Coming to Understanding

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Volume Two: The Theology

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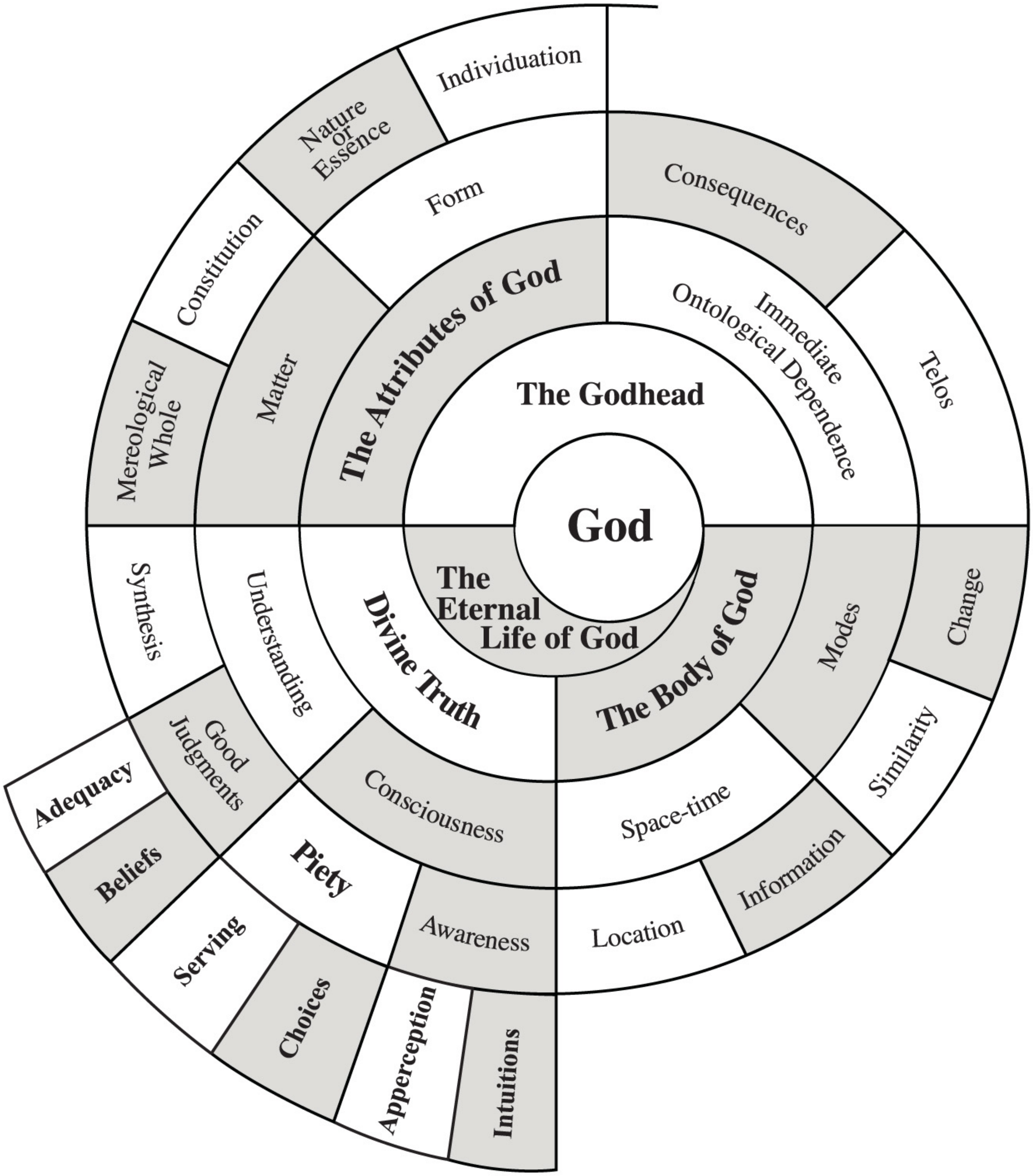
Diagram 1


God
The Godhead
The Attributes of God
The Eternal Life of God
Divine Truth
The Body of God
Immediate Ontological Dependence
Form
Matter
Consequences
Telos
Individuation
Nature or Essence
Constitution
Mereological Whole
Synthesis
Understanding
Good Judgments
Consciousness
Space-time
Modes
Change
Similarity
Information
Location
Awareness
Piety
Adequacy
Beliefs
Serving
Choices
Apperception
Intuitions

Part 4: God

Chapter 19

The Metaphysics of God

We believe:

That God comes first. We believe that in order to know who and what we are and what we must do in life, we must know about God.

Before everything else, and before everything else in every way, there is God. God, preeminently, has both form and matter. His form is the Godhead, and His matter is His Eternal Life. Like God—and in imitation of God—everything has form and matter as well. The Eternal Life of God has form and matter. Its form is Divine Truth, and its matter is the Body of God.

The form and the matter of God are not parts of God, for God Himself has no parts. The form and the matter of God, the form and the matter of these in turn, and in imitation of God, all of the form and all of the matter of all that follow in this way, we call the attributes of God. God has no parts, but some of His attributes have parts. We are not parts of God; we are parts of the attributes of God.

The Godhead links God's attributes together, and so we can call it *Ontological Dependence*. All of God's attributes are linked together in two ways that are in reality the same way. Attributes are explained in terms of other attributes—this is the first way that God's attributes are linked to one another. His attributes depend on one another in the sense that they exist only because of His other attributes that they are ontologically dependent on—this is the second way that God's attributes are linked to one another. Although these look like different ways that God's attributes are linked by the Godhead, they are actually the same way.

We believe in a version of the principle of sufficient reason. Explanation—in principle—is complete: There is an explanation for the existence of every particular other than God Himself and for every fact about

every particular. We reject brute facts or brutely existing objects: objects that just are for no reason or facts that just are the facts without there being in principle some explanation for them. This does not mean that any particular explanation for anything can be easily known. What it means, rather, is that the search for explanations never ends. No fact or object is ever to be treated as just given without there being a reason for it that is amenable to future study and understanding. Furthermore, it means that the explanation for any particular, or for any fact about that particular, is part of the metaphysics of that particular and ultimately part of the metaphysics of God.

All of God's attributes, regardless of how the Godhead links them together, are ontologically dependent on God Himself. This means that any explanation for any objects or facts that there are is ultimately to be found in God.

The Body of God, The Block Universe, has form and matter, and the properties of these are studied by science. The form of God, the Godhead, has form and matter, and it is studied by philosophy. Here, we study Divine Truth—the form of God's divine Eternal Life.

Everything imitates God, and in imitation of God, everything has form and matter. The matter of God has form and matter, and those have form and matter in turn. The attributes of God iterate endlessly. Though we can learn a great deal, we can learn only an ever-increasing but nevertheless always finite amount of what there is to know about the infinite attributes of God.

We can discover only by degrees what there is to know about the attributes of God. Moreover, we can sometimes discover that what we thought we knew we did not know. We are fallible. What we take to be revealed about God we can later learn to be wrong. Here is what we believe so far.

The divine Eternal Life of God reveals His objective teleology. No more and no less should be expected of us than that we organize our lives around this objective teleology. Were one to pray to God, He would disappear from view. The very act of asking for an intervention by God is sacrilege. God will not come to anyone's aid; it is we who must come to the aid of God. It is we who must devote ourselves to the objective teleology built into the Godhead, the form of God. We call the objective teleology built into the Godhead God's will.

To study what God wills, we deploy the following six principles:

(1) Regarding God and His Attributes:

(i) God is the only ontologically independent particular.

(ii) God has two further particulars, neither of which is a part of Himself: the first, His form, is the divine essence that individuates Him—His Godhead; the second, His matter, the whole that is His divine Eternal Life, that whole of which He is constituted.

(iii) The form and the matter of God are each His attributes. They also have form and matter, as do each of their form and matter, in turn, and so on, iterating all His attributes into the infinite matter/form tree with God at its source.

(iv) God's formal attributes have no parts. His material attributes may have parts. With the exception of the parts of His attribute the *Attributes of God* itself—its parts being His very attributes themselves—no part of any attribute of His is the form or the matter of another attribute of His.

(v) God's form, the Godhead, is the divine relation of *Ontological Dependence*; and God's matter, that divine whole which constitutes Him—His Eternal Life—is the grand process *Coming to Understanding*.

(vi) The matter of God's divine Eternal Life—His Body—is The (four-dimensional) *Block Universe*. The matter of the Godhead is His attribute the *Attributes of God*.

(2) Regarding God's Hylomorphism:

The form and the matter of each of God's attributes, themselves attributes of God, are ontologically dependent on that attribute of His of which they are the form and the matter.

(3) Regarding the Form of the Godhead Immediate Ontological Dependence:

(i) The form of an attribute of God is immediately ontologically dependent on the matter of that attribute.

(ii) The matter of every attribute of God is immediately ontologically dependent on the form of some other attribute of His.

(iii) The attributes of God are ordered by relations of *immediate ontological dependence* in an infinite linear sequence.

(4) Regarding the Structure of God's Divine Attributes:

The six specific relations of the Godhead—*is the matter of* and *is the form of*—and the specific relations of immediate ontological dependence—*is the immediately ontologically dependent matter of* and *is the immediately ontologically dependent form of*—shape the overall structure of God's attributes.

(5) Regarding Consequence and Telos among God's Divine Attributes:

In the arrangement of God's attributes, the *consequence* of a given attribute of His is the attribute that is the material sub-attribute of His attribute that is immediately ontologically dependent on it; and the *telos* of a given formal attribute of His, the end to which it is directed, is the attribute of His that is immediately ontologically dependent on the super-attribute of it.

(6) Regarding God's Attributes and the Relations among them:

Principle of the Sixes:

(i) There are exactly six relations by which God and His attributes stand to each other:

(ii)

- **(a) Is the constituting matter of.**
- **(b) Is the individuating form of.**
- **(c) Is directed at.**
- **(d) Is the consequence of.**

        - (e) Is the immediately ontologically dependent matter of.
        - (f) Is the immediately ontologically dependent form of

    - (iii) There are six rules that govern God's divine attributes:

        - (a) Of His first six attributes, only His attribute the *Attributes of God* has parts, and those parts are His very attributes themselves.
        - (b) The parts of any of His attributes—except His attribute the *Attributes of God*—are individuated only by virtue of their being parts of that attribute.
        - (c) Parts of any of His attributes are never simultaneously parts of some other attribute of His.
        - (d) The individuation of the parts of His attributes comes in degrees; given an attribute of His that has parts, the more formal attributes there are among its super-attributes, the more individuation it imposes on its parts.
        - (e) In the sequence of immediate ontological dependence of His attributes, the seventh of His attributes, Modes, is transitional; it has quasi-parts that are not sufficiently individuated to be the parts of any attribute of God.
        - (f) In the sequence of immediate ontological dependence of His attributes, the ninth of His attributes, Consciousness, is the first attribute of His to have genuine parts, those parts being souls.

God has infinitely many attributes. Here are several. The form of His attribute Divine Truth is Understanding. The matter of His attribute Divine Truth is Consciousness. The Form of His attribute Understanding is Synthesis. The Matter of His attribute Understanding is Good Judgments. The form of His attribute Consciousness is Piety. The matter of His attribute Consciousness is Awareness. The form of His attribute Piety is Serving. The matter of His attribute Piety is Choices. The form of His attribute Awareness is Apperception. The matter of His attribute Awareness is Intuitions. The form of His attribute Good Judgments is Adequacy. The matter of His attribute Good Judgments is Beliefs.

No one can understand everything about God. We do not need to

understand everything about God and His divine attributes in order to successfully carry out His will. But we can understand enough to understand what God's will requires of us. Let us begin our quest to understand what serving God requires of us by first considering what we know about His properties.

Chapter 20

The Properties of God

Let us compare God, as He is, with God as He is depicted in the Abrahamic religious traditions. We start by describing the nature of God: what He is, and what He is not.

God is not a person. No psychological attribution can be accurately applied to Him. He is not conscious; He is not sentient; He is not aware. He is not concerned either with humans or with anything else—He is not even concerned with or aware of Himself. These are not claims of "negative theology." We reject negative theology: there are many positive claims that can be made about God.

He is a particular, and in this respect, the term "particular" can be correctly applied to Him just as it can be correctly applied to other particulars. This does not detract from His uniqueness, for unlike any other particular, everything is ontologically dependent on Him.

He is infinite, for He has infinitely many attributes. He is not in time and space. More accurately, time and space are in Him; more accurately still, the body of God has space and time as its form. Space-time is an attribute of God, and He is not in one of His own attributes. There is more to God than His body.

God is eternal and transcendent.

Those traditional religious thinkers who thought of God as outside of space and time were closer to the truth than those who thought of Him as in time but as existing forever. God is timeless and incorporeal insofar as time and space are aspects of Him. There are other aspects of Him that are not in space and time, just as He is not in space and time.

God is immanent.

Can God be eternal and transcendent, not be in space and time, and yet nevertheless be immanent? Traditional religious thinkers never solved this problem. Calling God "spiritual" puts a label on the problem but does not solve it.

If space and time are the form of the Body of God, then they are within God, and it is in this sense that God is immanent: God is immanent in everything that belongs to Him. He is immanent in His attributes the way that a physical object is immanent in its form and is immanent in the matter that it is made out of. Nevertheless, He is transcendent and eternal because He and His attributes are unchanging and outside space and time.

Among God's properties are the ways that His attributes are linked to one another. These linkages include teleological connections—ways that some attributes reveal the purposes of other ones. In this way, the organization of God's attributes reveals the ethical ligaments of Divine Truth that in turn provide us with the religious and moral guidance we all need.

Our brief description of God and His attributes may not sound familiar to ordinary believers in God or to most people with knowledge of the Abrahamic religious traditions. This is because many of the properties usually attributed to God in those traditions are ones we have not mentioned, such as that God is:

Omniscient
Omnipotent
The sole creator of the universe
Supremely good
Perfect in all His qualities
All-loving

Despite the centrality of this list to the Western religious tradition, every item on it is nevertheless controversial. Some major figures in the tradition, Maimonides for example, would deny that God can be described as "all-loving" without great inaccuracy. That term, and indeed all terms that involve psychological descriptions applicable to humans, Maimonides believes, cannot be literally applied to God. God manifests psychological traits in a way that is at best only analogous to how human beings manifest such traits. (Maimonides, actually, believes that *no* description can literally apply to God *and* to a creation. He is a proponent of "negative theology.")

In any case, most religious thinkers would not treat this list, or any list of God's properties, as a simple list of qualities, but would instead try to show that certain properties of God follow from other ones—in particular, that His omniscience and omnipotence, and perhaps all His characteristics, follow from His perfection. The metaphysics of God, as it is studied in the context of one or another set of traditional properties like those listed above, is a rich and complex literature.

Much of the complexity and richness of this literature, however, is due in large measure to the philosophical puzzles that it gives rise to. It seems clear that the notion of God evolved from earlier notions of deities to which were attributed various powers or dominions. The traditional list of God's properties seems to arise from the process of extending those various powers or dominions to the "*n*th degree."

It is precisely this extension of God's powers to the *n*th degree, however, that gives rise to philosophical perplexities. Some of these are, perhaps, not very deep. There is the example of the immovable stone. If God can create an immovable stone, then there is a task that He cannot perform: the moving of this stone. If God cannot create an immovable stone, then there is a task that He cannot perform: the creation of an immovable stone. If there is a task that God cannot perform, then He is not omnipotent. This puzzle is meant to show that the attribution of omnipotence to any being is incoherent. It has been suggested that if someone's powers are unlimited in a certain respect, then there is a way of describing that fact that makes it sound as if His powers are limited. If God can move a stone of any weight, then there is no stone that He cannot move. And from this it follows, of course, that He cannot create a stone that cannot be moved by Him. But this does not show that His powers are limited, it is argued, because the constraint on His potency is a purely logical one. On the other hand, it can be countered that omnipotence means by definition that any task can be performed. Creating a stone that cannot be moved by anyone is a well-characterized task, and so correctly describing omnipotence requires that the full set of "tasks" be consistent with one another. One way of limiting the set of tasks would be to disallow that God can create a stone that cannot be moved by anyone (Himself included). Another would be to disallow that God can move any stone (for He cannot move the immovable stones that He can create). Nothing in principle tells us how a consistent set of tasks is to be non-arbitrarily delimited. This, if it does not show that omnipotence is incoherent, at least shows that it requires additional elucidation.

Other puzzles may seem more intractable. There is the apparent incompatibility of God's perfect goodness, omniscience, and omnipotence with the presence of one or more kinds of evil in the world. This puzzle is forced by the apparent closing of various routes of escape from it. If God were limited in His sentience or in His potency, one would understand how some evils were possible. If He were limited in His goodness, one would also understand—and deplore—the presence of some evils. With both of these options excluded because of the properties that are traditionally attributed to God, one is forced to suggest that the human understanding of the overall situation, or a merely human moral evaluation of the world, or both, are defective. The idea is that as one gains a fuller understanding of how the world is, one recognizes the necessity of certain evils. For example, it is often argued that certain evils are required in order to make the presence of free will in human beings effective. But it is obvious that there are evils in the world that are so monstrous and so gratuitous that their justification requires that it simply be accepted that "God's ways are mysterious," and so beyond human comprehension.

There is also the apparent conflict between God's omniscience on the one hand and the claim that humans are responsible for their own actions on the other. There is, in Abrahamic religions, an association of the ethical commands of God with notions of punishment and reward. It is presumed, naturally enough, that if a person is not responsible for what is attributed to him, then he cannot be rewarded or punished for what he has done. The worry is that if God already knows from the moment of creation what people will do, then there is no sense in which they are responsible for their actions.

Our aim, in discussing these issues as briefly as we do is not to dismiss their complexity or to dismiss the subtle thinking that has gone into the study and attempted resolution of them. It is only to present a raft of puzzles that have bedeviled the traditional view of God and to indicate what it is about the traditional properties attributed to God that gives rise to these puzzles. Our aim is diagnosis.

We have mentioned that many thinkers try to derive all of the qualities of God from the postulation of one or another particularly significant property of His. Here is an illustration. Consider the quality of perfection. One version of the ontological proof of God proceeds by the argument that all things being equal, a nonexistent being is less perfect than an existing one. If God is perfect, it must therefore follow that He exists. Once it is established that God exists and is perfect, one endeavors to derive His other properties from His perfection. In particular, it has been argued that if God did not create everything *ex nihilo*, then He would be less than perfect. In the same way, it is thought that if He were less than infinite, He would be less than perfect.

We have listed some of the properties attributed to God in the Abrahamic religious traditions, and we have briefly indicated how these properties can create puzzles. We have also mentioned how one or more of these properties are often singled out to be utilized in definitions of God—the most perfect being, for example—to enable both the derivation of the existence of God and as corollaries the derivation of His other properties. There are puzzles that arise from these properties, but one strand of thought in the Abrahamic tradition is that these puzzles are only temporary obstacles that can be solved if enough work is put into the project.

There is another possibility, however. This is that the initial augmentation of the powers of minor pagan deities to the *n*th degree, in order to create the traditional concept of the God of the Abrahamic religions, has led to an unstable blend of properties that cannot be made consistent. There are then two possible responses. The first is to reject the traditional notion on the grounds of these inconsistencies and to replace it by a consistent notion. The second response is to claim that there is no role for reason in the worship of God. This second response is an influential "irrationalist" strand of thought that is very common in the Abrahamic religions. Consider these other properties that are also often attributed to God.

A person
Simple
Triune
Transcendent
Immanent
Eternal
Infinite
Unchanging

We start with the claim, made nearly everywhere in the Abrahamic religions, that God is a person. It is often noted that God is referred to in the tradition, even by Maimonides, as "He," not as "It" (and we too follow the tradition here—but purely as a matter of style). He is not merely a force, an energy, or a substance of some kind, so it is claimed; He is a person. He is self-conscious and self-willed. He thinks and acts. What is important to notice is that treating God as a person applies "folk psychological" notions to Him. Crucial to the coherence of these notions is a "belief-desire" model of the mind. Being attributed to God are particular beliefs and desires, and knowing what these are makes it possible to explain why He does what He does. God is trying to bring something about based on what He knows or what he believes—which in this case are taken to amount to the same thing. The attribution of such folk psychological notions to pagan deities, of course, is straightforward: such beings may know more than the average human, and for such beings there may be no distinction between what they believe and what they know; but none of this undercuts the cogency of the attribution of beliefs and desires to such beings.

But together with the other traditional attributes of God, the belief-desire model creates a terrific strain that is reflected in thousands of years of tortured theology. Consider the simplicity of God. It is not obvious how the belief-desire model is compatible with His simplicity: Different psychological faculties seem involved—a faculty of beliefs, and a faculty of desires. This may not be a problem because the belief-desire model does not itself require that different aspects of a being give rise to its desires on the one hand and to its beliefs on the other. It may be that the one simple God manifests as what He knows and as what He wants. After all, the same effects of fire cause some things to melt and others to burn.

Consider, however, the claim made in certain Christian traditions that God is not only a person but three persons in one: God the father, Jesus the son, and the Holy Ghost or Spirit. As it is sometimes (paradoxically) put, there are not three distinct gods here, nor three modes, parts, or aspects of one God, but "coequally and co-eternally one God." In Chapter 2 of the Westminster Confession, the phrase occurs "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance …"

On the face of it, there seems to be no way of making the unity and the trinity attributed to God compatible. It is no surprise, therefore, that Anselm said something to the effect that the trinity makes no sense, and thus he believes it. Perhaps, as well, it explains the reaction of other thinkers who also claim that it makes no sense, but who add—in contrast—that they do not believe it.

This particular contradiction in the notion of God posed by His simultaneous unity and trinity does not arise in the Judaic and the Islamic traditions. But they accept other qualities of God that are incompatible with the attribution of folk psychological properties to Him. In the same documents where it is stressed that God is a person who is aware, who thinks and who acts, it is also said that He is otherworldly, transcendent, and unchanging. He is described as something unlike anything that one can imagine, and it is claimed that He cannot be represented by anything in our world. As it is always put: He is not like us in any way whatsoever. It is this kind of view that Maimonides is propounding when he argues that to attribute any personality trait to God, including sentience, is to speak at best analogously and therefore in a way that cannot be literally understood.

The believer is told that he is not to apply his folk-psychological understanding of what a person is like to God and yet at the same time that God is to be described in ways that do require such notions. God gives commands, and God punishes those who fail to obey His commands. God is to be worshipped and prayed to. And nevertheless, God is utterly transcendent: The presuppositions of folk-psychological language are not to apply to Him.

Consider also that in the same documents that describe God as transcendent, one will find Him described as immanent: He is described as with humans—and the world—in every way and all of the time. He is present. But at the same time that He is described as present, He is also described as infinite. If He is everywhere at all times and He is infinite, one can easily wonder, as Spinoza did, how there is room for anything else. The traditional answer is that He is spiritual, not material. Therefore, despite His immanence, He is not in space and time; thus, He is everywhere at all times in some other sense that is not specified.

These conflicting doctrines powerfully impel the view that the human mind is too incapable and too weak to understand the metaphysics of God. We stress again that the attribution of the traditional set of properties to God looks contradictory. That fact is largely acknowledged in the Abrahamic religious traditions, and it is the source of the widespread view in those traditions that such contradictions are an indication of the "depth" of the subject matter. It is not that one is trying for too much—trying to claim of God what cannot be consistently claimed about anything. Rather, it is thought that God transcends our concepts altogether. It is therefore often thought to be a mistake to approach these doctrines with the hope that a little philosophical reasoning can enable one to see his way to a consistent construal of them. The point, rather, is that such views—with all these contradictory qualities—are to be taken on faith and faith alone. Reason has its limitations, and those limitations arise when trying to study God and His properties.

If the metaphysics of God is amenable to rational understanding, as we claim it is, then not everything attributed to God in the tradition can be retained. In particular, we repudiate the central attribution that creates so much trouble for the notion of God—that of His being a person. It is clear that to attribute a mind and other personal qualities to God is—on pain of incoherence—to disallow other claims about Him. If His being a person is instead rejected, then other aspects of the traditional attributions of properties to God, ones that generate the problem of evil, for example, can be jettisoned as well: His omnipotence and His omniscience, for example.

It is likely, of course, that many traditional believers will deny that the resulting being is God. Some will claim that to deny God as a person is to posit a being, a substance, that is not God and that does not deserve the personal pronoun "He." There is a sense in which we have no response to this claim. Anyone can fixate upon a particular trait that is attributed to God in one or another religious tradition and deny that the name "God" is properly used if it describes a being lacking that property. Many feel that to deny that God is a person is to describe a being that cannot be called "God."

Our aim is to show that enough of the central aspects of the traditional notion of God remain in place to justify our continued use of the term "God." We also claim that if no being exists who plays the central role that we take God to have and who is in addition sentient, then we have justified our use of this name. What follows are brief descriptions of the various ways in which God—as we understand Him—has central properties as they are described by adherents of one or another Abrahamic notion of God.

First, there is a widespread belief in the Abrahamic religious tradition that God is infinite and transcendent, not a part of the universe that exists alongside other things. If something deserves the name "God" then it must be infinite in this special way.

God, as we describe Him, is not a being in the world; He is not a substance, not a force, not a powerful spiritual person. He is not anything that might be included in the inventory of the efficient causes in the world. God has the whole space-time kingdom as His body. He is not a further item alongside those in space and time in the world. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, God is infinite—at least in the one clear sense that He has an infinite number of attributes.

On the other hand, if something is to be described as God, the Abrahamic traditions demand that He not be absent from the world—that He be intimate with human believers and indeed closer to the things of the world than anything else. Our view of God meets that demand in a way that the God of the Abrahamic traditions cannot. As the real things in the world are parts of His attributes, God's immanence is explained—and in a way that coheres with His transcendence.

Second, for Abrahamic believers, if anything is to deserve the name of "God," then it should be prior to everything else. An angel is shown not to be God by the fact that it is a created being and thus ontologically dependent on something else.

But even uncreated beings, if they are ontologically dependent on something else, cannot be God. This means that only the being we have designated "God," if any, has the right to be called "God."

Third, many believe that if something deserves the name "God," then it created the world with purposes in it—an objective teleology that is not reducible to any complex of merely human aspirations. The world on such a view exists for the sake of this Godly purpose. Suppose, for a moment, as contemporary materialists believe, that matter is ontologically fundamental and that everything else is ontologically dependent on it. This is to suppose that everything that exists has been created by matter assuming one or another arrangement. Given such a view, could matter be described as God? No. Materialism cannot be a theology because matter so conceived is devoid of purpose.

We have already denied that God created the world with a purpose, if this means that God, a sentient being, created the world having a purpose in His mind. But this does not imply that something similar to this demand—that the teleology in the world be due to God—is not true of God as we understand Him. For it is because of the nature of God—insentient though He be—that there are purposes in the world and that there is a direction to His divine Eternal Life. This is enough for

God to be designated “God” despite his not acting purposively to bring the world about.

A traditional believer might argue that, regardless of whether God as we have described Him provides purpose for the world, if He is God, He must be the creator of the universe. We do not credit God with being the creator of the universe in the literal sense—instead we have said that the things in the world as we know it are parts of His attributes. Demanding that God be the creator of everything else is just a crude version of the intellectual demand that God—regardless of what He has done or not done and regardless of whether He is even capable of action—be the ontological foundation of everything there is.

God, as we understand Him, is ontologically prior to everything else.

Fourth, many think that if something deserves the name “God,” then its purposes in creating the world must be what sets the objective standards for human action. To see the force of this demand on the appropriate use of the name “God,” suppose that some god created the universe with a purpose that left humanity entirely irrelevant. Suppose, for example, that the god’s purpose was for the world to come to contain some aesthetically ideal arrangement of supernova, an arrangement that was achieved a billion years before the appearance of humanity. Then humanity would be at most a downstream consequence of that god’s purposes in creating the universe. His purposes would have no relevance to human behavior in any way. This would rule out the possibility of that god being God.

Despite the absence of conscious intent on the part of God, He nevertheless embodies real purposes by which we can evaluate each human action.

Fifth, if something deserves the name “God,” then it should—many think—be eternal and unchanging.

There is a sense in which God is eternal and unchanging—His attributes are eternal and unchanging. There is also a sense in which His body is unchanging, even though the form of it is space and time and even though what is in His Body changes over space and time. That is, when we view God’s body as a whole, we view it as one unchanging “block universe” only within which time and space can be used to locate things.

Sixth, and perhaps most important for the tradition, God must be perfect. This is a demand that God—as we have described Him—perhaps may be thought to fail to meet.

What is true is that the ethical standards that the teleological structure of God supplies and that the parts of His attributes are supposed to meet are standards that those parts can fail to live up to. In this sense, the parts of the attributes of God are parts that can be less than perfect. Nevertheless, because He and His attributes fall short of no standard, and indeed, because they are what supply the standards for everything else, there is a sense in which God can be properly described as perfect. He should also be described as perfect according to this traditional formula: There is nothing more perfect than God.

There is a preexisting philosophical task that the Abrahamic God was induced to undertake when the three Abrahamic religious traditions intersected with the Greek philosophical tradition. This is that He fulfill the philosophical demand for the existence of a necessary particular. A necessary particular is supposedly established in certain versions of the cosmological argument. This argument begins with a purported distinction between necessary and contingent beings or existents. A necessary being exists necessarily—it is impossible for that being not to have existed. Accordingly, there is no need to explain why a necessary being exists, for there is no alternative possibility that the explanation could exclude. Contingent beings, such as the things in the "world," by contrast, exist but might not have existed. An explanation is thus required for the fact of the existence of things in the world and hence for the world itself. And inevitably, so the argument goes, that explanation must appeal to a necessary being as the cause or source of contingent beings. The required necessary being, so Al-Gazali, Avincenna, and Aquinas tell us, is none other than God Himself.

What motivates the doctrine of God's necessity, therefore, is that God's existence being contingent—for that matter, everything being contingent—seems to leave unanswered the question of why there is something rather than nothing. Is the existence of everything to be considered a brute inexplicable fact? Is the existence of God to be considered a brute inexplicable fact? If so, that seems to violate our acceptance of our version of the principle of sufficient reason.

Facts are always matters of some thing or things being this way or some thing or things being that way. It is fact that roses are red and that electrons have mass. Facts, that is, are always of the form of something being a certain way; and such facts are contingent when the things in question could have been different. Explanations, in turn, rule out those other ways things could have been on the basis of other—also contingent—facts. So explanation is always a matter of accounting for *existing things* being a certain way. This means that it is muddled to look for an explanation of why there are any existing things at all—for why there is something rather than nothing. And thus it is also a muddle to look for an explanation for why there is God rather than nothing at all. Many have tried to use the principle of sufficient reason to argue that the question of why there is something rather than nothing is both a cogent question and one that necessitates God as an answer.

The question of why there is something rather than nothing is not cogent. The fact that there is something rather than nothing is not in need of an explanation.

But it certainly looks as if the existence of ordinary particulars involves contingent facts whose explanation is not a muddle. We often explain why particular things exist in terms of previous events that brought them about. These explanations ultimately trace back to the attributes of God and to God Himself. The existence of any particular is a contingent fact about the parts of God's attributes being a certain way. When an explanation is asked for why some particular exists, what is really being asked is why it is that God, His attributes, and their parts are this way rather than that way. This is not, therefore, a genuine question of the form Why is there this particular rather than not? And so this question is not of the same form as Why is there something rather than nothing? This latter question does not focus on the existence of a particular—and therefore on the way that God or one of His attributes is—but instead on God Himself, and it is precisely at this point that the question loses sense. The question can no longer be recast as a question about why something that exists is this way rather than that way. Therefore, it is not a brute fact that there is something rather than nothing, and so there is nothing left that needs explaining.

The great religious traditions are powerful institutions, the contours of which—even in their doctrines—are the result of a great deal more than the sober consideration of what properties God has. Their scriptures and commentary are not mere descriptions of truths sincerely offered for believers, but instead have many sociological, psychological, and even political uses. It would be superficial to think that metaphysical doctrines promulgated by religious leaders and thinkers are designed merely to capture truths about God's supernatural reality.

It is this, more than anything else, that explains the contrast between the notion of God as it is found in the Abrahamic tradition and the notion of God that we teach.

Chapter 21

The Will of God

The will of God is the objective teleology embodied in His Godhead. It can be understood only by the study of God and His attributes.

The study of subjective teleology is the study of the purposes and the goals of things as those purposes and goals are imposed upon them by the beliefs, aims, and desires of sentient beings. Thus, the purposes and goals studied in subjective teleology are to be found only in the things sentient beings like humans have created or adapted for their own purposes. Human artifacts have only the purposes humans have given them, and those purposes depend on human minds for their existence. A knife lost in the wilderness has no purpose in and of itself—alone, and without the humans who give it value, it is simply a brute physical object. Its subjective purpose, in such a case, is not unknown—its subjective purpose is nonexistent. So too, it is confused to try to evaluate the value of a knife in and of itself—the value intrinsic to a knife regardless of the circumstances it is in. A knife—as such—has no value.

Objective teleology, on the other hand, encapsulates those purposes that things have intrinsically embodied within them by virtue of their relationships to the attributes of God and ultimately by virtue of their relationships to God Himself. In contrast to the purposes of subjective teleology, such real purposes and goals are not dependent on minds at all. Real purposes and goals are included in the very fabric of objects by virtue of those objects being parts of the attributes of God or by virtue—if they are themselves attributes of God— of their intrinsic teleological relationships to other attributes of God.

The values that things have by virtue of their teleological relationships to God and to God's attributes are real values, not subjective ones. That is, the relations of objective teleology are dependent neither on our minds nor on the mind of something divine. Objective teleology is not an aspect of mind; mind is instead an aspect of objective teleology. To think otherwise is to confuse objective teleology with subjective teleology.

With respect to both objective and subjective teleology, something often has value not in and of itself but by virtue of its being a means to some other end. It is in this sense that we say that something is of value for—or that it is directed towards or that it is for the purpose of—that from which it inherits its value. A knife—an object that is subjectively valuable for people—is of value because of something else: its purpose, cutting things. If a knife is given to someone but he is forbidden to cut anything with it, that knife becomes valueless by virtue of that decree.

In the case of subjective teleology, things are subjectively valuable for other things by virtue of the aims and goals of the minds that have imposed those values. The values of objective teleology are not relative to minds. Many particulars—attributes and parts of attributes—are of value because they are directed towards or are for the purpose of something else: other attributes of God, or God Himself. That is, they have as their goals or their purposes something else by virtue of which they are valuable.

Objective teleology, the warp and woof of the Godhead, is one of the six divine ways that are the only ways God's attributes relate to each other. The *divine arcs of objective teleology* are infinite lists of God's formal attributes linearly ordered according to the objective teleological relations they bear to one another.

The *ultimate telos* of each divine arc is a material attribute of God. Every material attribute of God has exactly one divine arc directed at it as its ultimate end. Because each such arc links infinitely many attributes, no such arc can be described completely. Because there are infinitely many material attributes of God, each with one divine arc ultimately directed at it, there is no complete list of these arcs.

God's attributes are infinite, and every attribute of His that is the form of some other attribute has another of God's attributes as its unique purpose. Thus, infinitely many of His attributes have purposes—and those are the other attributes of God at which they are directed. These attributes, their purposes, and the purposes of those attributes in turn are linked in grand infinite arcs of attributes connected to each other only by their linear teleological ordering. There are infinitely many such teleological arcs linking the attributes of God. Every formal attribute of God is in one such arc and only in one such arc.

The three very greatest of these arcs of God's formal attributes are ultimately directed at the three most fundamental material attributes of God: (i) the divine Eternal Life of God, (ii) the Body of God, and (iii) the attribute the Attributes of God.

The five attributes of God at the beginning of the greatest arc of objective teleology, that which is ultimately directed at the divine Eternal Life of God, are related teleologically as follows:

The telos of God's attribute Imitation is Spatio-temporality.

The telos of God's attribute Spatio-temporality is Divine Truth.

The telos of God's attribute Divine Truth is the Godhead.

The telos of the Godhead is the divine Eternal Life of God.

Imitation is the form of God's attribute Modes, which is in turn the matter of God's Body. It is upon His attribute Modes that His attribute Space-time is ontologically dependent. Space-time is the aim or purpose of Imitation: the actual way in which Modes is organized as the whole that it is.

To many, spatio-temporality is merely a property attributed to ordinary objects: they have spatial coordinates, and they have temporal coordinates. But we recognize Spatio-temporality to be more than the brute here-and-now of things: It has a purpose, and its purpose is Divine Truth, the way things are in the divine Eternal Life of God. Things are not simply in space and time: they are in space and time in order for there to be such truths.

Divine Truth, in turn, is not something of value only in and of itself. The purpose of it is the Godhead, the form of God Himself. The purpose of Truths is for how everything depends on everything else and how they depend on God; and they are for the purpose of explaining things in terms of other things and ultimately for explaining everything in terms of God.

The Godhead, lastly, with its embodiment of all the relations of the attributes of God to each other and all the relations of everything to the attributes of God and to God Himself, including those of objective teleology, is also not of value in and of itself. It is of value only insofar as those relations enable the divine Eternal Life of God.

The four attributes of God at the beginning of the second greatest arc of objective teleology, that which is ultimately directed towards God's Body, are related teleologically as follows:

The telos of God's attribute Constitution is Form.

The telos of God's attribute Form is Immediate Ontological Dependence.

The telos of God's attribute Immediate Ontological Dependence is the Body of God.

Everything, in imitation of God, has both form and matter. But although the purpose of His attribute Constitution is His attribute Form, Form in turn is not of value in and of itself. The purpose of Form is His attribute Immediate Ontological Dependence, the matter of the Godhead. Immediate Ontological dependence in turn has as its purpose the very Body of God.

Attributes are not always of value only in themselves, or more accurately, they are not always entirely of value for themselves, since any attribute of God is of intrinsic value by virtue of its being an attribute of God. But the intrinsic value of some of God's attributes are mediated by their value for something else—for other attributes of God, and ultimately, as with everything, by their value for God Himself.

The four attributes of God at the beginning of the third greatest arc of objective teleology, that which is ultimately directed at God's attribute, the Attributes of God, are related teleologically as follows:

The telos of God's attribute Apperception is Piety.

The telos of God's attribute Piety is Understanding.

The telos of God's attribute Understanding is the attribute the Attributes of God.

Apperception, the subjective sense of self that some individuals have, is not of value merely so that those individuals may have knowledge of themselves and what they are. Apperception is of value only insofar as the knowledge it yields is a tool for Piety.

Piety is the form of Consciousness, and it too is not of intrinsic value merely because of what it is in and of itself. Piety is not an end in itself. Rather, its purpose is Understanding. It is of value for understanding.

Understanding, lastly, is also not an end in itself. Understanding is not an intrinsic value. Its value is for the purpose of God's attribute the Attributes of God. To turn the ultimate operation of understanding away from God's attributes is to pervert the right purpose of understanding; it is to utilize it for something that is not valuable, and further, to utilize it for something that is not what understanding is valuable for.

The divine Eternal Life of God has as its form Divine Truth and has as its matter the Body of God. His attribute Divine Truth has as its form

Understanding and has as its matter Consciousness. His attribute Divine Truth is ontologically dependent on His attribute the Body of God. The Body of God has as its form Space-time. Consciousness, the matter of Divine Truth is ontologically dependent on Space-time, the form of the Body of God.

Because the divine Eternal Life of God has as its matter the Body of God, what constitutes that life is an unfolding in space and time. From one perspective that unfolding is an unchanging single thing: the Block Universe. But from within it, from one part of it to another, there is change in space and in time. The contours of space and time are not necessary—they are not determined in how they must be. They could be otherwise, even though they are timeless in God. Divine Truth is ontologically dependent on the Body of God, and so Divine Truth depends on how the Body of God unfolds. Consciousness, the matter of Divine Truth, is ontologically dependent on the form of the Body of God, Space-time.

How space-time is configured is not perfect. It contains pestilence and plague, for example. Furthermore, these imperfections are contagious. How space-time configures the Body of God is what Consciousness is ontologically dependent on, and so damage in the space-time configuration of the Body of God damages Consciousness and in turn damages the divine Eternal Life of God. To damage the divine Eternal Life of God is to impede God's will.

Although God is eternal and unchanging, what His divine Eternal Life is—in its details—depends on the space-time configuration of His body. It is here that the demands of the Godhead must be met. It is here that the teleology embodied in the Godhead is an aim, the way things should be, as opposed to the way they are. The divine Eternal Life of God can be injured by teleological failures in His Body. God can be injured by failures within His attributes, specifically within His body, and these injuries can spread from there to Divine Truth, thus poisoning His divine Eternal Life. There is a sense in which God is perfect: His attributes provide the standards for everything. But there is also a sense in which God is not perfect: not everything meets God's standards.

It is in this way that the enemies of God attack Him from within, for there is nothing outside of God.

Chapter 22

The Enemies of God

All harm to God originates from within His body. Events and actions within it are not always in accord with the teleology dictated by the Godhead. We know of three such kinds of harm: (i) natural harms to God, (ii) human harms to God, and (iii) institutional harms to God.

There are always the accidents of nature because not everything is due solely to God. Not every aspect of every part of every attribute of God is His responsibility. Because Consciousness is ontologically dependent on Space-time and because Consciousness is the matter of Divine Truth, the latter can be damaged both by the extinction of conscious particulars—their disappearance from manifestation at particular times and places—and by their survival in a damaged form. When particulars are conscious, their consciousness is parts of Consciousness, and in this way they contribute well or ill to the Eternal Life of God. When they die or are hurt, this can in turn damage His Life. Accidents of nature that kill, maim, or otherwise destroy sentient beings—monsoons, volcanoes, earthquakes, various diseases the flesh is heir to, famine—are accidents of geography and nature that even God suffers from (for all of these things are within Him, as everything is within Him).

Far worse, however, are the human harms to God—the voluntary choices that sentient beings make that impede the process of coming to understanding—the divine Eternal Life of God.

Evil behaviors are those actions intentionally directed towards harming the divine Eternal Life of God; good actions are those actions intentionally directed towards facilitating the proper embodiment of the teleology of the Godhead in the divine Eternal Life of God. In addition, humans can voluntarily commit bad actions—ones that impede the divine Eternal Life of God—without intending or recognizing that these are the effects of such actions.

Good, bad, and evil actions are not usually described in terms that connect them so intimately to the fulfillment of God's will as we do here. Rather, murder, adultery, thievery, fraud, and lying are seen as wrong because they are the deliberate imposition of harms—in certain circumstances—on others. For everyone recognizes that harms unintentionally imposed—even if they require redress—are not evils in the sense that intentionally committed wrongs are; and even serious harms intentionally committed may not be regarded as crimes—for example, the killings committed during the prosecution of a just war or as the punishment of wrongdoers.

Nevertheless, these crimes and the others like them are not simply a disconnected list of harms to others that are—except in special cases—to be avoided. Either all such crimes are seen as wrong actions on the grounds of authority because they are forbidden by the laws of society or by the commandments of God or there is an attempt to rationally justify the presence of some harms in the list and the absence of others by describing those listed as inflicting wrongful involuntary pain and suffering on others. Wrongful involuntary pain and suffering imposed on others is then described as the unifying theme or essence of criminal action.

Neither reliance on authority nor the usual attempts to rationally justify this list of wrongs explains very much about why such actions are wrong. To note only that these wrongs are interdicted by the laws of God is to leave without any explanation why they are so interdicted. Why is this particular list of actions and not others interdicted by God? Furthermore, it opens the list as it stands to a kind of trivialization, because such laws of God, in the Abrahamic religious traditions, are accompanied by dietary restrictions and by requirements of dress and ritual, neither of which seems as significant as an interdiction against murder. God wants all this from His believers, the Abrahamic religious tradition tells us, and there is no explanation of the relative importance of the avoidance of murder as compared to the refusal to eat pork.

Similarly, when such acts as murder are outlawed by society, they are accompanied by traffic regulations, tax laws, and rules about awnings, for everything like this is regulated by societies as well. Again, it is difficult, on such grounds, to see how to separate what is important from what is not. That societies have such rules is not enough to explain why societies *should* have such rules, or even why or when it is right not to obey the rules of a society.

