontology has a kind of priority, yet not at the exclusion of a robust relational ontology. Finally, Christian Tapp's discussion on the resurrection exemplifies both objective and subjective truths when attempting to integrate them with a communitarian and dialogical understanding of persons.

The third movement worthy of highlighting is the constructive developments concerning personal eschatology. Nikolaus Wandinger utilizes a traditional notion of purgatory, yet moves beyond some of its original dualistic assumptions. Contrasted with the traditional model, this model states that purgatory is purification for those who are heaven-bound, which he argues assumes that persons are necessarily embodied. Robert John Russell also exemplifies a movement by pressing on the bounds of scientific and theological discourse by considering the resurrection in relation to eschatology and cosmology. Inspired by Polkinghorne's thought on Jesus' resurrection, Russell argues that the new earth will be transformed yet be continuous with the old earth. Russell does not fail to mention this is in keeping the general sentiment of most contemporary theologians (p. 244). The most fascinating constructive addition is found in Russell's building upon the notion of eschatology as prolepsis, from Pannenberg, and diagrammatically displaying what it might look like for there to be both continuity and discontinuity, the notion that the future results appear in the present and persist from that moment forward (p. 256).

With the book's many contributory benefits, there are three criticisms worth mentioning. The first criticism is from the non-existent interaction with anti-realist or idealist views of physical matter. There does seem to be historical precedent in the likes of Berkeley, Malebranche and Edwards – to name a few. Given the nature of the book's emergence from a conference, this may be expecting too much, but it would be nice to interact with the subject in a more balanced manner.

There are two criticisms that flow out of a predominant tendency in the book. First, is the tendency toward non-reductive materialism as presupposed fact (p. 11). Surprisingly, while the reader may expect to see these assumptions in other philosophical disciplines – one does not expect to see this in a text of such a theological nature. A second, related criticism is the tendency to deny substance dualism outright as a viable option worthy of consideration, which the reader will recognize based upon a quick perusal of the contents. Ted Peters supports this bias in

the foreword, when stating, "The non-dualist alternative explored in the pages that follow is the resurrection of the body (XII)." Neither Cartesian nor non-Cartesian versions of substance dualism find their way into the discussion. This dismissal is intimately tied to the perennial problem concerning bodily persistence faced in the book.

Gasser in commenting on the views represented in the book, states: "No solution is able to preserve identity in the strict sense (p. 9)." If no view provides this kind of identity and personal identity depends upon a body that is strictly the same, then the materialist will have difficulty accounting for personal identity, as well, because for most versions of materialism personal identity is predicated upon same body/brain. Alternative solutions that are able to account for persistence of personal identity and, possibly bodily identity, include a form of immaterialism, substance dualism or Thomistic hylomorphism with the soul/form having *ens per se* kind of existence. Both of these views account for personal identity by affirming an immaterial entity endures through somatic death to the physical resurrection. Nonetheless, how might they account for the body? One answer may be that an enduring soul only needs a similar body, or, alternatively, the soul provides the sufficient conditions for the new body. In the final analysis, it is clear that to dismiss dualist views of persons is unwarranted. Unpopular though it may be, substance dualism has something to contribute to the contemporary discussion.

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Timothy Yoder. *Hume on God: Irony, Deism and Genuine Theism*. Continuum, 2008.

The title of a recent biography of David Hume is *The Great Infidel* and almost all interpreters of Hume, from his contemporaries on, have taken him to be an atheist, agnostic or some kind of deist. In Hume's works, though, there are many instances of what Timothy Yoder calls 'affirmation passages' where Hume seems to acknowledge the existence of the traditional God of theism. These are usually written off as mere irony and seen as part of a strategy of concealment for reasons of prudence given the dangers of open avowal of atheism in the eighteenth century. Much of Yoder's book focuses on these passages and on the purposes to which authors put various kinds of irony. He highlights 'covering

irony' – or, in the context of religion, 'theological lying' – in which there is a private and a public message: it is intended that an audience understand something different from the explicit declaration, and there is often a twist where the public message is portrayed as ridiculous and those shrewd enough to understand the private message thus see its superior force. Hume is usually taken to be adopting such a strategy: the private message is sceptical whereas the public message is pious. Yoder, however, asks us to 'not be too hasty to identify irony in an author's writings unless a straightforward reading can be ruled out' (p. 34) – 'not every religious proposition that [Hume] asserts is automatically to be viewed as disingenuous or insincere.' (p. 50) Yoder thinks 'it is time for a reevaluation of Hume on God, ... a fresh reading.' (p. 20) And in order to provide such a reading, Yoder offers a hermeneutic procedure for determining whether passages in a text should be taken as ironic and, if so, for determining their role. Suggestive of irony are certain explicit hints contained in titles and epigraphs, known errors and contradictory claims made by the author, inconsistencies in style or vocabulary, and conflicts between the text and the author's known or expected beliefs.

In certain ways Yoder's resultant interpretation of Hume is uncontroversial. His Hume is critical of organised religion and of Christianity in particular. Irony is sometimes used in his attacks on religion for reasons of politeness since many of Hume's friends were religious. Hume's irony also results in some very funny commentary on religion and examples are given of Hume's sometimes 'dripping sarcasm' (p. 27). (Hume's *History of England* could also have been mined for sarcasm and humour.)

There is, though, a surprise. Hume may be critical of 'vulgar' religious beliefs and practices – of, for example, petitionary prayer – but Yoder argues that Hume does accept that there is a transcendent being who created the universe, 'the one true and surpassing God, who created all and governs the universe according to his eternal laws, written out of his supreme power and wisdom.' (p. 92) Belief in such a being constitutes 'true religion' or 'genuine theism'. Yoder claims that 'the testimony of one of history's great sceptics and thinkers is that there is a god – a sobering message to a secular age.' (p. 146)

Yoder supports these claims with a close reading of some of Hume's works. In the *Natural History of Religion* (NHR), religions old and new come in for hostile criticism, but there are also several affirmation passages and Yoder takes these at face value.

> [T]he whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion. (NHR, Introduction; Yoder, p. 6)

The *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (DNR) is a work usually taken to be destructive not only of popular religion but also of the argument from design and natural theology in general. First, Yoder supports the plausible interpretation that there is no one interlocutor that speaks for Hume, but that we must 'distil the truths that emerge from the froth of the entire debate' (p. 99) between Philo (the sceptic), Demea (the mystic) and Cleanthes (proponent of the argument from design). Philo's perplexing 'reversal', where he seems to affirm belief in the existence of God after having in the preceding parts of the book undermined natural theology, is a conundrum for any interpreter of Hume. At first blush certain clues suggest irony – Philo, for example, seems to make contradictory statements concerning the existence of God – but this, Yoder argues, is because Philo is considering two distinct arguments: he is critical of arguments that support an anthropocentric idea of God but does affirm the existence of God via a distinct kind of argument from design. There is therefore no reversal. Philo's sentiments are unfeigned: 'no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind ... a purpose, an intention, a design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker.' (DNR 12.2; Yoder, p. 110) The argument that Philo accepts is not an argument from analogy (although Yoder admits the form of Hume's argument is not explicit in the text); rather, when we observe the intricate order of nature 'the idea of a contriver [designer] ... flow[s] in upon you with a force like that of sensation' (DNR 3.7; Yoder, p. 105). The awe we feel in the presence of nature entails that 'it is as if we have witnessed first-hand the fashioning of [for example] the human eye by the hand of God.' (p. 105) Given, though, the importance of Philo's beliefs to an interpretation of Hume on religion, this suggestion requires more careful development. In particular more could have been done to show how this interpretation is consistent with Hume's account of the mind. The awe to which Yoder refers would seem to be what Hume calls an impression of reflection, an emotional response to our experience of nature. But what is not clear is how such a response should be seen as having divine content.