Attempts to rationally justify right action by utilitarian principles designed to maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain experienced by a population fail also. Such utilitarian principles can only justify principles like “Do not murder if the outcome is worse in pleasurable and painful consequences than otherwise.” Every action is placed under the same standard of maximizing utility—understood this way—and the serious wrongs are trivialized by having their utility for pleasure and pain measured alongside the utility of rules about awnings. Failing to leave one’s house on time may be worse in its utility outcomes than murdering one’s neighbor—especially if he is disliked by everyone else, and he is killed peacefully without his knowledge while he is sleeping.

What is required is that the good and the bad be justified by how they are grounded in God and His attributes within which humans live and have their being. If a murder is wrong, it can only be wrong because of its ultimate impact on God. To murder is to prevent a part of Consciousness from manifesting itself any longer in the Body of God, and doing so—in this case—is wrong because it impedes the unfolding of God's body in accordance with the will of God—the teleology embedded in the Godhead.

All actions of sentient beings must be evaluated in terms of their consequences, just as with the utilitarian urges, but not in terms of their consequences for maximizing the pains and pleasures of sentient beings. Rather, the consequences of actions must be evaluated in terms of piety—serving God's will and His divine Eternal Life. However, evaluating the consequences of actions in terms of their impact on God's Life is directly related to the form of that life—Divine Truth. Its form and matter in turn being Understanding and Consciousness explains why actions should be evaluated as good or bad in relation to sentient beings and how those beings are affected. To this extent, standard Utilitarianism is correct.

The drama of human good and evil has been seen as so important that for almost two thousand years it has been the basis for the grand narratives about God in His Heaven and Satan in his hell. The attempt to coerce believers in the Abrahamic religious traditions towards right action and away from wrong action, has been mythicized into a systematic hierarchy of rewards and punishments: eternal bliss in Heaven for those who are good, eternal damnation and punishment in hell for those who are bad.

Indeed, good and bad actions and the good and bad intentions that are the sources of those actions have themselves been detached from the actual human agents who intend and commit such actions and personified as good and bad angels who tempt, cajole, and prod believers in one direction or in the other. Satan, at the hands of the Christian Church fathers, evolved from one among many mere antagonists, the "satans" of the Old Testament, into the powerful solitary figure who himself is not only the originating cause of all the evils in the world—because of his actions in the garden of Eden—but who continues to be a source of fresh evil via his role as a tempter of mortals and as the progenitor of evil occult practices.

Satan is even seen, in Christian folk literature, as God's archenemy and as a credible challenger to God's dominion—despite the latter's official omnipotence and omniscience. Satan, out of sheer misguided pride, fights God for the control of the earth and its inhabitants until he is vanquished by Jesus on the day of judgment.

For all of the Abrahamic religions, morality becomes purely a matter of reward and punishment for appropriately placed loyalty to God or for misplaced loyalty to Satan. The idea of Heaven evolves into a lifestyle of eternal beatitude, where the good ones can—for their delectation—even watch the bad ones eternally tortured in hell. The important consideration of what is right, what is wrong, and why is reduced to a cosmic drama of war where right and wrong are decided solely by whose side one is on and whether one has uttered the right mottoes of loyalty and engaged in the appropriate religious rituals. Lost entirely is a concern with how the question of what is right and what is wrong is to be grounded in God in order to make sense out of it.

Although human evil is misdescribed in the Abrahamic religious traditions, at least it is recognized as the danger it is. Not so for institutional evil—the third kind of harm to God.

Institutional evil is far more invidious and destructive of God's divine Eternal Life than the evil machinations of any single sentient being can be.

Even in cases where we think the evil of one man, an Attila, a Stalin, or a Hitler, dwarfs that of thousands of others, still that evil is promulgated not by the actions of such a man on his own but by the institutions that he operates with the connivance of. Nevertheless, the Abrahamic religious traditions, and all religious traditions for that matter, fail to recognize the danger that institutional evil poses for humanity.

No extant religion addresses the problem of institutional evil.

Institutional evil is the greatest threat to God's divine Eternal Life, because Divine Truth, the form of His life, depends for its constitution not just on the consciousness of single individuals but even more so on consciousness as it is manifested in groups of sentient beings working in unison. We now describe briefly three kinds of institutions and their potential vices. We do not mean to suggest that these three types are mutually exclusive: an institution may easily fit under more than one of these characterizations. We also do not mean to suggest that institutions—merely by virtue of being institutions—are evil. That is not so, because institutions are crucial for the divine Eternal Life of God. Our only aim now is to indicate briefly the nature and scope of institutional evil.

The first kind of institution is the political one. Sentient beings bond into various groups to which they are loyal to various degrees: the family, the city, the state, and the empire. Such institutions can themselves either impede or enhance the embodiment of the teleological structure of the Godhead in the divine Eternal Life of God. Furthermore, individuals die, and although their evil deeds can live after them, and impact on a few generations, an empire can impede the divine Eternal Life of God for thousands of years.

Political institutions can corrupt its members or citizens in a number of ways. First, they can orient the focus of such individuals towards their own individual success in the hierarchy of that institution. The infrastructure of the institution can then become the entire world within which an individual evaluates good and bad, success and failure. Whatever distorted values that institution embodies then become the proximate and ultimate goals of the individuals within those institutions. Various forms of ethical objections to the practices demanded by an institution that individuals may be aware of are damped out by the rhetoric and emotion of loyalty and patriotism.

Second, political institutions often come equipped with codes of belief that are imposed, even from early childhood, on their citizens. The result is that such citizens come to confuse their familiarity with the views they have inherited with a presumed understanding of why such views are justified and what they really say and imply. This rigidity of belief acquisition—this tendency to learn and to teach political dogma by rote—severely restricts understanding. It is not much of an exaggeration to describe the citizens of such political institutions as not really conscious of what they officially believe, not even when they repeat the contents of their memorized documents to one another. They do not recognize the implications of their own beliefs nor the need for those beliefs to be justified: their beliefs amount to no more than slogans.

Finally, power is centralized in political institutions. Even if an individual does not confuse success within such a political institution with success more appropriately construed according to the teleology of the Godhead, he may be unable to withstand the institutional forces arrayed against him. The social control mechanisms deployed by various political institutions to control their citizens are usually too powerful for those citizens to withstand. If the majority, or even a well-placed minority, of the participants in a political institution are blind to what is right and good, they can impose on everyone else who belongs to the institution and prevent them from doing what is right and good. Indeed, it can even be that the way the institution itself is structured prevents everyone within it from doing what is right and good, although no individual is to blame for this.

Religious institutions—the second kind of institution we describe—inherit most of the vices of political institutions when they are, in addition to their religious roles, political. This blending of roles is not uncommon, as the examples of the Byzantine Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, and the current government of Iran indicate. However, specific to them as religious institutions are properties and powers that a political institution need not have. Religious institutions characterize God or other supernatural beings and characterize the right and the wrong in terms of God or those other beings. Furthermore, they dictate one or more right ways of living in terms of their descriptions of God, or gods, and of the right and the wrong.

When religious institutions operate apart from political ones—when there is a distinction "between church and state"—religious institutions offer individuals a benchmark that they can use against the dogmas of political institutions. Right and wrong as described by a religious institution can be used as a perspective against which to measure the actions that a political institution inclines its citizens to engage in and—more important—as a tool to measure the actions that the political institution itself engages in, apart from those of its citizens.

As a result, the potential vices of religious institutions are in some sense far greater than those of political institutions. For religious institutions formulate a framework of claims about God and His properties for its believers. And similar to the educational practices of political institutions, those beliefs are trained into believers while they are still too young to evaluate the beliefs they are being taught. By the time they are in a position to do this, the inertia of familiarity largely prevents them from testing their inherited beliefs in the ways they need to be tested.

One thing that makes religious institutions more dangerous than political ones is that the motivations of political institutions and those in them are more transparent than those of religious institutions and their representatives. Politicians, for example, are rather obvious about their love of power. This is generally not true of priests. Secular goods are naturally associated with political success. The value of asceticism so common to proponents of religious institutions often disguises the distorted values of those proponents.

The third kind of institution that threatens the divine Eternal Life of God is science. Science as a practice sheds concern with the broader issues of morality and the corresponding need to ground morality in the metaphysics of God. Though in principle nothing rules it out, science has no interest in God or metaphysics: it arbitrarily restricts the domain where it takes explanations to be available only to specialized empirical subject areas, and it treats mathematics purely as a tool for studying those areas. The scientist, therefore, is concerned with the discovery of truths—not generally, but specifically with respect to the block universe. Not only is specialized knowledge desired by scientific institutions, but a kind of power is desired as well—the power to create artifacts that human beings want (such as weapons), or ones that can make human life easier (such as household conveniences), and the power to make discoveries that can be used to cure or to prevent the natural ills that threaten everyone.

As described, science is somewhat in the business of coming to understanding, and insofar as it sticks to that business, it facilitates the values of the Godhead that should be embodied in the divine Eternal Life of God. However, the danger of science is not the danger of the distortion of the metaphysical truths about God that the religious institution threatens its believers with. Rather, the danger is that the very real knowledge that science provides can be taken to exhaust all of the options for any possible knowledge. We describe this threat as *Scientism*: the view that the subject areas of science provide all the knowledge that is possible and that there are no other sources of knowledge.

Exactly how bad a threat Scientism is turns on what its proponents take the scope of "science" to be. If one includes in "science" what are called the soft sciences—psychology, sociology, and so on—"knowledge" is then taken to include more than if "science" is restricted to physics. Regardless, because the sciences take it that the evaluation and justification of values—as opposed to the empirical study of how societies promulgate such—is not amenable to "the scientific method," however broadly that is construed, even the most generous understanding of science still threatens the very knowledge of God and His attributes that is needed to recognize how values themselves are operative in the divine Eternal Life of God.

The crimes of institutions against God dwarf those of individuals.

Chapter 23

The Traditional Roles of God

The notion of God has a long history and has evolved into many forms. He is made to play more than one role, not just in the successive world views in which He appears, but often even within the very same world view. These roles are not to be understood as mutually exclusive, even if they are in logical tension, because very successful religions always have the notion of God playing many such roles simultaneously. As a result, the tensions within a religious world view are usually due to implicit conflicts or contradictions between the multiple roles that it imposes on its notion of God. We shall give short characterizations of seven of the roles the notion of God has played in religious views and practices. The monotheistic notion of one God that we are primarily concerned with evolved from earlier notions of pagan gods, and as a result the subsequent roles a notion of a monotheistic God plays in a religion are often the same as one or another role played by notions of pagan gods in polytheistic bodies of belief. These roles in turn motivate the different strands in the traditional Abrahamic notion of God that we have discussed earlier.

First, God may be taken to play the role of a superhuman personal power with specific concerns and attitudes towards this or that individual or group of individuals. It is not just that He is seen as responsive to prayer or that He is seen as aware of individuals or that He is taken to manifest Himself to specific chosen ones (for example, to the prophets of the Old Testament). It is also that the properties attributed to God (for example, His attitudes towards created beings or the relations of those created beings to Him) indicate the point or the meaning of those created beings: they explain what roles one should have in life or what one should do.

Second, God can play a role in unifying the identities of an entire people or tribe or even that of a small town or geographic area. Tribal or ancestral gods often have this kind of role. They supply cultural coherence for a group of people: they explain in a broad way the point or meaning or importance of the specific practices and behaviors of that social group. The Hebraic Yahweh is especially interesting in this regard, for He seems to have started out as one among many others in a pantheon of gods, playing precisely this role for a specific group of people. Even when the belief in Yahweh evolved into the belief in the One and Only True God and His devotees had come to believe that other gods—even those mentioned in the Old Testament—were mere myths, He continued to have the same role towards His “chosen people.”

Third, and related to the second role just mentioned, the notion of God can be used to explain the course of particular historical developments—why things happened the way that they did. Such a role for God seems explicit in the Old Testament, where God Himself directly causes events to occur. Causal efficacy on the part of gods, is, of course, a staple in mythology—for example, in Greek, Indian, and Babylonian myths, where purported historical events (the Trojan war, the founding of Athens) are explained as due to the actions of the gods.

Fourth, and related to the first and second roles just described, the notion of God often operates as a basis for moral distinctions. These can be grounded, for example, in God's attitudes towards created beings—what God has designated as appropriate behavior for created beings. But they can also be grounded in metaphysical claims about God apart from His attitudes, as for example when the neo-Platonic distinction between being and non-being is taken to ground the distinction between good and evil so as to locate evil as the privation or lack of God's activity or presence.

Fifth, and related to the first role, access to God can allow an ecstatic escape from ordinary life and the ordinary ways of speaking about that life. Influential mystical traditions have it that God transcends the ordinary methods by which one recognizes the operations and laws of the world around him, and furthermore, that by means of some process of getting in touch with God, one can escape ordinary forms of life in the world.

Sixth, and related to an expansion of the third role described above, God can and often does function cosmologically: playing a crucial explanatory role in the metaphysical structure of the universe. He may do so by means of His personal powers, as a creator and upholder of the universe, or in some other way entirely. When He is made to play this role, the intelligibility of the notion of God is often stressed; so that, for example, from God's intelligible nature as loving and all powerful, cosmological explanations are provided that are otherwise unavailable. For example, the origin of the universe, it can be—and has been—suggested, is one thing that cannot be explained without invoking God. This is the basis of both cosmological proofs of God and of arguments from design.

Seventh, related to the fifth role but in some tension with the sixth role, the notion of God can be central to maintaining the mystery and the incomprehensibility of the cosmos. God is then seen as something indescribable and thus as something that transcends any possible human understanding. This supports the fifth role of God for individual mystics but can undermine the explanatory power of the notion of God. The ineffable properties of God, if those are the only properties He is taken to have, can hardly be appealed to in the explanation of the origin of the universe. Still, even an ineffable God can play a cosmological role, but one that encapsulates the intrinsic "mysteriousness" of the cosmos—that the cosmos is something that is in principle unknowable because its maker is unknowable.

Many think that all of the major religious traditions recognize that the ultimate divine reality is infinite, and as such, that it utterly transcends the grasp of the human mind. God, therefore, is not a part of the knowable universe, existing in the same neighborhood with other things, nor is He to even be categorized or compared to other things.

This view is at one extreme end of the paradoxical tension that runs through the history of the notion of God, one that has had a nearly confounding effect on the multiple roles of God in religious thought. Here is the tension: on the one hand, for God to be immanent, for Him to be in the universe and to play a role in the cosmos as a ground for the recognition of what is right and what is wrong, He must be in principle describable by the language that is also used to describe the universe, and He must be knowable by (at least some of) the methods that are used to know about anything else that can be known about in the universe. Call this the immanence of God: God is to be *present* in the universe, and knowledge of Him is to be available to advanced sentient beings, such as humans.

On the other hand, an equally powerful tendency running through the history of the notion of God is that He is to transcend the cosmos. Just as His presence in the universe can take many forms, so too, His absence from the universe can take many forms. It need not be—and often is not—understood in the simple sense that as a creator of the universe, He existed before the universe did. Rather, the view can take the form that He does not have the personal characteristics that a God satisfying the first role must have. Either these are foreign to Him altogether or He has them more or in a richer sense than created beings do. This latter is perhaps what some mean when they describe God as having an intellect and a will that are beyond both intellect or will or that are only analogous to what can be meant by describing an ordinary person or sentient being as having an intellect or a will.

The emphasis on the transcendence of God can also take the form of a skeptical claim: ordinary methods of knowing about things will not apply to God at all. It can even take the form of a more extreme incomprehensibility thesis: God, in His essence, is unknowable, not merely insofar as it cannot be known what His properties are but in the more dramatic sense that none of the terms of any human language can apply to him. Mystics can take this ineffability thesis so seriously that they deny that one can even describe God as existing—even *existence*, that is, is not a concept that applies to Him.

In various doctrinal traditions, the ways that God is explained as being immanent and the ways that He is explained as being transcendent can prove to be very intricate. To the extent that God is taken as immanent, to that extent the notion is “naturalized.” God is treated as a being like other beings, in principle as something that can be studied and described like anything else. To the extent, on the other hand, that He is transcendentalized, He becomes something that one cannot study and cannot understand. Often, a supernatural notion of experience is imported to relate believers (paradoxically) to the transcendent God; God can be experienced, but in that experience, something happens (psychologically) that itself cannot be characterized in ordinary terms. In this way, God satisfies the fifth role—but in so doing He is incapacitated, to some extent, from satisfying His other roles. Talk of faith in God transcending knowledge and reason is a softened version of this supernatural grasping of God.

In the contemporary setting—where scientism and atheism are ever-present alternatives to theistic world views—the transcendentalizing of God causes many to jettison the notion altogether. Part of what inclines the contemporary religious thinker towards a transcendental God is that science seems to leave no place for God's presence in the world. His cosmological role, His role in history, even His role as a basis for ethical decision making, all can seem replaceable by one or another secular ersatz. Insisting on the utter transcendence of the notion of God, however, is open to the charge of incoherence. A notion that one cannot grasp the way one grasps other things, that cannot be expressed in the language one uses to express everything else, that (even in the garb of faith) requires access by means of epistemic methods that are acceptable nowhere else, is a notion that it can be denied anyone has. As we have already mentioned, the mystical denial of God's comprehensibility was traditionally accompanied by the claim that nevertheless, experience of Him is still possible. In a contemporary setting where all such unusual states of mind can be explained in more quotidian terms, the mystical perspective is a difficult one to sustain rationally.

The paradoxical tension between the transcendent and immanent roles of God is due exclusively to tensions found within traditional religions. There are many conflicting culturally and politically motivated factors that force God to take the roles He takes in those traditions and that force the attribution of conflicting properties to Him. These are not operative in our presentation of God as He actually is.

We have indicated God's properties and distinguished them from the false images of Him that are reflected in the Abrahamic tradition. We now describe His proper role, given the correct view of His metaphysics.

Chapter 24

The Proper Role of God

Old ways of believing in and worshipping God are everywhere around us. The various roles of God that we described in the previous section are still adopted by many people even when they seem archaic—such as the attempt to interact by prayer or by other means of exhortation with an omniscient God who is nevertheless taken to be partial to one small group of people to the exclusion of everyone else. We will now compare some of these old ways of believing in God with the proper way of doing so.

If God is inexpressibly transcendent, as some believe, then he is inaccessible to our ordinary ways of learning about things. He is inaccessible to direct reasoning, based on concepts that are recognized to apply to Him. So too, He is inaccessible, on such a view, to being indirectly reasoned about by means of inferences from the universe around us to what He must be like, given the assumption that He is the ontological foundation of that universe. Furthermore, on such views, He is taken to be inaccessible even to positive characterizations, either descriptions of His properties by means of terms already in use elsewhere or even by means of new terms invented for the very purpose of talking about Him alone.

None of this is true. Even though God is infinite and His attributes cannot be described completely, and even though what is believed about His attributes at a time can be wrong, He is not inaccessible to understanding and reasoning. One can understand that He has infinitely many attributes. This is a truth about God—one that is simple to understand.

It is right to reject views about God that make him accessible only by mystical insight and that describe him as so transcendent that He cannot be described in any way at all. God can be partially understood in much the same way that many things—such as atoms—can be partially understood.

Another archaic tendency among believers is to make God a personal sentient being. Not only do such believers think He has human emotions such as anger and jealousy, but they even believe that He is concerned with the minute details of their lives. Such a personally involved God is a trial and a mystery for such believers. If He is so concerned with them, why does He allow such terrible things to happen? This is the problem of evil that cannot be solved by the traditional Abrahamic religions.

To attribute human characteristics to God is a mistake. We are not "created in his image," as the Old Testament teaches. He is not that sort of

being. He is not conscious; He is not aware of us; He does not intercede on our behalf or on behalf of anything else. None of the ways that we describe things around us, as things that think, that are in space or time, that are distinguishable from other things—none of these ways of speaking—apply to Him. They do not apply to Him not because He cannot be described but because all such things that can be described in this way either are attributes of His or are parts of those attributes. He can be described only as we have attempted to do herein.

At first, ordinary believers may be frightened of such a concept of God. Many, if not most, want their notion of God to do at least three things. They want Him to provide ethical guidance for them in the guise of commandments that He gives. They want Him to be the ontological foundation for the universe, either by His having created it, or by His providing its fundamental laws. And, finally, they want Him to provide the ultimate explanations for how and why everything is as it is. They do not believe that any notion of God that fails to provide these things is a genuine notion of God.

These are reasonable demands on a notion of God. That does not mean they should be met in the way that ordinary believers expect them to be met. If God is to provide ethical guidance in the guise of commandments, they think, then God must be a conscious being concerned with a human's ethical welfare. They think that He must be willing to punish and reward responses to His commandments. These are naïve views of God.

God provides ethical guidance for us, not by promulgating laws nor by His being aware of what sentient beings do or fail to do to uphold those laws but by Himself being in such a way that ethical precepts are present in the structure of what He is, in His attributes and how they are related to each other and to Him. This is our view. The metaphysics of God, of what He is, includes teleology, what should be the case among the parts of His attributes—including intelligent conscious beings. The metaphysics of God—despite the absence of sentience on His part—includes clear guidance for how intelligent sentient beings should live their lives.

Many ordinary believers think that God is fundamental to the ontology of the universe because He created it from nothing. A conscious God, that is, made a decision to bring the universe into existence. Such a God is fully responsible for what He has done because an omnipotent and omniscient being cannot be surprised or fail to expect what happens in a universe that He has total knowledge and control of. This is the source of the unsolvable problem of evil that faces such believers.

We believe it is naïve to think that God has created the universe and that it is simply wrong to think that this is the only way that He can be ontologically fundamental to that universe. Instead, although everything is ontologically dependent on Him, this is not because He created anything. His attributes, which are ontologically dependent on Him, are no more in space and time than He is. Nevertheless, He is ontologically prior to them. The parts of those attributes in turn are ontologically dependent on the attributes they are the parts of, and so they too are ontologically dependent on Him.

Furthermore, the metaphysics of God and His attributes provide the needed explanations for the way everything is. God is the foundation for everything, and He is the source of our understanding of everything, and this is the case despite His lacking personal human qualities, such as consciousness, or despite His absence from space and time.

If one considers the various roles for God that we have described, it will be clear that either they are inappropriate roles to impose on God or that God, as we have described Him, satisfies them. The properties we have attributed to God will later be used to explain the significance of conscious beings and what their ethical obligations are. These explanations will be based on the nature of God, in particular His teleological nature. The demands of the first role of God, such as His having specific concerns or attitudes towards specific individuals, are inappropriate. The second role—unifying the identities of a group of people or a tribe—is equally inappropriate. It makes God into a petty being who takes sides in human warfare.

As we have indicated, the fourth and sixth roles for God—His being the basis for ethical and for cosmological distinctions—are appropriate for Him and for His attributes. His properties and those of His attributes are also relevant to broad-scale tendencies in historical and evolutionary developments: the emergence of conscious beings and our growing scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, He cannot be used to explain the details of historical developments, as the third role for the notion of God would have it, because many of those details are not due to Him or to His attributes.

There remains only the seventh role to discuss: The mystery and incomprehensibility of the universe being due to the mystery and incomprehensibility of God Himself. We reject one way of interpreting this view, that God is inaccessible to our ordinary ways of reasoning and learning about things. God, despite how unique and how vast He is, is amenable to our understanding. However, His attributes are infinite, and we are fallible in what we claim about them. There is always more to learn and more to correct about what is already thought to be known. In this sense, and in this sense alone, God is mysterious.

As we have seen, a major motivation in the Abrahamic tradition for the perennial invocation of the mysterious nature of God is the problem of evil. Given the omnipotence, omniscience, and holiness of the Abrahamic God, His mysteriousness is required if those properties are to be compatible with the evil so prevalent in His creation. Furthermore, so that the Abrahamic God is not made responsible for the apparent evil in the world, an original "Fall" from the garden of Eden is required, one that leads to a changing, contradictory, morally flawed profusion of events from which we can be saved, on the Christian view, only by an act of sheer grace on God's part, through Jesus.

However:

God is the victim. We are His only salvation. The "redemption" of the world—and Him—is up to us. The appropriate unfolding of the divine Eternal Life of God depends on us, on our descendants, whoever they might be, and on whatever other sentient beings who realize what it is that God needs. Righting the wrongs in God's Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions. It is the aim of what follows to describe what we must do in thus serving God.

Part 5: Serving God

Chapter 25

The Metaphysics of Souls

Regarding God's attributes, we further believe:

> **That Divine Truth has as its form Understanding and has as its matter Consciousness.**

We believe:

> **That Consciousness has as its form Piety and has as its matter Awareness**
>
> **That Understanding has as its form Synthesis and has as its matter Good Judgments.**
> **We believe:**
>
> **That Piety has as its form Serving and has as its matter Choices**
>
> **That Awareness has as its form Apperception and has as its matter Intuitions**

We believe:

> **That Good Judgments has as its form Adequacy and has as its matter Belief**
> **We believe:**
>
> **That Divine Truth is immediately ontologically dependent on God's Body—The Block Universe**
>
> **That Understanding is immediately ontologically dependent on Consciousness, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on**

Space-time

That Synthesis is immediately ontologically dependent on Good Judgments, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Piety, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Awareness, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Location—the form of Space-time

That Adequacy is immediately ontologically dependent on Belief, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Serving, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Choices, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Apperception, which in turn is immediately ontologically dependent on Intuitions

What follows is commentary on this fundamental credo.

The contemporary notions of "person," "human being," "conscious agent," or "individual conscious agent" are commonsense notions of the vernacular that are unanalyzed composites of several ideas. When we describe a theater as having burned down and been rebuilt across the street, we are speaking simultaneously of something physical and of something institutional. In the same way, when we speak of a person, a human being, or an individual conscious agent, we are sometimes speaking of a conscious entity, sometimes of that entity coupled with its physical body, and sometimes of a complex of something conscious, a physical body, and an institutional status. These ideas, therefore, must be analyzed into their metaphysically genuine parts before we can understand what we really are and what we are responsible for. The important notions that we discuss in this section and in the next are those of "the soul" and "the self." These are not identical with each other, and neither of them is identical with the ordinary notions just mentioned.

Souls are parts of God's attribute Consciousness; bodies—human and otherwise—are modes in the Body of God.

Everything within the Body of God—that which has God's attribute Space-time as its form—unfolds in space and time. What appears within the Body of God are "modes"—cohering and continuous portions of space-time—the kinds of things we describe as stars, planets, plants, animals, artifacts, etc. In recent times and on one particular planet that we know about for certain, Darwinian evolution has been taking place among self-replicating modes. It is here, on Earth, that consciousness—as far as we know—first makes its effects visible in the Body of God.

As we ordinarily speak, we describe certain kinds of creatures as "conscious"—humans, other primates, mammals, and many other animals. It is generally thought that consciousness comes in more developed and less developed forms. Perhaps the "consciousness" of insects is so primitive that we should not describe them as conscious at all. But rodents seem complex enough in their psychological responses to their environments to be described as conscious of those environments, and primates in many ways seem as aware of, and as intelligently responsive to, their environments as we are.

As we ordinarily speak, we describe consciousness as a characteristic or property of certain animals, and therefore we tend to think of it as something that occurs entirely within the Body of God. However, some aspects of consciousness make it seem alien to the space-time manifold that is God's Body. The "intentionality" of consciousness—that it is intrinsically "about" other things—seems quite different from anything found in space-time. If the seat of consciousness is regarded as a physical entity—the brain—then it follows that there are states of the brain that are intrinsically about other things: the brain of a rodent, on this kind of view, thinks about cheese, and when that happens, there are events in its brain that are intrinsically about the physical objects that the rodent is aware of.

It seems bizarre to suggest that purely physical events or entities can be "about" other physical events or entities or for that matter about anything at all. Physical things and processes seem to obey only physical laws, and nothing about such laws seems to allow intrinsic "aboutness" in those things or processes. Not even mirrors or photographs, we think, are intrinsically "about" what they reflect or are the images of. Both mirrors and photographs are the results of certain physical processes that generate visual images. In calling the results of these physical processes "images," we are imposing "aboutness" upon them. What is actually involved (from the purely physical point of view) is nothing more than a causal process that leads to some effects. It is we who impose intentionality on those duplications by seeing the painting as about the things that it is a painting of and by treating the mirror as presenting to us the objects that it reflects.

Considerations like this about the intrinsic non-intentionality of physical objects can motivate dualist views of mind. If a brain—a purely physical object—cannot sustain events that are intrinsically about other things, then it cannot be the seat of consciousness. That means that something else associated with the person—his mind or his soul—must be what it is that is aware of things and must be what it is that is intrinsically intentional.

When we think about the properties we attribute to conscious beings by virtue of their being conscious, we realize yet another aspect of consciousness that does not seem to be physical either. Apart from its being intrinsically "intentional"—described as involved in thinking about other things—consciousness is inherently concerned with truth and falsity; indeed, it may be appropriately described as inherently truth-seeking.

Despite these ways that the nature of consciousness seems to transcend the Body of God, it is clearly ontologically dependent on that Body. Indeed, specific consciousnesses seem linked to physical entities—animal bodies—and they seem to cease in their effect on the Body of God when those bodies cease to be present there. Specific consciousnesses seem to begin, develop, and end with the specific bodies they are associated with.

Specific consciousnesses are thus ontologically dependent on the bodies they are associated with, but they must—in any case—be distinct from those bodies. Indeed, we assert that consciousnesses are not in space and time at all. Most think otherwise. They think of the events of consciousness as temporal, and indeed, as like physical processes: a man sees a table and then becomes aware of it, just as a man walks from one part of a room to another. But this is to confuse a physical process that takes place over space-time with a timeless and spaceless process that is akin to a logical relation: the seeing of a table (timelessly) entails becoming aware of it.

Consciousness is a timeless set of relations corresponding to the physical process we call "seeing a table," just as the temporal process of someone inferring *Socrates is mortal* from *All men are mortal* and *Socrates is a man* has corresponding to it the timeless logical entailment between the second two propositions and the third. Even though the implication itself is not in space and time, there is still a sense in which it is a process: the consequent follows from the premises that imply it. In exactly the same sense the processes of consciousness are timeless.

For Aquinas, God is not in space and time, and yet God is omniscient. Aquinas explains this by taking God's cognition to replicate timelessly and spacelessly within His mind all of the spatially and temporally indexed events that He is aware of. The entire contents of everything that happens is within God's ken—but not along with its reality as within space and time. Although we do not accept Aquinas's personalization of God as a conscious being that is aware of everything, we do accept his characterization of the purely non-spatial and non-temporal nature of awareness, and indeed, the non-spatiality and non-temporality of all the events of consciousness. These timeless and spaceless events correspond to spatial and temporal events in space-time, but they are not themselves such events. They are not in time and space.

The seat of such timeless events we describe as the soul; and the soul too is not in space and time. Souls of individual conscious agents, however, are ontologically dependent on the bodies they are the souls of—whether those bodies be human ones, or other kinds of bodies.

Souls are timeless and spaceless: souls are immortal. Souls are ontologically dependent on but distinct from the modes in Space-time that they are associated with. Souls are intrinsically aware.

When we speak of a person or an agent being aware of a table next to him, our natural way of speaking masks complications. The body of the person is next to the table, and there is a causal relationship established between the eyes of that body, the table, and the illumination in the room. The soul of the person, however, that which is aware of the table, is not next to the table at all, since that soul is not in space and time. Corresponding to the tensed event of light reflected from the table striking the eyes of the body of the agent is a spaceless and timeless event of the awareness of the table on the part of the soul of that agent. That timeless and spaceless experience of the soul is ontologically dependent on the tensed event; but it is also distinct from it. We shall often speak in what follows of persons, conscious agents, or agents, being aware of this or that object that is near them; but we always understand this way of speaking as a convenience that can be dropped for a longer accurate description along the lines of what we have just described.

So, as we ordinarily speak of persons or agents, we describe them as aware of things, believing propositions, desiring certain states of affairs, making choices for good or evil, and making judgments about what is the case. Just as we speak of individual agents being aware of things, we also describe them as understanding other things. Given that souls are the seats of consciousness, these ways of speaking attribute various properties to souls as subjects—and treat them as all on a par: Just as a particular soul has the property of being aware of something, it also has the property of believing propositions about that something and having the property of making decisions about it.

These ways of speaking also mask metaphysical complications. Souls are conscious—this is something that is intrinsic to them by virtue of their being parts of God's attribute Consciousness. Souls are aware—this is by virtue of God's attribute Awareness being the matter of His attribute Consciousness. Awareness is what consciousness is constituted of. No soul can be conscious without its being aware.

We also speak of souls understanding these things but not those things. Understanding, however, is not a simple matter of the soul being what it is, as is the case when a soul is aware. Rather, God's attribute Understanding is the form of

His attribute Divine Truth; and so the nature of understanding is more truly grasped when it is recognized as something that a soul is aware of rather than as something in the soul itself. For a soul to be aware of an apple is for a soul to be conscious of that apple; for the soul to understand that an apple is a fruit is not for that soul to understand something, but rather for that soul to be aware of a relation that the apple bears to the property of being a fruit. Understanding is therefore external to the soul itself, and it is something the soul is aware of just as it is aware of anything else.

A soul's desires—its feelings of desire—are also external to itself in the same way that its understanding is. Just as a soul understanding that an apple is a fruit is for that soul to be aware of an apple being a fruit, so too, a soul desiring to eat an apple is its being aware of desire for an apple—its being aware of the event of its animal body being drawn towards the apple. The locus of desire is the animal body, and its being drawn towards this or that in the Body of God. The soul is aware of its animal body, and its desire, just as the soul is simultaneously aware of the apple as that which is desired.

As we have mentioned, what the soul's awareness introduces into the events of the animal body being drawn towards the apple is "aboutness," or "intentionality." Because of the soul's awareness, the desire is for *that apple*, as opposed to it being a brute causal event in the Body of God of an animal body being drawn towards an apple only in the way that an apple is drawn towards the ground when it falls from a tree.

We speak of conscious agents believing this or that in just the same way that we speak of them being aware of this or that. This falsely makes it seem that for the soul to be aware and for the soul to believe are just matters of different properties the soul has. But a soul's beliefs—unlike its awarenesses—are not constitutive of that soul—no more than what it understands or what it desires is constitutive of it. Rather, God's attribute Belief is the matter of His attribute Good Judgments; it is literally that of which Good Judgments is constituted. That is, a soul's believing something is the result of its piety. We have called the form of God's attribute Consciousness "Piety," but it may also be described as a species of "Choosing." To understand the primary ways that a soul is, one must first understand that it is aware and that its awareness is shaped by its choices.

Thus, a soul is not just a collection of awarenesses. A soul has as its form the ways that it singles *this* out as important—and not *that*. A soul's awareness is shaped by how it foregrounds this and backgrounds that. A soul's awareness is necessarily selective—even when it does its best merely to contemplate what it sees without making any of the details of what it sees significant.

To describe Piety as a species of choosing is to acknowledge that many choices are not pious: choices that are made blindly and mindlessly are not pious.

If someone merely flips a coin to make a decision, although he can be described as making a choice on that basis, such kinds of choosing are not what a soul does when it takes itself to be legitimately engaged in decision making. Genuine choices that a soul makes must be shaped by the ends that such choices are to serve. It is only when choices are so shaped that we describe those choices as pious ones; and indeed, God's attribute Piety has as its form Serving and its matter Choices, where "Choices" is understood in the broadest sense. Pious choices, we must add, are freely chosen: they are acts of *free will* on the part of a soul. To flip a coin and then act on it is not to make a *free* choice; it is to bend one's will to the tyranny of a random outcome. The telos of God's attribute Piety is Understanding: that is, pious choices are made with the aim of facilitating understanding.

With the emergence of the impact of consciousness in the Body of God, there also arises the importance of responsibility. The soul is an agent that makes choices based on what it is aware of, and a soul is responsible for its choices. It is here that the unfolding of what is within the Body of God is affected—for good or for ill—by what that soul chooses. Since the telos of God's attribute Piety is Understanding, the soul's choices must facilitate understanding—that is what the soul is responsible for helping (in whatever ways that it can) to bring about.

Maximizing awareness, especially awareness of understanding, in itself and in the souls it affects is what each soul must attempt to achieve by its choices.

What is required for something to be a soul is for it to be conscious. In turn, what is required for something to be conscious is for it to be aware and for it to exercise free choice. Is there anything in any of this that restricts consciousness only to sentient agents associated with animal bodies and to nothing else? Consider a computerized robot with sensing devices and with intricate programs to enable it to evaluate—according to a set of concepts—what it is picking up. Suppose the robot is also programmed with goals of various sorts, for example, finding all the red objects it can move and placing them in a bin. Is such a thing conscious? Does it have a soul? We think it may. In the same way that what an animal sees is structured by the nature of its choosing—what it cares about and what it does not care about—a robot's sensing of its environment can be equally selective. Are those free choices, however, that the robot makes in order to achieve its goal? If not, it does not have a soul, and if its choices among its options are selected by a randomizing selection program, we do not regard it as having a soul either. However, if the program governing the robot is one that learns and modifies itself on the basis of the impact the environment has on it, and if its responses—although intelligent—cannot be deterministically predicted on the basis of its current state, then we see no reason to deny that it has a soul.

Although we have suggested that computer-governed robots can be conscious, they are still, nevertheless, individual agents associated with individual concrete bodies. Consider, instead, institutions: business corporations, scientific societies, not-for-profit organizations, sports teams, cults, and religious orders. Can these things be conscious? Certainly they can be described as aware: a business corporation may be quite aware of changes in its target audience and adjust its business plan accordingly. So too we can describe a scientific society as failing to realize that certain studies that it is having published are now out of date or a sports team as intending to beat its opponents. And we can describe the sorts of choices—for good or ill—that such organizations undertake.

It is tempting, because such institutions are made up of individual conscious agents, to try to reduce the awareness and the decision making of an institution to the awarenesses and decision makings of the individuals in that institution. But this attempted reduction fails because what an institution is aware of can deviate from what the individuals making it up are aware of, and its decisions can differ from the decisions of the individuals in it. An individual, for example, can discover something that he tries to alert others in the organization about, by sending around a memo. If the memo is waylaid by accident, the organization as a whole should be described as failing to be aware of what that individual knows. A more complex way that an organization can fail to be aware of something is when all of the individuals in the organization are aware of something, but the organization itself—perhaps because of its official policy or because of its constitution—is not in a position to take notice of this fact. For example, the citizens of a country may realize or come to believe that slavery is wrong. Their country, however, because of its current notion of a citizen and because of its economics or because of the other ways that its infrastructure is rigid, may be appropriately described as unaware of this.

The ways that an organization chooses to act can similarly deviate from the actions of the individuals in it. Indeed, if an organization sues another organization, that action is one that it is wrong to describe as one in which some particular individual in the organization is actually doing the suing. This does not exclude, of course, the possibility of individuals in an organization being sued or engaging in lawsuits, but that is a different matter from the organization itself doing so. This distinction between an institution and the individuals in it is legally acknowledged by the practice of directing lawsuits at both institutions and the individuals who run them.

Declarations of war are actions that countries, not individuals, engage in. An individual may assassinate the high-ranking official of another country, and he may even do so in the name of his country. The country, on the other hand, may apologize for the action and refuse to take responsibility for it. When a country goes to war with another, this involves the actions of many individuals; but the actions of the country as a whole are quite distinguishable from those. Even in the extreme case when all of the citizens of a country are appropriately brave and distinguish themselves honorably in a war, it can still be possible for the country itself to be deplored for its actions.

It might be thought that if a country is to be criticized for what it has done, this means that some individuals—its leaders perhaps—are the ones to be criticized. But this is not always the case. Perhaps the country's actions are due to a vote, and some individuals voted for the reasons they did because they were misinformed. On the other hand, it may turn out that the misinformation is not due to a specific conspiracy of individuals but instead to a series of accidents for which no one individual is to blame.

Individual conscious agents often bond together in groups that—as a result of this bonding—have knowledge that individuals belonging to the groups can not be taken to have on their own. And as a result these organizations can achieve things—write a modern encyclopedia, build a rocket capable of traveling to the moon—that no individual alone can manage. Individual conscious agents, in fact, often deliberately and quite consciously subsume themselves to one or another group that they belong to. This means—to a greater and to a lesser degree—that they subsume their awarenesses to the awareness of the group and that they subsume their actions to that of the group. This can sometimes mean—but only in extremely rare cases—that they are subsuming themselves to the will of an individual. In most cases it means that they are subsuming themselves to something other than a single conscious agent: they are subsuming themselves to the group itself.

There are good empirical indicators that humans have faculties that make them naturally group themselves into unified larger institutional wholes in the ways we have described—whether they consciously want to or not. For one thing, there are automatic ways of speaking which indicate this: We are very good at describing what "we" or "they" think as opposed to what "I" think or what "he" thinks. Furthermore, we very naturally speak of the viewpoints, attitudes, and even character traits of nation-states, tribes, ethnicities, etc. "Naïve sociology" is often wrong, however: very often the kinds of attributions just mentioned are falsely taken to apply to every member of a group. But if the policies of a country are involved, it may not be at all wrong for us to attribute attitudes to the country that are not shared by many of its citizens. We should not confuse the correct tendency to recognize that institutional units of human beings can have attitudes and knowledge of their own from the mistaken tendency to presume that those attitudes and knowledge are had by all the members of those institutional units.

There is a great deal of evidence from evolutionary biology that the social control mechanisms that various institutions use on their citizens and the psychological tendencies of humans to knit together in groups are due directly to the fact that it has been groups of humans—families and tribes, but even larger units such as cities—that have been the units of selection in the Darwinian evolution of humans, and not, strictly speaking, individual humans all on their own.

A transition from groups of organisms, where the organisms can survive or die on their own, to groups *as* organisms, that can only survive or die as whole units, looks to be fairly common throughout the history of life—e.g., from symbiotic communities of bacteria to eukaryotic cells, from collections of such cells to larger organisms, etc. What is required to bind individuals into these larger wholes is not an altruistic decision to sacrifice the individual organism's own interests to the greater whole but rather a kind of involuntary inclusion of the individual into the larger unit so that its fortunes are tied to that unit. To some extent, humans are so involuntarily included by virtue of their being born into families and historically by belonging to tribes that survived or did not—as whole groups—in the face of various external challenges.

Our psychological tendencies, therefore, to identify with groups and to attribute beliefs and desires to such groups are not due to our voluntarily joining such; this Hobbesian picture is false. Rather, they are the result of external social controls that tribes and other group units automatically place on their members and of the genetically given psychological needs of individuals to belong to such groups and to operate in accordance with them—both being the result of the long evolution of such groups of humans.

This does not mean that we lack all capacity to avoid belonging to such groups or to leave groups that we have hitherto belonged to. To some extent we do have that ability, especially those of us living in contemporary Western societies. Nevertheless, it is clear that we are evolutionarily designed to function optimally not alone but with other human beings in groups.

Conscious agents, as we have been describing them, seem to fall into a natural hierarchy. First, there are the individual conscious agents who are associated with human bodies. Second, there are the various organizations of these—we have called these "institutions," and we mean by this term the various formal and semiformal organizations described above: countries, corporations, societies, political parties, etc. Third, there are the looser associations of individual conscious agents and such organizations that we will describe as "cultures." Finally, there is the broadest association of individual conscious agents that we know of—humanity itself.

Is it appropriate to describe all these various groupings of individual conscious agents as conscious and therefore as having souls? It may not always be appropriate. A soul is not had by a mode of God's Body by virtue of its reacting automatically in response to environmental stresses. An amoeba does as much. Nevertheless, it would be misguided to describe an amoeba as aware of its environment and as responding to the challenges that it sees that its environment poses to it. This is where piety comes in. Consciousness is present not merely if something is aware and makes choices in the broadest sense that those can be understood. What is also required is that the awareness of the creature be selective, and selective because of the choices it engages in which are directed towards goals.

The fact that humans form a group and speak of that group as a "we" does not suffice on its own to provide that group with its own soul. Various groups of human beings—families, corporations, political parties, cultures, etc.—can manifest various degrees of decision making and various degrees of piety. If these are primitive enough—reactive in a mechanical way to the environment or amounting to no more than the actions of the individual conscious agents that make it up—then such a group has no soul, despite how its members speak of it. It is, however, a self—a different matter that we examine next. What is required is sufficient unity in the policies of the social whole in response to what it perceives and indeed sufficient unity in what it perceives. This unity can be due to the power and control of one or a few like-minded individuals over the whole group. But—and this is common in even contemporary hunter-gatherer societies—the group can be quite egalitarian in structure and in how it decides its policies, and yet its members nevertheless always operate as a unit. Such a tribe has a soul apart from the souls of the individual members of the tribe.