Yoder compares Hume's position with that of English deists such as Herbert of Cherbury, the Earl of Shaftesbury and John Toland. Many of their views were shared by Hume: their condemnation of priestcraft and ecclesiastical corruption, their rejection of the Bible as the word of God and in particular their sceptical attitude to miracles. Hume, though – Yoder argues – should not be seen as a deist in this tradition since he did not see reason, in particular the analogical version of the argument from design, as providing support for his theistic beliefs, as deists did; neither did he take religion to be important with respect to morality (again something to which deists were generally committed, so Yoder argues). There are no practical consequences to Hume's true religion. We have no reason to believe in an afterlife or in particular providence, God's direct involvement with humanity, and Hume's God is morally indifferent. The affirmation texts may ascribe intelligence and power to God – Demea's mysticism is rejected; we can have knowledge of God and his attributes – but Yoder interprets Hume as arguing for 'amoral theism' (p. 143) and against Cleanthes' view that 'the proper office of religion is to regulate the hearts of man, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience' (DNR 12.12; Yoder, p. 110). Thus Hume's God requires and deserves no worship. Yoder also distinguishes his approach from John Gaskin's interpretation of Hume as an attenuated deist, that is, as only being committed to the minimal claim that 'the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence' (DNR 12.32; Yoder, p. 111). Yoder takes such an interpretation to be anachronistic since it is purged of any of the religious aspects that were integral to eighteenth century deism. This minimal claim is also the conclusion of an argument from analogy, a form of argument (Yoder argues) that does not for Hume underpin true religion.

Yoder's book does have something valuable to offer Humean scholarship. Careful consideration of the affirmation passages must be an essential priority for anyone trying to get to the bottom of Hume's views on religion and Yoder provides a corrective to lazy ascription of irony to anything that is at odds with one's own favoured interpretation. It is all too easy to write off difficult passages as ironic – Yoder asks us to consider more carefully the alternatives. It is also good to see attention paid to how Hume relates to eighteenth century deism and the controversies surrounding it.

However, Yoder's interpretation of Hume is not persuasive. The most serious omission is wider discussion of Hume's scepticism. It looks difficult to align Yoder's interpretation with Hume's mitigated scepticism and claims such as this from the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (EHU 8.1):

> [I]f men attempt the discussion of questions, which lie entirely beyond the reach of human capacity, such as those concerning the origin of worlds, or the economy of the intellectual system or region of spirits, they may long beat the air in their fruitless contests, and never arrive at any determinate conclusion.

Yoder focuses mainly on the *Natural History* and the *Dialogues* whereas it would be useful to look elsewhere, particularly at the *Treatise*, of which there is much relevant to religious belief. A particularly surprising claim by Yoder is that '[i]t is clear, Hume argues, that divine providence stands behind every cause and effect that we observe.' (p. 137) A passage in the essay 'Of the Immortality of the Soul' is taken to support this view, but Yoder makes no mention of how this is sharply at odds with Hume's *Treatise* account of causation. According to a traditional interpretation of Hume, causation amounts merely to constant conjunction and thus there is no room for the idea of God's *power* to bring things about – we do not therefore have any idea of God's omnipotence or his providence with respect to particular effects in the world. The alleged subversively irreligious consequences of Hume's *Treatise* account of causation were well known to his contemporaries and they demand more attention than Yoder affords. Hume's candidacy for the chair in moral philosophy at Edinburgh University was opposed by those who took his religious views to be suspect. That it was in part his account of causation that caused offence is clear from Hume's *A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend in Edinburgh*, his reply to a no longer extant pamphlet that was circulated in opposition to his candidature.

Yoder does consider a passage concerning causation from the first *Enquiry* (EHU 11.30), but admits that it 'ends on a note of skepticism' (p. 119): Hume argues that we only come to infer the existence of a cause when we have experienced the constant conjunction of particular causes and effects before, and such an interpretation is therefore problematic in the context of the singular event of divine creation. Yoder's response to this worry is unsatisfactory. He claims merely that 'Hume is rounding out the give and take of a philosophical conversation, and laying out the

options for the reader to consider' (ibid.). Interpreting Hume's views on religion is no easy task, but Yoder's interpretation is rather forced and it is hard not to see the author projecting his own views onto Hume.

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Earl Stanley B. Fronda. *Wittgenstein's (Misunderstood) Religious Thought*. Brill, 2010.