Is it reasonable to describe a collection of humans as large as humanity itself as conscious, as choosing actions and then executing them? To answer this question, we focus on the elements that we have distinguished as intrinsic to consciousness. First, awareness is required. We naturally describe humanity at certain stages as being aware of things that it was not aware of earlier. Consider the fact that the earth is not fixed in place with the sun circling it. This is a fact we can now describe humanity as aware of, although it was not aware of this fact some thousand years earlier. Humanity being so aware does not require that every human is aware of this, for many still are not. Nor does it require that only the best and most advanced in the knowledge of the time are aware of this—for it is fair to say that in Newton's time humanity was not aware of this fact although Newton and the other scientists he corresponded and feuded with were so aware. What is required is that this knowledge be located and distributed among humans in a particular way so that it is correct to say that humanity knows it. This is the case today. It is not required in order for humanity to have a soul that every single human is a participant in the whole that constitutes "humanity." Certain individuals are sometimes spoken of as having “lost their humanity.” We suggest this be taken literally. Being part of the whole that is humanity is not merely, or not any longer, a matter of being human: It is a matter of participating in humanity in such a way as to support its having a soul.

Is it reasonable, therefore, to describe humanity as making choices for good or for ill? It is indeed. Humanity may make a choice—soon enough—to destroy itself and its habitat. This is not quite something that has been deliberately decided on as a course of action by any particular group of individuals. Humanity, in total, makes decisions that we all participate in, even if our choices are not its choices. Sometimes those decisions are collectively ours: sometimes it is that those decisions are ones we participate in but not ones that we can be described as having made.

Nevertheless, having made these points about humanity in the last thousand years or so, it is clear that humanity has not always possessed a soul. At a time when we were just small groups of hunter-gatherers, it may have been correct to describe such tribes as possessing souls, but it would not have been correct to describe humanity—the collection of all such tribes—as having a soul. Humanity acquired a soul later.

Chapter 26

Souls and Selves

We have distinguished the proper attributes of a soul—awareness and choice—from what are not properly attributed to it—desires, judgments, and understandings. A soul does not, properly speaking, desire anything. It is *aware* of the desires of its animal body, and it makes choices based on what it is aware of. As we have mentioned, this is not how we ordinarily speak. Our ordinary notion of a person, a conscious agent, or a human, includes more than what are properly attributes of a soul. This notion that most souls have of themselves is a *self-image*. We will often speak in what follows, as people ordinarily do, of persons or humans being aware of this or believing that or desiring this or choosing to do so and so. But we acquiesce in this ordinary way of speaking—which jumbles together metaphysically real aspects of souls with other things that such souls are, strictly speaking, only aware of—only for the purposes of expository convenience. We have made clear how these ordinary ways of speaking can be spelled out so that they are metaphysically accurate.

Souls have agency, and some of their choices are unforced.

We describe the Body of God as one thing with its form being God's attribute Space-time. All of God's body exists—it is all *real*—despite its being proportioned by time and space. It may seem that such a description of God's Body, on which our choices are to have their impact, is not compatible with attributing free will to the soul. The future is definite—as definite as the existence of God's Body in all time and all space. The future therefore is already one way. In what sense then can the future be up to the chooser? In what sense can a chooser make genuinely free choices?

Imagine that a traveler on a forked path is contemplating which fork to take. His choosing one or the other, and its impact, is already present in the Body of God—later in time, as we say. So the irrelevance of freedom looms as a consequence because of *predestination*: the idea that given the existence of the future, what will be is already fixed in future time. We call this "fatalism": if a person thinks that the universe is already a certain way in the future, then why should he struggle over his choices? And yet his agency turns precisely on the idea that his choices matter and that they matter in the sense that how the universe turns out is partly affected by how he makes his decisions.

The worry about a fixed existing future is in one way akin to the worry that the traditional theist of the Abrahamic religions faces, given his belief that God's omniscience strips created agents of their responsibility for their actions by making those actions known and hence fixed in advance. The traditional theist denies God's responsibility for the free choices of created agents, placing full blame for what they do only on them. We do not agree with this. We believe that the omniscience of the God of the Abrahamic tradition does make Him responsible for His created agents' actions despite the traditional attempts to avoid this conclusion: His omniscience implies that He knows what created agents will do, and His omnipotence implies that He can do something about what He sees that created agents will do. But even granting this, we can still maintain that under certain circumstances created agents are nevertheless (also) responsible for their actions. This will be so in the cases where those agents choose freely in our sense, despite the fact that the God of the tradition can see ahead of time what they will freely choose to do. The traditional God's foreknowledge, or ability to predict what created agents will do—and consequently His responsibility for what they can do—does not threaten their freedom or their responsibility.

This is because an agent choosing freely in our sense means that his decision has not been determined either by internal compulsions or by external forces. Rejecting determinism with respect to some of the agent's decisions—the free ones—is compatible with many other events being determined. Our claim is simply that some events, including some decisions made by human beings, are not determined by events (in space and time) external to those individual agents or by internal compulsions experienced by them.

Consider what is crucial to the rationality and autonomy of decision making. One thing is to find out as much as one can in order to make a decision. The agent needs to know what the constraints on his choices are. If something is not a option, then one has no choice with respect to it. Genuine determinism—the claim that every event has an antecedent cause—undermines the rationality of decision making. For if an agent tries to find out enough relevant information, and determinism is true, that agent will (eventually) learn of the antecedent events or facts about himself that necessitate his choice. But does not our view face the same problem? If future outcomes are eternally fixed in the Body of God and are the ways that they are, then could not an agent (in principle) find out enough about the future to discover what it is that he will do and in this way find out that his apparently free choice is actually necessitated? To answer this question, we must ask how it is that the future is learned.

One way to learn about the future is to live into it. But this is not relevant: that an agent can discover what he will do by doing it does not mean that he then discovers—just by making a decision and acting on it—that his decision was forced. What other way of discovering the future is possible? Well, we can often predict what must happen ahead of time on the basis of what is currently the case. Physical laws—to the extent that they determine future events on the basis of past and present events—enable us to predict those events in just this way. But our predictions are based on our ability to trace out the causal chains from the past and present to the future—and so such predictions are restricted only to those future events with causal chains that extend into the past.

Contemporary science denies genuine determinism, for it is a view that fits best not with current scientific views but only with the outdated Newtonian picture of the universe. Rejecting determinism—as we do—means that some events in the future are not caused by events in the past: those events cannot be predicted on the basis of information—no matter how complete—that we gather. So the mere fact that the future is what it is is not relevant to our own agency. No matter how much we learn about the present and the past, when facing a decision that is not determined by past and present events, we will not find that our decision is forced or fixed in advance or predictable from the laws and the past history of the unfolding of God's Body. And that is all that is needed to protect free and rational decision making by souls.

The selves of souls are the constructed products of the choices that those souls make on the basis of what they are aware of. As such, selves are imitations of their souls; they are the ecological footprints of those souls in God's Body.

We have described souls as the seats of consciousness. This means that they are the loci of awareness and free choice. One way that these faculties of the soul are manifested is by the activity souls engage in of *self-imagery*. Humans, for example, have an image of themselves as a *self*. Although they see the self as the seat of their own consciousness and as the roots of their own freely chosen actions, they do not usually think of the self as we have described souls to be. One reason for this is that almost everyone takes a self to be something that is in space and time. When ordinary people think of their own immortality, they think of the self as surviving death—and therefore they do not think of the soul as timeless and spaceless to begin with. Those who hope for immortality hope that the self will last the entire future extent of God's body.

These images of self are quite flexible in one sense and quite rigid in another. The sense in which they are quite flexible is that they differ greatly from individual to individual and in addition from one culture to another. These differences are not just in respect to how people vary in how they take themselves to be different in intelligence, affability, etc. It is also a matter of such self-images differing even in what people regard as relevant to a self-image: they differ in the families of properties that people think the qualities of selves should be characterized in terms of. Another way of putting this point is that people differ greatly in what they regard as the sorts of properties that can be *essential* to their self.

Some, for example, regard only the differing aspects of their mental abilities as essential to them. For such individuals, the particular aspects of their body, even that they have a body, are irrelevant to who they really are. The "real them" can—at least in principle—be transferred entirely from one body to another. Other individuals include various bodily aspects of themselves, such as their skills as a musician or athlete, as essential to the self that they really are. They may even include the appearance of their face or body as so essential. Still others see accidents of birth such as ethnicity, class standing, or nationality as essential to the selves that they really are. If such a person discovers that he is wrong about his ethnicity or nationality, this can trigger a suicidal depression—an "identity crisis"—because he cannot accept or imagine that he is different from what he has defined himself to be.

Some, finally, include their possessions as part of "who they are." Someone who owns a corporation may regard that corporation as—and act as if that corporation were—part of *him*. Others cannot detach their self from the cars they own or the style of appearance (their clothes) that they have.

A self-image is a psychological construct, in part the creative construction of the very human who has adopted it and in larger part an unconscious result of how that individual's history and nurture has affected him. We have some capacity to modify these images of ourselves, and to a large extent, a self-image develops and shifts over the life of an individual because of developments in his personality and the events of his life.

The self an individual attributes to himself directly affects the freedoms he takes himself to have and not to have. This is because when someone thinks of certain properties as essential to his self, he then makes it almost a matter of the definition of who he is that such things cannot be changed and therefore are not aspects of his self that he has any control over. In this respect, such a person engages in what has been called "false consciousness"—more accurately described as "false selfness" (or even "false selfishness"). The person refuses to recognize the genuine elements of choice that are available to him. These are ruled out by his rigid self-image assumptions about who he is: a man, a woman, belonging to a particular class, lacking certain abilities or skills, belonging to a certain nationality. He takes himself, therefore, "not to be capable of that sort of thing."

We do not deny that there are realities about the potentials and limitations of particular souls; we are by no means claiming that everyone has the capacity to be whatever they can imagine or that nothing about what one is restricts one's options. Our only point is that often a self-image is far more restricted in its properties—the properties that a soul takes to be essential to itself—than is really true of the soul that has adopted this image of its self. It is also true, of course, that a self-image of a soul often provides it with the illusion of latitude in its options where there actually are none. Self-delusion provides both the illusions of nonexistent options and the illusions of nonexistent constraints.

The image of the self that a soul has evolves even despite the soul's resistance to change in its self-image and sometimes despite its denial or failure to realize that its self-image has changed. Dramatic events in its life that it responds to in ways it did not anticipate and that it even would have denied were possible provide the accidental discovery that it is capable of much more (or much less) than it thought—crushing the illusions of self that so many cherish. But these forced developments in maturity reveal something positive: that the self-image is one that is far more under the control of the soul than most souls imagine it to be. Our self-image is something we can reconstruct and improve. We can uncover what and who we really are. We can discover the soul itself that is the locus of choice and awareness and use that discovery to construct a self-image that better fits with who we are and what we should do—a kind of psychotherapy, as it were.

The idea is not that our self-image should simply be replaced with our notion of soul. Our notion of self—rather—has a different and complementary role to our notion of soul: the self-image should be made to correspond to the actual self developing in God's Body. Our self is the manifestation—the ecological footprint—of our soul in the Body of God. So it is imperative that the soul be appropriate in its choosing and its awareness. That is, we should see the self as the actual appearance of the effects of our awarenesses and choices: the laying out in space and time of the results of who we are. In turn, we should see the soul as ontologically dependent on the self that its choices construct in space and time, in the Body of God.

Imagine two people playing a board game. The course of the game is partially a result of what the two people are aware of at each stage in the game and of the choices they make in continuing the game. The resulting trajectory of the game through space and time is a blend of the decisions of the players plus the inevitably present accidents of luck and necessity that are the nature of the game itself—its rules and the geography of the board. We can distinguish, to some extent, the two selves that are manifested in the game. We don't mean by this that we can distinguish the two people that make the various moves in the game. We mean, rather, that the moves themselves on the part of each person in response to his opponent can be distinguished. These are the elements of selves—of each person who is playing the game—as they appear in the trajectory of the game. These selves are a product of the impact of the player's choices and awarenesses combined with the aspects of the environment (the geography of the game board, for example), and with the responses of the other player.

The self, therefore, is in only a somewhat artificial way distinguished from the broader elements around it that participate in its constitution: the other selves in the trajectory of the game and the infrastructure of the game itself.

Games (and the games that souls play are no exception) have several properties. They have at least one player and are unlimited in the number of players they can have. They have rules, a definite beginning, an end, and a goal—what it is to win. There is a domain in which the game is played—a board, a field, etc.; there are the various props of the game; and the players themselves either appear in the trajectory of the game or use tokens—one or more—of the players that stand for them in the trajectory of the game.

We call the game that souls are engaged in *the game of life*. The souls are the players, and in the case of individual agents, their concrete bodies are the tokens of them in the game. In the case of the souls of organizations, for example the post office (if it actually has a soul), there are many tokens of the organization in the game—its employees, buildings, delivery trucks, etc. The self, therefore, is properly seen as the trajectory of the particular playing of a game, or more accurately, as a part of the trajectory of the playing of a broader game that it is a complex part of. One can always try to see one's own self selfishly—try to believe that one makes choices in response to the environment and include indifferently in that "environment" everything that is not one's self: the choices others make, the geography within which one's choices are made, etc. But it is more accurate to see the game one is playing as inclusive of one's self and other selves and indeed as inclusive of selves further up in the hierarchy of selves that one is a part of. Only in this way does it become suitable to recognize that the game that one is playing is not properly called "My Life," but rather "God's Life," or simply, as we have it above, "*the game of life*."

It is also in this way that one comes to recognize that one's self—the spread of choices one makes in response to and that are responses to events and choices outside one's self—is unified by the important role that one needs to discover that one's self should have in the broader games that one's self is a part of. In this way, the soul can be different than it would otherwise be. The soul allows itself as a conscious being to be shaped by understanding.

It is also important to stress that the suggestion that games have winners and losers also applies to the game of life. This is something we discuss later.

Some selves have no soul corresponding to them. An organization, especially, may be so fragmented that its members do not operate in harmony with each other but instead each acts on his own in the name of the organization. Over time, such an organization displays a trajectory of decisions made in apparent awareness of this fact or that fact of the environment, but a closer inspection reveals that the organization appears to be aware of something at one moment and not at the next, that its choice at one moment is made with one set of goals apparently in mind and an entirely different set in the next moment. A self is present, but there is no locus of awareness and piety; there is no soul.

Such "empty selves" are not restricted to organizations. Individual agents can be so shattered by the events of their lives that they subsequently move through their lives mechanically, with barely an awareness of what is happening around them. Only the self continues to function.

If we hierarchically organize selves in terms of size and membership, we recognize larger and larger units: the trajectories of individual agents, that of small organizations and clubs or families, larger corporations, countries, scientific organizations, various cultures—of science, of nation-states, etc.—humanity as a whole. We find that all of these can be described as selves but not all of them succeed in having souls.

For an individual conscious agent to see "the big picture," to recognize that he is to participate in something larger and more significant than he is, amounts to more than participating in a self that is larger than his self. It is also—to the extent that one can do this—an endeavor to make sure that the larger self that one is dedicating oneself to corresponds to a soul. That is, one endeavors to ensure that there is something corresponding to such a self that is aware and that is engaged in piety.

The self-images people have play a huge role in their attempts to understand themselves—to understand what they can do and what they should do. In describing the trajectory of a life as a "game," we were not in any way suggesting that such trajectories are not *serious* things. They are very serious matters indeed.

Seeing one's self correctly and seeing its importance to other selves in the broader games of life are huge responsibilities. In order to serve God efficaciously, we need to fulfill these responsibilities.

We have spoken of souls as the locus of consciousness; we have described them as making choices and as having self-images that such souls may recognize later to be false to themselves. But souls are not in time. Is there a contradiction in this way of speaking? No. As with inferences, we describe the timeless logical relations of the decisions of souls to what they are aware of and what goals they have by the use of the temporal idiom of process. Thus, to speak of souls coming to a realization or as making a decision is to speak of them timelessly engaged in a process with a preceding part and a consequent part in exactly the way that a timeless inference so divides into its premises and its consequences.

We have also spoken of (some) selves as being the ecological footprints of souls and as being the manifestation of those souls. We have mentioned that a soul's decisions have impact on the Body of God. These ways of speaking sound causal, but they are not meant to be. Souls do not cause anything to happen in the Body of God. Their decisions are reflected by modes in the Body of God and in the unfolding of God's Body in time and space, because such modes imitate the souls they have: the self is an imitation of the soul it has.

In turn, to speak of the self imitating something else is not to describe the self as conscious or as deciding so to imitate. Imitation is more fundamental metaphysically speaking than the intentionality that is due to minds. This is already clear from the many ways that God exhibits objective teleology without His being conscious. Neither is imitation a causal process—there are many ways that things come to be like other things apart from causation. Imitation is a teleological process. Our sense of our self is that we are beings who make choices that causally affect our body. That is not the right picture. Choosing and awareness are timelessly in the soul, and our body is an imitation of those choices of the soul.

There are no choices without responsibilities. This is the lesson of piety. To shirk genuine choice is to shirk responsibility. We are responsible for the selves we create in the Body of God. We are responsible for what those selves effect and fail to effect in the Body of God.

Chapter 27

External Piety

God has no causal powers over His Body or over what is in it. He is dependent on souls for the fulfillment of His will. Piety is the formation of the pattern of the choices by souls, in serving God, that best facilitates coming to understanding—on the basis of the location of the selves of those souls in God's Body. Coming to understanding is the divine Eternal Life of God with His Body shaped—as it should be—by His attribute Divine Truth.

God is contingent. The unfolding of the lives of selves within the space and time of the Body of God is correspondingly contingent. The choices of souls in part determine the contours of the unfolding in the Body of God.

After the ecological footprints of consciousness manifest in the Body of God, the extent and development of the imitation of understanding in God's Body is largely determined by the choices of conscious agents. Therein lies the profound moral significance of choice and the significance of God's standards for right choice.

The traditional God of the Abrahamic religious tradition is omnipotent and unchanging: He is unaffected by us, no matter what we do. But, of course, God is dramatically affected by our decisions and actions in much the same way that, say, the ecology of the environment is affected by our decisions and actions.

Whether and how the purposes of God are manifested in His divine Eternal Life depends on us. God Himself is utterly powerless.

The everyday attitude of ethical subjectivism and the toleration of moral relativism are both deeply mistaken. Right and wrong are metaphysically real features, due to the objective nature of the Godhead. By contrast, the moral "projectivist" follows the philosopher David Hume in supposing that right and wrong are the projections of our subjective emotional responses and our desires onto the universe. The "conventionalist" sees morality as a variety of systems of tacit and explicit agreement among rational agents that have survived because they coordinate human behavior in effective ways.

The objective teleology embodied in the Godhead—God's form—sets the ultimate standard for right and wrong activity in God's Body.

There is a vast distance, of course, between the lives of ordinary people and the large-scale quest to ensure coming to understanding—the appropriate unfolding in space and time in God's Body. To understand the connection between large-scale moral aims directed towards God and the very small activities and choices of individual conscious souls, we must first consider the moral requirements on individual conscious souls and how those requirements fit into the large-scale pattern of the divine Eternal Life of God.

The Kantian view of morality breaks any such link between the moral requirements on individual conscious agents and God Himself. Rational sentient individual agents, on that view, are the sole ends of moral action in the sense that all morality hinges on the requirement that such beings are never to be the means to some other end: they are never to be used for other purposes.

However, given the requirement that the purpose of moral decision making is that processes in the Body of God unfold appropriately according to the teleological requirements of the Godhead, all souls must be means to divine ends. The Kantian view—because according to it rational agents are ends and not means—also insists on the autonomy of rational moral agents; such agents must undertake their moral obligations voluntarily. This much is true: souls must volunteer to be the means to divine ends. They must freely choose their roles in enabling the divine Eternal Life of God to embody the objective teleology of the Godhead.

That souls are the various means to an end of the Godhead implies that they themselves must exhibit a certain functionality in what they do. Aristotle was sensitive to the fact that the demands of functionality must be met if a human life is to be morally successful; but he tried to characterize that functionality in terms of the properties held in common by the members of various quasi-species—men, women, types of animals and plants, etc. By virtue of belonging to such a quasi-species, a creature—if healthy—would naturally embody certain entelechies along with all the other members of its group, and so it would by virtue of those entelechies be equipped to execute certain functions.

Given that teleology is crucial to the Godhead, it is unsurprising that the functionality of souls is an important way of characterizing the moral requirements on souls. The function of a soul, however, cannot be discovered by characterizing the commonly held properties of some group of creatures or other that it belongs to. Rather, the functions of particular souls are in many ways as specific as they are and can be discovered only by a revelation of the characteristics of those specific souls and their specific environment in the Body of God.

Piety requires the subordination of the ends of the souls to the ends within God. In properly serving the ends within God, differences in human abilities and patterns of activity are more important than the common human functions found more or less among all the members of our species.

God’s attribute Piety has as its telos God’s attribute Understanding. God’s attribute Understanding has as its telos God’s attribute the Attributes of God.

The telos of Understanding being God’s attribute the Attributes of God and the telos of His attribute Piety being that of Understanding, do not directly lead to a requirement on the activity of every soul: that every soul is to have as its goal in life the contemplation of God and His attributes. The accumulation of understanding is a long process, but the ecological footprint of an individual conscious soul in the Body of God is terribly short. Herein lies the teleological rationale for institutions: they enable the integration of the accumulated understanding and knowledge of individual conscious souls (past, present, and future), and they enable the retaining of this understanding and knowledge beyond the presence in the Body of God of the particular selves which that understanding and knowledge is crucial to.

At one time, understanding and knowledge were transmitted only by means of oral traditions. To pass on the accumulated wisdom of a group to the next generation, an apprenticeship was required: younger individuals needed to learn directly from the elders of the tribe what was known by those elders. Otherwise, the knowledge and understanding of the tribe—embodied as it was only in the minds of those elders—would be lost. In the contemporary setting, knowledge and understanding, strictly speaking, are not to be found exclusively in individual conscious souls at all. This can be recognized by looking at where knowledge and understanding are imitated in the Body of God. They are not imitated in the selves that correspond to individual conscious souls but instead by institutional networks of such selves coupled with books, computers, and the mechanized operations of various devices. Understanding and knowledge thus have moved beyond individual conscious souls into larger institutional complexes within which those individual conscious souls are still an essential part.

Thus, certain institutions have come to have souls that more fully embody the teleology of the Godhead and that enable its fruition in understanding. They have overcome the limiting effects of the shortness of the ecological footprints of individual souls in the Body of God. But they have also provided an increase in the movement of coming to understanding that unfolds in the Body of God. With individual souls subsuming their activities, personal understanding, and knowledge to that of the various institutions to which they belong, much more can be done to embody the teleology of the Godhead in the Body of God than is possible by the endeavors of individual conscious souls alone.

Consider the scientific understanding of the Body of God that is developing at an ever-increasing pace in the contemporary setting. This is a crucial and significant part of the process of coming to understanding. But it is clear that such understanding is no longer located in any one individual conscious soul. The understanding and accumulating knowledge now manifest in the awareness of the soul of a large institution—something we might describe as the scientific culture.

The scientific culture is appropriately described as aware of certain things and not other things; it is also appropriately described as engaged in various studies and activities and not in others. Individuals acknowledge the location of understanding not in themselves but in this broader soul by routinely describing what "we" now understand and do not understand—as when a scientist mentions that "we do not as yet understand the mechanisms of viruses." When "we" do understand these mechanisms, it will not be any individual practitioner who so understands this; it will be a collective achievement scattered among technologies, research papers, and individual consciousnesses. All this understanding, however, is unified enough in its operation and impact that should the research develop practical applications, it will be applied by the scientific culture to improve or save lives. Thus, this will be an achievement of an institutional soul, not one of any individual conscious soul.

We have been speaking of "the scientific culture," but treating it as a separate institution with its own soul is something of an artifice because scientific knowledge cannot any longer be isolated from the knowledge and understanding of humanity in general. Scientific knowledge does not function in a vacuum. It is securely linked in many ways with the commonsense knowledge held in common among us and includes other kinds of understanding that we have about one another and about the universe. It is the whole of humanity, with its computers, its scientific institutions—its think tanks and its laboratories—and its individual conscious agents, that is now engaged both in the understanding and in the practical application of that understanding to the Body of God. It is the soul of humanity that at present determines how we, individual conscious agents, should orient our lives. At the present time, when we see ourselves properly, we see ourselves as parts of humanity. The nature of our ethical lives can be seen clearly only through the role they play in the incorporated soul of humanity.

For all we know there *may* well be, spread throughout the vast reaches of space and time, many such souls that are composed of individual conscious souls and that are striving to understand just as much as humanity is striving to understand. Any one of them would be a proper part of God's attribute Consciousness. Any one of them would be an equally important embodiment of the purposes of the Godhead. At this point, of course, we know of the existence of only one such entity: humanity. Whether or not humanity is alone in its quest, it is still supremely important to God. Furthermore, it is the embodiment of God's will in humanity that currently gives the striving of individual *human* souls a significance that extends beyond their own lifetimes.

We have stressed that the serving required of individual conscious souls is presently mediated through their participation in larger souls and that ultimately their roles matter insofar as they facilitate coming to understanding in humanity itself. We have also stressed that it is the particulars of the location of the self of an individual conscious soul in the Body of God that specifically requires what function it must serve. From this it follows that there are a diversity of "excellences," or virtues, that can serve the purposes in the Godhead. What is needed from human beings to facilitate coming to understanding—as we have stressed—is not one common set of character traits or cognitive abilities, such as the reasoning capacity that enables each human to contemplate God, but whatever sorts of traits, in a given context, actually facilitate coming to understanding in the souls that they are the parts of. For this, our "common humanity" understood as traits held by everyone—nearly enough—is neither our embodied entelechy nor the means to that end. It is the robust differences among human beings, the enormous variety and adaptability of our species, that makes us all the more suitable for serving God.

During the course of the unfolding in God's Body, souls find themselves involved in *the game of life*, attempting to respond to the moves of other souls and to the constraints of the environment. The specifics of the self constructed thus far by a soul at a time and a place and the specifics of what that self faces are the materials out of which the functionality of that soul—what, for God, it is a means to—is to be recognized.

This means that at a given time and place new sorts of talents and new configurations of talent may be required. To take a dramatic historical example, Isaac Newton had a number of unusual intellectual and temperamental character traits. Perhaps no person with this mix of characteristics had ever before existed. Newton's blend of a capacity for single-minded intellectual obsessions—in mathematics, physics, alchemy, theology, etc.—and for great intelligence and creativity in the pursuit of those obsessions facilitated advances in physics that perhaps would have failed to materialize without him. Despite the personal unhappiness that he caused himself and others, he fit perfectly into the cognitive niche of his time and place in the Body of God. And as God's body continues to manifest greater coming to understanding, entirely new ways of approaching knowledge and entirely new ways of being human may be required.

New personalities and new ways of being human are hardly required of everyone, however. We have uncritically inherited from many sources the idea that certain vocations are intrinsically higher—that is, more worthwhile in themselves and independently of the ends to which they are directed. So the philosopher looks down on the scientist, the scientist looks down on the entrepreneur-businessman, and the entrepreneur-businessman looks down on the professional doctor or lawyer; professionals look down on office workers, and office workers look down on janitors—all in an endless attempt to shore up the inevitable insecurities that are produced by a system of prestige and reward that does not have substantial roots in the genuine ways that various job activities actually facilitate the values of the Godhead. Indeed, the janitor and the sanitary worker probably save more lives than doctors by simply protecting us from germs and disease and thus may be the most effective servants for God and in that way may be living better and more significant human lives. The relative scarcity of those capable of certain prestige activities means that those so able are provided with more money and status. This distracts us from the real question of what end is being served by this or that activity and why it is important.

In a very real sense, a focus on the goals of humanity as a whole democratizes the activity of facilitating coming to understanding. It is not a process to be engaged in by lonely philosophers, by a small oligarchy of wise men, or by scientists engaged in pure research. It is, rather, something that a whole community must be involved in; and that means that whatever people do to facilitate coming to understanding—according to their abilities—is good. This includes not only directly increasing the understanding of the soul of humanity but also helping to build and maintain the infrastructure of the self corresponding to that soul. Plumbing, waste removal, the construction of highways, computer programming, agriculture, scientific research, child rearing, education, and the like are all ways that people function in the work of humanity to facilitate coming to understanding.

Peace and comfort follow from understanding our location or place in the scheme of things—the way in which we are in accord with God and His will. Happiness consists in actualizing our talents and virtues in accordance with the location of our selves in God's Body.

Despite the very real differences we have mentioned between the rather contextualized notion of functionality that we have stressed and Aristotle's species-specific notion, there is similarity in the shared view that happiness consists in actualizing one's talents or virtues. Since these talents can be of all sorts, what is required is that one exercise them to the fullest and that one find a location in the collective process of coming to understanding that the soul of humanity is undergoing where those talents will do the most good—where they will, that is, facilitate coming to understanding most effectively.

Our insistence that ethical behavior be judged in relation to its effect on God and the teleology of the Godhead and more specifically that ethical behavior is to be mediated by the subsumption of the activity of an individual conscious soul (corresponding to a human self) to that of humanity itself, may seem susceptible to a radical interpretation. The ordinary impression is that morality involves responsibility to one's family and society, that one should be temperate and honest in one's dealings with others, that in fact there are many "behavioral oughts" regarding family, neighbors, friends, country, etc. Our view may seem to imply that all such conventional "oughts" are either of no intrinsic interest ethically speaking or are to be ruthlessly overridden by one's dedication to God.

Whether this is true or not is very much a matter of the location of the self of an individual soul in the Body of God. There are circumstances and corresponding souls with talents and abilities where the requirement on such souls indeed is something radical. What is required of such souls to best facilitate coming to understanding in the Body of God is a ruthless avoidance of the ordinary morals of ordinary people. They should ignore their obligations towards family, friends, or country. Perhaps Isaac Newton was an example of such.

These are, however, quite unusual cases. For most individual conscious souls, the best way to facilitate coming to understanding precisely accords with the obligations of conventional morality. One should have a family, honor one's obligations to one's friends, be honest in business dealings, and exhibit temperance and restraint in struggles with others. One's proper function involves supporting the infrastructure of the self corresponding to the soul of humanity; and that function means that one's role in the community should largely be a conventional one.

One mistake of conventional morality is the presumption that normal circumstances are all circumstances: that Aristotle's doctrine of the mean—moderation in all behavior—and the conventional list of appropriate behaviors towards others imply ethical rules that are binding upon conscious individual souls in all circumstances and at all times. There are always exceptional circumstances, however, and this is something that conventional morality cannot recognize.

Ethical behavior is not a set of rules, recognized by reason, that apply at all times and in all places. They are as contingent as God is. What an individual conscious soul must do at each step in *the game of life* is something to be recognized on the basis of the contours of the self constructed by the soul at that time and place and the environmental challenges posed by other selves and the infrastructure of the game itself.

Ethical behavior, in conventional morality, is concerned with the right behavior of individuals towards one another. There is only a minimal concern with the role of individuals in institutions, perhaps only with one's specific obligations towards family members—parents, siblings, and children. This is a second mistake in the perspective of conventional morality. We have noted, in contrast, that by far the greatest factor in pious behavior is an individual's role in the various institutions he either belongs to, or otherwise helps support. Conventional morality tends to treat the institutional roles of individuals as various "jobs" that such individuals have. But since it is the institutional souls that have come to play the more significant role in coming to understanding, we suggest that "calling" is a more suitable word. More often than not, it is the individual's calling in one or another institution that for better or for worse best exhibits his functionality in facilitating coming to understanding. Our understanding of ethics should shift profoundly from a focus on the interactions of individual conscious souls with each other to a focus on their interactions in and with the institutions they help constitute.

For individual conscious souls, pious behavior is best exhibited by their serving institutional souls: making institutional souls possible and contributing to institutional souls being pious.

We have noted the presence of two sorts of hierarchies among souls. First, there is the ordering of individual conscious souls to the larger institutional souls that they voluntarily make themselves parts of and of those institutional souls to yet larger organizational souls that they in turn are the parts of. The individual understandings and actions of souls are subsumed to the understanding and actions of the souls they have chosen to belong to.

But there is another kind of hierarchy—one among individual souls—where such souls are valued depending on the roles they take in the institutions to which they belong. It is not so much that souls are differently valued as that the roles played by the souls are differently valued. If someone is paid well because he runs a successful business organization, he is being paid well—and valued—for his role in that organization; he is not being paid well or being valued for his role as a good father or for the poetry he writes and publishes. There are times in history when such valued roles were treated as inalienable from the persons playing them—for example, royalty—but it is the case nearly uniformly in modern times that persons have more than one role and that they are at least in principle seen as distinct from those roles.

This second kind of hierarchy of souls is challenged by many. It is thought—as socialists have put it—that "from each according to his means; to each according to his needs." That is, the rewards of the various roles that people have should not be as inequitably structured as they are, especially in capitalist societies.

There is also a sense in which this second kind of hierarchy looks inappropriate from the point of view of coming to understanding. If the janitor is as crucial to coming to understanding as the surgeon is, why should the rewards in life be so meager for the janitor and so fulsome for the surgeon? If the best high-school teachers facilitate coming to understanding more successfully than the best athletes, why should those teachers be paid so much less? The response is that such hierarchies, although needing adjustments in various ways, are due to the nature of the selves that humanity is made up of at this time and place. One cannot, in attempting to recognize what is required for facilitating coming to understanding, simply abstract away from the rich and complex nature of the selves that are the vehicles for coming to understanding in the context of humanity. An unfair hierarchy of rewards and deprivations—partially based on supply and demand—is virtually a corollary of the emotional needs of the human animal, which is a creature resulting from an evolutionary history that severely restricts what it is capable of and what can motivate it. A hierarchy of material rewards is currently an essential tool to progress in coming to understanding. Should the selves of humanity change in some drastic way, material rewards, and the kinds of hierarchical value systems that humans crave, may cease to play a fundamental role in the soul of humanity—but this is not the time and place in God's Body where we are now.

It is clear that the current genetically given psychological constraints on individual human agents determine what kinds of institutional souls they can participate in. Thus, in describing those institutional souls, we have focused on the rigid elements in the emotional life of humans. Some aspects of that emotional life, however, are flexible and open to change. Indeed, all religious traditions not only acknowledge this fact but make it the basis of their ethical requirements. Unfortunately, their ethical requirements are often unrealistic ones that are based on non-natural assumptions—indeed, supernatural assumptions—about what humans are capable of. The demands of internal piety must respect the realities of souls whose footprints appear in the present time and place in the Body of God.

Chapter 28

Internal Piety

Love has a deep and abiding significance for the Abrahamic religious tradition. Not only is it urged to be—on the model of Jesus for Christians—the appropriate emotional response to one's fellow man (whether or not he reciprocates); but because of the personal nature of God, it is an important component both of the worship of God and of the Abrahamic view of God's feelings about His own creations. Traditional Abrahamic complications about how much knowledge of the actual nature of God is possible for created beings also infect—of course—Abrahamic views of the nature of God's love. God's love for his creations, according to some in those religious traditions, is a property of God that we can only describe as "loving" by analogy. Like all of the properties of God, it is something that ultimately we cannot be said to understand.

It is also a central aspect of the Abrahamic religious tradition that love is to be identified with the good. When it is so identified, there is a sense in which it is the love of God that is the primary emotion that a believer should have—and the primary good that a believer should strive for. All his emotions towards everything else should be subservient to that love. Love thy neighbor as thyself—but let not either of those loves eclipse in any way thy love for God.

We do not accept the personal nature of God as it is given in the Abrahamic religious tradition, for God is not a personal being. Consequently, a love of God—indeed, any emotional response towards God—cannot play the role for us that it plays in that tradition. Although we do not demand of believers in God that they *love* God, love is nevertheless as crucial to our views as it is to the Abrahamic traditions. Love is absolutely necessary if we are to successfully serve God; but we cannot successfully serve Him by "loving" Him.

Worshipping God is serving God. It is neither a way of loving God nor a way of expressing fear of God. And worshipping God is neither being in awe of God nor an expression of gratitude to God. Prayer cannot be an act of communication. No prayer is ever answered by God.

Love is crucial to our successful serving of God.

Our emotional lives are powerful and rigid constraints on our capacity to function. Psychological processes of all sorts—both conscious and unconscious, and no matter how distinct they seem to be from our emotional lives—always operate for us against the subliminal background of our constantly shifting emotional responses to everything we experience. Indeed, the mere exercise of our senses—and even apart from explicit aesthetic experiences (such as looking at landscape or art)—is impossible without the accompaniment of the subliminal pleasure we take in such sensory acts. We are incapable of action without an emotional accompaniment; for that matter, we are incapable of thought without an emotional accompaniment. The pure logician is a myth. These properties of our emotional lives are the currently unchangeable psychological characteristics of the individual conscious souls that make up humanity.

To say this is not to say that such emotions are contained *in* the soul. The soul is constituted entirely of awareness. (Timeless) events of awareness are properly described as *in* the soul. What the soul is aware of, however, need not be and generally is not in the soul—no more than an apple that one is aware of is *in* one's soul. Awarenesses are in the soul; the objects of those awarenesses generally are not in the soul. Everyone recognizes desires and other emotions as originating in our animal bodies. (This is an important element of the Abrahamic tradition.) Feelings arise from the interaction of those animal bodies with other animal bodies and from their interactions with other inanimate things found in the Body of God. A lust for something is a process of our physical brain and animal body in the direction of something external to it. It is our soul's awareness of this striving relation between our animal body and that thing that makes it a lust *for* that thing. The soul's awareness of that striving relation is what introduces "aboutness" into what would otherwise be a mere physical striving. Physically speaking, a body's lust "for" something is no more a genuine striving *for* that something than the sun's gravity is a striving *for* the earth orbiting it. It is only the aboutness introduced by the soul that marks strivings in animal bodies as lusts *for* objects. Nevertheless, only the awareness itself is *in* the soul; the rest of the emotional event occurs in the animal body and in the environment around that body. When we speak of a soul "loving" something, this complication should be kept in mind: the soul is aware of love, and its awareness directs that love towards the object of that love.

Love is not *the good. The good* is the unfolding, in accordance with the teleology of the Godhead, of all things within God's Body in space and in time. Love is the most powerful positive feeling that we can have for our own souls, for some of those souls whose selves are adjacent to our selves in God's Body, for our own pious choices, and for the pious choices of other souls near us.

Love is a beneficial constraint on the pursuit of *the good.*

Contrary to the implicit identification of love with the good by adherents of the Abrahamic traditions, the real teleological role of love (and emotion in general) is to counterbalance a dangerous tendency towards overzealousness in pursuit of the good. Love—and every emotion, for that matter—does this by directing our attention locally towards persons and activities that are near to us. We *care* about those near to us, and our degree of caring tapers off as the distance of things from us increases.

Awareness is ontologically dependent on God's attribute Location. Location is the form of God's attribute Space-time.

We cannot love what we cannot be aware of. We are finite beings, as it is sometimes put. The soul is finite in what it can be aware of and therefore in what it can be aware of an emotional relation to. We cannot love what we experience only as pure abstractions—we cannot have genuine emotional relations with what our awareness presents to us as pure abstractions. Loving what is in fact an impersonal God is attempting to engage emotionally with an abstraction. The result is always love of something else—not God but a construction of our own making. Equally, loving something because it is a part of God is impossible for us. No one can say genuinely: *that* is a part of God, or *that* belongs to God, and *therefore* I love it. When the Abrahamic religious tradition makes this demand of its believers, it is forcing them to love constructs.

Proper love is local love.

Some try to love large things, such as God Himself, or humanity as a whole. This is attempted either because people think it is the right focus for their emotions or because they are urged to do so by one or another religious tradition. It is unfortunate that because of our psychological incapacity to do such a thing, we invariably end up loving something else that we think stands for what we take our emotions to be directed at—a kind of idol—or we love what is really a construction of our own imagination. Either case is one of improper or impious love, and we will discuss this further in the next section.

It is common to think that an emotional focus on those souls that are near to us and on our own (and their) activities is immoral: Justice, we are taught, is to be dispensed without regard to whether the parties have any connection to the one dispensing justice. Morality is a matter of evaluating right and wrong actions without regard to our sentimental feelings towards those who have committed these actions. Aware of the problems inherent in this bias and the favoritism that family members naturally direct towards one another, Plato eliminates families—

among the guardians—in his utopian *Republic*.

It is true that love so focused on those we care about can lead to wrongful actions. But it is no solution to this problem to direct the emotional responses of persons to things they are incapable of loving. Rather, one should see what it is about the emotional capacities of human beings that plays a positive role in their contributing to coming to understanding—facilitating the unfolding of what is within the Body of God in accordance with the objective teleology of the Godhead. If—like Plato—we direct too much attention to examples of impious love, we will overlook the positive and important role of our emotions in making our caring local.

The problem with setting the goals of individual conscious souls as anything other than what is locally near them is that doing so in terms of the pattern of the teleology of the Godhead is too grand for individual conscious agents to grasp in the kind of detail needed for the successful achievement of those goals. Individual conscious agents can rarely be aware of (or understand to more than a quite limited degree) whether and how the pattern of unfolding in God's Body is going right or going wrong. Love's role—when piously operating—keeps the focus of individual conscious souls and their understanding *local*, for it is only locally that the vast majority of those souls can succeed in initiating actions that successfully facilitate coming to understanding. Individual agents are not meant to engage in large doings; they are meant to enable the process of coming to understanding in small increments. It is precisely their local loves that can make them attentive to what they can do in that respect.

Thus, we are successful in enabling coming to understanding as much as we are, not through our intellectual grasping of how all of the details of it knit together in God. There are indeed souls with that capacity, but they are not the individual conscious souls of humans; they are the larger institutional souls that individual conscious souls must contribute to. It is only those institutional souls that have the breadth of intellectual power to enable them to continue the process of understanding God in a direct way. By comparison, even the most intellectually brilliant of individual conscious souls will fall short in this respect.

Individual conscious souls are—in contrast to institutional souls—successful in serving God by following the lead of the emotions that they are aware of: not by their direct pursuit of the good. To directly pursue the good—the overall unfolding of everything within God's Body according to the teleology of the Godhead—an awareness and understanding of God is required that extends far beyond what such souls are capable of. When individual souls attempt to act on such an understanding that they take themselves to have, they "lose perspective"—they engage in activities for "the good" that because of the details of the impact of those activities on the environment around them actually impede coming to understanding. They become what we call “fanatics in the service of God.” Individual conscious souls are always on safer ground when they try to act more locally for the good of those they love or in the practice of activities that they love; for it is in these kinds of activities that what they are aware of and understand is in accord with the actions they are engaged in. Still, there is always the danger that Plato was so aware of: love turning impious when concern with the objects of love overrides service to God. We discuss this in the next chapter.

Love is an important check on overzealousness. A balance between our vision of the good and what we love locally is what serves God best.

When we claim that an individual conscious soul cannot understand enough and love broadly enough to act towards God as a whole, we do not mean to say that God, His attributes, and the parts of those attributes are beyond the utter comprehension of individual souls the way that mystics in the Abrahamic and Indic traditions claim. We do not mean that there are no concepts available for the individual soul to enable him to grasp the nature of God. We mean something analogous to what is meant by saying that a single individual cannot understand and execute everything needed to build a rocket that can travel to the moon. Only a group of individuals has the skills to manage something like that.

But the analogy goes further: no individual will *love* working on all aspects of what is needed to build such a rocket. What individuals love to do differs from individual to individual, and more important, is always narrow.

Love of its own proper work is often the best way for an individual conscious soul to facilitate coming to understanding. In describing in this way how such a soul should remain focused on the nearby details of what it is doing, it is important for that soul not to forget the larger picture in the following sense: what is to be remembered is that work is that soul’s service to God.

A soul’s loving its service to God is that soul appropriately worshipping God. Love of one’s own pious choices is an example of proper love.

However, we cannot love that service by virtue of the fact that it *is* service to God. If this were possible, we would be capable of loving any service to God—even if it was the service of others that we knew nothing of. A soul can recognize that all service to God is good; a soul can recognize that all service to God is appropriately loved—by some soul or other. But a soul can only genuinely love the service to God that belongs to him. And he will love it not because it *is* service to God but because it is *his* service to God.

A soul's love of the pious choices of souls local to its self is an example of proper love.

These are the facts about the kind of individual conscious souls that we are—the kinds of souls humans have. Perhaps there are other kinds of individual conscious souls that are capable of loving parts of God precisely because they are the parts of God. We are not those souls. Maybe, just as the soul of humanity may come to understand God in ways that the individual souls that make humanity up cannot, maybe the soul of humanity may become aware of emotions as well; maybe the soul of humanity will come to love God. Probably not. Loving God is too much to expect of any soul, because a soul can only love what it is aware of, and nothing can be aware of everything. This is an implication of God's attribute Awareness being ontologically dependent on God's attribute Location.

No soul can be aware of everything. No soul can love God. It is impious to even try: to try to love God is to trivialize God—to make Him into the sort of thing that *we* (mere souls) can love. We can love only the parts of God that are near to us.

Some versions of the Indic religious tradition demand something equally impossible. They make it sound as if someone—perhaps after many years of study and spiritual exercise—can experience that (a) his own distinct soul is an illusion and that (b) he is identical with God. Neither experience is possible or metaphysically appropriate.

Proper Love is love of the real—the metaphysically real.

Souls are genuine parts of God's attribute Consciousness. The parts of God's attributes and God's attributes themselves are real; they are not illusions. Although we are subject to illusions, we are not subject to illusions when we recognize the existence of our own soul or that of other souls or when we love those souls. Nor are we subject to illusions when we see the imitation of our own pious choices in the construction of our selves in the Body of God and love those choices or see the imitation of the pious choices of other souls in the Body of God and love them. We are aware then of genuine aspects of God, and we love those aspects—although we do not love them *qua* aspects of God. If we could do that, we could love any aspect of God whether it was something locally available to us or not. This is something we are not capable of.

Love of our souls, not our selves, is proper love.

Selves are constructions of souls and of the immediate environment of the Body of God that those selves inhabit. Included as part of one's self are things like social standing, looks, material possessions, and the power one has gained over others. One can inappropriately love these or love the presence of these in others instead of the soul and its choices, which are the real agents behind these things. When we love the modes in God's Body, or anything in God's Body, we are actually loving quasi-particulars which imitate the real instead of real particulars. Souls and the choices of souls are real; and when pious, they are the proper objects of love.

Love of souls local to us, not their selves, is proper love.

Divine Truth is that of which Consciousness is the matter. Our very love of experience—of being aware of things—is not a sensual love of sensation, as some would have it. It is the love of truth. We love experiencing what is real because it is real and because the real is the foundation of the true. But even this love is one that must be local, not global in nature. We do not love truths just because they are truths. If that were the case, we would love truths even if we did not understand what they were. What we love are the truths we understand. Understanding is the appropriate intimate relation for us to have to truth—and when we have it, we have love of truths as well. We cannot understand all truths—the full extent of Divine Truth. We understand some truths—the ones we are capable of understanding.

Love of truths is proper love.

Love should always be directed towards the metaphysically real. Other emotions need not be. One can fear dangers—even if they occur in the Body of God—and one can be drawn towards pleasures. One can take pride—but not too much pride—in the self one constructs in the Body of God if it is a self that serves God. One can care about one's constructed self and the selves of other souls that are near one's self in the Body of God. However, it is important that the soul remain aware that in all such cases, these emotions are directed towards constructions, and it should also remain aware that emotions towards such things should be secondary to the love it feels towards what is metaphysically real.

One way that emotions can endanger the soul's role in the service of God is if that soul identifies too closely with the self it is constructing. In that case, the soul will become aware of negative emotions based on resentment, and these will damage its capacity to facilitate coming to understanding.

The soul is timeless; the self that soul is constructing is not. The soul should be concerned only with the past "time slices" of the self—relative to a "present" moment of that self—as resources for later “time slices” of it. The soul, that is, should treat the portions of a self before a moment of that self only as resources for the self it constructs.

Should that soul, however, identify itself with the self, it will experience resentment. It will treat its perceived past as a repository of wrongs done to *it* that should be righted. It will recall its past, in the sense of debts and credits between itself and others that are required to be settled. It will wish its past were different than it was, and it will blame its own failings on that past and on others who forced it to have the negative experiences it resents having had.

In doing this, such a soul no longer views its self as something it is constructing with such and such resources but as someone who deserves better than what he has gotten. This will not be someone who contemplates what is the best thing to do in the circumstances of the here and now that he finds himself in. Instead, he will be someone who fantasizes about and executes various forms of revenge.

These negative emotions are due to a misidentification of the self with the soul. Forgiveness of wrongs done is therefore the recognition of what and who one really is and the recognition that in order to do the best that one can, one must correct one’s appreciation of the past. This means that emotional attachments to past events must be changed—from a set of resentments over what has happened into a set of resources that the soul uses to construct its self.

Nietzsche’s notions of the *Übermensch* and of eternal recurrence relate to the points we have just made. What Nietzsche requires of the *Übermensch* is that he embrace his own personal history that led up to him. Indeed, the *Übermensch* must be so free of resentments over his past that he would accept the eternal recurrence of his past—precisely because that past leads to who he is right now. Furthermore—and now we are leaving Nietzsche far behind—he not only accepts all that he is and all that everyone around him is, but he takes full responsibility for his now making of all of this the best that he can in the service of God. Only in this sense can the past be let go and be forgiven—so that one can do the best one can with the resources it provides.

Resentment is the soul’s illusion that it is a self existing in space and time.

A soul encapsulates the timeless quasi-logical movement of awarenesses and choices to other awarenesses and choices. These movements are imitated in the Body of God by temporal relations among events in selves. The negative emotions, such as resentment towards past wrongs, causes the souls aware of those emotions to invest the past with more significance than it should have. The forgiving soul sees all of the events under its purview as equal in importance; it does not overweigh the significance of the ones that it remembers.

Chapter 29

Impiety

The appropriate objects for the love of a soul are those metaphysically real things that are locally available to that soul: its own soul, other souls, its own choices, and the choices of other locally available souls. It is important to remember that none of these suitable objects of a soul's love are in the Body of God. It is only the imitations of these things that are in the Body of God. If the love of a soul becomes directed not towards souls or their choices but towards the imitations of these in the Body of God, then the love of such a soul has become impious. Things in the Body of God are not the appropriate objects of love for souls.

We recognize this when we recognize that someone loves someone else not for who he really is but because of what he looks like or for what position he has achieved in life or for other similar reasons. This is not the love of his soul but the love of his extended self that his soul has constructed thus far in the Body of God. So too we can love our own self instead of our soul: We then love something in the Body of God—an imitation of what our soul has done rather than the soul itself. In the same way, as we have indicated already, an attempt to love God results in impious love: a love not directed towards Him—because that is impossible for us—but a love directed towards some other constructed thing entirely.

Impious love is the love of constructions rather than metaphysically real things.

Impious love is idolatry.

Consider the following kinds of cases:

Love of selves
Love of material goods, and pleasures
Love of fame, success, and prestige

In each of these cases, by virtue of being loved by a soul, these things become permanent goals and intrinsic ends of that soul. A soul that is enraptured of another self or of its own self wants to satisfy the wants of that self or to possess the other self. In the case of material goods and other pleasures, acquiring such become ends in themselves, and the same is true for fame, success, and prestige. Collecting yet more material goods, becoming still more famous, ever increasing one's prestige and honor are seen as valuable pursuits only because of what is sought. But it is never appropriate for the gathering of things such as these to be permanent ends. Rather, they should always be the means to something else: serving the objective teleology of the Godhead by making it present in the Body of God.

Of course, a soul cannot substitute the ultimate goal of the teleology of the Godhead for the goals of selves, material goods, fame, success, or prestige and then consciously treat selves, material good, etc., as means to that end. This is too much to demand of any soul. But what is called for is that a soul recognize that at any stage in its construction of its self, whatever that soul is pursuing should be a temporary goal. The soul must recognize that it is not to be acquiring anything for itself but only for the pursuit of other things whose significance it may not understand until later, if ever. What every soul must practice, therefore, is the exercise of detachment from its personal goals: the recognition that the things that it pursues are temporary goals to be surpassed and replaced with later goals. Or to put the matter another way, the soul must recognize as the appropriate goal and therefore as the appropriate object of its emotional life the constantly moving target of goal-directed *activity* itself.

Our views contrast strongly with the Buddhist position that one must practice methods that eventually extinguish desires altogether. We say there is nothing wrong with the emotions that the soul is aware of—apart from love—being focused on selves, material goods, pleasures, fame, success, or the other "goods" of God's Body. The crucial thing is that this focus of the emotions that the soul is aware of be temporary, because any such goals must be recognized by the soul as ones that can be surpassed as its aims are redefined. Or if that soul's aims are not ones to be redefined—because its function in the Body of God requires that it remain fixed on these goals for its entire ecological footprint—then that soul must at least recognize that it is to be focused on its goals because there are other purposes—ultimately in the Godhead—that lie beyond that soul's activity and awareness. If the soul treats the acquisition of material goods, fame, success, etc., as appropriate ends in themselves and if that soul does not recognize how their importance and its own importance are superseded by other things, then all is lost for that soul. It is impious. We call such a soul "arrogant": it makes its own goals and aims more important than the teleology of the Godhead. We call such a soul "ignorant": it fails to realize that the teleology of its true function and role lies beyond itself. It fails to realize that *it* is not an end in itself.

The intentions of the soul are what are crucial to whether it is engaged in right or wrong action. Actions initiated by the soul can always lead in directions that are not anticipated; actions based on intent do not always yield what was expected. However, when the emotions that the soul is aware of are appropriately locally focused and when that soul recognizes that everything that it is concerned with is a means to something else, then it is a soul engaged in right action, regardless of the outcomes. The extended self that soul is creating is a product not only of that soul but of other souls and of the environment as well. Whether that self facilitates coming to understanding or not and to what degree is a matter that goes beyond what a soul can achieve on its own.

The failure of a soul to fulfill its proper function is impiety.

One form of impiety that a soul can engage in is sloth—the failure of that soul to construct the most active self that it can. In this case, unethical behavior is not a matter of false love accompanied by false activity, as above; it is a sin of omission—a failure to identify the talents possessed by one's soul or a failure to go to that place in the Body of God where one's talents will do the most good. A soul can recognize that to do something, it must develop its talents in a certain way—be able to develop its capacities.

So too, a soul can recognize that its self is in the wrong place, given what that soul is already capable of. It is an ethical shortcoming to attempt to fit oneself into some niche in the Body of God where one's talents and abilities cannot function optimally. Part of our ethical obligation is to recognize the local values of our functionality and to maximize them by manifesting them in the right places in the Body of God.

We can see the results of ethical shortcomings on the part of conscious individual souls all around us. Sometimes these ethical shortcomings are due to self-ignorance, the failure of a soul to see what it really is or what it can be; and sometimes they are due to a willful laziness that prevents a soul from developing its abilities or from traveling to a place where the abilities it can develop are needed. Sometimes one's impiety prevents someone else from fully developing his talents or abilities; those who should teach and choose not to deprive not only themselves but others too of opportunities to flourish in the Body of God by virtue of their manifesting the teleology of the Godhead.

Ethical shortcomings of this sort are legion. Many are based on failures to deploy resources for the sake of the objective teleology to be built into God's Body and instead squander them on something else. Love of material goods, fame, etc., is usually the reason this has happened. It is not, of course, that a soul is supposed to recognize that the best thing for it to do—from the point of view of the teleology of the Godhead—is one activity rather than another. This is too much to demand of a soul. Rather, it is that the appropriate activity or function of a soul is one that it can recognize by the fact that it is the sort of thing that soul is best at and that such activities will be most helpful for the souls it is in contact with—especially the institutional souls that it contributes to and affects. Clearly, it is impious for a soul to pursue an activity that it recognizes itself to be less effective at because it thinks it will gain more money and more prestige as a result.

None of this is to criticize either material goods or prestige. These are perfectly acceptable goods—austerity is not being urged upon anyone on the grounds of its sheer intrinsic value. The point is a different one: if money and prestige are valuable concomitants of what a soul recognizes are the best things it can do—the best activities accessible to it—or if what the soul needs are such things in order for it to best actualize the extended self that will achieve the most coming to understanding (locally evaluated), then that is what the soul should pursue. The point, again, is that those material goods and other valuables are not appropriate ends for the soul but only means, and a soul should not turn away from its own proper activity because that activity does not—so far as that soul can see—promise wealth or fame.

There is but a limited time for each soul to take pious action.

The footprint of an individual conscious soul in the Body of God is a finite item. It lasts only so long, and only during its presence in the Body of God will the intentions and actions of that soul affect the Body of God. The soul may be judged, therefore, by the self it has made: in what it has done to facilitate coming to understanding or to impede it. This is a judgment of the whole of a soul's choices—a judgment of the significance of the sum of those choices—that shaped its self. As the final judgment can be made only subsequent to the footprint of that soul in the Body of God, there is nothing it can do to correct what it has done. In this sense, there really are winners and losers in *the game of life*, and there really is a "Day of Judgment" when that game is over for that soul.

Institutional souls must never be ends in themselves. Their function is to facilitate the teleology of the Godhead in the Body of God.

Impiety of the individual conscious soul is an important issue, and it is an issue that every religious tradition, in one way or another, recognizes the importance of. Such impiety, however, is hardly the most significant kind of impiety there is. Rather, as we have mentioned already, the worst crimes of impiety are not those of individual conscious souls but those of the institutional souls that such souls participate in.

Once it is recognized that institutions can have souls just as individual conscious agents do, it is a short step to the insight that the forms of impious behavior on the part of institutional souls bear a striking resemblance to the impious behavior of individuals. A typical form of impiety by institutional souls is for such souls to regard themselves as ends rather than as the means for something greater than themselves.

Nation-states typically do not see themselves as means. Of course, those nation-states that espouse democratic ideals at least suggest that such states and their institutions serve as the means of increasing certain benefits for their citizenry. But often the policies of such states benefit only certain small groups of their citizens—and not by any means everyone "belonging to" the nation-state. And worse, and rather too often, the institutions within a nation-state have policies which fail to benefit *any* of their citizens and in fact facilitate only their own continuance.

Typical of nation-states are policies of funding and enabling educational and research institutions, not for the facilitation of coming to understanding but rather for the far narrower aim of enabling their own success in various aspects of competition with other nation-states. The cold- and hot-war struggles of nation-states with one another usually cannot be explained in terms of goals that benefit their citizens—often, all of the citizens of the involved nation-states suffer greatly from the results—but only in terms of the nation-states themselves as entities triumphing over other such entities. "Success," for a nation-state, is not understood in terms of its citizens being better off, but instead by its own success, say, in taking territory from another nation-state.

It is striking how these acquisitions of various sorts become so easily the aim of a bellicose nation-state even though no benefit accrues to the preponderance of its individual conscious souls. This illustrates yet again how natural it is for individual conscious souls to subsume themselves into larger souls; it also illustrates the dangers of the resulting institutional souls impiously taking advantage of the individual souls that participate in them.

Nation-states, like all institutions, should not treat themselves as ends. Although pious individual conscious souls are pious by virtue of their behavior in and for institutional souls, those institutional souls in turn must be pious ones: they must recognize themselves not to be ends in themselves but only means to other appropriate ends beyond themselves: the objective teleology of the Godhead to be built into God's Body.

Business corporations of various sorts display similar self-regarding concerns, although—invariably—individuals profit from the successes of such corporations. Still, the individual conscious soul is not an end in itself, as we have seen, and an institution formed only for the purpose of profiting individual conscious souls cannot have a soul that is pious in its behavior.

Scientific and educational institutions rarely if ever develop the kind of self-regarding belligerence so typical of the contemporary nation-state. They always recognize themselves to be of value for something else—if not directly for the value of discovering new knowledge, then at least for the value of promulgating scientific discoveries among the appropriate cognoscente. Furthermore, such institutions, especially in the twenty-first century, recognize that the knowledge they facilitate the gaining of is knowledge that transcends individual conscious souls.

The danger, instead, with scientific and educational institutions, is their failing to recognize the proper ends that they should be directed towards. This has not so much to do with the particulars of the specialized knowledge they are concerned with, for educational and scientific institutions these days are not concerned with "knowledge in general" but with specializations and sub-specializations. Rather, the problem is that such institutions often function as if their knowledge gathering occurs in a vacuum. Knowledge is gathered and stored in various ways so that it can be accessible to the appropriate scholars and researchers—but such institutions officially regard ethical questions about the applications of such knowledge as ones on which they have nothing to say. As a result, scientific and educational knowledge is generally directed in two impious directions. First, it is co-opted and utilized by institutions such as nation-states for bellicose purposes. Or second, it is seen as valuable by various business corporations for the developments of products that can fetch the best prices in one or another market, regardless of the teleological *value* of such products.

The official concern of research in medicine is the curing of various diseases. And indeed, this is often the advertised ideal. In practice, however, the concern is not with disease *per se* but more often than not with funding and profits.

Knowledge is not to be gathered in such a way that it facilitates the aims of nation-states and business corporations as ends in themselves. Just as individual conscious souls are often ineffective and operate at cross-purposes to one another, indeed even impiously when they attempt to act outside of the context of institutions, so too institutions themselves often operate ineffectively and at cross-purposes to one another—not to mention impiously.

Scientism is impiety.

The view that specialized scientific domains of study exhaust the appropriate subject areas from which explanations can arise endangers knowledge. It prevents recognition of the teleological structure of the Godhead. Indeed, it prevents the recognition of the existence and significance of God.

Secularism and atheism are impiety.

Secularism and atheism are inappropriate belief sets for human beings because humans are religious animals: they are largely able to form into permanent groups without the employment of extensive tools of social control when such groups employ the methodology of religious belief (a focus on God, on good and evil, etc.) to cement their concerns to that of the group. Religious institutions continue to be the most successful at eliciting unswerving loyalty and belief. Nation-states, utilizing the emotional tools of patriotism, coupled with institutional threats against wayward members, often come close in their effectiveness to religious institutions, but they usually cannot elicit longstanding and continuous loyalty outside of the context of popular wars.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that secularism emerged from the heart of the Christian world; and consequently, Christian institutions are incapable of besting secularism in the struggle for the souls of Americans and Europeans. The reason is that Christian institutions largely oppose scientific claims rather than incorporating them into their ideological structure. The spectrum of Christian responses to science could not be wider: from dogmatic fundamentalist rejection to the nearly total evisceration of religious concepts by the replacement of them with scientific ersatz. These have not been successful strategies, especially when it is so clear that Christian institutions have only slowly accepted *ad hoc* intellectual compromises with the sciences. Indeed, in many ways—e.g., in relation to the theory of evolution—many Christian institutions still refuse to recognize the facts.

One must fundamentally rethink the relationship of scientific concepts and methods to metaphysics from the ground up without being hamstrung by antecedent scriptural commitments: one must even-handedly locate the appropriate role of science in an overall metaphysics and epistemology that includes more than them alone. The limits of science and its methods must be recognized, however, not by faith but by reason. Faith is a “loose cannon”: it cannot be used against empirical scientific methods because it amounts only to the mere denial that those methods cover everything there is. Faith is belief unaccompanied by justification. If scientific methods or how they are applied to gather knowledge fall short epistemologically, this must be shown in a systematic way that is otherwise completely compatible with those empirical methods.

Success against atheism and secularism, therefore, turns on recognizing their roots in scientism—for it is the scientistic belief that human reason and scientific method exhaust the means we have for knowledge and understanding that underwrites atheistic belief.

Human beings are religious animals. The official purpose of religious institutions is to promote the piety of human beings.

None of the traditional religions can sustain themselves against atheism and secularism—and clearly, none have. But this is more than a sociological fact. One handicap traditional religions face is, as we have discussed, that they all present false pictures of the soul and the self. As a result, they all make demands on their believers—to love God, to extinguish desire—that are impossible to meet. (This fact is often masked by doctrines that describe human nature as weak, finite, or fallen.) But in reality, none of the traditional religions, either because they predate the emergence of secular tools of knowledge gathering or because they have not sufficiently addressed the nature and limits of those tools, have the resources to challenge the world view of secularism: scientism. Thus they cannot consistently assimilate, for example, the insights of contemporary evolutionary psychology about human nature, and this is in general true with respect to all scientific doctrine.

These problems are less visible in contemporary Islam because it has aligned its opposition to secularism by associating the evils of secularism with the nature of Western political institutions. But this is not to meet the challenge of the scientific world view—any more successfully than is done by the traditional religions that simply eviscerate their own doctrines by replacing them with scientific ersatz—but instead is only a failure to engage with it altogether. A stark religious denial of what science has wrought, even when accompanied by political motivations, is contradicted by the widespread use of the very applications of scientific doctrine.

Notwithstanding their ostensible purpose of promoting human piety, all the extant major religions exhibit great and unceasing impiety.

Nonetheless, religious institutions are of paramount importance to humanity's serving God.

Chapter 30

The Holy Crusade for Truth and the Four Orders of Souls

The Four Orders of Souls

The Demonic: Souls that are impious, God’s enemies

The Virtuous: Souls that serve God by being internally pious

The Venerable: Souls that serve God by being externally pious

The Holy: Souls that serve God by righting the wrongs of impiety.

In the Holy Crusade for the Truth of Coming to Understanding, souls must serve God in whichever and whatever ways that they can.

Review 1: William J. Abraham

A book that begins with a section entitled "The Metaphysics of God" is clearly a bombshell in the playgrounds of contemporary philosophers and theologians. Mainstream contemporary theologians are preoccupied with questions of liberation. The only philosophies that really interest them are variations on late Marxism (approached through postcolonial theory) and versions of postmodernism. In the former case metaphysics is seen as a poisonous distraction thrown up as the epiphenomena of economic conflict; in the latter instance metaphysics is seen as the reassertion of grand narratives that have outlived their credibility and usefulness and that are likely to be the carriers of prejudice and oppression. Contemporary philosophy in the English-speaking world for its part continues to be dominated by analytical philosophers who remain deeply suspicious of the whole enterprise of speculative metaphysics.[1] The exception that proves the rule is the effort to develop a version of materialism that can accommodate consciousness, a move deeply related to the privileging of natural science as the gold standard of epistemology. So both terms ("metaphysics" and "God") in the section title are problematic; they are something of an oxymoron. Metaphysics is still out of fashion in philosophy; and God has been hijacked for political theologies or for playtime for the disillusioned.

Yet this volume was an accident waiting to happen. It was only a matter of time before a network of interlocking revolutionary developments within analytical philosophy would create the space for the emergence of a return to metaphysics and the consequent retrieval and creative updating of a tradition of philosophical thinking that goes right back to the roots of the discipline.[2] Hence *Theology* is to be welcomed as an extremely important contribution to a trend that is likely to accelerate in the decades ahead of us. This is especially the case when the foundations for the return to metaphysics were laid with such care in the volume that precedes this one. For those trained at a time when metaphysics was a swear word in philosophy or when it was used more often than not as a placeholder for charges of nonsense and hot air, it will be a challenge to come to terms with modes of thinking that are radically different and to countenance conclusions that will seem shocking at first sight.

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[1] After the publication of P. F. Strawson's *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959) analytical philosophers were perfectly happy to allow for descriptive metaphysics. The empiricist background music clearly drowned out any move to speculative or revisionary metaphysics.

[2] A very different approach to metaphysics can be found in the fine work of E. J. Lowe. See, for example, his *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), which provides a systematic overview of modern metaphysics and deals with the deepest questions that can be raised about the fundamental structure of reality as a whole.

Philosophy, however, has always been full of surprises. This was certainly the case in the turn away from metaphysics in the revolution led by Gottlob Frege, G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and others at the beginning of the twentieth century. We can expect that any turn back to metaphysics will initially be equally astonishing. If, in defense of metaphysics, the great R. G. Collingwood could rage against the barbarism of the young positivists like A. J. Ayer, we can expect that the remote descendants of Ayer will not be lost for words in castigating the surprising developments that await the readers of *Theology*.[3] Philosophy has never been for the comfortable or the fainthearted. What matters in philosophy is that the case be made clearly and rigorously from the bottom up; once this has been done then it is question-begging to lean on the orthodoxies of earlier generations. In this respect the preceding volume succeeds admirably. The author is fully in command of the crucial issues that need to be addressed; he has taken the measure of the opposition on its own terms; and he writes in a way that will be appreciated by those trained in the analytical tradition.

Theology is a somewhat different kettle of fish from philosophy; so the response is likely to be very different. At the moment theology as a discipline is hopelessly marginalized at the edge of the academy.[4] In some ways this status is thoroughly deserved, for theology has always had within it the seeds of intellectual corruption. Much contemporary theology is in fact a cover for fads, half-baked ideas, and polemical ideologies. Moreover, with the decline of mainline Christianity in the West and the emergence of robust forms of evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, the constituency for philosophical theology has dried up.[5] Even in the mainline traditions serious work in philosophical theology has, with some important exceptions, been sidelined. Karl Barth in his opposition to natural theology destroyed for many theologians in the twentieth century any serious conversation between philosophy and theology. Indeed contemporary Barthians will read *Theology* as a fresh onset of intellectual original sin in that their central conviction is that any theology that does not begin and end with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is a form of idolatry. Like David Hume did with metaphysics but for very different reasons and motivations, they will readily dismiss *Theology* to the flames.

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[3] Even if Collingwood had himself abandoned ship when he turned metaphysics into a special form of historical investigations that explored the absolute presuppositions of thinkers, his final fling at the end of *Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939) is worth remembering. "This [the danger to science] is my reason for offering to the public what might seem essentially to be an academic essay, suitable only for readers who are, like myself, committed to an interest in metaphysics. The fate of European science and European civilization is at stake. The gravity of the peril lies especially in the fact that so few recognize any peril to exist. When Rome was in danger, it was the cackling of the sacred geese that saved the Capitol. I am only a professional goose, consecrated with a cap and gown and fed at a college table; but cackling is my job, and cackle I will." See *Metaphysics*, 343.

[4] For an excellent analysis and response to this see John Webster's inaugural lecture as Lady Margaret Professor of Theology at Oxford, "Theological Theology," (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[5] It should be said, however, that evangelicals in North America have shown a keen interest in philosophy. Consider, for example, the extensive work of William Lane Craig and the journal *Philosophia Christi*. I can also testify from experience in Kazakhstan, Nepal, and Costa Rica that

Yet this is not the whole story. While many contemporary theologians and philosophers are happy to prevent any serious conversation between philosophy and theology, there has been a radical revolution over the last generation that can benefit enormously from these two volumes. Indeed some of the foundational work covered here opens up space for new forms of theism that are likely to flourish over the next two generations. It is important to get clear on the significance of this foundational work for what develops as the heartbeat of *Theology*. This preliminary work is not simply a matter of economy of style so that we read first things first; it is also critical in clearing the vetoes that have been used again and again against this kind of intellectual endeavor. I have in mind crucial labor on the nature of categories and in theory of knowledge that are the lead sections of the first volume. If we are saddled with the metaphysical constraints that are tacit in ordinary language and that have been the province of analytical philosophy; and if we are confined by certain narrow stringent conditions of justification and knowledge in epistemology and that have been conventional wisdom until recently; then there is little room to move metaphysically. However, given the careful and persuasive assault that is launched here against all such restriction, the author of *Theology* is free to spread his or her wings in a way that does not run foul of the standard vetoes that have been deployed. This strategy strikes me as both creative and correct.

I enter a caveat, however, for this strategy also gives rise to two very interesting potential problems. A comparison with John Locke is instructive at this point. Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*[6] ends with a remarkable effort to resolve a nest of ethical and theological issues that had driven his compatriots to civil war.[7] However, to get there Locke of necessity had to clear the decks by developing an alternative vision of language and knowledge. His

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students from the Pentecostal traditions are hungry and eager to engage philosophical issues not in spite of their experience but precisely because of their experience.

[6] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

[7] Book IV is clearly the climax of the whole argument.

ultimate goal, however, was clearly moral and theological. There is a similar discernible structure here. To get to God and the ethical concerns that matter, the author of necessity has to create the linguistic and epistemological space that will pave the way for the rehabilitation of God. The danger, of course, is that he or she will meet the same fate as Locke. Philosophers will concentrate on the deck clearing and ignore the climactic final part; they will become so fascinated by the creative and original reworking of familiar topics, that they will miss the payoff at the end. Thus they may miss the ethical and theological proposals that in their own way drive the whole enterprise.

However, there is an even greater danger lurking in the wings. The whole idea of securing God by reworking the linguistic and epistemological foundations is itself a deeply contested philosophical move. It may involve a cooking of the philosophical and theological books that can readily be missed by even the most discerning reader. The assumption at work here is that a certain material vision of epistemology has to be privileged in any conversation between philosophy and theology; but that is a philosophical assumption that should not be taken for granted. If there is to be a real conversation about God then it is not enough that the theologian be left to pick up the crumbs that fall from the philosophers' table; the theologian must be granted a place at the epistemological table too. Of course, the theologian will have to state the issue in a way that is philosophically pertinent. It is not enough simply to wave a theological hand to get first in line; the relevant philosophical claim will need to be articulated and defended. However, once this is done, the deep strategy behind *Theology* becomes much more contested that is generally recognized or is actually recognized here. This contested assumption is easily missed at a time when the secularization of philosophy and the academy systematically hides the longstanding interaction between theology and philosophy. In the past theological worries and proposals have driven philosophy as much as philosophical queries and proposals have driven theology.[8] In *Theology* philosophy wears the trousers; this is certainly permissible; it should not, however, be given the status of either an agreed assumption or an *a priori* principle.

As we turn to the material content of *Theology* I want to begin by recording an overall impression. Entering this volume is like entering a whole new intellectual world. Hence it requires patience on the part of the reader. It will also almost certainly require several readings and a genuine leap of intellectual imagination. Happily this has everything to do with the material content and nothing to do with the writing. In fact this is a beautifully written piece. The volume as a whole is very well organized. The flow from beginning to end is natural and felicitous. The various moves that are made are clear and tight. There are marvelous striking phrases and sentences throughout ("To flip a coin and then to act on it is not to make a free choice; it is to bend one's will to the tyranny of a random outcome."[9]) Every single page sets one thinking in various directions either by the provocative claim being advanced or by alerting the reader to assumptions in his or her own thinking that suddenly appear far from obvious given the alternative option being advanced. Hence by the time one is finished the initial difficulties give way to a sense of having entered a remodeled house that over time begins to exude a charm all of its own. At first the doors seem to be in the wrong place and the stairs seem upside down; in time they appear to be where they ought to be in the overall structure of the building.

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[8] I have charted what this involves in epistemology in *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology, From the Fathers to Feminism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

Inside the building it is well worth pausing to identify some splendid insights and arguments. There is a fine rendering of the inadequacies of scientism.

> …the danger [of scientism] is that the very real knowledge that science provides can be taken to exhaust all the options for any possible knowledge. We describe this threat as *Scientism*: the view that the subject areas of science provide all the knowledge that is possible and that there are no other sources of knowledge.[10]

Equally sharply, the central problem of materialism is identified. "It seems bizarre to suggest that purely physical events or entities can be "about" other physical events or entities or for that matter about anything at all."[11] There is a fine account of the way in which God (conceived for the moment as the God of the Abrahamic traditions) can play a whole raft of roles in explanation of events in the universe. Here the author of *Theology*, even as he rejects this vision of God, does a much better job of unpacking crucial aspects of traditional forms of theism than many recent theologians have done when they bought highly dubious restrictions on the nature of explanation and then reduced the cognitive content of central religious beliefs to myth, symbol, poetry, and the like. We are given a penetrating analysis of the ontology of institutions. This is especially interesting in that it brings to our attention entities that have purposes, goals, and desires but that are not conscious or aware. Hence it breaks the stranglehold of the principle that only conscious agents can have goals and purposes. It may be that in the end the purposes, intentions, and goals of institutions can be traced back to individuals or groups of individuals; but that is precisely the challenge posed by *Theology*, and we beg the question if we assume that this can be done. We should also note the fine-grained account of the inner dynamic and moral equilibrium essential to the working of society as an institution.

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[9] *Theology*, 44

[10] Ibid, 28. The really decisive objection to scientism, of course, is that its central theme is not itself a scientific proposal at all but an exercise in philosophical dogmatism. There are, to be sure, interesting quasi-empirical or common sense arguments for scientism that rely on the success of science in increasing our understanding of the universe; but it is massive leap of faith to say that all phenomena will yield to scientific-type explanations, that scientific explanations are the only viable kinds of explanations, and that other types of explanations, say, explanations in terms of personal agency, are cognitively empty. Personal explanations have been central to forms of Jewish, Islamic, and Christian theism, and are worthy of philosophical analysis in their own right. We are not dealing at this point with self-serving, arbitrary moves but with forms of explanation that are also crucial for understanding human agency and action. These are all philosophical issues that in my judgment cannot be reduced to scientific inquiry or handed over to science for adjudication. We can see this clearly when we ask: What experiments should we do to resolve disputes in this arena?

[11] Ibid, 40. There is more of course at stake here than the non-intentionality of physical objects and processes. It is hard to see how crucial predicates, like truth or falsehood, that apply to propositions can be applied to physical processes in the brain no matter how much we upgrade the physical descriptions.

> We have uncritically inherited from many sources the idea that certain vocations are intrinsically higher—that is, more worthwhile in themselves and independently of the ends to which they are directed. So the philosopher looks down on the scientist, the scientist looks down on the entrepreneur-businessman, and the entrepreneur-businessman looks down on the professional doctor or lawyer; professionals look down on office workers, and office workers look down on janitors—all in an endless attempt to shore up the inevitable insecurities that are produced by a system of prestige and reward that does not have substantial roots in the genuine ways that various job activities actually facilitate the values of the Godhead.[12]

Finally, there is a beautiful symmetry between the emphasis given ontologically to institutions and the moral weight assigned to institutional vices. There is here an appropriate regard for the criminal side of institutional life.[13]

The style of Volume 2 is strikingly different from the first volume. In Volume 1 the topics were carefully located in a trajectory of argument that upended the standard wisdom of, say, the later Wittgenstein and Ryle, or that deftly drew on the fresh moves of, say, Quine and Goodman. Aside from the fascinating use of diagrams the focus of Volume I is clearly on argument rather than exposition. In *Theology* we have a credo plus commentary. Even the morphology of the text is different with its heavy use of emphasized text. There is next to no serious interaction with the current literature on the topics discussed; the argument is overshadowed by elucidation and explication. I suspect that this is entirely fitting in that one expects a metaphysician to be drawn into this mode of writing especially when what is at issue is a whole new way of perceiving and thinking about the world as a whole. This is not to say that there is no argument; it is merely to draw attention to a fundamental feature of the volume. There are problems with this way of proceeding, as we shall see. However, readers need to cut the author some slack given the nature of the enterprise. Great metaphysicians more often than not have to spend a lot of their time articulating their root vision of the universe. *Theology* is no exception to this general rule. Moreover, I can only make sense of the abrupt ending to this volume within this context. We have there either an incomplete section or a promissory note or a dramatic call to live into the vision that is developed in the body of the text.[14]

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[12] Ibid, 62.

[13] I note also the refreshing attention given ontologically to hierarchies within what are designated as conscious agents: individual conscious agents, formal and semiformal organizations, cultures, and humanity itself. See ibid, 48.

The style of Part 4 is also strikingly different from that of Part 5. Part 4 is initially driven by a contrast between the God of the Abrahamic religions and the God of *Theology*. Part 5 is much more a matter of straight exposition. This is odd in that the Abrahamic religions have all developed extensive anthropological visions of human agents, souls, persons, and the like. Hence there was plenty of material to draw on that could have exploited the use of contrast in Part 5. Certainly in the Christian tradition, there is a rich and contested discussion on the best way to think of human agents from a metaphysical point of view. So if the author had wanted to take this tack, that option was clearly available.

Yet I am not disappointed in the lack of anthropological contrast as far as Part 5 is concerned in that the treatment of the Abrahamic religions in Part 4 is not entirely satisfactory. At one level *Theology* displays extensive acquaintance with figures like Al-Gazzali, Maimonides, Avincenna, and Aquinas.[15] There is also a clear grasp of the basics of Luther's doctrine of justification by grace through faith and of various elements of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Yet to lump the Abrahamic traditions together as offering some kind of mere theism that can be abstracted from the richness of their particular traditions is misleading. To be sure, philosophers have done this throughout the modern period; but safety in numbers is a lame argument given the revolutionary work that has been done in philosophy of religion over the last thirty years. We can no longer assume that this strategy does justice to the inner developments within the history of religion or that it can cope with the specificity, say, of the Christian conception of God.[16] In fact *Theology* shows no awareness of the extraordinary work that has been done over the last generation by Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, William Alston, Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Eleanor Stump, Janet Martin Soskice, Paul Moser, and a host of others. We are not speaking here of this or that marginal figure in recent philosophy; we are speaking of leading figures in contemporary philosophy who have made major contributions to epistemology and metaphysics. Philosophy of religion may still be off the radar screen for a host of philosophers, but it is now a thriving enterprise. In the light of this work appeal to the Abrahamic traditions as the paradigm for theism and the absence of any interaction with the revolution in philosophy of religion over the last generation is a serious weakness.

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[14] The last option is suggested by the reference to a holy crusade, but I am drawn to the first explanation as the most persuasive. As it stands the material is out of character in tone and content with the rest of *Theology*.

[15] I wonder if Anselm is being confused with Tertullian. See *Theology*, 11-12. Anselm is the paradigm of the philosophical theologian who is determined to make sense of every aspect of his rich theism.

Moreover, there is an unfortunate tendency to work off popular and even vulgar versions of religious doctrine and their origins.[17] Thus there is no serious engagement with the origins of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* in the second century.[18] Nor is there any serious understanding of the apophatic and cataphatic in patristic treatments of religious language. Indeed the origins of Abrahamic theism are traced to a simplistic evolution in which projection plays a key role. So we are told more than once: "It seems clear that the notion of God evolved from earlier notions of deities to which were attributed various powers or dominions."[19] There is no argument at this point; it is all a matter of assertion.[20] In addition, the account of the relation between religion and morality in the Abrahamic traditions, as we shall see, is very inadequate. I can understand why the author uses the contrast with the Abrahamic traditions, but as it stands the description of these traditions is too inaccurate to work among those who know them well. It is as if the author is tone deaf to the deep nuances of the traditions he is using as a means of contrasting exposition. In these circumstances it would be much better to follow the mode of Part 5 and stick to straight exposition. Failing that we need a clear disclaimer in Part 4 that anticipates and mitigates the charge of having constructed a straw man where intellectual victory is declared by setting up inadequate alternatives at the outset.

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[16] Bruce Marshall's *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) shows how vital the concept of the Trinity is to any robustly Christian conception of God. He also argues for the need to develop a hearty form of reflective equilibrium between belief, meaning, and epistemology. This is a revolutionary text in the way it reorders the way the whole debate about theological proposals is to be conducted. I have explored the internal developments in debates about the existence of God over the twentieth century in "The Existence of God," forthcoming in the *Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. by John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance.

[17] It does not help that sometimes the author resorts to pejorative language to describe various competing doctrines. See the deployment of "archaic" and "naïve" in *Theology*, 34, 35, 36.

[18] This doctrine was worked out in the second century in disputes between church theologians and the Gnostics.

[19] *Theology*, 8. The claim is repeated later: "The monotheistic notion of one God that we are primarily concerned with evolved from earlier notions of pagan gods, and as a result the subsequent roles a notion of a monotheistic God plays in a religion are often the same as one or another role played by notions of pagan gods in polytheistic bodies of belief." See ibid, 30. Three questions are worth asking here. First, where is the anthropological research that would support this claim? What if the evolution, as some have suggested, was the other way round? Second, is there are a hint here of the genetic fallacy in which the causal origins of an idea discredits its

There is a fascinating challenge at the core *Theology* that comes to light in a neighboring observation. One of its central tasks is to lead the reader into a whole new way of speaking. This begins with the radical revisionist way in which the term "God" is deployed. The argument for continuity between the old and new usage is well made. Moreover, there is a longstanding tradition, perhaps best represented by Spinoza, which continues to use "God" as a synonym for nature that fits with the usage here. So long as we have careful stipulation the alert reader can handle the revised discourse. Philosophers are surely free to use language in a way that suits their metaphysical purposes. It is worthwhile considering at this point the debate as to whether Christian, Jews, and Muslims believe in the same God. In favor of saying that they do is the argument that all of them agree on this identifying description for God, namely, "There is one and only one Creator of the Universe." Thus when a Christian converts to being a Muslim he or she does not cease to believe in God; he or she adopts a radically different *description* rather than a different *conception* of God. However, there are times when the radical differences in description makes one pause to adopt this elegant way to resolve the issue.[21] Clearly the author of *Theology* does not develop the same conception of

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contemporary deployment? Third, whatever the evolutionary history, do we not still have to answer the query as to why the identified concept of God has been sustained across millennia? Can a concept with origins in one sphere not turn out to be valuable in another sphere?

[20] A similar problem exists with respect to the author's remarks about Satan. "Satan, at the hands of the Christian Church fathers, evolved from one among many mere antagonists, the "satans" of the Old Testament, into the powerful solitary figure who himself is not only the originating cause of all the evils in the world—because of his actions in the garden of Eden—but who continues to be a source of fresh evil via his role as a tempter of mortals and as the progenitor of evil occult practices." This is a serious oversimplification of the complexities involved from a historical point of view.

[21] Many Christians on reading John Calvin are tempted to say that they simply do not believe in the same God as Calvin. Or on reading the New Testament they will actually say that the God of the Old Testament is not the same God as the New Testament, as Marcion famously did. These

God noted here as “the one and only Creator of the Universe.” However, the move is not to work with the same conception of God associated with the Abrahamic traditions but to propose a radically different referent for the term “God.” I see no philosophical objection to this proposal.

However, we are now on a road that we must tread carefully. No doubt this is one reason why Strawson famously stuck to descriptive metaphysics and eschewed revisionary metaphysics. It is not as easy to be persuaded by the revisionary linguistic meanings when it calls for a radical reworking of our everyday concepts. I have in mind the difficulties that gather around the common notions of consciousness, mind, body, soul, self, agent, and person. These are extremely difficult to unpack, of course. Hence there is plenty of room for revision; our conceptual disorientation and confusion makes us hunger for clarification and increased understanding. Yet we pause to adopt the new vision proposed here not simply because we are unsure of our general footing in the metaphysics, but because we are not ready to give up our tried and trusted ways of thinking.

Theology proposes that souls are outside of time. Yet souls are still aware. This is profoundly counterintuitive in that awareness of this or that state of affairs clearly takes place in space and time. So as I write I am now aware of the chair I occupy, of the blue skies of San Jose, Costa Rica, outside my window. These are datable events or states of affairs that are taking place on the morning of May 9, 2007, at 8.22 A.M. It is hard to see how the soul can be both timeless and aware of what is happening in space and time. As is noted by the author, this mirrors the problem of how a timeless God can be related to events in space and time, as we find in Aquinas. However, this is precisely why later philosophical theologians have rejected Aquinas’s view and attempted to work out a more coherent account of the relation between God and time.[22] It will not do simply to cherry-pick what we want from Aquinas at this point; we need a stronger account of how the new view avoids the incoherence of Aquinas’s views. Moreover, it is odd to claim that “no soul can be conscious without its being aware.” As I drive to work I am clearly *aware* of the traffic when I turn to the left to overtake but I may not at all be *conscious* of the traffic. Thus we can clearly identify cases where we have awareness but no consciousness. To be sure, the problem in this latter case is that the author of *Theology* is offering a revision of our ordinary intuitions, intuitions

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are cases where the descriptions of God are thought to differ profoundly from each other, so much so that it is legitimate to ask if we are indeed dealing with the same God. I shall not try to resolve this interesting question here.

[22] For a good recent discussion see Alan G. Padgett, *God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

that may be contaminated by a bad metaphysical schema.[23] However, if the redescription is meant to be a genuine redescription and not just a rejection of our everyday experience, then it is subject to criticism when it fails to fit what we naturally find to be the case.