Earl Stanley B. Fronda does not want to give a new interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion. His book is more or less the defence of the orthodox Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion against its widespread criticism. Although the interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion given by Dewi Zephaniah Phillips and other followers of Wittgenstein is very well known among Wittgenstein scholars, there are still rather unconvincing prejudices concerning this subject in the academic community. There are still many philosophers who claim that Wittgenstein was a fideist, a non-realist, or a crypto atheist. Fronda wants to show that none of these claims is true. He argues that it is necessary to adopt the perspective of apophatic theology if you do not want to misunderstand Wittgenstein. This idea is very well known since the 60ies and 70ies of the last century, although in the last decade no scholar defended this idea as intensely as Fronda does. As Fronda did not deal more deeply with Wittgenstein's and Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion before 2005 and as Fronda seems to have been confronted with many strong prejudices against Wittgenstein, he thinks that it is necessary to write a book which shows that many scholars still misunderstand Wittgenstein as a fideist. Thus, although there is nothing new in Fronda's book and nearly nothing of deeper interest for Wittgenstein scholars, it may be a helpful book for people who are not so familiar with Wittgenstein's religious thought searching for a first introduction. For serious scholarly work, it might be interesting how profoundly Fronda stresses the importance of apophatic theology for the understanding of the whole philosophical work of Wittgenstein. Although this idea is rather familiar in Wittgensteinian scholarship, it has – as far as I know – never been elaborated at such length before.

Fronda's argument runs as follows: When Wittgenstein pretends that he cannot help seeing everything from a religious point of view, Fronda states that this perspective is obviously the perspective of mysticism (p. 22). In chapter 2, Fronda convincingly shows some parallels between the early Wittgenstein's theology and the mystical approach of Pseudo-Dionysius (pp. 27-52). While this approach is rather conventional, it is interesting that Fronda shows in chapter 3 that the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein is still consistent with this mystical interpretation (pp. 53-77). Moreover, he tries to explain how the mature Wittgenstein opens possibilities of – via criteria – speaking affirmatively of God (pp. 79-107). In chapter 5, Fronda argues that 'God exists' is a grammatical statement for the later Wittgenstein, and that St. Thomas Aquinas held a very similar position (pp. 109-128). The problem with this chapter is that Fronda follows very much Norman Malcolm's interpretation of St. Anselm's argument of 'God exists' as a necessary statement and that the different philosophical approach of St. Thomas is not reflected in Fronda's book. Naturally, it is true that St. Thomas, like all philosophers in the theistic tradition, knows that God cannot be thought of as an object among other objects (p. 124). But ideas like this really are not specific enough to talk of a 'Wittgenstein à la St. Thomas' like Fronda does (p. 128). And the distinction between Platonic and Aristotelian thinking is too important to connect it in the way Fronda does.

In chapter 6, Fronda shows that miracles, extraordinary religious experiences, and the orderliness of the universe are no good evidence for God's existence from Wittgenstein's point of view (pp. 129-155). Thus, the 'supposed body of evidence that is supposed to justify religious belief is itself a product of the same sort of religious belief that it is supposed to justify' (p. 129). Although these observations are true and also helpful, for example for the current debates on *reformed epistemology*, it is a pity that the author does not try to show how the subject of foundation of faith can be dealt with constructively from Wittgenstein's perspective.

After elaborating on Wittgenstein's attitude towards traditional philosophical theistic arguments, Fronda deals with Wittgenstein's ideas on religious language. His main point is that Wittgenstein does not adopt a non-realistic view of religious language, but a 'religious realism with attitude', i.e. a realism which is developed from a certain world picture without stating anything on reality beyond this word-picture-depending approach (pp. 157-187). In chapter 8, Fronda resumes discussing how Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion is so often misunderstood and that

the mainstream of philosophy of religion as the mainstream in analytical philosophy is anti-Wittgensteinian (pp. 189-211). Against this sceptical denial of Wittgenstein, Fronda tries to show again that there are already important theological roots for Wittgenstein's thinking in medieval philosophy – especially in the platonic line of thinking. In this tradition God is conceived as ontologically, epistemologically and semantically transcendent (p. 204). Although this tradition obviously exists in Christianity, I wonder whether the wholly-otherness of God really is a very convincing approach to theology. It seems to me that especially the later Wittgenstein also offers other ways for theology, and Fronda does not choose the most convincing one. Thus, Fronda's last defence of Wittgenstein in his concluding remarks (pp. 213-229) certainly is a legitimate and possible interpretation of Wittgenstein – considering especially the work of the early Wittgenstein. But whether there is no alternative to the idea that Wittgenstein's point of view is the point of view of apophatic theology seems to be highly doubtable, in my opinion, in medieval thinking.