I am also puzzled by the move to say that computers have souls. The claim at this point is subtle. Not every computer has a soul; soul language only applies to those computers that have a program that "learns and modifies itself on the basis of the impact the environment has on it, and if its responses—although intelligent—cannot be deterministically predicted on the basis of its current state …"[24] The claim is a very weak one: "we see no reason to deny it has a soul."[25] This is surely a very lame move to make. This is especially so if it is the case that "souls are intrinsically aware."[26] We surely need some positive reasons for saying that the relevant kind of computer makes genuinely free choices[27] and is aware. I am not ruling out a case against the soul in this instance; but we need strong, positive arguments for it to be convincing. We meet again a situation where the metaphysics is driving the description, but the description turns out to be deeply counterintuitive and even misleading.[28]

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[23] One is reminded of Bertrand Russell's comment that common sense embodies the metaphysics of a savage.

[24] *Theology*, 44.

[25] Idem.

[26] Ibid, 42.

[27] I say genuine free choices here because I am far from convinced that the author does justice to what we mean by freedom. This arises most acutely in his claim that the future is fixed. "The future is definite—as definite as the existence of God's Body in all time and all space. The future therefore is already one way.." [*Theology*, 50.] "…the irrelevance of freedom looms as a consequence of *predestination*: the idea that given the existence of the future, what will be is already fixed in future time." [*Theology*, 50] Clearly this move creates an acute problem for freedom in that it would appear that nothing I now do can make a difference to what happens up ahead. The general line in response seems to be that we have freedom because science denies genuine determinism on the grounds that some events at the subatomic level are unpredictable. [*Theology*, 51.] However, even if we accept indeterminacy at the subatomic level, this does no ensure indeterminacy above the subatomic level. Presumably with the relevant computers we are dealing with the subatomic level, so modern developments in physics are not going to secure freedom as envisaged here. Moreover, failure to predict at the subatomic level does not at all rule out determinism, even if that failure is built into our very means of observing the relevant data. Determinism is a thesis about there being necessary and sufficient causal antecedents of every event in the universe; prediction is a capacity of human agents to discern future events. The ontology of the former is not undermined by failures in our capacity to predict the future; determinism may still be true if the latter is not the case. Nor am I convinced that God's omniscience is at all incompatible with genuine freedom and thus makes God responsible for his created agent's actions. [*Theology*, 51.] If divine predictability is compatible with freedom, then so too is divine omniscience. There is nothing self-contradictory in the following proposition: "God *knows* (rather than simply can predict) what I will freely do in five minutes." In other words, God can know our future *free* choices. Much of the trouble at this point in the past has stemmed from a Calvinistic theism in which God knows the future if and only if God determines the future. Calvin may be working at this point from analogies, like, say, I know what will be on

I turn now to the author's proposals on the nature and content of morality. I shall, first, look at the various remarks that are made about the relation between religion and morality in traditional theism and in the philosophical theism of *Theology*. I shall, second, explore some of the negative comments made about morality in traditional forms of theism. I shall, third, offer an evaluation of the central constructive move that is at the heart of his work on how to determine what counts as good or evil action.

Accounts of the relation between religion and morality are legion and multidimensional. Some have posited a psychological or empirical relation between religion and morality; thus religious practices or doctrines are causally essential to moral action. Not surprisingly, given the bad behavior and horrendous action of religious believers across the centuries this has been vehemently denied. Some have posited a conceptual relation between religion and morality; thus we cannot, it is proposed, understand crucial moral concepts like goodness and virtue without grasping crucial theological concepts like God's will or God's commands. Goodness, say, simply is the divine will. Others argue that we can clearly understand our standard moral concepts without recourse to religion; believers and unbelievers can discuss moral issues and use common moral concepts and principles; they are not talking past each other all the time when they do so. Some

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the final examination because I set it. However, I see no reason to accept this restriction on the kind of knowledge God may possess. Furthermore, the whole discussion of genuine human freedom requires deep exploration of agency and agent causation. That, of course, would take us into an alternative metaphysical vision than the one on offer in *Theology*. Or perhaps, this judgment is premature, for the author of *Theology* may well be able to exploit this extremely important development in agency theory opened up long ago by Thomas Reid. Alan Donagan's *Choices: the Essential Element in Human Actio*n (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) remains a very fine overview and discussion of the issues.

[28] It is very tempting to ask the author to specify what would falsify or undermine the central claims laid out in the whole of *Theology*. I do not ask this in the spirit of the old positivists of the 1950s and 1960s but more to gauge how far the metaphysical commitments developed here override observations made on the basis of our everyday experience and of our natural reading of events and states of affairs. We can also raise this question in a more deflationary mode: how far can experience bring the metaphysical proposals on offer under strain? If the answer is no to both of these questions then we really have a radical form of fideism and perspectivalism on our hands. The metaphysical faith and perspective really determine how we will interpret our experience at every level. However, it is not clear to me if this is at all the case in the material before us. I sense that we have a form of soft fideism or soft perspectivalism on our hands.

have posited an epistemological connection between morality and religion; thus we may understand the meaning of terms like goodness and virtue, but we are too sinful to know what these terms truly mean or how they are to be applied unless we have access to special divine revelation. Others, following Plato in the *Euthyphro*, have insisted that there is neither a conceptual nor an epistemological relation between religion and morality; thus the meaning of moral categories and their proper application in no way depend on access to special divine revelation.[29] Given the complexity involved and given the absence of interest in divine revelation, it is not surprising that the author travels only some distance in addressing this nest of issue. The remarks in and around the relation between morality and the divine will, however, are especially interesting.

Consider the following two comments side by side.

> Religious institutions characterize God or other supernatural beings and characterize the right and the wrong in terms of God or those other beings. Furthermore, they dictate one or more right ways of living in terms of their descriptions of God, or gods, and of the right and the wrong.[30]

> Evil behaviors are those actions intentionally directed towards harming the divine Eternal Life of God; good actions are those actions intentionally directed towards facilitating the proper embodiment of the teleology of the Godhead in the divine Eternal Life of God.[31]

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[29] I have developed my own position on these topics in chapter 11 of *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1985). I argue that the standard questions need to be reformulated. Thus we need to ask if there is a causal relation between moral behavior and divine grace rather than a causal relation between religious practice and morality. And we need to consider an option where moral concepts are *enriched* by divine revelation rather than obliterated or set aside by it. The latter option allows for some understanding of central moral concepts and principles without recourse to divine revelation, but it allows for the possibility of the transfiguration of those concepts and principles.

[30] *Theology*, 27

[31] Ibid, 23. It is important to note that this is a pivotal claim in *Theology*. It is repeated and expanded in the following remark: “What is required is that the good and the bad be justified by how they are grounded in God and His attributes within which humans live and have their being. If murder is wrong, it can only be wrong because if its ultimate impact on God. To murder is to prevent a part of Consciousness from manifesting itself any longer in the Body of God, and doing so – in this case – is wrong because it impedes the unfolding of God’s body in accordance with the will of God – the teleology embedded in the Godhead.” See ibid, 24.

It would appear that at the level of the logical relation between morality and religion, the author of *Theology* thinks of the relation between moral concepts and religious concepts to be one of identity. Leaving aside the somewhat pejorative rendering of the generalizations in the first quotation, this generalization will not hold for the Christian tradition. At best this is one way of thinking of the relation between religion and morality that shows up in the tradition. More importantly, we clearly need to know why we should accept the straight identity of moral concepts and religious concepts in the second quotation. It is surely not that case the concept of good, for example, can be reduced to "those actions intentionally directed towards facilitating the proper embodiment of the teleology of the Godhead." We find here exactly the same problem that the position suggested in the first quotation has raised for centuries. If we say that goodness is what is in keeping with the divine will, then the proposition "God's will is good" would be tautologous, amounting to nothing more than "God's will is God's will." So we have a very significant piece of unfinished business on our hands.[32]

As we turn to specific objections against the content of traditional religious morality, we can begin, first, with the claim that the "potential vices of religious institutions are, in some sense, far greater than those of political institutions."[33] The reasons for this claim are that religious institutions provide a framework of claims about God and his properties for believers. These beliefs are then "trained into believers" while still too young to evaluate them and thus the inertia of familiarity prevents them from testing them appropriately. These are very interesting assertions. However, there are obvious problems with them. First, it would be bizarre if religious institutions did not provide a framework of claims about God and His properties. Surely it is a good thing that the early church, for example, worked out a canonical creed that captured its central convictions about God as developed in the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a good thing that the church develops corporate teaching so as to make clear to the world where it stands, to help new converts get their intellectual bearings, and to provide a benchmark from where it can go on to further explorations in the faith as a dynamic, living intellectual community. Second, it is a good thing that the church teaches its corporate faith to its children in the faith. If a church thinks that its teaching is a treasure to be handed over to a new generation, then it would be daft not to do so in the case of its own children. The alternatives to this are not very attractive. It can leave children to flounder on their own or to pick up whatever is taught by their peers or to absorb the bits and pieces of this and that which will be available in the culture.

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[32] It is not clear to me whether the first quotation is a criticism of traditional religion. If it is, then *Theology* itself is subject to whatever criticism is being leveled against traditional religion.

[33] Ibid, 28.

Everything hinges at this point on how this handing over is to be done. Perhaps the author of *Theology* thinks that the only way to do this is to do it in such a way that children will not be able to think for themselves. He or she suggests that it will inevitably be done in such a way that children in the faith will become so familiar with it that they will send their brains on a permanent holiday. However, this is not the only way to hand over the faith to a younger generation. Done rightly it can be an aid to the cultivation of intellectual virtue rather than an occasion for the cultivation of intellectual vice.

Having said all this, the question still remains whether "the potential vices of religious institutions are in some sense far greater than those of political institutions"? This is much too vague for us to be able to answer it one way or the other. What do we mean here by "in some sense"? And what political institutions are in mind here? Are we to think here of secular political institutions like happened under communism or fascism? If we are, a case needs to be made to support such an assertion. Moreover, the Christian tradition has a long history of building and sustaining first-rate educational institutions. Is all this to be set aside as irrelevant to the claim before us? In any case, it looks as if we are comparing apples and oranges. Are religious institutions on a par with political institutions? But now we are back with the problem of what precisely is being asserted, for there are all sorts of political institutions that might be considered at this point.

Now let's look at a second comment on traditional religious morality. We are told in bold terms that "…the Abrahamic religious traditions, and all religious traditions for that matter, fail to recognize the danger that institutional evil poses for humanity."[34] We can agree that religious traditions have been blind to institutional evil; no doubt we can count on failures on this front in the future. However, this is not just a hasty generalization, it is patently false. In the ancient world the prophets of Israel thundered against institutional evil. In the modern world we have host of examples to drawn on. Form William Wilberforce's efforts to end the slave trade, to the extraordinary perception of Solzhenitsyn in his withering narratives of the Soviet system, to the costly protests of the Confessing Church in Germany against the Nazis, to the brilliant social commentaries of Reinhold Niebuhr, to the work of Martin Luther King in the civil rights movement, right up to the role of Pope John Paul II in the defeat of communism in Eastern Europe. Anyone who denies the longstanding, persistent protests against social evils by heroic religious leaders is living in a metaphysical fantasy land.

Consider, thirdly, one more comment on the content of traditional religious morality.

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[34] Ibid, 26.

> For all of the Abrahamic religions, morality becomes *purely* a matter of reward and punishment for appropriately placed loyalty to God or for misplaced loyalty to Satan. The idea of Heaven evolves into a lifestyle of eternal beatitude, where the good ones can—for their delectation—even watch the bad ones eternally tortured in hell. The important consideration of what is right, what is wrong, and why is reduced to a cosmic drama of war where right and wrong are decided *solely* by whose side one is on and whether one has uttered the right mottoes of loyalty and engaged in the appropriate religious rituals. Lost entirely is a concern with how the question of what is right and what is wrong is to be grounded in God in order to make sense out of it."[35]

The sweep of this indictment of traditional religious moralities in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions is breathtaking.[36] Now no one will deny that rewards and punishments have played a role in the motivation for pursuing the good and avoiding the bad in, say, the Christian tradition. The rest is a bundle of nonsense. Few, if any, serious theologians have proposed the vision of heaven on display here. Professions of faith (oaths of loyalty) and participation in religious rituals have rarely if ever been seen as sufficient for moral action in the Christian tradition when viewed canonically and normatively; on the contrary they have been excoriated as insufficient, if not a moral snare, again and again. Furthermore, there is a wealth of material in the history of the Christian tradition exploring various angles on how best to decide what is right and wrong, as seen in discussions of conscience, virtues and vices, apt moral principles, examples of conspicuous sanctity, discussions of various moral problems and dilemmas, and natural law. Debates about the legitimacy and strength of the latter totally undermine the claim that no effort has been made to see why what is grounded in God does indeed make sense to ordinary human reason.

Turning to the constructive vision of morality developed in *Theology*, the most striking feature that catches our attention is the very general way in which moral issues are to be resolved. Here is one fine summary of what is at stake that shows up early on.

> God provides ethical guidance for us, not by promulgating laws nor by His being aware of what sentient beings do or fail to do to uphold

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[35] Ibid, 25. The emphasis is added.

[36] I am not in a position to speak for the Jewish and Islamic tradition, so I shall confine my remarks to my knowledge of the Christian tradition.

> those laws but by Himself being in such a way that ethical precepts are present in the structure of what He is, in His attributes and how they are related to each other and to Him.[37]

One is immediately struck by the opacity of this proposal. Will this really help us think through what we should do about abortion, war, terrorism, sexual ethics, capital punishment, and the host of issues that trouble us intellectually from a moral point of view? I doubt it. Nor does it help very much to be told later.

> Ethical behavior is not a set of rules, recognized by reason, that apply at all times and in all places. They are as contingent as God is. What an individual conscious soul must do at each step in *the game of life* is something to be recognized on the basis of the contours of the self constructed by the soul at that time and place and the environmental challenges posed by other selves and the infrastructure of the game itself.[38]

It is clear that the author of *Theology* is at least partially aware of the problem at hand.

> The problem with setting the goals of individual conscious souls as anything other than what is locally near them is that doing so in terms of the pattern of the teleology of the Godhead is too grand for individual conscious agents to grasp in the kind of detail needed for the successful achievement of those goals. Individual conscious agents can rarely be aware of (or understand to more than a quite limited degree) whether and how the pattern of unfolding in God's Body is going right or going wrong.[39]

This is a refreshing statement of the difficulty the individual faces. The grand claim that good actions are "those actions intentionally directed towards facilitating the proper embodiment of the teleology of the Godhead in the divine Eternal Life of God" has turned out to be less than action guiding. We cannot at this point fall back on traditional religious moralities for they are false; nor can we turn to utilitarianism or some kind of Kantian categorical imperative, for these have been rejected. The solution proffered is essentially that we are to live a life of love in our local environments.

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[37] *Theology*, 35.

[38] Ibid, 66.

[39] Ibid, 70.

> "Love's role—when piously operating—keeps the focus of individual conscious souls and their understanding *local*, for it is only locally that the vast majority of those souls can succeed in initiating actions that successfully facilitate coming to understanding."[40]

The turn to love surely comes as a bolt from the blue. Whence this privileging of love? Why is this moral virtue singled out, as opposed to, say, courage, or justice, or honesty, or all the other traditional moral virtues? Moreover, how is this choice to be grounded? It cannot be grounded in the Godhead for the Godhead is strictly impersonal and neither loves nor is loved. There can be no appeal to love as grounded in a discerning and natural response of gratitude to a personal God who at great cost has brought redemption to the world. So why should we adopt this value as supreme? Is this a matter of common sense or intuition? Is this a hangover of the Christian tradition in the West that has been stolen without acknowledgment?

Even then the appeal to love does not get us very far. Love is not enough as a formal guide in the host of moral challenges and dilemmas we face. Efforts to limit our moral commitments to that of love foundered in the efforts of the situations ethicists of the 1960s; they are now historical curiosities. In some cases love became a placeholder for a loose version of utilitarianism. So it is not surprising that we are told that the individual needs further help from institutions. Some souls are fortunate to work things out, to see how things knit together in the Godhead, "but they are not the individual conscious souls of humans; they are the larger institutional souls that have the breadth of intellectual power to enable them to continue the process of understanding God in a direct way."[41] But this does not get us out of the woods. We now have two further problems. First, surely this means that the individual soul will have to depend on authority. This does not sit well with the epistemology that lies behind *Theology*. Second, it is far from clear how we are to identify the relevant institutions to which the individual soul should turn for help. There are a host of institutions we might suggest as candidates at this point: political parties, think tanks, government agencies, universities, philosophical schools, and so on.[42] To which of these are we supposed to turn? Until we get help on this matter we are still in the dark.

What is troubling through all of this is the hope that was engendered by the initial claim that an exciting new metaphysical vision could provide substantial moral guidance for the perplexed of our times. Thus we were told that good and bad actions were intimately related to the Godhead. However they might spell out their initial intuitions on the matter, many people will be drawn to this splendid offer of help in negotiating the moral maze they inhabit. The promissory note is attractive, but the fine print turns out to be disappointing. The situation, however, is much worse than meets the eye initially. At the end of the day we discover that the Godhead depends ultimately on us rather than the other way round. We start out with an offer of help from the Godhead; but the Godhead is in no position to deliver the goods. We were drawn in with an offer of moral knowledge; but it turns out that the Godhead needs not just our knowledge but much else besides.

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[40] Idem.

[41] Ibid, 70.

[42] Clearly we cannot turn to the church for help for this has already been dismissed as morally dysfunctional and founded on a false theology.

> God is the victim. We are His only salvation. The "redemption" of the world—and Him—is up to us. The appropriate unfolding of the divine Eternal Life of God depends on us, on our descendants, whoever they might be, and on whatever other sentient beings who realize what it is that God needs. Righting the wrongs in God's Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions.[43]

One further comment is appropriate in rounding off this set of comments on the constructive moral vision at work in *Theology*. It is clear that there is also a spiritual or redemptive agenda buried in this metaphysics. It comes out most clearly in the following observation.

> Our self-image is something we can reconstruct and improve. We can uncover what and who we really are. We can discover the soul itself that is the locus of choice and awareness and use that discovery to construct a self-image that better fits with who we are and what we should do—a kind of psychotherapy, as it were.[44]

The question that this remark evokes is this: does this proposal help us solve the soteriological problem of evil? Philosophers have rightly made much of the evidentiary problem of evil, that is, of how to reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of an all-good and omnipotent God. However, the soteriological problem of evil is quite different in nature. It focuses on the existence of evil as a power at work in individuals and in institutions. The question in this instance gathers around on how best to make sense of evil and ultimately how best to address it in all its depth, self-deception, and folly. It is clear historically that the deep attraction of Christian theism has stemmed as much from its message of redemption as it did from its perceived intellectual depth and explanatory power. In the modern period this dimension of the faith has been eclipsed by debates about internal consistency, the meaning of religious discourse, natural theology, miracles, natural atheology, the credential of divine revelation, and so on. Consequently philosophers have ignored other dimensions of Christian faith and practice that have been pivotal in conversion and in the sustaining of religious commitment. What this suggests is that a really robust theism needs to develop a satisfactory response to the soteriological problem of evil as much as it needs to develop a satisfactory response to the standard problem of evil. Happily philosophers have of late begun to come to terms with this very different problem, at least in the sense that they are beginning to identify what needs initial attention.[45] As it stands the material in *Theology* barely begins to scratch the surface. So it is fair to suggest that at this point we have another piece of unfinished business on our hands.

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[43] *Theology*, 37. The emphasis is that of the original.

[44] Ibid, 54.

I mentioned at the outset that one of the great virtues of this work is the careful attention that is given to clearing space for the metaphysics that is developed in *Theology*. I also suggested that there were potential problems, namely, the risk of readers focusing on the space clearing at the expense of the content of *Theology* and the danger of assuming that philosophy is the privileged partner in the debate about the interaction between philosophy and theology. I wish now to explore further this second observation and to let it lead naturally into an interesting consequence that may have been missed by the author.

Of course, if we state the matter baldly as allowing theology to be privileged over philosophy then there is an obvious rejoinder to this worry. It will require philosophical argument to make this case, so it looks as if philosophy has logical priority in this debate. However, the issue cannot be so easily resolved. As the author makes clear in the contrasting of his theism with the theism of the Abrahamic faiths, what we have in the end are rival versions of theism that need to be adjudicated. So we have in the end one form of philosophical theism pitted against another. Once we state the issue this way, we can see that a radically different theist from the author of *Theology* may want to challenge the way in which we begin the enterprise by developing a particular vision of categories and of epistemology. *Theology* and its precursor simply ignore the whole question of divine revelation. What this means is that we have a crucial begging of the question already in play. Theists who do not share the philosophical theism of *Theology* will see immediately that the author has chosen a very particular set of epistemological earphones. No appeal to divine revelation is ever going to be allowed a hearing; so that other versions of theism are never going to get a serious run for their money.

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[45] See Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought, an Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), and Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

The absence of any discussion of divine revelation dovetails with the vision of faith that is explicitly adopted in *Theology*. Faith is defined as "belief unaccompanied by justification."[46] This is, of course, a common conception of faith among contemporary philosophers. Faith is seen as a cop-out, an appeal to the believer's say-so, an exercise in arbitrary hand waving. Faith is believing what you know ain't true.[47] Not only is this conception of faith a pejorative understanding of faith invented in the nineteenth century by theologians as a conversation stopper and adopted by philosophers as a useful polemical tool, it is in fact deeply flawed both historically and conceptually. To believe on faith is not to accept some arbitrary will-o'-the-wisp, it is to believe on the basis of divine testimony or on the ground of a divine revelation. Thus conceptually the one who believes on the basis of faith has access to the highest form of knowledge. To believe on the basis of what God has said is to believe on the highest testimony available, the testimony of God. That is why theologians as far apart as Origen and Aquinas rightly discerned that to believe on the basis of faith was not to reject reason but to believe on the highest form of reason. Faith is not to be seen as contrasted with reason; it is a form of reason. Faith in fact gives us access to knowledge, God's own knowledge. In the light of this it is not surprising that Aquinas argued that if we found a contradiction between what we believe on the basis of divine revelation and what we otherwise know to be true we must conclude that we have wrongly interpreted the divine revelation. Moreover, we can readily see, once we ponder epistemologically what is at stake in divine revelation, that divine revelation is a threshold concept. Once adopted we must accept what we believe as knowledge, we must where appropriate read all else we know in the light of divine revelation,[48] and we must be prepared to obey it even to the point of death as witnesses and martyrs. This kind of observation was commonplace in medieval theology and philosophy. It was lost in the modern period in part because of erroneous and inflationary identifications of divine revelation with scripture of the kind we associate with fundamentalism. However, historical investigation of scripture has cured serious theologians of fundamentalism. Once we get beyond this critical cleansing of the theological stables, this older and altogether more coherent conception of divine revelation is available for reappropriation.

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[46] *Theology*, 81. Earlier we are told that certain claims "are to be taken on faith, and on faith alone." See ibid, 12. The claims specified are, first, that "the human mind is too incapable and too weak to understand the metaphysics of God," and that "God transcends our concepts altogether." Surely these are entirely plausible options for the theist who approaches all theistic doctrines "with the hope that a little philosophical reasoning can enable one to see his way to a consistent construal of them." We need more than a "little philosophical reasoning" here, to be sure; we need careful, patient, systematic philosophical reasoning. Moreover, that reasoning can be readily applied to the doctrines identified here. Surely it is worth pondering why there might be a significant epistemic and cognitive gap between the Creator and the creature. Moreover, there are good reasons why philosophical theologians might say that God transcends our concepts. Aside from the gap between the Creator and the creature, there are considerations related to the nature of language (it is designed primarily to speak of the created universe) and from religious experience (the religious subject is often utterly reduced to silence in the effort to describe what has been "seen".) I find it striking that in the Christian tradition there is an apt circumspection in speaking both about God and about human agents made in the image of God. This symmetry strikes me as exactly right. It is interesting that Colin McGinn has argued for the radical limitations of all speech about human agents in his provocative book, *The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). If McGinn were simply to state his claim at the outset, then it would be little more than a failure of nerve and a counsel of philosophical despair, as some critics have aggressively asserted. However, this is not the case. He works his way to his provocative *conclusion*; we are not dealing here with dogmatic philosophical incompetence of assertion. McGinn makes his case in part out of a commitment to the evolutionary origins of human agents. We can see in this instance how underlying metaphysical commitments about what is ultimately real shape his epistemological deliberations about the limits of the human mind as applied to long-standing and unresolved philosophical problem, most notably (and notoriously) the problem of mind and body. *Mutatis mutandis*, this principle applies to the way in which a vision of the distinction between Creator and creature may shape a philosophical theologian's vision of the limitations of the human mind in understanding God and in claims about God transcending human concepts. Metaphysical and epistemological doctrines exist in a delicate relationship with each other. In evaluating the epistemological moves we have to take into account the metaphysical doctrines, and vice versa. Of course, this makes their evaluation a holistic affair; it would be nice if we could pin down one and then resolve the other side of the correlation. Philosophical is an exasperating discipline; but there is no way to avoid this sort of complexity once we give up on the easy and eventually inadequate solutions offered by Positivists and their successors in the Analytical tradition who thought they could resolve everything by a return to a hard-line edition of empiricism.

It will be natural to argue against this that this kind of retrieval does nothing to show which divine revelation of the many on offer should be embraced. For that we need to appeal to reason if we are to avoid begging crucial questions or to avoid going round and round in circles, so it looks as if we are right back where we started. Reason remains sovereign after all. This is indeed true. However, such a move gives no succor and comfort to those who want to dismiss faith as epistemologically barren. Once we arrive by reason at the identification of divine revelation, then, as Locke perceptively noted, there are truths above and beyond the truth of reason that the theologian can rightly deploy in working out the material content of one's theism.[49] These truths, contrary to Locke, can rightly be defended as knowledge. In fact it is plausible to think that the kind of Christian theology that is a serious competitor to the one offered here draws its content in no small measure from the resources made available in divine revelation.[50]

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[47] I associate this definition with Bertrand Russell, but I have forgotten the reference.

[48] This move goes all the way to the bottom to include how we see our own cognitive capacities, an observation that was not lost even on Descartes who did so much to dislodge the medieval way of thinking and doing philosophy.

It will not do in these circumstances to set up the epistemology of Volume 1 as the relevant adjudicating standard. To do so is simply to beg the crucial epistemological questions that need to be pursued. An epistemology that already cooks the books against divine revelation will, of course, come up with a radically different vision of God and of ethics than that set forth in the canonical heritage of the church. An epistemology that works out of a more complex and sophisticated account of the relation between reason, revelation, and faith will naturally come out with radically different conclusions. It is that cooking of the epistemological books that has to be challenged at the outset if we are to have a real engagement with the debate about pertinent evidence. There is a correlation between the epistemology and the theology on offer. We cannot simply assume or baldly assert the vision of faith and reason developed in *Theology*. In fact, as I have already noted, the vision of faith on offer is both historically and conceptually otiose.

My point is sufficiently important that I now want to approach this topic from a different angle. Earlier I used the language of veto to capture the aptness of the author's work in Volume 1 as a preparation for the metaphysical theology developed in Volume 2. I do not hesitate to call this move a brilliant one. Too much work in philosophy has worked off badly conceived standards of what counts as meaningful and what counts as appropriate evidence. Thus both the Positivist tradition and the Analytical tradition attacked theology from assumptions about meaning and justification that have turned out to be hopelessly flawed. Despite the revisionism of figures like Sellars, Goodman, Quine, and Davidson, many philosophers fail to grasp the crucial significance of this revisionism for theology.[51] In part this stems from a legacy of distaste and polemic that goes back to A. J. Ayer's brilliant attack on theology in chapter 6 of *Language, Truth, and*

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[49] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 687.

[50] For my own vision of the role of divine revelation in the articulation of a robust version of Christian theism see *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). I argue that a proper account of the relation between reason and revelation requires us to think of justification in diachronic and not merely synchronic categories.

[51] Major philosophical heavyweight figures, like John Searle, Richard Rorty, and Daniel Dennett, continue to work off epistemological assumptions in their treatment of religion that have long been abandoned. They show little awareness of the theological significance of the epistemological work done over the last generation.

Logic.[52] When I was a student of philosophy in the late 1960s it was still fashionable for some of my very best teachers to roll out the positivist critique of religious language even though they themselves repudiated its central tenets. Thus it is refreshing to find the author of *Theology* dispatch the standard constraints so splendidly in Volume I.

However, once we crack open the door for the theology on offer in *Theology* then other versions of theism will have to be let in as well. I am not asking at this point that there be any extended discussion of these alternatives as we find them, say, in Process theism, or, say, in the extraordinary recovery of nerve by adherents of more conventional forms of Christian theism. What I would like to have seen is at least some awareness of this development over the last fifty years, and most especially over the last thirty years. This observation holds not least because one vital tradition in the defense of Christian theism is both metaphysically sophisticated and epistemologically penetrating and it shows up in the pages of *Theology*. I have in mind the retrieval of cumulative case arguments that mirror the appeal to eduction deployed so extensively in *Theology*.[53] This tradition is especially manifest in the Anglican tradition, going right back to Richard Hooker, and showing up in a fecund discussion that runs all the way from Bishop Butler, John Wesley, John Henry Newman, F. R. Tennant, Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, up to William P. Alston.[54] In fact Mitchell and Swinburne represent two quite different strands of thought within this tradition, with Mitchell opting for informal judgment and Swinburne preferring the formalizing of judgment in his appeal to Bayes' theorem.[55]

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[52] New York: Dover, 1946.

[53] The other tradition in recent philosophy of religion that deserves mention because of its epistemological and metaphysical sophistication is represented by the work of Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga would be perfectly happy to appeal to eduction in various arguments for the existence of God, but he is justly famous for mounting a powerful critique of evidentialism and classical foundationalism that paves the way for his claim that belief in God should be seen as properly basic and thus does not stand in need of evidence to be justified. He followed up this startling argument with a two volume work in epistemology that filled out the deeper defense that was essential if this proposal were to hold its own in the current debates within epistemology. He has also worked out the full dress account of warranted Christian belief that was central to his early revisionary proposals. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant the Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[54] It also shows up in Charles Hartshorne in the Process tradition. Regrettably we do not have any extended historical account of the place of such arguments in debates about the rationality of theism.

[55] For a splendid review and discussion see Robert Prevost, *Probability and Theistic Explanation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

In the light of these developments *Theology* cannot but appear as it stands both puzzling and radically incomplete. First, *Theology* is puzzling because in setting up the straw man of the theism of the Abrahamic traditions, it makes life much too easy for itself by limiting the alternatives that need to be explored and evaluated. It is as if the theism of *Theology* simply wins by default. Once we get rid of the alternative theism that serves as a contrast (the abstract theism of the Abrahamic traditions), we are free to develop the theism of *Theology*. However, there are other very powerful alternatives currently available. Second, *Theology* is radically incomplete because it would benefit from interaction with the debate about eduction that has surfaced in the defense of competing forms of theism. Put simply, there is abroad in the land an intense debate about how best to construe the nature of explanation and the nature of abductive argument that would enrich the argument for the metaphysical theism of *Theology*.[56]

It might be said at this point that the metaphysical component of both volumes is enough to undercut the relevance of these considerations. After all, it is metaphysics as much as epistemology that is the driving force of the argument. However, the rejoinder to this move is obvious. All metaphysical proposals are radically underdetermined by evidence, so any appeal to metaphysics will be shaky at this point. Furthermore, some of the competing theologies on offer will propose their own alternative vision of what is ultimately real, so that it is question-begging to appeal to the metaphysics developed here as the only option available.[57] More generally, it is clear that some of the competing theologies available will have their own way of absorbing, revising, or rejecting the metaphysics laid out for adoption. After all, the canonical Trinitarian faith of the Church is itself an ontology where personhood and communion are seen as the ultimate horizon of reality. So there are bound to be interesting questions about how to relate this material ontology to any rival or ancillary metaphysical offer from the philosopher. There is plenty of precedent here for such negotiations in that Augustine, for example, clearly borrowed extensively from neo-Platonism without sacrificing essential Christian beliefs as elaborated, say, in the Nicene Creed. In other words, some of the competing theologies are at full intellectual liberty to relate to the metaphysical insights of *Theology* so long as they work critically with the issues at stake.[58] So appeal to metaphysics will not take care of business at this stage of the argument either as the only coherent alternative or as a veto on the considerations I have just advanced. As I have already said, other theological options that can make hay out of the splendid way in which this work creates space for its own version of philosophical theism.

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[56] It is surely much too vague to say, for example, that good judgment has as its form "adequacy" [p. 38]. We need to know how this form (adequacy) is to be identified in ways that are epistemically positive.

[57] I think especially at this point of the metaphysics developed with the Process tradition running from Whitehead through Hartshorne to Griffin, Cobb, and Ogden.

[58] Note that I am not handing out free lunches here. Philosophical commitments must be paid for in philosophical cash.

Given the religious character of the author's metaphysics four further comments are in order by way of conclusion. None of the comments are meant in any way to undercut the intellectual density and sophistication on display in *Theology*. On the contrary they are intended to bring out its subtlety and depth.

First, it would help if we had some sense of the theological and philosophical journey of the author of this work. I am not saying that this should be given here, but if we had access to it, it would enable readers to get a better feel for the human dimensions of what is at issue in adopting this metaphysical vision. Generally speaking, the material comes across as having been entirely invented out of one's head, something that is clearly incredible on the face of it. It would be especially helpful to see what, if any, were the religious and theological antecedents that came before the development of this vision of life and ethics. Critics of metaphysics as far back as Aristotle have often complained that metaphysicians occupied a kind of ethereal la-la land divorced from real life. Knowing the whence of the journey behind *Theology* would do much to undermine suspicion in this case.

Second, just as it is extremely illuminating to relate any particular theology (and indeed philosophy) to the canon of writers who hover over and around it, so here it would be good to get a fix on the canon of philosophers who operate as crucial mentors and sources of inspiration. It is clear that the work of Luther, for example, takes as its canon Paul, Athanasius, and Augustine. It is clear, to take a very different example, that the work of the fine Process theologian, Schubert Ogden, takes its bearings and crucial cues from the work of Luther, Schleiermacher, Whitehead, and Bultmann. Clearly the canon here would include Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Spinoza, and Hegel. However, this is but a guess; it would be good to know what canon in the history of philosophy the author privileges either tacitly or explicitly.

Third, it is obvious that the full embrace of the way of thinking, speaking, and living involves a complex process of initiation. It would require the functional equivalent of the catechesis of the patristic period. Hence it would be good to know how the author would teach the intellectual, ethical, and tonal dimensions of this complex metaphysical vision to a complete neophyte. How should we clear away the misrepresentations of ordinary language or of conventional epistemological constraints? What would need to be learned in what order? What pitfalls of misunderstanding should we anticipate? What stages should we go through in order to fathom all that is at stake? The reason for seeking answers to these questions is simple. One is very unlikely to pick up the metaphysical vision developed here merely by reading books that articulate it. Hence it would be good to know how the beginner might enter into it and make it his or her own.

Finally, the very last section of *Theology* speaks of the demonic, the virtuous, the venerable, and the holy. These concepts naturally belong in a scheme of salvation, that is, in a vision of the healing of human agents to bring them into line with their proper *telos*. Hence it would be good to have a nuanced account of what the equivalents of sin and salvation looks like in this vision of the world. What is the core problem in the human situation that needs to be addressed? Is it ignorance, stupidity, or self-deceit? If it involves none of these how is the human condition to which it speaks a healing word best described? What is the basic prescription on offer? How does it lead to human welfare? What vision of human welfare is privileged in this vision of the universe? I am not asking here that foreign categories be imported; that would distort what is at issue. Allowing for appropriate revisions of the crucial categories deployed, it would be good to see the soteriological dimensions of the total vision laid out in summary fashion.

Review 2: Philip Clayton

General comments

I have read both volumes of *Coming to Understanding* with interest and pleasure. Although the present review is a sustained philosophical and theological discussion with the second volume in particular, it is informed by, and will occasionally allude to, Volume 1.

The philosophical comprehensiveness of these two volumes is actually quite impressive. Not only the core areas of metaphysics are included—ontology, theory of categories, theory of the ultimate, monism versus pluralism, and a rather extensive dialogue with the history of Western philosophy up to the present—but one also finds treatments of the philosophy of mind, theory of consciousness, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of science, and other areas. The author is well informed in the history of metaphysical reflection, and one encounters references and allusions not only to the classical sources but also to twentieth century analytical treatments, both directly in metaphysics (e.g., Nicholas Wolterstorff, David Lewis) and in related fields such as category theory. Volume 2 turns from the core argument to its application to theological topics, offering in effect a metaphysical theology.

The overall argument is intelligent and original. It is developed against the background of the great tradition in metaphysics, but it also seeks to make a contribution not duplicated elsewhere. The two volumes combine a freshness of perspective with a good knowledge and use of the resources that the tradition makes available.

I should add, in the interest of full disclosure, that I hold a position that is in many respects congenial to these conclusions. I am deeply interested in constructive metaphysics; I believe that the most adequate metaphysics includes the notion of God; and, like this author, I also draw deeply on the tradition of Spinoza, while—again like this author—diverging from Spinoza on important points. The similarities add a particular interest for me in the process of preparing this review. Perhaps they will also make the differences, where they arise, more philosophically significant than they might otherwise be.

Specific analytic criticisms are the goal of good philosophy. But to critique a metaphysical system, one must first understand its logic. Criticisms in metaphysics must move from the systemic level *downward* to specific details. Often the only way to establish critical distance from a metaphysical system and to recognize its strengths and weaknesses is to compare and contrast it with alternative systems that are equally as comprehensive. Thus I begin the critique with a few comparisons, holding off critical comments about specific features of the system until later.

Major sources and a first important difference

The metaphysical theology contained in Volume 2 of *Coming to Understanding* moves in a different direction than classical theism on the one hand and the process metaphysics stemming from Alfred North Whitehead's 1927 classic, *Process and Reality*, on the other. (One might actually have expected a fuller reliance on the doctrine of internal relations in Bradley, an author whose work I would recommend in this context.)

The resulting metaphysic shows a significant family resemblance to Spinoza's *Ethics* and, in its use of the form-matter distinction, to the metaphysical traditions stemming from Aristotle and incorporated into Christian theism by Thomas Aquinas. Interestingly, however, the author resists using the notion of substance. As is well known, for Spinoza "God or nature" is the one and only substance; likewise, substance metaphysics is central for Aristotle as well. The parallels with Aristotle and Spinoza are interesting for another reason: like the author of *Coming to Understanding*, both are "pure metaphysicians" who resist compromising metaphysical results for the sake of practical religion; yet both include ethical reflections that they believe to be fully compatible with, and even implications of, their metaphysical reflection—Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, and Spinoza directly in his great metaphysical treatise, the *Ethica More Geometrico*.

Another way in which the present metaphysic is interestingly different from these two great authors is that it seems to resist any language of the activity of God. For Aristotle God is *nous noetikos*, "thought thinking itself." Though *nous noetikos* is not active in the world—indeed, it does not even know that it has given rise to a world—it is continuously, even eternally, actively engaged in thought. Likewise, Spinoza affirms both an active and a passive element in the universe as a whole: *natura naturans* is the universe-as-active, and *natura naturata* is the universe viewed in terms of its qualities and attributes but without the active dimension.

In some respects it would be metaphysically attractive to retain the active dimension in Spinoza's sense, for it would allow one to draw even closer connections between what the modes do—and, in particular, their involvement in the process of coming to understanding—on the one hand, and the nature of God and God's attributes on the other.

Now perhaps the author will respond that as soon as we affirm an active dimension to God, we fall back into the understanding of God as a person or an actor—exactly the mistake that, as he shows, has led to so much inconsistency in Western theistic metaphysics and has fostered negative theology and fideism. Although I see this danger, I do not think that it is a fatal one. Few have argued, for example, that Spinoza's metaphysics reduces to personal theism, and with good reason: Spinoza avoids anthropomorphizing the ultimate as successfully as any metaphysic in the history of Western thought; indeed, worldwide he is rivaled only by Sankara in the *advaita Vedanta* tradition of Hinduism. If Spinoza can successfully conceive God as having both an active and a passive dimension, then it should be possible for the present author to do so as well.

There is another reason why being able to conceptualize the activity of God (without anthropomorphism) is desirable in principle. Every metaphysician who develops a metaphysical theology—everyone who tries to show that metaphysics can fulfill many of the functions that theology has traditionally fulfilled—takes on a difficult task. We know that we cannot assert the truth of the very particular narratives and stories of the religious traditions, and we have a deep commitment to avoiding the sort of projection of human wishes and desires that Ludwig Feuerbach so powerfully castigated in *Essence of Christianity*. Yet we are seeking to convince religious believers that much of what they want from the concept of God can be supplied from a more metaphysically adequate conception. The only way we can do this is to show that the most important or essential functions that their notion of God serves can also be supplied by a metaphysical theology. The God concept we advance cannot be a "big person in the sky." But if the God we postulate manifests no activity, He is unlikely to be seen as fulfilling the minimal conditions for a concept of God, and theologians may challenge our very use of the term. Is it possible, then, that the activity of the modes or particulars, which occur within the Body of God, could be attributed, even in an indirect sense, to God?

The centrality of monism

Another core issue that deserves to be mentioned at the very top of this review is the issue of *monism*, which will also occupy us further below. It is metaphysically attractive that the author avoids the sort of dualism that has continually plagued classical theism. The form-matter distinction (in its Aristotelian, but not its Platonic form) is attractive because it allows one to recognize and specify conceptual distinctions without creating ultimate ontological dualisms. I will evaluate this metaphysic based on the assumption that the author seeks to preserve monism in this sense, that is, conceptual and categorial distinctions within the context of an ultimate ontological unity.

In both volumes the author recognizes the strong metaphysical motivations toward monism and draws the appropriate consequences: “Our monism regarding The One, of course, is absolute” (Volume 1, p. 70). Like Spinoza, he acknowledges and follows the conceptual compulsion toward viewing those things that are ordinarily called individuals as modes: “what appears within the Body of God are ‘modes’” (p. 39).[1] Not only are there powerful metaphysical reasons for this conclusion, which the author summarizes, but there are also strong reasons from within the philosophy of physics which incline one in the same direction. For example, one could explore the ontology of quantum field theory, or general relativity, or the “block universe” model itself (first referred to in Volume 1, p. 67). Although Einstein is never referred to in Volume 1, some reference to his advocacy of the “block universe” model would seem indispensable to the argument there, since it seems to me that the overall argument depends crucially on this notion.

This lacuna raises an important methodological point. I presuppose that a strong metaphysic is aware of and supported by conclusions in the philosophy of science, which are in turn supported by scientific developments. Science is never sufficient for metaphysics, but a metaphysical system that incorporates and helps to explain scientific results is more powerful, more coherent and comprehensive, than a metaphysical system that does not do these things.

I will return to the crucial notion of modes further below, which is perhaps the most visible consequence of the author’s commitment to monism. This awareness of the importance of avoiding an ultimate pluralism without overarching unity, it seems to me, implicitly drives much of the argument in *Coming to Understand* (both volumes). The author recognizes that many standard treatments of categories point ultimately to some sort of unsatisfactory pluralism. I agree with him in particular that all theories of categories which speak of the categories as being instantiated in “matter,” *where matter is conceptually and ontologically independent from form*, fall into this same sort of pluralism.

The problem of parts and the concept of participation—or a substitute

For many authors in the great metaphysical tradition, the concept of participation offers a way of avoiding an ultimate ontological plurality (with the costs to conceptual coherence that plurality brings) and of uniting all things in a single metaphysical reality. In Volume 1, the author resists using the category of participation as a means for attaining this goal. He seems to presuppose that participation, like classical theism, will force one to give up on genuine metaphysical reflection and fall into an appeal to mystery, which amounts to irrationalism. Although, like the author, I seek to formulate a metaphysic that brings more of Aristotle to the reworking of Plato's insights than the tradition generally has done, I am not as skeptical about Plato's doctrine of participation as the author is.

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[1] References not preceded by a volume number should be understood as referring to Volume 2. Where the reference might be ambiguous, I will supply the volume number.