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Neil Spurway (ed.), *Theology, Evolution and the Mind*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Theology, Evolution and the Mind (henceforth TEM) is an edited volume that contains the papers presented in the conference of the *Science and Religion Forum* in Canterbury in 2007. The volume tackles highly topical and controversial issues in theology and science: the nature of biological evolution and its theological implications, theological anthropology in the context of human evolution and the nature of human minds and brains. These issues are crucial for science, philosophy and theology, and deserve extensive, rigorous and critical treatment. Unfortunately, this is what the volume, for the most part, cannot offer. The book is all too short to deal extensively with the issues it raises. Further, the articles are very uneven with respect to scope and the level of argumentation, and lack much needed philosophical rigor. But perhaps the value of an edited volume does not lie in its coherence and length only, but in the strength of the

individual contributions therein. Here, TEM holds little surprises: there are some interesting exchanges and ideas, but hardly any innovations.

The first exchange of the book is between the cognitive archeologist Steven Mithen and theologian Celia Deane-Drummond. In his paper *The Prehistory of the Religious Mind*, Steven Mithen briefly goes through his theory of the emergence of culture and language. According to him, the religious mind emerges when both culture and mind emerge in human history. Early hominids, such as *Homo ergaster* and *Homo neanderthalensis*, did not have religion or culture in the same sense that later *Homo sapiens* had. The crucial difference between *Homo sapiens* and its ancestors is that *Homo sapiens* evolved towards larger group sizes. This also led to the development of a more sophisticated cognitive architecture and theory of mind. It was the theory of mind in conjunction with what Mithen calls *cognitive fluidity* that made religion, culture and language possible.

One of Mithen's arguments deserves some criticism here. He himself puts the argument like this. It is a fact, Mithen notes, that religiosity is a pervasive and ubiquitous feature of human societies. This fact can be explained in two different ways. According to the first, there exists a supernatural realm inhabited by a supernatural agent (or agents) that has the power to act in the natural world or even create it. If this explanation is true, then religion is not natural, but supernatural and God(s) exists. But there is an alternative: what if the pervasiveness of religiosity is just due to the fact that the human mind is prone to believe in the supernatural and "on-going activity of the universe and life are explained by entirely natural processes" (p. 11)?

What we have here is a very typical evolutionary debunking argument of religion. If it is the case that religion has natural origins, that is, its emergence can be explained naturalistically, there is no good reason to believe in the supernatural. In her response *Whence Comes Religion*, Celia Deane-Drummond points out the shortcomings of this naïve opposition. First of all, it might be the case (as far as we know) that God exists, but does not interfere with the emergence of religion in any way detectable by science. Second, the fact that the theory of mind and cognitive fluidity are necessary for religion does not mean that they are sufficient and causally explain all forms of religious action and thought. Given that many contemporary theologians tend to accept, for the most part, that human beings and their brains have indeed evolved and were not created by God in a single creative act, Mithen's argument does

not have force against them. One point that Deane-Drummond does not mention but could be made here is that even if it is the case that all religions everywhere are completely natural and we could know this, we could still have other evidence to support, say, theism. A theist could argue, e.g., that the existence of the universe and the fine-tuning of its constants make theism at least as probable as naturalism. Finally, Deane-Drummond also points out that there are viable scientific criticisms of evolutionary psychology.

Lluis Oviedo provides a wider perspective by describing the diversity of contemporary approaches to the evolution of religion. He points out that Mithen's theory is only one theory in a family of theories. *Commitment theories* aim to explain the evolution of religion in terms of its adaptive benefits to individuals by enhancing cooperation in human groups. *Cognitive theories*, such as Mithen's theory, explain religion as a by-product of mental systems that evolved for some non-religious purpose. Finally, Oviedo also argues (*pace* Mithen) that contemporary naturalistic study of religion is much impaired by its disregard of conscious thinking, religious emotions and religious experience.