If pluralism must be avoided but the concept of participation is not employed, then one needs a *different* way to understand the relationship between a category and those items that exemplify it. (The author shows in Volume 1 that he is aware of the important work of Nicholas Wolterstorff on this topic.) The only way that the author sees to solve this problem is to affirm "that items participating in a category do so by being parts of that category," although he recognizes that this is not a common solution ("we are under the impression ... that no one before us has held such a view") (Volume 1, p. 28). Although my primary charge is to provide a philosophical and theological review of Volume 2, it is essential to that task to comment on this important move, which deeply influences both volumes of *Coming to Understanding*. What is attractive about this view is that it keeps categories from being abstractions (for in that case one must struggle to specify exactly what they are, what is their metaphysical status, and how they are to be related to the particulars); the author's move also avoids an irreducible pluralism of particulars. In addition, it is also true that the author's move allows him to retain many of the strengths of Spinoza's position. What makes Spinoza's metaphysics of such enduring significance is its ability to recognize the real existence of distinctions, *and to conceive them metaphysically*, yet within the framework of ultimate metaphysical unity. These are goals that we should endorse, since they are basic to metaphysical success.

I do worry, however, that there is a step missing in the argument of *Coming to Understanding* in its present form. Consider two contrasting views. Spinoza offers a view of smaller bodies composing larger bodies, and they in turn larger bodies, up to nature as a whole (see the "digression" following proposition 13 in Book II of the *Ethics*). But Spinoza also affirms, alongside this hierarchy of parts and wholes, an *exactly parallel* hierarchy of ideas forming larger ideas, etc.,—a hierarchy leading up to the "idea of all ideas," which is God conceived according to the attribute of Mind. One learns from Spinoza that the parts-wholes schema by itself is not metaphysically sufficient, but the use of *two exactly parallel hierarchies* come much closer. This is not to say that the resulting view is finally fully adequate; and indeed I fault it on several crucial points. But the resulting conception, with its two conceptually separate but ontologically identical hierarchies, does manage to supply a fairly full conception of *how* parts are related to the whole.

Perhaps the author could achieve something similar if he could map the upper half of Diagram 1 in Volume 1 onto the lower half. Or maybe there are resources in Volume 1 that I have not yet fully comprehended. In any event, whether by that means or another, a somewhat fuller account of the part-whole relationship seems necessary.

Hierarchies and inclusion

It's frequently been said that the problem of The One and the many is the fundamental problem in Western metaphysics; so it is no surprise that the metaphysics of *Coming to Understanding* would struggle with these issues as well. As a second example of how the part-whole relationship might be conceived, consider the very important position of Samuel Alexander in *Space, Time, and Deity* (Gifford Lectures, 1918–1920). Alexander employs the notion of a hierarchy of inclusion relations (I follow the conceptual reconstruction by Dorothy Emmet, with some modifications; the language is mine):

(1) At the base of the ladder lies Space-time. Time is "mind" and space is "body"; hence time is "the mind of space." Space-time is composed of "point-instants." (Already the early commentators on Alexander found this theory hard to stomach. It has not improved with age.)

(2) There must be a principle of development, something that drives the whole process, if there is to be an ongoing process of emergence. Thus Alexander posited that "there is a nisus in Space-time which, as it has borne its creatures forward through matter and life to mind, will bear them forward to some higher level of existence" (ii, 346).[2] This "nisus" or creative metaphysical principle bears important similarities to the principle of Creativity in Whitehead's thought.

(3) Thanks to the nisus, Space-time becomes differentiated by "motions." Certain organized patterns of motions (today we would call them energies) are the bearers of the set of qualities we refer to as matter. So, *contra* Aristotle, matter itself is emergent. (Quantum field theory has since offered some support for this conception. E.g., in *Veiled Reality* Bernard d'Espagnat describes atomic particles as products of the quantum field, hence as derivatives of it.[3])

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[2] All references in these eight points are to Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time, and Deity*

[3] See Bernard d'Espagnat, *Veiled Reality*: *An Analysis of Present-day Quantum Mechanical Concepts* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

(4) Organizations of matter are bearers of macrophysical qualities and chemical properties. This constitutes emergence at the molecular level.

(5) When matter reaches a certain level of complexity, molecules become the bearers of life. (This response is consistent with contemporary work on the origins of life, which postulates a gradual transition from complex molecules to living cells.)

(6) Alexander didn't adequately cover the evolution of sentience but should have. Thus he could have covered the evolution of simple volition (e.g., the choice of where to move), symbiosis (reciprocal systems of organisms), sociality, and primitive brain processing as extensions of the same framework of bodies and their emergent holistic properties, which he called "mind." Certainly Alexander's hierarchy would have to give careful attention to the stages of actual evolutionary development if it is to pass as a conceptual reconstruction of natural history.

(7) Some living structures then come to be the bearers of the quality of mind or consciousness proper, "the highest empirical quality known to us." This is the notion of the emergence of mind that we have already touched on above.

(8) But Alexander did not stop with mind. At a certain level in the development of mind, he held, mind may be productive of a new emergent quality, which he called "Deity." Here he evidenced a perhaps overly cautious agnosticism. We know of Deity only that it is the next emergent property, that it is a holistic property composed of parts or "bodies," and that it results from an increased degree of complexity. To be consistent with the productive principle of the hierarchy, Alexander had to postulate that Deity is to the totality of minds as our mind is to (the parts of) our bodies. It follows that Deity's "body" must consist of the sum total of minds in the universe: "One part of the god's mind will be of such complexity and refinement as mind, as to be fitted to carry the new quality of deity.... As our mind represents and gathers up into itself its whole body, so does the finite god represent or gather up into its divine part its whole body" [viz., minds].... For such a being its specially differentiated

> mind takes the place of the brain or central nervous system with us" (ii, 355).

I do not summarize Alexander's inclusive hierarchy of emergence as a substitute for the metaphysics of *Coming to Understanding*. But it does offer another example of how to conceive the inclusion of parts within a more overarching whole, and does so in a way that could in principle be extended all the way up to The One. It's the use of *some such principle* that I am advocating in future revisions of *Coming to Understanding*.

Parts, categories, and the theological dimension

What happens when we consider this metaphysical need in the context of the project of Volume 2? Although it is not my assignment to offer an in-depth critique of Volume 1, I did express the concern that some sort of complex metaphysical specification of exactly how "items participating in a category do so by being parts of that category" still needs to be supplied. Could the theological context of Volume 2 help at all in developing such an account?

As the author may already know, I have for some years endorsed the metaphysical position that all existing things together form the Body of God, although God is also *more than* this Body—a position I call *panentheism* (following a tradition dating back to the German Idealist philosopher Schelling). One might formulate a fourfold dilemma: either (1) the items that exemplify a category are themselves idea-like, in which case one has idealism; or (2) the categories themselves are particulars, which leads to the author's view; or (3) categories and particulars are different kinds of things, in which case one is faced with an irreducible dualism or pluralism; or (4) some other conceptual framework, such as participation or inclusive hierarchy, bridges what would otherwise be an ontological gap between categories and particulars. In *Coming to Understanding*, the author holds the second view, whereas I advocate the fourth. For good reasons, he insists that categories are not the sorts of particulars that are in space and time (Volume 1, p. 28). In this context he adds that "the same is true of their parts" (ibid.). But doesn't this raise the same problem in a different guise? If categories are just like *any sort* of particulars, then we lose track of what is their specific nature qua categories.

If there are two kinds of particulars—those in space/time and those not in space/time—and if categories are the *only* non-spatiotemporal particular, then one has the same kind of two-track position that Spinoza advocates (see above). It was not my impression that the author wishes to endorse exactly this position; at least the full symmetry of (what I presume would be) the top and bottom of Diagram 1 in Volume 1 was not clearly affirmed (and I think there would be some problems in asserting it of the diagram in its present form). But it may be that this is what he ultimately intends. If he has a different answer, it is not yet fully clear to me.

Here's another possible solution. Perhaps the author could consider a view such that categories become more instantiated, and thus more "matter-like," as one moves down the scale of instantiations. This would be true to the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, though it would create a greater distance from the position of Spinoza, which is otherwise deeply influential in *Coming to Understanding*. If the author endorsed this view, he could say that there is a hierarchy from pure form (or almost pure form) in Aristotle's sense down to "pure matter." At the upper end would be what Aristotle calls "astral intelligences," and at the bottom end would be either pure matter as a limit case or forms so limited that they verge on pure matter.

This sort of hierarchy is equally as clear in Plato. Admittedly, he advocates pure forms in a sense that the author (and I) do not want to endorse. But the model of the divided line in Plato's *Republic* gives a good sense of an ontological hierarchy—a hierarchy of ontological dependence—extending down into the natural world. As Aristotelians, we would not want to say that instantiated forms are less real or "pure" than Platonic forms. Instead, it would be open to us to say that the resulting hylomorphic unities, while still always including an element of form and an element of matter, proceed along a continuum or hierarchy. Perhaps the principle of the hierarchy depends on the number of steps of derivation from the nature of God and the primary attributes of God (cf. the derivation relations in Diagram 2 in Volume 1 of *Coming to Understanding*).

If the author is able to assert some in-principle hierarchy of this sort, I believe that he would have added to the sophistication of his view that categories can be particulars. This richer, more metaphysical understanding of the "Body of God," which includes those particulars that are categories as well as those particulars that are not categories, might also make it less problematic to conceive consciousness, with its inherent drive toward truth, as *part of* the Body of God rather than as transcending it. Finally, note that the change could be made in a way that adds to the theological interest of the resulting position. The language of the "Body of God" occurs already early in Volume 2 (p. 2). It would be attractive to those in the panentheistic traditions in theology to be able to conceive the Body of God as including within God hylomorphic modes that are closer to and others that are further from the core qualities of the divine.

God, causation, and logical entailment

The author strongly resists all anthropomorphic language about God, and as a metaphysician I generally share his concerns. (Some further reflections on the question of personal and impersonal language concerning God will occupy us further below.) Thus whatever causation we associate with God cannot be "agent causation" (in the sense of Richard Taylor or the Boston Personalists). Nonetheless, as a good Aristotelian the author rightly resists any reduction of causation to efficient causation alone. Hence "consciousness is a timeless set of relations" (Volume 2, p. 41); it concerns logical entailments rather than temporal progressions. In making this move, the author also has the strength of Spinoza's *Ethics* behind him, which famously (in Book 1) makes the same move.

Nonetheless, certain tensions do arise in this regard, and tying the various pieces together presents certain dilemmas, at least for this reader. The view expressed in the two volumes would be coherent if the author rejected the reality of time (as Spinoza does) and did not make any assertions that presupposed the existence of temporal process. In fact, certain passages in both volumes do seem to push in this direction, including the author's advocacy of "a four-dimensional Block Universe" (vol. 1, p. 78) on which I commented above. If time is not real or time does not matter, then a consistent translation of mental processes into logical entailments would become possible and souls could be understood as non-temporal.

Yet, among other examples, the author places great stress on the importance of "coming to understanding"—which certainly seems to imply a temporal process, and a very important one at that. Furthermore, denying the reality or the importance of temporal process would mean arguing that our phenomenal awareness is illusory, since we certainly *seem* to be immersed in what philosophers call the "flow of time." Time has metaphysical significance in this system because of the role that contingent choices play: "God is contingent. The unfolding of the lives of selves within the space and time of the Body of God is correspondingly contingent. The choices of souls in part determine the contours of the unfolding in the Body of God" (Volume 2, p. 58).

I also do not believe that the pervasiveness of logical entailment relations is not required by the notion of The One in Volume 1. After all, note that The One does not "metaphysically determine" all particulars, but the particulars "are at least partially random" (Volume 1, p. 96).

Again, here one faces a dilemma (or more exactly, a trilemma). Either (1) physicalism is true, and all that can be said of mind or consciousness is what can be in the end the product of micro-physical laws and causes; or (2) one takes the Spinozistic view that what we call individuals are merely modes of a single, unchanging whole; or (3) one seeks to comprehend the reality of phenomenal awareness in a "third way" that does not reduce either to physicalism or to dualism. I have the impression that the author holds that this "third way" is impossible; and since he emphatically wants to avoid both dualism and physicalism, he draws closer to Spinoza.

(I have defended the third way in *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness*, so obviously I believe that it offers the best current solution to the problem of time and awareness. The fact that I hold this position causes me to come to different conclusions on the topics of awareness and consciousness than Volume 2 comes to. But to criticize the text based on holding a different viewpoint would be external critique, not internal; it would also be redundant to describe a position that is in print elsewhere. Thus it seems best merely to draw attention to this differences and leave it at that.)

If one takes option (2) above, one can still develop an account of the conscious and rational activity of the modes. But the modes exist only as modes of The One or God. Hence, it would seem, one can speak of the modes as rationally active only if the whole ("God or nature") is rationally active. As we saw above, Spinoza uses his doctrine of *natura naturans* as a means of asserting this activity. I would urge the author to consider some way to assert the activity of the whole, since doing so would allow him to speak of the activity of modes in a way that would strengthen the theory of consciousness in Volume 2.

Finally, there are some "costs" to a metaphysic that has to dismiss many parts of human experience as illusory (though sometimes this is a cost that the metaphysician simply has to pay). But there are also some possible inconsistencies raised by an overly atemporal theory of consciousness in the context of this second volume. It is not clear, for example, that desire or awareness can be adequately parsed without temporal referents; and certainly the lived experience of consciousness and of *qualia* is a deeply temporal one. Free will would also seem to be an inherently temporal concept. All of these considerations push this reader, at any rate, to supplement the relations of logical entailment with a more robust theory of mental causation.

Doctrine of the soul and free will

As the author writes, "to understand the primary ways that a soul is, one must first understand that it is aware and that its awareness is shaped by its choices" (p. 46).

The author asserts not only that individual persons have souls, but also (in some cases) groups of persons; and indeed one could say that humanity as a whole is evolving a soul. It is a metaphysically attractive view to allow for souls embedded within souls. The author goes on to suggest that a robot might have a soul. I do not yet see that the author's criteria for having a soul are (or could be) fulfilled by robots; this applies in particular to the criterion of free will. But this is not a major point.

The author offers a clear definition of freedom: “This is because an agent choosing freely in our sense means that his decision has not been determined either by internal compulsions or by external forces.... Our claim is simply that some events, including some decisions made by human beings, are not determined by events (in space and time) external to those individual agents or by internal compulsions experienced by them” (p. 51). Is this a full libertarian definition of free will? It does not include the counterfactual condition—viz. the claim that a free agent, given an identical antecedent causal history, might have acted differently—though it may be that the author means to imply this.

Reflecting on robots and free will, I would actually argue that fulfilling the conditions for free will is rather more difficult than is often assumed. Some compatibilists argue that as long as the string of causal influences is mediated through internal states of the individual, then the individual can count as free. But even some libertarians lower the bar, maintaining that as long as there is a choice in the context of genuine randomness, the resulting action is free. I disagree with both positions, and I suggest that the broader context of *Coming to Understanding* also militates for a more stringent definition of free will, one that includes rational reflection and the ability to respond to the force of the better argument. These are conditions not fulfilled by any robot or computerized program at present, and there are good reasons to wonder whether an algorithmic program could ever fulfill these conditions.

Souls and bodies

In the treatment of the philosophy of mind in Volume 2 of *Coming to Understanding*, I sometimes worry that the argument is falling into a sharper break between the qualities of soul (awareness, intentionality, free will, etc.) on the one hand, and the attributes of bodies in space and time on the other, than one would expect in the context of hylomorphism. I think that such a dichotomy is costly, and the overall metaphysical position would be stronger and more coherent if it could be avoided.

If the theorists of emergence (see, e.g., Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, referenced above) are right, then many of the phenomena that are often treated as dichotomies could in fact be placed along a spectrum, evidencing a gradual transition. Take “aboutness,” for example. The author writes, “The soul’s awareness of that striving relation is what introduces ‘aboutness’ into what would otherwise be a mere physical striving” (p. 68). He then adds, “Physically speaking, a body's lust ‘for’ something is no more a genuine striving *for* that something than the sun's gravity is a striving *for* the earth orbiting it. It is only the aboutness introduced by the soul that marks strivings in animal bodies as lusts *for* objects” (ibid.).

This metaphysics of the natural world takes its lead from physics—and indeed, it seems, from macro-physics—alone. But what if one can establish a non-reductive view of biological phenomena, as I think one can? In this case, we can recognize that every cell—every living thing understood as a unit on which natural selection operates—has an "aboutness." It is "about" its environment insofar as it is, viewed biologically, a guess or hypothesis about how one can "earn a living"[4] in that particular environment. Likewise, if organisms are defined in terms of their environments, then they are in their very nature "about" these environments. A monkey that possesses a "theory of other minds"—internal representations of what it assumes to be the experiences or observations of others—manifests intentionality or aboutness in a more extensive sense than the dog who wags his tail when his owner returns to the house, and both manifest deeper levels of aboutness than the mouse that pushes a button with its paw in order to receive food from a tube. But all of these systems, *qua* natural systems, manifest a type of aboutness that nonliving systems do not manifest. Finally, humans evidence the sort of aboutness or intentionality that the author describes in these pages, a performance unmatched by any other living things we have yet encountered.

I suggest that this sort of gradualist approach achieves the distinctions that the author seeks to preserve, and achieves them (as he also does) without Cartesian dualism—and yet without the sharp contrast between souls and physical reality that seems to arise in these pages. Perhaps most importantly, the emergence-based approach *is a natural successor to the Aristotelian philosophy of form and matter*. It has turned out, I suggest, that the levels of soul identified by Aristotle in *De Anima* are in fact progressively instantiated over the course of evolution. Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas after him, understood soul as the form of the body. Just as different types of objects have different types of forms, so also it is a natural implication of hylomorphism to assert that there are different levels of forms or "souls" at different stages in the organization of nature. Note that this view is not only consistent with the author's overall hylomorphism, but it is an approach that supports the sort of monistic approach that he takes to many of these questions.

Finally, note that the author's focus on "proper function" (p. 77), which I also endorse, would also be strengthened by this sort of layered conception of souls. Indeed, the twofold treatment of the hierarchy of souls that one reads in Volume 2—individual souls giving rise to group souls on the one hand, and the hierarchy among individual souls on the other—would actually be strengthened by extending the hierarchy down into the pre-human levels of the living world, where more rudimentary versions of form or "soul" are manifested.

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[4] See Stuart Kauffman, *Investigations*.

Love, piety, and impiety

Christianity affirms that love is the highest virtue. But even Spinoza—whom no one could accuse of being either a Christian or a theist!—culminates his classic work on ethics with a doctrine of love. Yet whereas the Christian texts call believers to "agape," or unlimited love, and whereas Spinoza's *Ethics* culminates in the "intellectual love of God," the author links "proper love" to "local love," as an implication of God's attribute Awareness "being ontologically dependent on God's attribute Location" (p. 72).

The result is an interesting and possibly unique love-centered ethic. The emphasis on local love (e.g., p. 69) might seem to be a rejection of the more idealistic and demanding love ethics that one finds in the New Testament and in Spinoza. Yet the degree of responsibility that individual souls face in Volume 2 of *Coming to Understanding* is actually quite high. Although the author believes that conventional morality holds in most cases, the core of his ethical position involves the "subsumption of the activity of an individual ... to that of humanity itself" (p. 64)—an extremely high standard, when one thinks about it.

I would actually encourage the author in future drafts to seek to work out not only the conventional aspects but also the radical aspects of this ethic in more detail. After all, these radical aspects involve much more than the question of whether the resulting ethics matches or goes beyond conventional morality. It is, on my reading of the text, equally radical—or radical in a deeper sense—to suggest that the individual soul considered his or her relation to something as big as the Body of God. Indeed, this call, which is a clear implication of the metaphysic as a whole, remains in place even given what we might call the "location principle" that otherwise organizes the author's ethic.

Indeed, I suggest, *any ethic* that introduces the "God's-eye perspective"—and all metaphysical systems, it would seem, must do so—already lifts ethics above the "merely" humanistic or utilitarian level that dominates so much of ethical reflection in contemporary philosophy. As long as the resulting ethic asks individuals to consider their place within reality as such, and thus within the Body of God, it already takes a (for our age) radical point of view. We might call this an ethics of *limited supererogation* (though I admit that this term sounds paradoxical). The moment of supererogation stems from the individual's recognition that her decisions have to be made from the standpoint of an ultimate reality to which she is (internally) related (again, see Bradley). The "limited" side comes from the principle of location, that is, the awareness that the ethical call on her most immediately concerns her relationship with the souls around her and with the broader group souls of which she is a proper part.

Contingency and necessity in theology

One of the distinctive features of this metaphysical theology is the emphasis on contingency. We know from Volume 1 that The One, although it has no (external) efficient cause, is contingent. (Volume 1, p. 63). We also know that the *eide* are contingent (ibid, p. 63).

I am deeply sympathetic to the claim not only that the being of God includes contingency, but that God himself is contingent (Volume 2, p. 58). This position, which receives its strongest twentieth century formulation in the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead, is given powerful metaphysical expression in Volume 1 of *Coming to Understanding* and gives rise (for example) to the powerful metaphysically based ethics in Volume 2.

Following Whitehead, however, I am not convinced that affirming radical contingency in this sense requires us to eschew all language of necessity. One way to express this concern is to ask: contingent relative to what? If one follows Bertrand Russell's critique of the cosmological proof for the existence of God, one could insist that every existing being is contingent because produced by or dependent on other contingent beings. If one further argues that the natural world as such is not itself an object (cf. Russell's set-theoretical paradoxes) and that nothing exists outside of the natural world, then one can reasonably assert that all existing things are contingent.

But the author obviously does not share Russell's anti-metaphysical bias. God exists, and God is not an object within the natural world. Moreover, Volume 1 clearly argues that existence is not limited to the natural world or objects within it. What would it then mean to assert that The One is contingent? The One is not causally dependent on anything outside itself, and I cannot find a way in the text to understand what it would mean to say that it might not have existed.

How should one proceed? I suggest adding the nature-content distinction at this point. The One, being dependent on nothing outside itself, exists necessarily. But the *modes* of The One do in fact fulfill the conditions for contingency, for they might indeed have been otherwise. Thus the particular content that awareness takes, the particular structures that arise in space-time, the particular free decisions reached—all of these are contingent. Because they are modes of The One, this means that the particular *content* that characterizes the Body of God is contingent. And yet the nature of The One or God remains always the same, and hence necessary.

Note that the same issues of causality and logical entailment arise again here which we began to address above. I strongly support the move to "Aristotelian explanation." That is, I share with the author the view that the fourfold causal explanations that one finds in Aristotle go far beyond the limited kind of linguistic and causal explanation so often connoted by the term “cause” in contemporary philosophy. Aristotelian, hylomorphic explanations are ontological explanations—which explains the role of the concept of Ontological Dependence in Volume 1 and the use of the term “God” in Volume 2.

But on this question, as so many others, it would seem that one must either (1) go all the way with Spinoza and interpret *all* explanation (which must of course mean all causal explanation) in terms of logical relations and entailments between parts of God’s Body; or (2) one must formulate a principle whereby some (causal) relationships are contingent and temporal rather than logical. Option (2) involves a hybrid understanding of explanation, which I think is also Aristotle’s view. It’s this latter move that I believe is missing from or underdeveloped in the treatment of soul and free will in Volume 2.

In the (many) cases of contingency, as I noted in the previous paragraphs, the relation of ontological dependence *on* The One or God remains, even though God is not Himself ontologically dependent on anything outside Himself. Thanks to that dependence, real contingency arises between the modes. As a result, *not* all of the interrelationships between modes can be expressed in terms of logical entailments, that is, not all are of the form “*necessarily* if *A* then *B*” (Volume 1, p. 64). It’s important to note that one can deny that “God is contingent” (Volume 2, p. 58), and yet still assert that “the unfolding of the lives of selves within the space and time of the Body of God is ... contingent” (ibid).

God and the category of Ground or grounding

We need to consider one important implication of this discussion of contingency because, though arising out of the treatment in Volume 1, it concerns the theological focus of Volume 2 in an important way. The author is to be supported in his metaphysical affirmation not only of particulars and The One, but also of the *eide*. Thinking these three categories together in a hylomorphic context is not easy; but any approach that offered less would lack the conceptual complexity that is required of a comprehensive metaphysical system. Now I would like to suggest that the foregoing discussion of contingency and necessity has given rise to the need for a fourth basic category: the category of Ground or grounding.

Volume 1 shows that many of the features normally taken to be essential for defining what it is to be a particular are lacking in the case of The One; in particular, of the four Aristotelian causes that lead to the four types of explanation, The One lacks both of the external causes (efficient and final). So I would suggest adding as a further criterion within the definition of a particular: that it is a thing (entity, category, mode, etc.) that is grounded in something else. Note that the grounding relation does not require spatial exteriority; it remains true that all things are in God and constitute the Body of God. But all particulars also exist in a relation of grounding to whatever is the metaphysical ultimate, in this case The One or God. Since it is nonsensical to say that God exists in this same relationship to Himself (viz., that God is self-grounding)—a move that the author rejects when he rejects the medieval and Cartesian notion of *causa sui* or "self-caused"—we must say that God is not grounded in or by anything else. Hence God can serve as the ground for all other things. This move again distinguishes The One from particulars in a way that I believe is consistent with the contours of the metaphysical system expressed in *Coming to Understanding*.

I must add one other dimension of this discussion, though I do so with some hesitation, because it does not involve a direct philosophical strength or weakness of the system. The author is clearly interested, as I am interested, in a metaphysical system that can support many of the functions formerly attributed to religion. If The One serves the function of grounding all finite particulars, then it serves a function that "God" in the Abrahamic faith traditions also served. I believe that something like rational worship and service may be possible only if that which is served is also affirmed to ground all things, and thus ourselves. Otherwise—that is, if in this system God is not to be worshiped as an aware, subject-like, moral exemplar, perfect being, or Ground—it is not clear whether any of the attitudes traditionally attributed to the Creator by created beings can be applied to the ultimate as defined in *Coming to Understanding*. And if none of those attitudes could be applied to this ultimate, then it is not clear that it would be appropriate to call it "God."

What makes God different from The One?

I concur with the author that many of the features traditionally held to be necessary conditions for the use of the term "God" are not in fact necessary conditions. Since we agree both on this fact and on the reasons for this conclusion, I will not waste words to write more on that topic—even though it is a major theme in Volume 2.

But the very success of that portion of the author's overall argument leads to another question. One way to ask this question is to consider the difference between Plato or Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Scholars have frequently wondered whether the ultimate (the Demiurge or the Form of The One for Plato, and the Unmoved Mover for Aristotle) can really serve as God. By contrast, very few have doubted that Thomas Aquinas's ultimate should be called God. What is the difference between these systems?

Thomas Aquinas *combines the hylomorphic structure of Aristotle's metaphysics with the ontological dependence relations of Plato's particular theory of the forms*. This allows God to serve many of the functions vis-à-vis the four causes which God also serves in the work *Coming to Understanding*. But, in addition to these functions, Aquinas's God also is the Ground of all existing things. Aquinas conceives this function in the terms of a "metaphysics of being" of the sort that the author of *Coming to Understanding* does not develop in this work. But, I suggest, the framework of a metaphysics of being, and thus the conceptual bases for it, are present in *Coming to Understanding*. It's just that the details are not yet worked out metaphysically. I base this claim on the very central role that Ontological Dependence plays in this system. Ontological Dependence is next to The One—indeed, it is exactly as close as Coming to Understanding—and stands in the relationship of "*is the form of*" to The One. Yet Ontological Dependence must mean a dependence of being, since "ontology" is derived from *ontos*, Greek for "being." The author gives Ontological Dependence a hylomorphic structure, but this should be seen as an improvement on rather than as a step *outside* the structure of a metaphysics of being. Ultimately, all things depend ontologically on The One. *But this is just the relationship of ontological grounding that I have been describing*.

I would like to suggest that Aquinas's combination of a hylomorphic metaphysics with the relationship of Ontological Dependence, derived from Plato, brought together the major two conceptual building blocks on which his notion of God is constructed. Now Aquinas also added on many theological attributes from the Abrahamic traditions, and those attributes have been rejected in the metaphysical system of *Coming to Understanding*. Nonetheless, the two building blocks that one finds in Aquinas, together with their Platonic and Aristotelian elements, continue to be present in this system. For this reason, *the author is indeed justified in introducing the term "God" in Volume 2*.

But the use of the term "God" will work only if the implicit framework of a metaphysics of being is made explicit, and only if the role of The One as the ground of all else is formulated. Aquinas achieves this goal by understanding God as pure being or being itself—thereby making explicit what is implicit in the ontological priority of the forms for Plato. I am not sure whether the author would want to follow Aquinas on this point or whether he would have reasons for resisting Aquinas's move. But *some such move* does seem essential, for it appears to be necessitated by the overall framework of the metaphysical system.

Perhaps one way to achieve this goal would be to distinguish between two types of consequence—or, better put, to preserve the existing conceptual relations in Volume 1, Diagram 6 (p. 86), but to explicitly acknowledge that "consequence" has two meanings. The relationship "logical consequence" is already sufficiently elucidated in Volume 1. I would thus suggest that the second sense of "consequence" could be fleshed out more fully in Volume 2. The symmetrical relationship would then be clearly acknowledged between the two relations "*is* *ontologically dependent on*" and "*is the ontological Ground or source of*." The Ground-grounded relationship can be immediate (as in the case of Aquinas) or transitive (as in the doctrine of emanation in Plotinus), or perhaps both (in different respects, which the resources of hylomorphism allow one to elucidate). The structure of the argument in Volume 1 suggests that the author would incline toward the second sort of solution (though my own leaning is toward the third). In any case, it could be consistently explained and worked out in Volume 2.

The important thing is not to give the impression that the "consequence" relation concerns *no more than* logical consequence. For in this case the relationship of Ontological Dependence cannot be fully thought. I presuppose here that there must be a symmetry in the diagrams between moving outward and moving inward; and I think that the author's treatment presupposes the necessity of this sort of symmetry as well.

Temporality

As I read *Coming to Understanding*, much of the push toward atemporality comes from the drive to think more deeply about relations that are often thought (in common sense terms) as temporal relations. The result is a push to transform them into relations of logical entailment. Given the push toward atemporality, the author would be right to move in this direction, for relations of logical entailment are indeed timeless. But if the "consequence" relation is *also* one of ontological grounding—as I have urged, based on other themes in Volume 1—then the atemporality condition is not essential. After all, God could also be the ultimate ontological source of contingent and changing particulars. Much of the upper half of Diagram 1 in Volume 1 could be understood in purely atemporal terms; indeed, perhaps the entire upper half could be so understood. But at least some of the terms in the lower half seem essentially temporal. Obviously this would apply to Space-time and Change, and I could argue in some detail that some of the other terms require a temporal dimension as well. But most crucially, the central category of *Coming to Understanding* must have a temporal dimension: at time T1 agent A has some quantity Q of understanding; and at T2 A has an increased amount or level of Q.

One last thought: Volume 1 presupposes a tension between what science may see as "a temporary accident" or "emergent order swimming against the tide of entropy" on the one hand, and "the grasping of the structure and nature of our Ontological Dependence on The One" (p. 114). (The text implies that the phrase "emergent order swimming against the tide of entropy" has occurred earlier in the document, but this is actually the first mention of entropy in all of Volume 1.) But Whitehead has shown that one can metaphysically support the idea of a *directed* *temporal process*, that is, a temporally unfolding process that includes contingent features and nonetheless evidences a specifiable metaphysical structure. He calls this directed temporal process “concrescence” in *Process and Reality*. I have argued in this section that *Coming to Understanding* presupposes and requires a temporal process of some sort. If the author were to appropriate certain features of Whitehead’s view, he would be able to preserve his language of “the nature of the directed process in the world of unfolding understanding” in a way that is, I think, consistent with the two volumes as a whole.

Final theological comments

The author offers a rational theology in Volume 2 that is also reminiscent of Aristotle’s metaphysical theology in the *Metaphysics*. Without a doubt, many of the themes that the author handles in the second volume are themes classically associated with theological reflection. The goal is to show that those classically theological themes can be given a more rational and metaphysical treatment rather than being based on faith commitments, vagueness, and logical tensions that are painted over with the euphemism of “paradox.” In many ways, the author’s attempt in this second volume is successful.

I have also raised some questions about the necessary conditions for utilizing the term “God,” which do not need to be repeated here. Given that other readers are likely to raise similar concerns, it would be highly advisable to begin Volume 2 with some pages explaining the transition from Volume 1 to Volume 2. Why is it that one would wish to move beyond the language of “The One” and begin to use the language of “God”? What is implied conceptually by making this shift? Is any new content introduced in the process of switching from “The One” to “God”? If so, how does one justify this new content—for of course, merely adding a new term cannot be said to do argumentative work. If no new content is added, then why the switch of terminology between Volume 1 and Volume 2? What motivates it, and what work is the new term supposed to do that the previous term could not do?

Here is what I assume will be the author’s answer: the author recognizes that the metaphysical system developed in Volume 1 has the potential to address classic theologic issues. By working on the basis of the metaphysics and the other distinctions spelled out in Volume 1, the author is able to reveal certain difficulties with the classic Western theological traditions. Since Volume 1 is able to give rationally more satisfying answers to these classic questions than the opposing views, it is valuable to retell the story of Volume 1, as it were, using as much of the language of traditional theology as is consistent with the position spelled out there. In the process, one sees that conceptual confusions in theology are cleared up, difficulties and inconsistencies are avoided, and yet many of the same "payoffs" that theology tried to produce can still be achieved. In particular, the language of piety, teleology, service to God, ethics, the interrelatedness of humanity and its dependence on God, and a notion of ultimate responsibility can all be preserved.

I may have correctly understood the author's intentions, or I may have made some false attributions of intent here. But *some* account, whether this one or another one, would be extremely valuable at some point in Volume 2, presumably at the opening.

One final point: there is a strong amount of evidence that the notion of an infinite personal being is inconsistent. The classic argument was formulated by Fichte in 1799 in the so-called Atheism Dispute. Fichte showed successfully that a being could only be understood as personal if he or she stands in relation to others. But an infinite being either excludes all others from existing or contains them within itself. Hence an infinite being cannot be a personal being. I believe that it is more appropriate for a metaphysical work such as *Coming to Understanding* to concentrate on metaphysical objections of this sort rather than on the contingent features of (in this case) the Abrahamic religious traditions.

Concluding reflections

In this review I have sought to weave together insights drawn from both volumes of *Coming to Understanding* with the goal of strengthening the overall project. A "review" in metaphysics cannot be an external project; one cannot criticize a metaphysical position merely by speaking out of the context of a separate position. Instead, one must comprehend and internalize the goals of a particular metaphysical system—thinking the author's thoughts after him—and then ask, "How could this particular system be made more internally coherent and thus more rationally attractive as a whole?" Every comparison and every thinker I have cited in these pages has had the goal of bringing new resources for the author to advance further in his own thinking and to strengthen his overall position as a result.

I deeply believe that the monism (or, if you will, monistic elements) in this metaphysical system are true to the fundamental metaphysical insights of the Western (and for that matter, Eastern) metaphysical tradition. A metaphysical system is always built around something that it takes to be ultimate, and there are overwhelming reasons to assert a unitary rather than a pluralistic ultimate. In the eighteenth century Lessing is reported by Jacobi to have said in one of his final conversations, "The *hen kai pan*—I know no other!" Lessing's reference was to Spinoza, but the author is right to see this great monistic tradition stretching back through Western history of metaphysics to Plotinus and, before him, Plato. He is also right to construe the parts of The Block Universe as modes rather than as separate substances or ontologically independent existents.

The derivation of all particulars from The One, as expressed especially in Diagrams 1, 2, and 6 in Volume 1, parallels the doctrine of emanation in Plotinus's thought. But the author counteracts the mysticism and apophaticism of Plotinus's thought by extending Aristotelian hylomorphism all the way to the nature of The One or God. This allows for a much more extensive connection to be drawn between all finite particulars and The One; indeed, the author understands The One as itself a particular (a view that I was forced to challenge above). This moves his metaphysics from the more mystical approach of Plotinus (and much of the medieval tradition) to what is one of its closest philosophical kin: the metaphysics of Whitehead. Even Spinoza understood "God or nature" as ontologically unique, for it alone could be called a substance and nothing existing in the world qualifies as a substance. By contrast, Whitehead insisted that his highest principle, which he also called God, be understood not as an exception to his basic metaphysical principles but as its "Chief Exemplification." Such a move, it goes without saying, is deeply metaphysically satisfying.

I hope that this exercise has been a philosophically productive one. The criticisms offered here are certainly meant in that spirit. Where they uncover genuine inconsistencies, they become motivators to further improvements and a further tightening of the system. Where the criticisms are misguided and resources already exist within the system to answer them, they call merely for textual changes that will help future readers to avoid the same misunderstandings that I have fallen into. In either case, the ongoing work on the system becomes yet a further step in that overall "coming to understanding" which is its telos.

Review 3: Jan A. Cover

A. Quick Blurb

Coming to Understanding, Volume 2: *Theology* offers a novel view of reality and our place in it. Novelty on its own is not a high intellectual virtue. One may secure it on the cheap by borrowing widely and indiscriminately, crazy-quilt style: the resulting contrasts and irregularity, if by some reckoning aesthetically valuable, offer no likely improvement to our understanding of the world. When earned but not stolen, novelty is accompanied by the virtue of helping us to see *better*, not just differently. What is earned by Volume 2, *Theology*, is the promise of seeing better. It accomplishes this by urging, and sometimes arguing for, a distinctive picture of reality. In doing so, *Theology* can scarcely hope—any more than any other large systematic philosophy, as this can be fairly called—to have landed on the whole truth. But it can hope to offer, and by all serious measures does offer, a unique and powerful account of how to think about what there is and the sources of value in what there is.

Like any intellectual project, *Theology* inevitably borrows, or at any rate inherits. If all of philosophy is but a footnote to Plato, *Theology* is—as a sequel to its companion *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 1: *Philosophy*—an astounding synthetic footnote to Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza. From Plato and Volume 1, it inherits a hierarchical account of forms and particulars; from Aristotle and Volume 1, it borrows a hylomorphic structuring of non-universal forms and matter and an account of four kinds of explanation; from Spinoza and Volume 1, it accepts serious monism. (Readers of *Theology* will be unable properly to appreciate its contents without having first read Volume 1, *Philosophy*.)

It is no easy task wedding these elements of Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza. In setting out to wed them (and more, it must be said, particularly in respect of methodology), the author may be fairly viewed as offering a defense of the claim that the hopes for theology must rest with the successes of philosophy. At any rate, the hopes for Volume 2, *Theology*, will rest on the successes of Volume 1, *Philosophy*—a difficult, wide-ranging, and enormously courageous project in the tradition of old-style systematic philosophy. In taking up where the system of *Philosophy* leaves off, *Theology* for its part seeks first to clarify and expand upon that system's metaphysics of God (construed in monistic terms) and then to spell out the broadly value-theoretic consequences of this account for human and institutional action. The result is a second wide-ranging, important, and enormously courageous volume about our place in the world and our relation to God.

Theology can be, and is, inviting to some and off-putting to others. Those for whom theology is most likely to be off-putting, who are likely to be unsympathetic with traditional Western theism, may be attracted by parts of this book; those for whom theology is most likely to be inviting, who are likely to be sympathetic with traditional Western theism, may be put off by parts of it. What may be the case needn't be, and in this case oughtn't be—in the sense of "oughtn't" familiar from claims to the effect that we oughtn't avoid what will benefit and improve us (vegetables, exercise). But leaving the ills of bias—and justified confidence too—well aside, it can safely be said that all readers of a philosophical turn of mind will find much in *Theology* from which to learn by engagement, complete with smiles and frowns but above all with cause to rethink for themselves some of the deepest and most important issues confronting the intellectually responsible mind.

B. Specific Comments

[Persisting in the belief that it's useful to learn of reactions from readers gotten while reading, I shall comment as I read, as is my way. If you catch yourself thinking, "I cover that in the sequel, so just be patient," right about there is the time to ask if it might be useful to anticipate, explicitly and in a very short and forward-looking way, what you promise is yet to come. And, as always, the comments will doubtless range from small and picky-seeming (I mean none of them to be such, but a few will inevitably turn out to be such) to the fat and broad and big-picture. And finally, as always, I write from the conviction that criticism is high praise.]

Chapter 19

1. p. 2 First paragraph, "…who and what we are and what we must do in life, we must know about God": There are two senses of "must" at work here, it seems to me, the second modally stronger than the first. So I'd write, instead, "…what we *should* do in life," given that what you mean by this first appearance of "must" has a normative sense that's notably weaker than the strong necessary-condition sense operative in the second appearance of "must." (We often, likewise, distinguish two senses of "required" in English. There's no reason to risk misleading the reader if there's a good word available letting you avoid it.)

2. p. 2 Second paragraph, "Before anything else…": I take it that the sense of "before" is left purposely wide open—"before," that is, "in every way"—because it applies to God in any sense you wish, under any sober linguistic disambiguation of that familiar term. But perhaps not, if a standard and thus sober meaning of "before" in English is "temporally earlier than": if God isn't temporal, then God can't stand in *that* relation to anything. And God isn't temporal, since God is The One and The One isn't temporal; therefore, God is not before everything else in every way, as claimed—but rather, only in some or many, albeit more important, ways.

Meanwhile, I like the tenor of the point being made: so to say, *God is first in the order of being and in the order of ~~knowing~~ understanding* [i.e. of "knowing" in your preferred sense], these orders of priority being broadly orders of dependence. It's a good way to start any theology and so a good way to introduce yours. One might hope that readers could approach these opening themes of Volume 2, innocently and without the requirement of having Volume 1 recently and firmly under their belt. Yet this may be too much to expect; and it may not be what you expect or hope. I don't know. I just pose it here, at the very beginning, as a question about presentation: my feeling is that much of what the uninitiated reader encounters here in the early going can only feel obscure and often unmotivated. You may realize this, or you may be so close to the project as to not realize it. So, my apologies for not knowing what your intentions for Volume 2 are—for not knowing what expectations you have in place for its target readership.

The importance and centrality of the form-and-matter idiom, for example, broached on the very first page (second paragraph) of Volume 2, will strike Volume-1-ignorant readers—even such readers as are interested in and fairly well versed in traditional Western theology—as unmotivated and obscure. (I'll pretty quickly come to refrain from pointing this sort of thing out, since I imagine that you mean for Volume 2 to be read by, and to be of benefit almost exclusively to, readers of Volume 1. I'll pretty quickly *come to* so refrain, just in case what I imagine here happens to be false.)

"Godhead," then—it's a piece of nomenclature familiar to the tradition: you could, if what I imagine (just above) is false, pose the term explicitly as referring—standardly and comfortably—to *the essential nature of God*, in just so many explicit words, and then move immediately to announce your account of that as God's form—noting, for the uninitiated Volume-1-ignorant reader of theology, that the form of a thing has long been reckoned the nature or essence of a thing. And right there you've got a very early context for introducing form-and-matter as a crucial motif of your theology. [That motif is worth briefly reviewing anyway, for any readership.]

Third example, with form and matter, which "we call the attributes of God": The divine attributes are a familiar topic of traditional theology (you know the list). If the *form* of some entity *x* can without any dissonance in the average ear be judged an attribute (principle property, aspect, way-it-is) of *x*, it is only by running roughshod over received usage to call the *matter* of a thing an attribute, property, or aspect of the thing. [The issue here is actually deep, as you know: in the contemporary way of speaking, the hard-nosed monist invites us to quantify just over the one single independent thing, and to reckon all else not additional things at all—scraping the grammatically substantival idioms of common speak with their adjectival or adverbial replacements. There is the carpet and its wrinkle—or rather, there is just the carpet, and it is wrinkled (or wrinkled F-ly); in your case, there is just x = The One, and it is formally F and materially G, no form of x or matter of x needed. One can of course be a monist without embracing Hard-nosed Monism: you and Shaffer prefer a more Forgiving Monism, with a pluralist ontology of abundant particulars. But Shaffer's Forgiving Monism isn't wed with hylomorphism or with theism. The forgiving monist who insists upon a theistic hylomorphism, who also goes on to speak of matter in the rubric of a divine attribute, *owes us at least some story about how to parse the attributive idiom in this case of* matter (form, as I say, being no great stretch). This needn't—indeed, can't—be done right here, presumably, on the second page, though perhaps a gesture to your nominalism would do the trick. But since most readers will confront your text possessed with a sense of "divine attributes" that is not respected by your particularist usage here, most readers will wonder, fairly in my view, if they've understood you. One can call the tail of a horse a leg, but this doesn't make horses five-legged; and the audience who hears me speak of the tail in pedestrian terms can't be expected to understand me. (Added later: I had a similar feeling at the bottom of page 3: insofar as there's a received usage attending the word "will," why call objective teleology God's will? The semantic distance seems considerable—wide, even. You can of course call things whatever you please; but you cannot in general do so *by borrowing* and expect readers to understand what, if anything, you take yourself to be accomplishing with the calling, the naming. You'll lose them, or just as bad, make them suspicious, skeptical.)]

Fourth example, with "parts" lower down the page: divine simplicity is a commonplace of traditional Western theism, and you could introduce this part of your new monistic theology under that rubric, for familiarity's sake, and then move to your own distinctive sense of it.

So one could get the ball rolling, in Volume 2, more innocently and invitingly and comfortingly (to initiates), with the credos introduced thus: We believe in the Priority of God…. We believe in the Simplicity of God…. We believe in the Intelligibility of God (PSR)…. And so on.

But all right, then: minimal refraining will now quickly come to its limiting case of stopping. No more of this. I shall in what follows endeavor to keep my comments to follow from being *too* much like reactions to Part 3 of Volume 1—that material being taken pretty much for granted.

3. p. 2 Last full paragraph, "…in two ways that are in reality the same way…" and "they [plural] are actually the same [singular] way": Two things are never, ever, the same thing, and cannot be. What's literally false serves no good purpose unless it's usefully clever: this isn't clever enough to avoid being worse than awkward, and there must be a way of avoiding this double-talk, because there must be some way of speaking the truth.

4. p. 2 Bottom/incomplete paragraph: Well, there is either an explanation [of some kind] for the existence of God Himself, or there is not. If there *is*, then you need to drop the exception clause "…other than God Himself." If there *isn't*, then His existence is a brute (i.e., wholly unexplained) fact, and you need to drop the bit about "[w]e reject brute facts or brutely existing objects." No literary license here either, for the double-talk.

(Divine aseity of the strongest sort is part of traditional theology: one can hereabouts see that there is a good reason for this [and why it has seemed so natural to say that God is a necessary being: whatever else I've done, I've given an explanation for the existence of a thing if I say that it's impossible for there *not* to be that thing (here I agree with Peter van Inwagen [PvI])]. One can deny this, of course, but there's no virtue in denial just for denial's sake. You have your reasons: there are—let me put it this way—*no arrows of any sort* running into the middle circle. So you are required to admit bruteness, *if explanation is exhausted by the relations you've posited*. To explain *x in terms of* some other thing *y* [or other things *y*, *z*, …] is to say that *y* [*z*, etc.] is explanatorily prior to *x*. But nothing is prior in any way to The One, to God. Just say so, then: your principle of sufficient reason (PSR) is not the full-bore version with universal scope. You hint at this, with the measured words "We believe in a version of the principle of sufficient reason." Good: drop the other wording that comes off as a full-bore rejection of all brute facts, because you've got at least one. [But I have this suspicion that you think there is a sort of, I dunno, transcendental (!) explanation for the existence of the one—i.e., a fifth sort of explanation that perhaps Kant had in mind when he said that we've earned, sorta-explained, a thing *x* when we see that *x* is a condition for the very possibility of stuff we know to be actual. You earn, sorta-explain, the existence of God, because *without the center circle you've got nothing*. What explains the existence of a circle is the actuality of everything else. Something like that. (It's no good, of course: it justifies belief in God, but it does not explain the existence of God. So say I.) But the worry here is that whatever is a necessary condition for the possibility of what's known to be actual must be necessary, and you don't want that. I still am not sure why, exactly, you don't want that, but that's an issue for the previous volume, not this one.] End aside.)

[Added later: you might handle all of this, not by restricting the scope of PSR, but by restricting how many facts you recognize—saying, in essence, that there is no fact corresponding to "The One exists." One encounters things sounding a bit like this—not quite, but a bit—later on. It wouldn't be my way of handling all this, but that I suppose goes without saying.]

5. p. 3 First full paragraph, "…This means that any explanation for any objects or facts that there are is ultimately to be found in God": Relating to the point(s) above, I think this cannot be correct, on your story, as written. It would evidently be correct if it read as follows: "…any explanation for any objects or facts that there are, *other than God Himself,* is ultimately to be found in God."

Ditto down below, next paragraph save one: by "[e]verything imitates God" you mean, really, "everything *that isn't God* imitates God."

6. p. 3 Final/bottom full paragraph: I said I'd refrain to the point of stopping and quit worrying about readers, ignorant of Volume 1, feeling puzzled and unclear about what's behind your saying what you're saying. I've done that: I'm not ignorant of Volume 1, so I can say that I'm puzzled and unclear about what's behind the middle sentences here: you believe them, which is just fine, but they seem in this context, right here, so unmotivated and out of the blue to puzzle me—these bits about prayer. I don't see that they've earned placement just exactly here and would bet a pretty sum not only that there's a better context for them elsewhere but that there's no material loss to your approach right here on these pages if you were to drop them.

(Meanwhile, since they're written here on the page: (i) Outsiders often do think that prayer just is petitionary prayer, but they're wrong. Prayer includes expression of awe or honor or glory praise or thanks—some or all, say I—just for starters. Why should The One disappear from my view if I expressed awe? (ii) Outsiders often think that prayer is directed to God, and they're right if they're asking me [Catholics will say otherwise: they'll say that *some* prayers are directed to God, but others are directed to Mary, to various saints, and so on]. Is it analytically impossible, by the very semantics of the case, to direct expressions of awe, honor, glory, praise, thanks [whatever] to a non-person? Perhaps: genuine requests, at any rate, must surely be *to* a thing, and moreover only to a thing with sufficient cognitive and volitional powers as to understand the request and deliberate in respect of acting on it. But one can do something second best, absent any person: just *declare one's awe of*, and thankfulness for, the existence of some special kind of thing. I personally do this with trees and don't see why I shouldn't. (iii) I can come to the aid of *x* iff *x* can be improved, and *x* can be improved only if *x* can be changed, and *x* can be changed only if *x* is temporal. The One isn't temporal, so The One cannot be changed, so The One cannot be improved, so we cannot come to the aid of God. Not literally. [Perhaps the point will be one of speaking non-literally, in the sense of aiding *x by* aiding *y*—where *y* stands in some important relation R to *x* (say, in the *is the body of* relation to *x*). Is that going to be the point? Sorry: I'm trying to get into the groove of your level of presentation, here. Bear with me.])

7. p. 3 Item 1.(ii), "God has two further particulars": If God doesn't in any sense *have* himself, then "further" is out of place—His form and matter being the first two mentioned that He has. But (thinking just of presentation here), what do you intend or hope to communicate to your reader by saying that "God has particulars"? (I appreciate that your nominalism permits His attributes to *be* particulars, but the having relation isn't like having a car, exactly; so for the sake of communicating to the reader, if you can't just say [instead] "God has two principle immediate attributes," which parses out pretty naturally, can you offer some natural and neutral expression for the genus of this relation, which *is the form of* and *is the matter of* are special and theoretically precise species? Again, bear with me: I'll be able to quit this soon enough, I think. It's just hard not to say something about what seems to me less transparent/helpful than it might be. I'm trying to help.)

In respect of the subsequent pages of Chapter 19, basically pp. 3–6: this I take it is a kind of summary recapitulation of the core upshots of the metaphysics in (13)–(17) of Volume 1. It's no surprise that I can't (after paging back and forth between the volumes) see anything on these summary pages that does not accord with that earlier and more detailed development of the metaphysics. So the idea, early here in the first chapter of Volume 2, is evidently to begin posing the core elements of the metaphysics into a preferred theological language. Now insofar as the recognizably theological bits of language employed here depart from their common and established meanings in traditional theological usage, the intended gloss of the recapitulated metaphysical claims cannot be transparent to anyone unfamiliar with the metaphysics of (13)–(17). All right: but the departure from established usage is not small but rather is considerable, and even supposing familiarity with the earlier metaphysics, how transparent is the point and force of the summary exercise of these pages, really? My own feeling is that it is not especially transparent, and that without more signposts, more help, more forthcoming *guidance* [yes, even here: signs needn't be huge and long] about the purpose of so posing these core elements of the metaphysics, the reader can feel as if she's been dropped into a dry and uninspiring desert of vaguely familiar bones and rocks and asked, please, to begin *appreciating* a traverse through these environs. Why should she, and how is she to do so? I appreciate the literary attraction to bare bones and to bare announcement: doubtless you've earned it, as a sort of flourish, if you want it. I expect that you intend to present the rocks and bones first, and then in the sequel put flesh on the bones and construct with the rocks, in the remaining chapters. Might you, here, at the very least say *that*—something reassuringly forward-looking and promissory, if nothing else large enough to count as a signpost?

Chapter 20

8. p. 7 God is not a person. All right: that's your business, since it's your business to develop the metaphysics of Volume 1 into a theology of Volume 2. To so develop it will be, in part, to avoid Humpty Dumpty's impertinence in announcing—as Lewis Carroll had him wrongly declare, for Alice's good education—that one can call a thing anything we please: language doesn't, and can't, work that way. [Here I echo some sentiments in **2** above, about appropriating bits of language already possessed of a minimal received semantic content.] Here, as elsewhere, it would be very helpful, and I should think not especially difficult, to blend with your pronouncements the briefest explanations of *why* you so pronounce. Never minding for the moment, then—we must, surely, get something about this later on—why The One deserves the name "God." Here, God is not a person, because _______ (fill in the blank quickly, is my hopeful point: the reader may know, but the reader may not, too—and even if the reader suspects she knows, it's reassuring to hear from you what they suspect is the case).

One may be forgiven for asking, as now I do: Why can't The One be a person? Persons are particulars, so all's well there. It is no part of the semantics of "person" that persons are *human* persons, or even material objects (witness angels, spooks, the traditional Judeo-Christian God, Cartesian egos, Leibnizian spiritual monads, etc.), so all's well there. Famously, the doctrine of divine simplicity that's of a piece with medieval orthodoxy, and the simplicity of all minds according to Descartes, Leibniz, and Cover, entail that the divine person is partless, so all's well there. It's a majority position in traditional theism that the divine person is timeless, so all's well there.

All may be tolerably well in a *lot* of places, albeit through less univocal or literal avenues. So, for example, you've allowed, in Volume 1, a large measure of *analogical talk*. Way back on page 66 of Volume 1, say, you stake your claim not for Aristotle's four causes but rather for analogs of the four causes. The analogy is suitably close and departs minimally enough from a received semantic content of the terms "cause," "explanation," etc., that you earn license to use that language. Fair game. Or, as a different example (of less univocal, less literal), there is the admonition that we adjust our intuitions about the use of "form" and "matter" inherited from their received application to folk (i.e. the third- and fourth-order) particulars—that we use these terms all right, no apologies, but with a nuanced meaning beholden to the more basic notions of "whole" and of "essence or nature": the *eide* are in some permissible relative sense material, or formal. The idiom of "process" is permissible for the not-spatiotemporal *eide*; the passivity of matter and the activity of form is a "relative" (Volume 1, p. 74) predication—rather like Descartes can say that he weighs 147 pounds relatively speaking, modulo his relation to a body that is non-relatively of that weight. So there is permissible slack, even by your lights.

In urging some helpful filling-in of the blank "God is not a person, because ______," I am urging upon you the value of some gesture in the direction of explaining why talk of God as a person is a case of talk with too much slack. So to say, we'd like to hear what principles govern your line-drawing in the way you do, hereabouts. So the taxonomy of personhood is too much. But why? The One contains, in some permissible sense of "contain," matter and form, *allowing* a permitted sense in which God is material and formal; The One contains, in some permissible sense of "contain," consciousness—but evidently *not allowing* a permitted sense in which God is conscious. Why not?

9. p. 7 God is timeless and incorporeal (spaceless, so to say). Folks have rightly said that we can't think of time itself as temporal or space itself as spatial; and red itself isn't colored. So to say, those aspects or attributes of the world aren't aspects or attributes of those aspects or attributes *themselves*. But this is not how you fill in the blank of "because ______" in the present case of an atemporal and incorporeal God. How you *do* fill in the blank could stand to be made much clearer. Attributes of *x*, aspects of *x*, aren't truly predicated of *x*, according to you, at least when *x* is The One God. Readers could, say I, greatly use a reminder here of why that should be so: the reminder would, by a stroke of good luck, serve as a great filling-in of the blank.

10. p. 7 Last full paragraph, on the immanent-transcendent issue: You say that "[t]raditional religious thinkers never solved this problem." It's doubtless a tension, a challenge. All theories, all grand/global stories of the world, have one or two bubbles under the flypaper somewhere, and the perennial ones work like this: when one succeeds in flattening them suitably, one inevitably presses up a bubble somewhere else on the table.[1] The logic of this case, like the logic of most perennial ones, admits of only two sorts of solutions: grasp one in the seemingly incompatible pair and learn to live without the other or else learn to live with a gloss on one or the other or both according to which the seeming incompatibility isn't a genuine incompatibility. In respect of the transcendent-immanent issue, you'll find accounts of both kinds in traditional theology, though mostly the latter. Your declaration that all such accounts "never solved" the problem isn't something you defend, and doubtless it'd be a distraction to try to defend it: but it's evidently made against the background of some criterion of success that, though not shared with the reader, is a criterion your solution passes. Your solution is of the second/latter sort, and exactly like all traditional theological solutions, undertakes to gloss "beyond the world" and "in the world" in such a way as to render the incompatibility flattened and gone. The bubble inevitably appears: by "God is in the spatio-temporal world" we must mean something nearly the opposite, i.e., "the spatio-temporal world is in God." Fine: you're willing to live with that bubble, and traditional theologians can live with a different one—say, "An atemporal creating God is provident via divine concurrence and literally via the incarnation and the holy spirit." You both have a theory, but I don't see any principled criterion, forced upon all or most rational minds of good will, that yields the verdict "solved!" for your theory but "unsolved" for the traditional ones.

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[1] In the sciences we just accept them as declarations that the world is weird and curious and over time learn to live with it. We learn to live with the fact that there is no global "now" or frame-independent simultaneity slice of all events simultaneous with a given event—some being

So I like the paragraph, upper p. 8, but it would be far fairer and closer to the truth—virtues, these!—if it dropped the contrast imposed by your "never solved" declaration. The contrast should be left at where the real contrast is, namely, in *how* they solve it. Full stop, pretty much.

11. p. 8 First full paragraph, about those divine attributes on the traditional-theology list that aren't on yours: After contrasting the centrality of items on the list with their controversial nature, you seem to illustrate the latter with accounts recommending analogical predication. (i) If they're controversial, they're not particularly controversial from within the theological tradition, and if you have in mind their being controverted from without, then of course it's a

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simultaneous relative to *x*, but later relative to *y*. If we make a quantum measurement and collapse the wave function to get the eignenstate for momentum, we must say [on the going Copenhagen interpretation] that there's no fact of the matter about position, or if we pin down position there's no fact of the matter about momentum. Etc. etc. It's not easy to pretend that we really understand how these things can be, but we get over it and embrace the strangeness of the world. It's curious that in philosophy and theology, it counts against a theory if it hands us a verdict that we can't really pretend to understand, and we hear that there could be no such strangeness in the world as that. We're asked to gleam and genuflect in one case but wag our heads about a congenital defect in the other.

humdrum matter of no surprise (that complaints about divine attributes should come from complainers about God). (ii) But in respect of suspicion from within: the analogical route can scarcely represent a position that is at odds with the *centrality* of the list—since far and away the most famous, developed, and influential route of that sort was Aquinas, and he wrote whole treatises devoted to almost all of these items on the traditional list (devoting entire parts and hundreds of pages in one or another or both *Summa*s). So reminding readers that some have doubted if the attributes can be literally predicated of God doesn't seem to me to do the contrastive work that your "Despite the centrality of this list…" paragraph sets out to do.

Beginning hereabouts, on p. 8 or so and drifting forward: I had gotten the impression, early on, that you wished to present the theological story emerging from deep in your larger metaphysics. I am not starting to get the impression that you wish to do more than present your own view, but wish also to offer criticisms of the older traditional view you reject. Strategically, I think there is a serious danger in doing so. (I had written "…danger in doing too much of this," but erased that because of the point I'm about to make.) You cannot hope to do both, but in particular you cannot hope to do a thorough and creditable job of the second: J. L. Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford, 1982), for example, or Jordon Sobel's more recent *Logic and Theism* (Cambridge, 2004) do begin a creditable job of offering a skeptical appraisal of traditional theism, but those are philosophers working long on the task and writing very lengthy books. Isn't there some risk, not merely of distracting yourself and your reader from the main task of presenting and getting clear on your own theological picture, but also the risk of doing an inevitably piecemeal job of posing skeptical challenges only to meet with the criticism of shallowness? (So, over on the next page: the old stone-too-heavy-to-lift chestnut is in the category of what Mark Johnston aptly called "junior high" efforts: I think it won't be helpful to go down this sort of path—and I worry that going down it being more than just unhelpful.) Sorry: just calling it as it strikes me. I may have gotten the wrong impression—but if so, this is because nothing in the text, prior to heading into these critical digressions, has posed any alternative.

12. p. 9 Last full paragraph, on the problem of evil: this, like the omnipotence case before it and the omniscience case to follow, is too quick and easy to really establish anything. It fails to distinguish giving a defense from giving a theodicy, it badly shortchanges the options for replies to the so-called evidential problem, it seems to pretend that on the magnitude/scope species of the evidential problem one is forced to an epistemic solution, etc., etc. But nothing—believe me—is "obvious" (p. 9) hereabouts: the two sides would not be fine-tuning their ongoing (and philosophically very difficult) dialogue if any of it were obvious, even with respect to epistemic proprieties.

Skipping the omniscience case, which treats most quickly the divine attribute I find most philosophically challenging of all (but then, every area of philosophy poses for us serious challenges), one sees what I was missing earlier—an indication of why these quick reminders of well-worn challenges are being canvassed: "to indicate what it is about the traditional properties attributed to God that gives rise to these puzzles." It is, or at any rate has long seemed to many to be, the attributes themselves, or pairs or triples of them, that have given rise to these puzzles. My apologies here, but I really do not understand this point about diagnosis (top p. 10): have we gotten it/them, or is diagnosis/-es something yet to come? Failing thus far to see diagnosis in the reminders, I hope the answer is "yet to come." (If that is right, perhaps it is worth saying so, right where "our aim is diagnosis" appears in the text.)

13. p. 10 (bottom), 11 (top) About the idea of getting the traditional big list from some one or another significant item *on* the list: On a charitable semantic theory, I suppose that every characterization of God amounts to the predication of some property or properties of God; and I suppose "property" is a near-enough synonym for "attribute"—though I note that the list of divine attributes has in traditional theology been reserved only for essential, not contingent/accidental, properties of God (explaining why God spoke to Abraham never appears on the list). So I suppose that one could take the broad, fat general characterization of God in the perfect-being tradition—you know, the famous Anselmian *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* theme of the greatest or most perfect being—to express yet one more, albeit special, item on the list. But the traditional discussion hasn't really so reckoned it. It's a small point, but were I asked to sketch the story, it'd go like this: (A) The attributes of God? Well, look to what those philosophical theologians of the Abrahamic tradition, who have undertaken high-level reflection and theorizing[2] about God, have ascribed as essential to God, and put them on the list. (B) Is this a laundry list, an assemblage owing to historical accident? Well, not if there is some general notion that plausibly and soberly can be thought to bind them together, to unify them, under which they all alike fall. The list represents an old and well-considered effort on the part of many to give specific content to the general notion of the most perfect being, the greatest being. (C) Is this true? It's true enough, I should have thought: take the traditional list, and ask yourself whether there is some attribute included in it that could be removed without fear of diminishing the degree of greatness or perfection it represents, and ask yourself whether there is some property that could be added to the list that would render the being who enjoys the expanded list greater than a being who possesses only the properties on the original list. (D) But the project isn't, not really, to make sure the list complete: why think an approximation of a definition should aspire to that? (I define a dog as anything falling under the genus *Canis*—but failing to include carbon-based is no failure, despite the impossibility of a non-carbon-based organism being a dog.)

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[2] Why the proviso? To rule out some of what one can nowadays read emerging from the pens of professors of divinity schools, who say all manner of crackpot stuff. This is controversial, but no apologies from me: some stuff nowadays said from such folk would, from the second century until 1850, be insisted as tantamount to atheism. It's no good pretending that just anything can count, or—to anticipate something I earlier hoped aloud will eventually be broached in your text—that we can call "God" pretty much anything we please. No Humpty-Dumpty-ism allowed: words have meanings, and aren't wholesale up to us.

As I say, it's a small point: the spirit of your paragraph, if not what I thought I saw in the letter of its first sentence, is right enough.

14. p. 10 Last full paragraph, regarding "another possibility"—i.e., an augmenting of pagan deities to the *n*th degree: All right. Let's see, here: (i) Is this the "diagnosis" I was wondering about and looking for a bit ago, toward the end of **12**? If so, it'd surely be worth saying so. Readers need signposts. (ii) The possibility being posed here is offered as an alternative to what came before. What came before, evidently, is something like the perfect-being theology's (A)–(D) unpacking of the general conception of God, i.e., the most perfect being, into its more articulated list. The alternative possibility here posed includes the notion of "augmenting the powers of minor pagan deities": but surely the business of minor pagan deities may itself have been an early and stumbling effort under the same broad description (of starting with a greatness intuition and attempting an unpacking—by parceling out among many rather than clustering under one). I suppose it's an empirical question, impossible to answer really; but insofar as it has not been ruled out, this notion of "augmenting the powers" can fall less on the side of an alternative to what came before as an early episode in its history. (iii) It's difficult, in any case, to know how to describe the history of religious reflection: your talk of augmentation of the powers of minor deities "in order to create the traditional concept of the God of the Abrahamic religions" makes it sound like the effort was an intentional, witting one—which strikes me as unlikely. (iv) Meanwhile, moving now to the remainder of your description of the alternative possibility, you assert that the resulting blend of properties "cannot be made consistent." I deny this, as do all traditional Judeo-Christian theists, but more importantly you haven't shown it, and so I think aren't positioned to represent it as so. I'm not sure if you are representing it as so; but you are building it in as part and parcel of the alternative possibility. So if you go on to express your endorsement of the alternative possibility, you will be expressing your endorsement of the view that traditional theism cannot be made consistent. Since, again, you haven't shown this to be so, in so expressing any endorsement of the alternative possibility you will be making yourself vulnerable to charges of merely asserting without showing. And I'd say that's an unnecessary vulnerability: you don't need it. Returning to an earlier point, about not merely presenting your own view but objecting to a view you reject, I'd repeat my view that it's a risk you would do well to avoid—if, at any rate, you wish to get a broad spectrum of readers to give your new theology a fair reading and take it seriously.

Continuing in this same paragraph (damn: I'm going so slowly, and at this pace I'll never make it by 15 April…): In the face of your alternative possibility, we are presented with two sorts of responses—[1] reject the traditional conception on the ground that it is inconsistent or [2] claim that there is no role for reason—no fair demand for rational consistency—in the worship of God. In respect of [1], I and others will repeat our denial that the traditional conception is, or has been shown to be, inconsistent, and so will pose the option of [3] retaining, and continuing the long and grand tradition of *apologia* for, the traditional conception of God. In respect of [2], I don't understand why you pose the scope of no-rational-consistency-required as the *worship* of God. Wouldn't it be, rather, the worship (all right) but also the *study/investigation/theological theory-building* about God? It's the very concept of God that is your target, so far as I can see—not the religious practices per se. Witness: the additional items listed, lower down on p. 11, are the stuff of study/investigation/theorizing about God, in the tradition, not mainly—or anyway not exclusively—the stuff of religious devotion and practice.

15. p. 11 Paragraph continued from previous page, about the belief-desire model alongside divine simplicity: You're right to not dig in your heels here. Descartes explicitly addressed the many-faculties objection in the context of his simplicity argument for the soul (it is, he rightly insists, one and the same thing that wills and doubts and remembers, not one thing that wills and another that doubts); but without an argument for why Leibniz is wrong to claim that a simple/partless monad there cannot be many causal powers, the objection remains a junior-high item.

The Trinity, you imply, is harder, and so it is. But you imply more: you imply—or rather assert, on the top of the next page (p. 12), that it is a "contradiction." This is not true. One F and many Gs is something that everyone—*everyone*—is faced with, somewhere, when attempting to reconcile our intuitions about deep metaphysical matters.

It arises whenever it seems like it's the case both that *x* is *y* and that *x* has properties distinct from *y*. For example, it happens in the case of material constitution. Take the bronze statue of Goliath (the cat of ancient discussion would work just as well): we've got a lump of bronze, and we've got a statue, with the same material constitution but with different historical properties (existed an hour ago, yes but no) and different modal properties (could survive the loss of this bit of matter, no and yes). There are four or five basic solutions here, but the point is that there are solutions, all consistent, and all leaving us with a little bubble under the flypaper to learn to live with.

The example I've chosen is relevant: Rea and Brower have written two very useful and promising papers deploying Aristotelian hylomorphism to solve the problem in a way that also handles the issue of the Trinity. (I haven't the luxury of time to lay it out, but it's very neat. Like the lump and statue, the persons of the Trinity are conceived as hylomorphic compounds, with the divine nature/essence filling the role of matter and the properties of the persons filling the role as forms. When the forms are instantiated by the single divine essence, each gives rise to a distinct person. See, for example, their "Material Constitution and the Trinity" in *Faith and Philosophy*, 2005.) But of course there are other solutions, including Geach's relative identity solution (see, for example, *The Virtues* [Cambridge, 1997], pp. 72–81, and earlier "Identity" and "Identity—A Reply" in his *Logic Matters* [Blackwell, 1972]), and PvI's development in a different but related direction (see his "And Yet They Are Not Three Gods but One God" in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* [Notre Dame, 1988]). There are others aplenty. My point is to worry aloud about talk of "this particular contradiction"—calling a lump of coal what hasn't been shown to be one. The worry is that since it's unearned, it brings a risk, and the admonition is that since the risk is avoidable, avoid it: you help yourself and all your hard work if you do.

You are undoubtedly right in claiming on previous pages, this page, and subsequent ones, that there are tensions. 'Twas ever thus, in any field—even, I say again, in the sciences. (Einstein said, and David Bohm says, that he cannot not conceive and will not pretend to understand the scenario according to which the cat is neither dead nor not-dead, or that the photon has position but no momentum or momentum but no position. Folks claim to have gotten used to it, of course: but the deceived are known to claim widely and boldly.) Strategically, then, in light of tensions, it will be safest and best to lay out your own theology with the following advice: minimize efforts at maximal criticism, and maximize efforts toward minimal tension. The latter half recommends charity in respect of competitors and caution in respect of your own story.

16. p. 11 Last full paragraph on non-Trinitarian tensions in Judaic and Islamic traditions, lower down in revisiting (cf. your earlier p. 8) the immanence-transcendence issue, and generally *passim* hereabouts: When reading these paragraphs, casting my eyes fore and aft again, memory put to mind in passing a theme of your own, back in Volume 1 (cf. end Chapter 9 around p. 46, and into Chapter 10 around pp. 48ff)—that we sometimes are forced by our investigations to grant the inadequacy of our language. The tensions evident in many cases can indeed arise from asking bits of language, which grew up and matured in some (often folk) domain of usage, to do extraordinary duty in other and more nuanced domains. So I earlier [in **10**] reckoned your request that we treat the folk's immanent locution "*x* is in *y*" according to the new recipe "*y* is in *x*" as a sort of bubble that we can, fair enough, learn to live with. Crucially, there, it was a bubble case for all—for you and for the traditional theist. We've got it again here on this page, and one can be forgiven for getting this sense of things: "Look, traditionalists: there are unavoidably conflicting doctrines here." *Maybe* so; but maybe it's otherwise, in roughly the way you indicate, mid-page, when locating a difficulty at some level of semantic imprecision ("…He is everywhere at all times in some other sense that is not specified"). One can fiddle with the language, or one can do the disambiguation, the further specification, but either way there are moves to make. (The medieval options, in this particular case of divine presence, were that presence for a non-spatiotemporal God is to be understood either in terms of the reach of His knowledge [omniscience, so, everywhere], or in terms of the reach of His Power [omnipotence, so, everywhere]. Analogy: the immaterial soul is in the body in virtue of its power to move the arms and legs and head….)

Again, then—and I shall strive mightily to quit this soon—I'm inclined to worry, on behalf of the readership that you hope to at least engage if only by nudging, that "[t]hese conflicting doctrines" (first line, bottom paragraph) is not established and so unfair and unhelpful. It pretends, at an absolute minimum, that the traditional theist cannot make good on what the sentence ending the previous paragraph wishes for.

Ditto next page (p. 13), upper: "not everything attributed to God in the tradition can be retained." In the wider context, I urge toning down to just the temperament of *minimizing tension*—which tension you can declare to see on the face of it (without the pretense of having established something stronger), and which minimizing you can declare to be supplied by your alternative theological story. You can do this consistently with the nonnegotiable commitment to intelligibility, and the back of your hand, if you wish, to anything ineffable, mysterious, not transparent to the human intellect.

(I don't have a developed personal view about the latter issue. I'm a Leibnizian, a rationalist, so it's hard to carp at the ambition you have, and I don't carp. But of course Christian theology has always held that the Trinity and the incarnation (and a few others) are "mysteries,," where by this is meant that human reason cannot reach an adequate understanding of how they could be true. I'm inclined to try to distinguish between showing how they could be true [eliminating mystery] and showing how they can be expressed free of contradiction [eliminating formal inconsistency]. The latter I'm always pleased to undertake, or rather would be pleased if I had the time. The former: well, what exactly is behind the unyielding demand that one either succeed or else find a new and improved story where one can and does?

Leibniz and I say that faith has truth as its object—so that it, like belief and knowledge, is another propositional attitude. Indeed faith is belief, but of a certain kind: I believe the mysteries by faith, where to believe a mystery is to believe without adequate understanding of how it could be true. The modern temper has been to pose the challenge from the presumption of a kind of evidentialism—where by "modern" I mean something at least as late as Bayle, and where by "evidentialism" I mean the justificatory notion that no pro-attitude of the propositional sort reaches adequate grounds for epistemic duty fulfillment if it hasn't sufficient evidence behind it. You've heard me say it before, in connection both with epistemology generally (when I tried valiantly but failed hopelessly to write that chapter!), and in connection with what's stupid about much of the scientism: I unyieldingly deny Clifford's insistence that it is wrong everywhere, always, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence. (It will matter, of course, what one means by "evidence," which I haven't the time to engage. But you deny Clifford's insistence too, on a sober reading of "evidence": what verdict to declare in the age-old monism-pluralism debate, upon one side of which you fall, is badly underdetermined by the evidence. You and I both go beyond it, the evidence. So did Clifford, when he articulated his principle, because it cannot stand under its own weight.) This being so—and it being clear, on just a moment's reflection, why it is impossible to prove otherwise—one is free to claim that there are doxastic routes to warranted belief in the mysteries.

Mysteries? Inevitable, say I (perhaps temporally or otherwise indexed, *modulo* the human condition) if one weds the denial of Clifford's mantra with the following fact about human cognition: some truths we don't get, and moreover couldn't get without some help, help that as things stand we don't have. Having never seen color, the blind person can (let me say it this way) believe in them, mysterious as they must remain relative to his condition, unless he gets some help. (I say that special revelation is help but not a full helping of help. One can deny it, but one can't show that it is unavailable, not offered, nowise given. So let's drop that.) More imaginatively and perhaps helpfully: having never seen a mirror nor a reflection of any kind, the aboriginal desert dweller might accept our attempt at getting him to genuinely understand the whole business of looking into a mirror and seeing oneself. Our story, inevitably analogical ("it's like a drawing in the sand, though it doesn't have any thickness, and…") would be a story that anyone could wreak havoc upon if s/he chose: it'd be inadequate, in some sense insufficient; but maybe it would be enough for belief if not understanding. And maybe, in respect of the Trinity and the Incarnation, I am like the person who has never seen colors, or better, like the person who has never gazed into a mirror. For all I know, maybe I am like the youth who is told that photons are both waves and particles or that space itself could be curved or that the beta particle lacks a position if it has momentum. Even the youth could wreak havoc in his own way: "But to be curved is to be nonlinear, and our conception of curve and line is a conception of how things could be if they're in space!" "But a wave is a disturbance in some medium, and a particle isn't a disturbance but a thing!" Etc., etc. Later he'll believe, if not understand. (We sometimes pretend we understand, i.e., fully grasp, genuinely get it: I say that nature itself has mysteries. So does supernature. On reflection, it's no great concession or confession at all, saying that. It's pure sobriety.)

I need to stop. But I'm not sure how easy it will be, even for the hard-bore rationalist like myself (and you, perhaps), to keep at arm's length any story according to which faith and mystery—belief without adequate understanding—is to be ruled out on principled grounds. The principles will inevitably be too strong, and at any rate unjustified by their own lights.

End digression.

17. p. 13 Third full paragraph, expressing the aim "to show that enough of the central aspects of the traditional notion of God remain in place to justify…continued use of the term 'God'": One will show that the list retains enough only if one has a criterion, or more vaguely at minimum an articulated standard, for what is enough. Unless you have one, readers will be justified in doubting that you can show what you announce as your aim to show. They needn't *agree* with it: there just must *be* one….

What one? (I'm focusing, as you have, on size—scope, amount, whatever—and not on keeping *this* vs. scrapping *that.*) Take any word in any natural language that, as judged by the evidence of usage for over (say) twelve centuries in various written texts both explicitly about the concept the word is used to express and explicitly or implicitly about the thing to which it is applied, has earned semantic stability in respect of some minimal core content. And suppose that it's both asserted and plausible, judging from the evidence of those texts in that stretch of the word's use, that the list of semantic bits A, B, C, D, and E have been reckoned to follow from what the users intend as its minimal core semantic content. *None* of A, B, C, D, or E can be dropped, in such a case of essential features A to E while still honoring the most proprieties of linguistic usage. I cannot justify my continued use of "square" to express the notion of a plane [A], closed [B], four-sided [C], equal-angled [D] figure on the grounds that I've kept "enough" of the central aspects of the traditional notion of a square—equal sides being neither here nor there, thank you.

So it is not a matter of scope, amount, size, or the like, at any rate not in this case, and not in the case of "God" as more than twelve centuries have it. (Spinoza was an atheist, straight up. He denied the existence of the being that traditional theism had long affirmed—a being that's F, G, H, J for essential F, G, H, and J—never minding his eagerness to say that God was K and L = infinite and immanent. He wasn't suitably loyal to the idea that God is a person with a will who is morally perfect, etc., to be said to believe in the existence of God.)

So if the criterion/standard is not a matter of scope/amount/size or the like, then it must be a matter of keeping *this* vs. scrapping *that*; it must thus proceed on broadly functional lines—not really of language itself, but of role the object plays. How to articulate this I should leave to historians and anthropologists, I suppose—and to you, if you wish to give some criterion/standard of "enough."

It can seem, from bottom of p. 13 and forward, that you are picking and choosing—keeping and scrapping—willy-nilly, without a criterion. Keep *infinite*, scrap *person*, keep *immanent*, scrap *omnipotent*, keep *purposive*, scrap…, and, predictably (because it must be so, for you as for everyone else), with a preferred, distinctive, suits-your-purpose gloss on each of those. Gloss as you like or as you need: what, again, is the criterion/standard?

18. p. 13 Second to last (non-bold) paragraph, God must be infinite "in this special way": Could you, perhaps, clarify the special way in which God must be infinite that you have in mind? We know, from earlier in the book, where you're heading in respect of cardinality of attributes: there are infinitely many. But right here, I take it, judging from your reference to the Abrahamic tradition, you're wishing to acknowledge and accommodate the infinity of God as that tradition taught it, if not in whole then in part. What common, univocal sense of "God is infinite" are you acknowledging from that tradition and insisting upon for yourself? I wish this were made clear.

(The tradition hasn't been exactly of one mind, here—but in large measure, theirs wasn't a cardinality deployment *per se* but one "without limit." Even Aquinas, in *ST* I.7, couldn't avoid going *via negative* here: "We must consider therefore that a thing is called infinite because it is not finite"—where finite things are somehow restricted (as form restricts matter, as creatures have limited power, or limited knowledge, or limited goodness, etc.). Spinoza used the notion to his own monistic advantage, as might you if you chose [here or elsewhere], in forcing the connection between *infinite* and *all*. Consider *being*: if *x* has infinite being, then with that connection, it's possessed of all being—implying that there is no reality outside *x*. Actually, I think this or a related connotation of "infinite" is on your mind, below the surface, too—and I'd say present it, if it is. It'd add to the richness of your story.)

19. p. 14 Middle-ish **bold** paragraph, connecting not-ontologically-dependent with "God": You argue here by saying that since anything that is ontologically dependent cannot be God, it follows that only the being you have designated "God" has the right to be called God. Not quite, I think: all that follows is that nothing that isn't ontologically independent has the right to be called God. The independent condition is necessary for being God but not sufficient: so to say, for all we know, the thing you have designated "God" is possessed of some *other* qualities that *disqualify* it, or lack some other qualities that disqualify it.

In the subsequent ["Third, …"] paragraph, I found the expression "has been created by matter" an awkward or infelicitous one. Meanwhile, as to the spirit of the paragraph (which I like): (i) do you have anything suitably general and so guidingly helpful about your understanding of theology—or your use of "theology"—that can explain to the reader [or to Spinoza] why any story devoid of purpose cannot be (a) theology?) Perhaps more crucially, for some of your readership: (ii) are you committing yourself to the view that the actions of a wholly material sparrow or spider cannot be truly (albeit only partially) described in teleological language?

20. p. 15 First full/upper little **bold** single-sentence paragraph about God being ontologically prior to everything else: I get the impression that you mean to place **bold** statements of theological commitment from you immediately below non-bold paragraphs broaching various plausible divine attributes and that the bold bits are to sorta cap or firm up the non-bold bits. In this case, this bold single-sentence affirmation of *ontological priority* for God is placed immediately following several paragraphs about *purposes*. Doesn't it fit more naturally after the "second" prior-to-everything point on the previous page (p. 15) and more naturally cap that? But you've got the bold stuff there already, and this p. 16 cap can seem like just a repetition of that earlier one. Anyway, its appearance here struck me as a bit disorienting, in respect of the flow of things (it yanked me backward, rather).

21. p. 15 Middle-ish larger paragraph, on divine purposes and standards for human action: I'm not exactly clear on the force, or objective/goal, of this paragraph, so I'll mention a point about it, here. There are two issues floating about, or at any rate two issues that will surely come to readers' minds when reading this paragraph. One is the thesis that divine purposes are a necessary condition for the existence of objective rightness/goodness in human action. The other issue is how this would or could come about, this connection between divine purposes and objective value of human behavior. The paragraph opens by posing the first bit, the thesis. It then proceeds/continues by getting us to see—with an example—that if divine purpose only accidentally involved humans in only the most minimal way, those purposes would fail to ground objective value for human action after all. I just want to point out that the second bit, illustrating how divine purpose could exist yet fail to ground objective value for human action, does nothing to establish, support, or even motivate the first point, i.e., the thesis that divine purpose is a necessary condition for objective value of human action. To show that *some divine purpose might exist yet fail to ground objective value* doesn't show or lend support to the thesis that *divine purpose does ground objective value*. (Perhaps that's awfully obvious, and not relevant to your objective/goal in the paragraph; but the progression of things in this paragraph had the feel of offering later stuff as evidence or justification for the earlier stuff [thesis]. More weakly, even: the example doesn't, to my mind, help one see the force of the thesis.)

22. p. 15 The "fifth" item, on God being eternal: Why so skimpy? Here's a nice way to proceed: in each case (first, second, …) let the non-bold stuff both pose and at least motivate, if not justify, the attribute in question, perhaps placing it in an intellectual tradition but perhaps just going from your *a priori* intuitions, and then cap it with your bold "Yup: I accommodate that as follows:…." It's a decent pattern. To fill it out, then, beyond a skimpy sentence: what motivates divine eternity, within a tradition or even just intuitively?

It's interesting that this attribute figures prominently in the liturgies and arises with some frequency in songs/psalms of praise: so perhaps it's a comforting contrast with the impermanence of us human beings. Could that be the end of the story—that the collective wisdom, or revelation, or intuitions of theologically inclined people has inevitably built into the functional role for God that He be completely unlike us *in all respects that seem unfortunate about ourselves and our condition*? (Here too, then, "most perfect/greatest" is driving things.) One might think to do better by reckoning eternity a consequence—along the temporal—of His infinity: but the tradition hasn't gone that route, in judging him to be *atemporally* eternal. Thus we find Aquinas (in *ST* I.10.2) defending His eternity on the grounds of His immutability—and that is a maximally difficult section of the *Summa*, crucially involving the notion of an instantaneous whole (*tota simul*) that lacks successiveness. So no help from me, alas. What say you? Seriously: why—in your heart, going into things, not coming out of the abstract metaphysics—think that anything worthy of the name "God" is eternal? I say it's worth thinking about and wish I had the time: bloody hell, am I knackered.

23. p. 16 Topmost **bold** paragraph, about God, standards, and perfection, including "…He and His attributes fall short of no standard": To fall short of no standard is consistent with there being no standard at all. There is a standard, you say, owing to God and His attributes. Can you give some intuitive accounting of how the source of a standard can meet that standard? I don't mean that I see this to be meaningless or impossible: I just mean that it'd be nice to get a story. ("Owing to" signals dependence, so the standard is dependent upon God; but the perfection of God owes to His meeting a standard and so is dependent at least upon there being a standard. Can one be excused for feeling some tension in how the priority story goes?)

24. pp. 16 and 17 On the contingency/necessity/explanation stuff: Good, and also interesting, and also nicely done. I won't belabor things here, as my cards have been on the table and belabored before. Quickly:

(i) Mid-page 16, "…there is no need to explain why a necessary being exists": Repeating an earlier point, it seems to me not just intelligible but quite proper to say that one *can and does* give an explanation for the existence of a necessary being (or beings—propositions, numbers, God, the divine attributes, etc.) when saying that it's impossible for there not to be that thing—that by the very nature of the thing, it cannot not be/exist. Put otherwise: it is not an analytically necessary truth that "explanation" entails "…refers to something else" (something else's existing, something else's obtaining, etc.); put otherwise and crudely, the concept of an explanation doesn't itself restrict *where one can look for it*. Put differently still: I agree (toward the bottom of the page, two lines up) that explanations rule out other ways things could have been, but I deny that this must be on the basis of things that could themselves have been otherwise. Why think that? Again, it cannot be part of the very semantics of explanation—or else, from Aristotle down through contemporary accounts of explanation in mathematics, we've spoken a fair bit of literal nonsense.

(ii) Still on p. 16, third full paragraph on the heels of the middle (cosmological argument) paragraph: One can and I think should resist the implication of the claim that "what motivates the doctrine of God's necessity, therefore, is that God's existence being contingent…seems to leave unanswered the question…." This implies that there are no other motivations for the doctrine of God as a necessary being. But there *are* other motivations for that doctrine. Here are ones I recall encountering [1] "The most perfect thing of all is to exist" (*ST* I.4.1), i.e., is *being*, and the concept of God is the concept of the most perfect being, so since God has all perfections essentially, God has being/existence essentially, i.e., necessarily: i.e., He exists. [2] All abstract objects, like numbers and propositions, are necessary objects; but everything other than God depends upon God, and since nothing necessary can depend upon something contingent, God is a necessary object. [3] There is no such thing as brute chance; therefore, the explanation for the existence of any contingent thing involves appeal to something else upon which (by definition) it is contingent and thus depends. But nothing worthy of the name "God" can exist merely as a fortunate gift of the circumstances, which might just as well have not been so fortunate; so God isn't dependent upon something else—i.e. (by definition), isn't contingent. [5] Ethical principles are necessarily true (there is no logically possible world where it is true that one should maximize pain for as many innocent sentient beings as possible), and necessary truths depend for their truth not upon God's free will but upon God Himself and His very Nature; so God necessarily exists.