Another interesting exchange in TEM is between Neil Spurway and his commentator Derek Stanesby. In his paper *What Can Evolved Minds Know of God*, Spurway argues that since our brains are a product of natural selection, we cannot have any confidence in their ability to acquire knowledge about God (or anything else metaphysical or ultimate). Spurway claims that our mental mechanisms and their outputs (concepts and beliefs) have been selected for in our natural history. Only the fact that they have been selected for makes them trustworthy as sources of knowledge about the world. But they have not been selected for in order to produce beliefs about religion, metaphysics or anything else that goes beyond everyday human environment. In other words, our cognitive systems are not designed to produce knowledge about worlds beyond our everyday world (e.g., the world of ideas and abstractions beyond time and space). From this Spurway draws the conclusion that our minds are incapable of gaining knowledge in these domains.

I am not sure whether Spurway realizes the consequences of his argument. If the argument goes through, there is no trusting any concept or belief that goes beyond our everyday interest in survival and sex. This would rule out at least some scientific beliefs, not to mention most ethical, aesthetic and philosophical beliefs. This point is also made by his respondent Derek Stanesby, according to whom "it is one thing 'to

urge a strenuous opposition to dogmatism in any form – fundamentalist or hierarchical' but entirely other to demand the elimination of all metaphysical conjectures and attempts to understand the world in theological terms. The rejection of anything that goes beyond science (meta physics) places us in the unimaginable bleak world of logical positivism and scientism" (p. 102).

Furthermore, Spurway's argument seems to make a questionable jump from the fact that our brains have evolved to the conclusion that our minds cannot have access to information that our brains did not evolve to process. Why should we believe this? And further, how does Spurway know this, if it is the case that his mind (as well as ours) cannot gain knowledge beyond our everyday world. If one wants to defend the possibility of achieving metaphysical or religious knowledge, it is enough that concepts and beliefs about such matters are to some extent similar to our everyday concepts and beliefs. Spurway has not in any way shown that the contrary is the case. Finally, Stanesby also points out how Spurway fatally confuses our concepts as a product of culture and our brains as a product of natural selection. The brain has indeed evolved, but the concepts that we use to carve up the world are mostly culturally formed. So the fact that our brains evolved to process information of a certain type does not entail that we cannot form concepts that are based on other types of information.

It seems to me that the debate between Spurway and Stanesby is mostly grounded in confusions created by what they call *evolutionary epistemology*. As most contemporary analytic philosophers have left evolutionary epistemology behind anyway, this debate gives all the more reason to look elsewhere for viable epistemological frameworks. This is, of course, not to say that the fact that our brains have evolved should have no impact in epistemology, but rather that the attempt to create a Darwinian epistemology (e.g., Peter Munz) in which the truth (or falsity) of our beliefs is somehow guaranteed by their adaptive value (or the lack of it) should be considered as a failure.

In his paper *Are We Ghosts or Machines?* Roger Trigg explores the evolution of the mind and the constraints that it presents to our view of humans. Given the fact that most contributions in TEM attempt to make theological content compatible with naturalism as far as possible, it is surprising that Trigg defends the idea that we humans consist at least partly of a non-physical soul. Trigg argues that only mind/body dualism is able do justice to our experience of ourselves as having unitary selves

and the multi-faceted reality surrounding us. He goes on to claim that the notions of God and afterlife are much more difficult to understand if some sort of materialism or physicalism is accepted. As far as theism is concerned, God will remain as a spiritual being that cannot be reduced to anything physical or immanent. Trigg maintains that attempts to combine theism with mind/body physicalism face considerable difficulties, one of these being the philosophical instability of non-reductive versions of physicalism and another being ontological parsimony. Trigg approvingly quotes Charles Taliaferro, according to whom "a theistic outlook will provide a fuller model of explanation in which the natural emergence of the mental from the physical, and indeed the very constitution and powers of the physical world itself, is seen as stemming, from a deeper, underlying cause" (p. 117).

In her response to Trigg's paper, Anne Runehov criticizes Trigg for setting up false dualisms between mind and body as well as God and world. Her own view as that the universe does not consist of two types "stuff", but is instead a nested hierarchy of increasingly complex parts and wholes. This includes both human selves and God. Runehov, therefore, seems to adhere to a view that could be classified as some kind of *non-reductive physicalism* combined with *panentheism*. In non-reductive materialism, the self consists of the physical operations of the brain but is not identical with them. Human selves emerge from the complex interactions between our environment and brains. Furthermore, selves, although composed of physical interactions, are highly complex entities that are not reducible to their parts. This assumption, she claims, is supported by neuroscience whereas dualism is not. But this is just what Trigg criticized in his paper; according to him, we are no closer in understanding how selves emerge from matter or how matter has the power to produce such things now than we were 30 years ago before the breakthroughs of neuroscience. Trigg insists that neuroscience does not force us to physicalism, the choice is philosophical and should be made on philosophical grounds.

Runehov seems to think that *panentheism* provides a kind of non-reductive materialist solution for the God/world relationship. In panetheism, the physical world is part of God, but God somehow extends beyond the physical world. The problem is, however, that the God/world relationship differs in many ways from the mind/body relationship. In panentheism, God is supposed to be "bigger than" the world. This does not answer the ultimate question of what God is. Classical theism has, as

Trigg points out, an answer to this, but panentheism, at least as Runehov presents it, does not. If the panentheist wants to hold onto creation *ex nihilo* and the ultimacy of God, she has to, in one way or another, be able to say that God is at least partly composed of something else than the stuff of the natural world. Well, what is it? In the case of the mind/body relationship, this is not a problem, because it does not require mental to be ultimate. It can be claimed that the lower levels of the natural world have intrinsic powers to produce higher levels of complexity which also gives rise to minds and selves. Because theism insists on the ultimacy of God, this move is not possible with respect to the God/world relationship without giving up creation *ex nihilo* and God's transcendence altogether. There is, of course, the process theology option, but I suspect that Runehov does not want to go there. What I am trying to say here is that even if Runehov can have her cake and eat it in the mind/body issue by advocating non-reductive physicalism, similar moves are extremely difficult to make in the case of the God/world relationship.

In conclusion, I will briefly say a few words about the contributions that deal with what could be called *the theology of evolution*. In short, my point here is that TEM offers nothing new on this front. Jeremy Law, who in his article *Unfolding Conversation* attempts to find some consonance between the nature of God and the nature of the evolving creation (and humans), argues, along with Fraser Watts' article, that from a theistic point of view evolution can be seen as having a general direction. Contrary to what Stephen Jay Gould and several others have claimed, both Law and Watts invoke Simon Conway Morris' work on convergent evolution to show that the evolutionary process has inherent constraints and ends up producing certain designs more than others. Since something like *Homo sapiens* (although not exactly like it) are bound to emerge by natural selection sooner or later, God can be conceived as using this process for the creation of human and animal organisms. This is what is generally as the "freedom within a form" or "law and contingency" approach to theistic evolution. Law then combines this approach with the idea of the Trinity and the relational nature of humanity to produce a view in which the natural world and its organisms unfold in an open-ended conversation between the world and God. As I said, the view of theistic evolution emerging from Law and Fraser is a pretty standard one. One surprising fact is that neither Watts nor Law employs the notion of *physical fine-tuning* in their theology of evolution. Several recent models of theistic evolution, such as Alister McGrath's, have made extensive

use of this idea. This move would have given both Watts and Law more philosophical depth.

In addition to being fragmented, uneven and sometimes loosely argued, TEM also suffers from shoddy presentation and copy editing. Sometimes authors make references to books or articles that are not listed in the bibliography, and sometimes information is missing from the footnotes. Even a non-native English speaker (like me) can identify numerous spelling errors and mistakes in the text. Some contributions (especially the short papers at the end of the book) could have been greatly improved by heavy-handed copy editing. As they stand, some of them look rather more like lecture notes with lists of topics that should be discussed than polished articles in an edited volume. Despite containing a few interesting and fiery exchanges, TEM has so many problems that the philosophically oriented reader in need of good material on evolution, theology and the mind should look elsewhere.