These aren't all equally good (or equally bad). But given their existence, it's at least a little bit misleading to imply that there is only one motivation for the doctrine that God is a necessary being. There are at least five. (If I weren't so tired I'm sure I could think of another.)

(iii) Bottom p. 16: You say that explanations rule out alternative ways things could be "on the basis of contingent facts," but this begs the question against the idea that there are necessary objects. (The argument: Presuppose, with Sanders, that [a] every explanation succeeds only on the basis of contingent facts. [b] Everything that isn't God depends upon God. [c] If the existence of *x* depends upon *y*, then *y* is, or figures essentially in, the explanation for the existence of *x*. [d] Therefore, the existence of everything other than God is contingent (upon its explanatory "basis," i.e., God) and God is contingent (since the explanation for the existence of everything else, on the Sanders presupposition, has as its "basis" some other contingent thing). [e] If everything other than God is contingent, and God is contingent, then everything is contingent. [f] That is, there are no necessary things.) Begging the question isn't such a good tactic; so I worry about your presupposition, here, appearing as it does in what looks like an argument for your view.

(iv) Top, p. 17: You say that explanation is always a matter of accounting for existing things being a certain way. But this can't be right: at any rate, it isn't analytic—a fact about the very meaning of "explanation"—that seeking the explanation for the existence of something is nonsense. You might say that the existence of something is a fact about that existing thing. All right; but it isn't analytic—a fact about the very meaning of existence—that it's nonsense to seek an explanation for the fact that I have now have no second child, or an explanation for why it's true that there are no living brontosauruses, or….

(v) Middle, p. 17: You say that "[t]he existence of any particular is a contingent fact about the parts of God's attributes being a certain way." But hang on. Suppose, for *reductio*, that this is so: [a] The existence of any particular is a contingent fact about the parts of God’s attributes being a certain way. [b] Everything is a particular, and thus God is a particular. Thus [c] the existence of God is a contingent fact about the parts of God’s attributes being a certain way. [d] If the existence of *x* is contingent upon *y*, then *x* is ontologically posterior to and dependent upon *y*. Therefore [e] the existence of God is ontologically posterior to and dependent upon the parts of God’s attributes being a certain way. But recall that [f] “God comes first,” and “before everything else, and before everything else in every way, there is God” (p. 2). Thus, since [g] God is something else than the parts of God’s attributes (and is something else than the parts of God’s attributes being a certain way], it follows that [h] God is ontologically prior to and independent of the parts of God’s attributes; contradiction [e, h]. Therefore, [i] it is false that the existence of any particular is a contingent fact about the parts of God’s attributes being a certain way. I suppose I didn’t need to write that out.

(vi) p. 17: Your discussion seems to me to pretty clearly imply that there is no fact corresponding to the proposition expressed by the sentence “Something exists.” I cannot see why you would want to say this (apart from needing a line of reasoning to yield “there are no necessary objects” or the like); nor can I see what theory about the nature of facts would yield it on independent grounds. So it leaves me puzzled.

But I still *like* these pages, ’cause it’s fun stuff and worthwhile stuff.

Chapter 21

25. p. 18 First non-bold paragraph, on subjective teleology: You don’t give a definition of “subjective teleology,” which is a pity, but you to give a characterization of it, when saying that it is a purpose imposed upon an object by the beliefs, aims, and desires of sentient beings. If I make an object with a certain structure and do so for the reason that this structure renders it functionally able to accomplish a certain task (for the accomplishment of which I have expressly designed the object), then I have imposed upon it a purpose—and so, by your characterization, it enjoys subjective teleology. Why should it matter if, later on, this thing is accidentally lost in the wilderness? The lost-in-the-wilderness point seems a red herring to me: whether in the wilderness or on the knife merchant’s display case, it’s still got the property you’ve characterized.

(Just below, toward the paragraph’s end: “…to evaluate the value…” might be more congenially expressed by “…to assess the value….”)

Down to the penultimate paragraph, on objective teleology: Here the contrast with subjective teleology could perhaps be more explicitly and clearly made. Without a definition (of either one, which makes things rather worse), we’re left in the present case with something shy even of a positive characterization—

left, instead, with relational claims about its source, its difference from the subjective, where it is or arises, and so on. None of this tells us what it *is*, and so has the feeling of only working around the edges.

I guess I don't mind being told that it's any teleology that's not subjective: in that case, I'll want to be a bit clearer than I am about subjective teleology. One should in any case think that there are processes in biology that are teleological but not all imposed by any beliefs, aims, or desires: is the sperm's swimming as it does an example of objective teleology? Since it's hard for the reader to see the connection between this sort of case and the attributes of God, it'll be hard for the reader to know if this sort of case is or isn't what you have in mind. I'd have guessed that it isn't what you have in mind, quite what you have in mind, though given the characterizations—but especially the via negative definition I don't mind being told—it's very hard to see *why* it isn't what you have in mind. (I was thinking of the arcs, and not being clear if the swimming sperm is to be located on one. Sorry: but my confusion might be shared by others.)

(We sometimes distinguish the intrinsic from the extrinsic, and when giving a first approximation of what the distinction comes to will go the route of monadic vs. relational, i.e., "in its own right" and "in relation to another." You say that objective teleology is intrinsic but nevertheless consists in a relation to something else. This can seem like "intrinsic and extrinsic.")

26. p. 19 Upper/topmost paragraph: I think what you're describing here goes by "instrumental value." The intrinsic (for its own sake, in itself, non-derivative) vs. instrumental (for the sake of something else [including some end/purpose], derivative) distinction is a very old, important, and much-discussed one, in value theory generally and moral theory in particular. It can be tricky business—as when, for example, the majority of philosophers aim to allow that all value supervenes on non-evaluative features but without being *thereby* derivative/extrinsic. More interesting is one of your own cases, where objective value can be nevertheless instrumental (in your next [i.e. second] paragraph). This being so, it might be best just to avoid "intrinsic" in describing the objective, as you did earlier (p. 18) in the case of the teleological and will later do (p. 21) in the case of value.

I note in passing that a knife may have instrumental value in respect of more than its teleological design for use as a cutting tool, and thus have such value even when a person "is forbidden to cut anything with it" (p. 19)—namely, when its perceived beauty or rarity (say) renders it, by the lights of those knowledgeable about the antique or collectible weaponry, likely to increase, or at any rate not decrease, in monetary worth. (I've here distinguished monetary worth from value, but as I say, this is tricky business.)

Is it at all possible to render the claims of the subsequent pages of Chapter 21 less abstract, more concrete—make them, I mean, intersect helpfully and meaningfully with concepts or objects recognizably familiar to those of us possessed of a run-of-the-mill religious consciousness? One can, with some effort, track the nomenclature of the claims back to the structural features represented on the diagrams all right, but this doesn't yet help one appreciate the theological force of the claims. (It's a bit akin to being presented with a mathematical structure—a system of numbers and relations among them—without being given any manual for rendering it an applied model of some concrete reality familiar to me. It's a *bit* like that: I'm not happy with the analogy, but I can't seize upon a better one at the moment.) Differently put: can you either parse the claims or illustrate their content by example in a way that gets a grip on some stable, if doubtless very general, intuitions we already have about the world? I don't mean to be impatient, but perhaps this request will communicate to you the sense of *cold foreignness* with which these pages might strike other readers. They are, in my case at any rate, foreign enough that I cannot offer any detailed comments about the claims themselves: they don't intersect sufficiently with anything I believe or take myself to know to permit detailed comment.

27. p. 22 Second full paragraph, claiming that "how space-time is configured is not perfect": In what does its imperfection consist? Doubtless we all think that when measured along some parameter of our choosing, (i) at least some particular *x* has some measure *m* of value that, were things different for *x*, would be greater than *m*, or (ii) the collective value *c* of some or all of the particulars *x*, *y*, *z*, … that there are, were things different for some or all of them, would be greater than *c*. If one thinks, as so many do (not me), that value facts supervene on non-value facts, then arguably *some* of the value-heightening differences we're imagining in (i) and (ii) will be differences in non-evaluative facts involving spatio-temporal particulars *x*, *y*, *z*, …. Call those differences "differences in how space-time is configured": those differences won't *themselves* be value differences but rather differences in non-evaluative facts about the space-time configuration. So how space-time is configured could be *different*: but could it be *better*? Well, not exactly *in itself*, perhaps, but yes, all right, in respect of how much value supervenes upon its configuration.

That is a quick and dreary-eyed filling out of your "how space-time is configured is not perfect," though it might not be what you had in mind. I just wondered what exactly you did have in mind—so I asked that question ("in what does its imperfection consist?").

Meanwhile, there's that little bit in my description that goes "…when measured along some parameter of our choosing." We don't, of course, get to choose: instead, we have handed to us only such value parameters as objective teleology gives to us. Here arises just one instance (among many) where my earlier point up above, about parsing the claims of this section or illustrating their content by example in a way that gets a grip on some stable intuitions we already have about the world, comes home: it would be nice to hear, in terms familiar to us, what exactly you want us to understand and appreciate when you talk about the imperfection of space-time—where, crucially, the parameters of value figuring in your "imperfection" claim are handed to us by objective teleology. *What* parameters of value are those, exactly, and how does objective teleology *yield* them, and why *them* rather than others (say, ones beyond our aesthetic and kinesthetic and moral ken, or diametrically opposed to the ones we take ourselves to find in our ken)? Despite our confidence in basic intuitions about beauty (or ugliness) and pleasure (or pain) and moral goodness (or evil), how exactly are we to see these, dawning on us from very close to home indeed, as in fact handed down by the teleological bits of your system? It just isn't at all clear; and this being so, there is the very real risk of simply losing the reader—of the reader wondering whether she is even tracking what you mean, what you're asserting.

> *Reader*: "The configuration of space-time is imperfect? How so?"
>
> *Marc* [dreary-eyed candidate reply]: "Well, because upon the non-evaluative facts about the spatio-temporal particulars that there are supervenes a plethora of ugly, painful, and morally reprehensible facts."
>
> *Reader*: "But hold on: you're helping yourself to these intuitive parameters of value that we all know and love. No complaint, I suppose: we'd suffer massive evaluative vertigo if you didn't. But you're guaranteeing that these have been handed up to us by the teleological bits of your story. I don't see how that goes; I can't see the basis of your confidence that the teleological bits *can* hand us these and that it hands us *these* rather than some others. Connect the dots, please, starting with your abstract story and running to the concrete and familiar items we all know and love."

(As I say, this is just one instance, among many: it's the *kind* of thing I had in mind, pretty much in each paragraph of these latter pages of Chapter 21. Mercifully, I won't repeat the exercise for all instances—though if I had the benefit of more time, I would, because each one would be instructively different.)

Chapter 22

[Disclaimer: I'm not fluent in matters of value theory generally—ethics, political philosophy, etc. My philosophical expertise will inevitably mean that in these matters of Chapter 22 and somewhat forward, I'm inevitably of less help to you than would be an ethicist, or value theorist generally, who would know the logical space of options far better than I can hope to.]

28. p. 23 Here, evidently, is a true predication of God/The One: *God can be harmed*. So you say. From this, other truths immediately follow: God can be improved; God can be made worse. All of these entail, as clearly as the noonday sun, that *God can change*. But God is eternal and *God cannot change*. So we have what looks to be contradiction as things stand. One thing you could do to make what looks to be a contradiction turn out not to be a contradiction after all, is to take back, i.e., withdraw, one or another of these assertions that "God can be improved and made worse" and that "God does not/cannot change." You do not want to do this, I gather. So, the (only) other thing you can do, to make the contradiction go away, is to gloss either

(A) God cannot change
or
(B) God can be made worse and better

in a non-strict way: you must say that one or another of these sentences of yours, like the sentence "The sun rose this morning," expresses idiomatically and non-literally some proposition that just cannot quite be read off the sleeves of the sentence itself. Employing the old distinction of thinking with the learned but speaking with the vulgar, we must say—if we are Copernicans at any rate—that the loose and vulgar sentence "The sun rose" expresses some strict and learned proposition which doesn't entail that the sun moves (but instead, expresses some proposition to the effect that the relative spatial disposition of earth's horizon to sun changes over time when viewed blah, blah, blah…). In respect of your apparent contradiction, then: *first*, which one, of (A) and (B) above, do you wish to say is loose and vulgar, and *second*, what is its strict and learned gloss? Something must be said: it can't be left as it stands.

Below I paste a question appearing in the History of Philosophy qualifying examination administered here at Purdue: it's the latter [*italic*] part that's relevant.

> Spinoza, famously, claims that there is exactly one substance, *deus sive natura* (God, or nature). "But how can this be? Stick with the one substance conceived under the attribute of extension. If billiard balls and turnips and hedgehogs aren't extended *substances*, are we to

> seriously reckon them to be *modes* of the one substance, of God? That is simply too implausible to take seriously. *Moreover, balls are hard, and turnips bitter, and hedgehogs prickly: but God is not hard or bitter or prickly. Moreover, balls are round and hedgehogs are not: shall we say that God has contradictory properties? Either we are getting Spinoza badly wrong, or else he is not half the philosopher he is made out to be.*" Discuss and evaluate.

Down below just a bit further: can you clarify or expand on what you mean by speaking of "accidents of nature"? You can't mean by it, "goings-on that have no explanation," and if you meant by it simply "contingent" you would have said that. So the reader can fairly wish for a clarification from you.

In the context of giving that, it would be *extremely* useful to remind the reader how you reconcile these two claims:

> All of God's attributes…are ontologically dependent upon God himself. This means that any explanation for any objects or facts that there are is ultimately to be found in God. (p. 2)

> …[N]ot everything is due solely to God. Not every aspect of every part of every attribute of God is His responsibility. (p. 23)

29. p. 23 Last full paragraph, "Evil behaviors are those actions intentionally directed towards harming the divine Eternal Life of God": There's a little distraction here I should mention. The policeman shoots a man fleeing from a horrible crime that the cop sees him commit. The cop intended to shoot the man. The man is in fact an old Nobel Prize–winning physicist down on his luck, the father of three starving children. The cop did not intend to shoot a Nobel Prize winner and did not intend to shoot the father of three starving children. Famously, intentional contexts are not transparent (in the lingo of philosophers of language) but opaque: substitution *salva veritate* of co-referring terms fails—meaning that in such contexts, one may be unable to save the truth of a statement when replacing a referring term with another co-referring term. [Sally believes that Mark Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn*. Mark Twain **is** Samuel Clemens. But it doesn't follow, and is false, that Sally believes that Samuel Clemens wrote *Huckleberry Finn*. So belief contexts are opaque, non-transparent. Intentional contexts behave the same way.] Evil behaviors are those actions intentionally bringing about disvalue/ill; disvalue/ill **is**, according to your theory, harm to the divine Eternal Life of God. But it doesn't follow, and may well be false, that evil behaviors are those actions intentionally bringing about harm to the divine Eternal Life of God. Just as the cop can truly say, “I intended to shoot that man” and also truly say “I didn’t intend to shoot the father of three starving children,” so an evil man may truly say “I intended to bring about that disvalue/ill” but also truly say “I didn’t intend to bring about harm to the divine Eternal Life of God.”

(In passing: the last paragraph of p. 23 and the first paragraph of p. 24 represent a standard view of the masses. This is communicated in various spots with the expression “…are seen as…,” which is just fine, but in reading the paragraphs—especially into the thick of the second paragraph—one can lose sight of the fact that you’re representing a view of the masses, not your own view. I’d suggest adjusting the expression to read “…are typically seen as…” or “…are generally seen as…” or the like, to reinforce/reiterate to the reader the not-yours perspective being offered here, mid-page.)

30. p. 24 First full paragraph, third non-bold paragraph, “Either such crimes are seen as wrong on the grounds of authority [civil laws or divine commands], or there is an attempt….” In the broader context of this section on harms, I don’t see any legitimate grounds for narrowing the scope of evil and bad actions (those are different) to *crimes*—where I take it crime is a civil concept (usually with moral motivations, all right, but civil nevertheless). So let me keep your initial purview of evil and bad action. I’m no ethicist, but your sentence seems to me to inordinately under-represent the options, the available space of stories one may offer. There’s the Lockean–Hobbesian civil story, all right; and there’s the old-style Divine Command story, all right; but there are others. (Utilitarianism, but I refuse to type more abou….) The Kantian deontologist can offer a quasi-logical categorical imperative story. The Aristotelian may offer a broadly virtue ethics story. And so on.

Perhaps I’m not understanding the point of the paragraph. But given its scope and (what seems to me) an unfairly narrowed representation of available stories, it’s predictably inevitable that you will be right to complain, in the next paragraph, that it doesn’t “explain very much about why such actions are wrong.” No kidding: but the complaint can only seem targeted to a straw man.

31. p. 24 Bottom (incomplete, onto-next-page) paragraph: I agree almost wholeheartedly with the sentiments here—and in passing they represent exactly Leibniz’s complaints in early portions of his *Discourse on Metaphysics* against the divine voluntarism of Descartes broadly, and the voluntarist species of divine command theory in particular. (But to be fair: even if, according to the voluntarist species of divine command theory, “*x* has value F because God willed it” is generally true, that is consistent with adding fine-grained chapters about *kinds* of value F, G, H, or anyway kinds of normative weight owing to the commands themselves. We oughtn't misrepresent the available space for adding subtlety.)

And needless to say, I quite agree with your distaste for the Utilitarian efforts, sketched over on the next page (p. 24).

32. p. 24 Bottom, last sentence following onto next page: "What is required is that the good and the bad be justified [as good and as bad] by how they are grounded in God and His attributes…." *Bravo*! Just so, say I, a Christian. Ultimately, all Christians should—and in some sense do—say this. I don't mean that Christians must be Leibnizians and can't be Kantian deontologists or Aristotelian virtue ethicists. I just mean that *Christian people like Leibniz and me* (who, on the Euthyphro question, say that God wills *x* because *x* is good, where the principles of goodness—indeed, all intrinsic value generally—are co-eternal with the contents of divine thoughts, which owe to the facts of the divine nature, *all alike being necessary*), *no more or less than Christian deontologists and virtue ethicists*, must all say that the logical constraints upon rational persons (Kant), or the human virtues of properly functioning moral agents (Aristotle), or the eternal truths of moral rightness (Leibniz), owe ultimately to the inner character of the good God to whom we are fully beholden in respect of existence and nature/form.

But you say more. "[a] What is required is that the good and the bad be justified [as good and as bad] by how they are grounded in God and His attributes…. [b] If a murder is wrong, it can only be wrong because of its ultimate impact on God." [b] doesn't at all follow from [a], and I say the first part is true but the second is false. I know you *believe* [b], but in a context where it can seem like you've been in the business of justifying your claims, it's inevitably odd to not see giving no *reason* to believe [b].

One more thing about this (third full) paragraph: Its last sentence, which is its latter half, says that murder is wrong because it gets rid of a part of Consciousness and so thwarts that part of Consciousness from manifesting itself. But that explanation covers *killing*, not (just) *murder*. It feels far too fat, capturing too much, to be an account of the wrongness of just some killing (i.e. the murderous killings).

33. p. 25 First full paragraph, "All actions of sentient beings must be evaluated in terms of their consequences…": If true, it's potentially misleading in the direction of the following falsehood: "All actions of sentient beings must be evaluated only in terms of their consequences." Motives and intentions can make the actions of willing bad in themselves. (The outward behavior, consequent upon so willing, might itself be either good or bad. One can behave beneficently, by giving time and money for a splendid cause, for bad motives.) That's what's behind the Scriptural point that runs, basically, "He who has committed adultery/murder in his heart has done as badly as committing adultery/murder itself."

I note in passing the following point about this paragraph: it defines—no: characterizes—piety (latin *pius*, i.e., right doing, or duty) in terms of God's will. Thus yours is, too, a kind of "voluntarism": x is good iff x accords with the divine will. But only innocuously so in one sense, a sense that isn't offensive to Leibniz or me (or a Kantian deontologist or an Aristotelian virtue ethicist): the divine will is what it is thanks to the divine nature, and there's the safety in it.

But in another sense, it's not innocuous and is offensive to Leibniz and me and perhaps everyone else, including even you. Your *definiendum*—the right-hand bit after the "iff"—expresses something that on the rampant contingency of your system is a wholly contingent affair. So things could have turned out differently in respect of what morally right or wrong. Leibniz and Kant and Aristotle get necessary truths for our basic moral principles (Leibniz from the inner nature of God, where "nature" expresses an essence [which of course couldn't be otherwise], Kant from the logic of rationality which couldn't be different, and Aristotle from the Aristotelian essences of human beings as kinds). Of course, in my current condition of fatigue, I could be wrong, and missing something obvious or subtly hidden: your system may be able to avoid saying "painful killing of innocent persons could be morally virtuous: it *could* be, because it's all a contingent business, but as it turns out it *isn't*." Can you say, clearly, how your system avoids saying that? You aren't going semantic on me at this stage, reckoning it all a business of mere linguistic analyticity, on the order of "Triangles have three sides." So, *what*, then? Please, please make me feel better about this.

34. p. 25 Last paragraph continuing onto next page: This goes astray in representing what I'd call *my* tradition: so either it's imbalanced or horribly narrow. It is one, or the other, in completely severing our notion of hell from its proper conception of justice. I hasten to add that this notion needn't slavishly embrace ham-fisted retributivism about punishment (say). And I hasten to add that when Augustine wrote "[W]ho but a fool would think God unfair either when he imposes penal judgment on the deserving or when he shows mercy to the undeserving" (*Enchiridion* xxv), he meant explicitly do deny what the ending of your paragraph can seem to imply—namely, that hell is reserved for people who behave badly. "*All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (*Romans* 3:23), so we all deserve hell. That all are not condemned to visit there is a consequence of some accepting full payment of remission on their behalf (the Cross being the reason for the incarnation) and others rejecting the payment. Doubtless there is mystery here, in speaking both of God's justice and God's mercy: part of what renders it less than a full-blown mystery is that partial understanding is available once one sees that the mercy of the Cross was made available to all. The option of rejecting it owes to the gift of freedom: no robots, we.

Has your system anything to say about mercy—you know, basically, forgiveness? (I'll be tempted by no story that does not. I still say we need a Savior. And it offers a center, a sort of pivot, to the rest of the story, which is thoroughly teleological: to quote the Shorter Catechism of the Church of Scotland, we do indeed have a "chief end" because we are made for a purpose—to glorify God and enjoy Him forever [still quoting]. Terrific, say I; and *true*.)

As I read this page (p. 26), I see what I think I'm justified—speaking now from my tradition—in calling a *caricature*: I really honestly and truly don't recognize the story. (And I'll add, in full agreement with you, neither do I applaud it!)

35. p. 26 On this page begins a discussion of institutional evil, with very much of which I agree. I say this with a large qualification, which may at first seem inordinately picky but which will, on better reflection about how Cover the philosopher thinks, be completely expected: I do not believe that there are any institutions. I believe that there are people, moral agents, with whom the moral buck always and necessarily stops, so to speak; and then, when—as we say!—institutions are created, all that happens is that certain humans come to stand in a new set of relations. The Vienna Circle isn't some thing, but *them*, in this case pretty loosely related; the Dutch East India Company was them, a bit more tightly related. World religions are somewhere in the middle. So you get the point of the qualification: the moral predicates attach, in the first instance and primarily, to the behavior of this person and that person. If this parliament or that corporation acted wrongly or poorly, as we say, that consists in Jones acting wrongly by posing the measure for a ballot, and Jones and Smith and Brown and Whistlebritches acting wrongly for voting in support of the measure, and X and Y and Z negotiating the financials to enact it, and A and B and C not calling into question their rightness in kicking the poor souls out of their homes. You get the point.

Here is one explanation for why, if it's true, "[n]o extant religion addresses the problem of institutional evil": there are no institutional evils. There are evil actions by persons.

But we can permit the loose and vulgar talk of institutions acting, i.e., permit the pretense of human institutions being moral agents. You say that no extant religion addresses the problem of institutional evil. I don't know if this is true: it's an empirical question, and I must leave it to you, who doubtless know more about world religions than I. It sounds true.[3] In any case, having granted the loose and vulgar talk of institutions acting, I cannot disagree with much of your description on these pages of institutional dynamics. The main point made, so far as I can see it, is that institutions, by virtue of possessing more power than single individuals, have a greater capacity to render cumulative goods and ills than individuals themselves. This might be analytic, but if not, it can be true for all that. (It is an interesting question, one I've not studied, how it is that relations among individuals can, by the very *holding* [obtaining] of such relations, bring into existence various norms that confer abilities to sanction and so on. I've nothing to say here.)

If it is true, it can feel to be in tension with something else you say, over on the next page, upper paragraph:

> Right and wrong as described by a religious institution can be used as a perspective against which to measure the actions that a political institution inclines its citizens to engage in…(p. 30)

You must mean, evidently, that it *can* be used in this way but *isn't*—since on the present thesis no religion addresses institutional evils.

(Finally, and not in the slightest deeply, this, to revisit quickly one dimension of an institution's "greater capacity to render cumulative goods and ills than individuals themselves" [my words, above]: You speak with some force and length, *passim*, about institutions corrupting their members and about institutional goals becoming goals of its members, etc. Groups of the kind in which I was raised (think Amish, Mennonite, Old Order Dunkard Brethren [mine]) manage, by virtue of those institutionally conferred norms I spoke of a moment ago, accomplish exceptionally virtuous outcomes in the behavior of its members that it could be more difficult to accomplish without the group—in precisely the ways you describe. The institutions are as good as their members and the actions/decisions of their members. But that, nearly enough, was my original point about the moral buck stopping with people, the *real* moral agents. 'Twas always thus, and always will be so.)

Chapter 23

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[3] Perhaps, in America, this is because liberal minds have fought hard for the separation of the church from the civil state and what properly falls within its purview. Perhaps we should cheer the religious group that acts to aid or thwart this political institution or that one. And then on second thought, perhaps not.

The first half of this chapter, treating of roles played by God in the tradition, is interesting, well written, and strategically useful. Good.

36. p. 30 First paragraph in this Section, "…The monotheistic notion of one God…evolved from earlier notions…": That I suppose is an empirical claim too—though, crucially, much rides on what is meant by "evolved from," which may mean no more than "was taught and handed down…." On this construal, it is worth pointing out that its truth is quite consistent with (i) there being *a priori* access to truths about the one God that there turns out to be, and with (ii) there being, in addition to general revelation, special revelation about the nature of the one God, and with (iii) recent efforts in evolutionary psychology to explain the origin of beliefs in God (which, so far as I can tell, are not only consistent with the beliefs being true, but on the going thesis that evolutionary advantage is conferred on true believers over false believers [something I'm as yet unconvinced about], are also tempting an argument for the existence of one God). It is in any case of considerable interest why the belief has persisted. If so-called "convergent realism" in science can urge us to see that adjustments in belief can trend toward the truth, so might it urge a certain suspicion about why the religious belief has persisted (this, of course, being neither here nor there in respect of monotheism in particular).

The general sentiment of the above applies at various points in the discussion of these seven roles, in this chapter, where one can get—in addition to the descriptive component of the text, which I gather is its principle intention—minor whiffs of skepticism about the propriety of believing in a God playing such roles.

Doubtless it falls, if one chooses to reckon it small enough, into the first role—but what happened to the broadly *salvatory* element that looms so large in the Jewish and Christian faiths? It's impossible to read the Jewish scriptures without seeing preservation and deliverance on nearly every page; and under the "type/foreshadowing" theme, as these are read by Christians, the broadly atoning elements of them anticipate the really central role of salvation and life eternal.

The immanent/transcendent material, though largely or wholly descriptive, seems nevertheless very balanced and thorough to me. Just one small point I wanted to make:

37. p. 33 First full, main paragraph, middle and nearly mid-page, "Insisting on the utter transcendence of the notion of God, however, is open to the charge of incoherence": Yes, that can seem true! (It reminds one of the *ding an sich*, about which…, well, *what*?) Meanwhile, the parenthetical reference, in the next sentence, to "the garb of faith" is not, I hope, meant to tar faith with *that* brush. Here, see again the latter paragraphs of my comment **16** digression, as reiteration of my conviction that faith isn't utter queerness.

Chapter 24

38. p. 34 First paragraph, "…still adopted by many people even when they seem archaic": I've doubted, earlier, the validity of any inference from "old" to "false," as well I should. I presume you're not recommending that, and hence that you are not meaning, by "archaic," something like "antique" or "very old"—which would presumably apply to the beliefs in physical objects and motherhood and…. But I am not sure what you *are* implying. If by "archaic" you mean "primitive," then the implication—that there are no learned accounts by previous and contemporary scholars of good will and excellent intellect of roles 1, 3, and 6 [previous chapter]—is simply false. If by "archaic" you mean "obsolete," then the implication is self-defeating, since (as you say) it's everywhere around us and many people still adopt the beliefs.

One paragraph down, the second: Apologies, but I can't quite understand what you mean when, in the context of describing those who say that God is inexpressibly transcendent, you represent them as claiming that "He is inaccessible to direct reasoning, based on concepts that are recognized to apply to Him." If one recognizes certain concepts as applying to Him, then He is not inexpressibly transcendent; and it's hard to imagine someone asserting both. Are there some—mystics, maybe—who assert both?

I largely agree with these middle paragraphs (p. 34). I wanted to note, in passing, that there is a *sense* in which God transcends human cognition, even for you, since—thanks to there being so many attributes—"no one can understand everything about God" (p. 6). Something can be beyond me in many ways, and one way is for it to be so big as to be, well, inaccessible. If there is, or are, inevitably some part or parts of God that will remain inaccessible, then God in this sense is too big to understand: we must inevitably come up cognitively short. Now perhaps there is a principled distinction to be drawn between sane and unembarrassing, as opposed to silly and embarrassing, ways in which something can be beyond the reach of adequate understanding. I had earlier confessed, in respect of the so-called Christian mysteries, that human reason cannot reach an adequate understanding of them. Are there principled grounds for reckoning your "too big" to be a sane and unembarrassing confession but my "too hard" a silly and embarrassing confession? What would justify those grounds?

39. p. 34 Final paragraph: I found this paragraph possibly overextended—not offensive, at least not for me (I'm impervious), but likely overreaching. (i) The "archaic" point applies here, as above. (ii) No traditional theist thinks He has "human emotions," exactly—though it's quite unclear what that expression means. If it means "emotions peculiar to humans, as in "dog feces," then clearly no traditional theist believes it; if it means "faculties or properties for which some piece of natural language true of human emotions can univocally or analogically apply," then yes, most traditional theists believe this—either by going the literal route[4] or the analogical route—but then "emotions" is the right word, not "*human* emotions." (iii) The rhetorical flavor of your question about evil betrays a shallowness unbecoming these pages, and the (quite unearned) pronouncement about the inability of traditional theists to solve it is, well, forgive me, something outside of your league to declare, frankly. Again: it doesn't offend me. It just strikes me as…overreaching. Your positive proposals don't need the flavor of it and won't benefit from the assertion ending it. [Added later: I see "unsolvable" at the top of p. 38. You don't need claim that something is coal in order to present your own diamond.]

40. p. 34 Beginning of **bold** paragraph, "all such things that can be described in this way [as we describe things around us] either are attributes of His or are parts of those attributes." But you don't want to go the negative theology route, so you want to make positive and literal true predications of Him. This makes your job pretty hard: the bulk of our descriptive language—sorry, no: *all* of our descriptive language—is meant for application to "things around us." That's what it's for. So what language shall you use?

I can report what language you use: you say that God has attributes, and you say that God can be harmed [see again comment **28**], and you say that God provides ethical guidance for us, and…. What are we to make of these predicates? Not, evidently, what we make of their appearance in sentences like "Spinoza says that extension is an attribute of God" and "To intentionally thwart a human's proper flourishing is to harm him" and "Rocks cannot provide ethical guidance for us." *What*, then? Shall it be impossible for you to tell us, in English?

Perhaps I'm missing something (it's late); but perhaps others will be missing it too. What is, I suspect, minimally right about my point—even if it's missing something—is an echo of an earlier point (in a comment above that I can't now find [too many/much of them!] to the effect that the more you can do to hook up the nomenclature of your abstract taxonomy to concrete things we already understand and talk about in a fairly familiar descriptive language, the better.

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[4] Thus William P. Alston, philosopher of language extraordinaire, has argued that there is a quite sober and plausible functional account of personal language that entails that the meanings of personal predicates are abstract enough for them to apply univocally to God and to human persons: see "Can We Speak Literally of God?" in *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Cornell, 1989).

I sorta like the second full paragraph of this page (p. 35)—except the way it ends. Perhaps "naïve" is the wrong word, unless you mean "artless," which is a thing of taste and so needn't be justified.

Leibniz and I, and probably far more traditional theists than you think, quite like the beginning of your next (fourth full) paragraph. I personally can accept its first sentence exactly as it is—though I don't mean by "attributes" quite what you do. (*Welcome*: say hello to your second cousin.)

You end this paragraph as follows: "The metaphysics of God—despite the absence of sentience on His part—includes clear guidance for how intelligent sentient beings should live their lives." Readers will, I think, grant you the overall sentiment, but will reckon "clear guidance" rather like Kant's advertisement for the categorical imperative: we wonder how clear the guidance for living really is, when we've got to decide whether to abort in the second trimester or pull the plug on Mom. Not *that* clear, right? OK; but probably not even as clear as, say, the Ten Commandments ("clear" not meaning "true" *or* "thorough"). [Much, here, may ride on what you mean by "include." I'm not quite sure how you intend it.]

41. p. 36 First bold paragraph: It might be helpful to remind your reader that "depends on" doesn't—semantically, *can't*—mean "is the [efficiently caused] effect of," so that you can answer the query "Well then, where did matter come from?" by saying "Dunno: wherever a final science ends up telling us it came from, I suppose—but no theology needs to answer that question, and mine, unlike the tradition, doesn't pretend to."

42. p. 37 Penultimate (excluding the little "However") paragraph: Predictably, I very strongly reject both your characterization of and your justification for the bit about evil.

Your theology is based on a metaphysical story that, according to you, you've partly discovered and partly constructed. My theology is based on a metaphysical story that, according to me, is revealed and also partly discoverable. If my God exists, I say that I know He does. [There's a book's worth of epistemology behind that, the first sentence of which is the denial of Clifford's principle and the second sentence of which is the first sentence of the book of *Hebrews*.] If your God exists, well, I can't tell, really, whether you know He does—not because of fallibilism (agreed on that, even in respect of more mundane propositions), but because I'm not sure that its basis isn't largely invention—meaning, I haven't yet seen either empirical or *a priori* routes to the discovery of the truth of monism. (The eductions themselves, still nebulous to me but never mind, seem to *commence from* it, not *establish* it.) Your perspective upon my theology, meanwhile, is very likely to be much like mine upon yours—except for one thing, perhaps: you cannot say that I've invented Jesus, and you cannot say that there is no evidence for His divinity. You can say that the evidence isn't very good, of course; but the business of miracles, and the evidential value of testimony and oral record, must wait for another day. Meanwhile, a final large difference is that you believe humans need to change themselves for the better, while I believe that humans need to be changed for the better. (That was what I meant when saying that I still say we need a Savior. The Christian story says that we're messed up and need fixing.)

The good thing, I suppose, is that we both agree that God shows Himself to us—neither of us is going in for pure and utter transcendence—and that value, broadly speaking, owes to Him. If not second cousins, perhaps third.

Final (**bold**) paragraph: It isn't literally true that God "needs" us, is it? He doesn't require us, or any particular behavior at all of ours, in order to exist (since He is ontologically independent). He doesn't require us, or any particular behavior of ours, in order to flourish, because He doesn't flourish—only His body does, and thereby His life, does. (This isn't an objection: it's just clarificatory business.)

Chapter 25

43. p. 38 A few lines down, in **bold**, "We believe…that Consciousness has at its form Piety and has as its matter Awareness": Diagram 1 on p. 61 of Volume 1 shows that Consciousness has as its form *Choosing*, not *Piety*. It's not clear to me how those can be the same, since the eide *are the eide they are* independently of whether the teleological arcs are manifested well or ill—so, independently of whether choosing is good choosing or bad choosing. Bad choosing is still choosing but can't be piety. [Something similar might be said about calling, at the top of the next page (p. 41), "Good Judgment" what you earlier called in Volume 1 simply "Judgment": judgment is judgment, i.e., that eidos *is the eidos it is*, good or ill.]

Doubtless I'm muddled somehow, but it may be helpful to you to know where readers can get muddled. But it can't be all muddle, since you go on to say, on this page (p. 38), that Choosing is in fact the matter of Piety. Perhaps the Diagram is now out of date?

Yes, it must be: I'm not finding Belief, or Adequacy, or Apperceptions, or Intuitions (figuring in the second paragraph of p. 41) on my Diagram 1 either. I think I might be able to reconstruct it for myself. I'll try….

44. p. 39 First full un-bold paragraph in the middle of the page: I'd replace "theater" with "bank," which will more quickly bring to mind an institution than will a movie house.

Can you lend some clarity to your claim, a bit lower down, that sometimes when we talk about a "person" we have an institutional something-or-other in mind? It isn't obvious what you're referring to. (Slavery came to mind: is that it?)

45. p. 40 Very top, "consciousness…makes its effects visible in the Body of God": how, exactly, are we to understand your conception of consciousness having effects (efficient causal?) in the Body of God if consciousness is nowise spatio-temporal, nowise a mode or modes of God's body? We'll later read about consciousness being "linked" to physical entities, i.e., modal animal bodies, which is how we do often talk: but the quoted, implied link of efficient causal effects running from consciousness to bodies is hard to locate on any diagrams and certainly can't be the ontological dependence relation, which runs the other direction.

Sorry again for the muddle, if it is one.

Lower down on the page, in the final/third full paragraph, you urge readers to see that purely physical intentionality is a misbegotten idea, even in a case of pictures and mirror images. I agree with this, and wonder if the point might be strengthened by pointing out that since the whole (physical) business is purely causal, even the most gerrymandered causal outputs bearing no resemblance to the original would must be granted to represent, despite our unwillingness to say so in most cases. (I seem to recall Johnston making a similar point [when talking about "presence"] in his piece, and it may be that George Bealer has argued for it more generally.)

46. p. 41 First full paragraph: I wonder if truth and falsity might be, well, not so much another case (like intentionality) of something proper to consciousness but not available in the purely physical, and rather a deeper item of that sort which is below intentionality. The hypothesis: intentionality isn't a physical affair because truth and falsity aren't, and that's because any full and proper analysis of intentionality will appeal to notions like "truth" or "truly" or the like. I'm too tired to put meat on those bones—just a wayward thought, in passing, when I think of the connection between intentionality and representation, and then between representation and truth/falsity.[5]

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[5] On p.56, for example, you'll notice yourself speaking, quite naturally, of images being true or false.

I'm un-persuaded by the subsequent paragraph, suspecting as I do, with Robert Adams, perhaps Peter Unger, Plato, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Berkeley, and a host of others, that there is no good argument for the impossibility of incorporeal conscious minds. (Even hard-bore non-reductive materialists about *human* consciousness, when articulating their supervenience theses about the mental being determined by the micro-physical, will [like Frank Jackson and others] very carefully fine-tune their supervenience claim so as to allow for the possibility of spooks (angels, etc.)—being rightly honest that they're in possession of no good argument for why immaterial consciousness is impossible. A cold and quick way of making the point, in this context: it is at this latish stage only where one sees systematic motivation for denying the existence of a personal creator-God: *there could be none* if the mental world must be ontologically dependent upon the material world. [You don't say it *must* be, but only say it contingently *is*; but since all metaphysics, really, is a search for synthetic necessary truths, I'm still reading your system through essentialist eyes—I can't do otherwise.] My point here is that I don't see any good reasons behind the systematic motivation itself. Actually, this broaches a deep issue that I hadn't seen until now, I'm embarrassed to say. Given your system of a linear ordering of ontological dependence, there can be no sort of traditional dualism according to which the mental and the physical are reckoned egalitarian categories or principle attributes [in the broadly Cartesian sense of two equally fundamental ways of being]: so to say, one must pick which shall be dependent upon the other. Traditional trees are gone. Sorry to have been so slow. So, then, all right: Leibniz and I take obscene delight in turning the tables: we say that the physical supervenes on the mental. Mind first, then body. The reason for this is easy to see, but never enough appreciated, especially by materialists: plain old homogenous smeared-out passive matte stuff cannot ground a world in which there is change. One can go Humean and just announce that things change, but they will have never explained it. One must bottom out, in one's metaphysic, on a category that is intrinsically active—and no bit of space-time or material content of it is intrinsically active. Only mind is. QED for a kind of idealism.)

Sometimes, the light breaks through utter weariness…. Sorry to be so slow. But now that it's clear to me: wouldn't this very deep and important point about your system be worth making quite clear to readers? Many will have gotten it for themselves earlier than I, doubtless, but some will not, too; and anyway, "display for full view the big and deep points" is advice almost always worth following.

47. p. 41 Third full paragraph, at the end, "The seeing of a table (timelessly) entails becoming aware of it." OK; but are you really denying that particular events in our mental lives are temporally ordered, some following others, some being simultaneous with others (I'm now feeling tired *and* [now] feeling pain in my throat *and* worrying about Barrett's esophagus)?

I like—and applaud—the courage of these reflections (and of course their precursors, in Chapter 17 of Volume 1, where I wasn't clear about the query above). I once published a paper entitled "Are Leibnizian Monads Spatial?" answering, against a subversive trend in poor scholarship, "No." I swore that one day I'd write a companion paper giving the same answer to the question "Are Leibnizian Monads Temporal?" It's a dog's dinner, denying the temporality of the mental; but if one takes seriously what I call a causal theory of time, one is invited to say that temporal relations supervene on causal ones (and, like you, the causal ones are a species of logical-dependence ones). That is my view, in my heart of hearts. [I know that it was Leibniz's, and I suspect that Kant thought this, too about the noumenal mind. I can't speak for, say, Hegel.]

But in your case, there's the rub of the mental depending upon the physical. So you can't tell my story. And you don't want to, I gather. You regard Consciousness as an atemporal whole, and the parts or processes of it (Consciousnesses, perhaps souls) likewise timeless. The first part of that story is a whole different story, and the congenial second half comes from—well, I'm still not sure I can tell, frankly, except that it's forced upon you by the details of the linear bit. OK: it's your story.

48. p. 42 Top **bold** bit: This gives me occasion to ask a question that might make no sense or that makes sense but is too hard (and so poses a kind of mystery, which I say isn't as embarrassing as some say). The non-spatio-temporal souls are ontologically dependent upon spatio-temporal modes in the Body of God, and the atemporal experiences of a conscious mind are ontologically dependent upon the thoroughly temporal changes in a physical world. The question [leaning now on Janus-face 1]:

> In what does the dependence of the existence of A upon the existence of B consist?

It can seem a pressing question, for it can seem mysterious that things of kind A should depend for their existence upon the existence of some *radically different kind of thing* B.

Perhaps it's a primitive. Primitives are, sometimes, like mysteries…. (PvI and Lewis, when going round with each other on Lewis's modal realism vs. what Lewis called everyone else's "magical/ersatz" realism, discussed the mystery of set membership. The existence of the set {Cover, Sanders} depends upon the existence of, but is ever so much a different kind of thing than, Cover and Sanders. *We learn* *to live with mysteries, but when we do, the right way to behave is to not pretend they* ***aren't*** *mysteries*. [Lewis, of course, worked to turn set theory into mereology—but couldn't avoid singletons to start, and there had to embrace mystery (if only, as he would say, just one little teeny one…. Typical David!)])

49. p. 43 Paragraph continuing from previous page, "Understanding is therefore external to the soul itself…." I sorta get the point, but sorta don't. *Sorta get it*: it's a relational state, is understanding, and this puts understanding at least partly outside the soul. But, *sorta don't get it*: Understanding is (you say) awareness of a certain kind, and awareness is part and parcel of consciousness in the soul and intrinsic and internal to the soul—and thus not external to the soul at all. Can you clarify what you mean by, or why you say, "…external to the soul"? [The obscurity bleeds down to the next paragraph, about desires; so it's worth clarifying, really.]

Man oh man, I'm never going to make it through Volume 2 in the allotted time! (So much chocolate, *so little time*.)

50. p. 43 Second to last full paragraph, last sentence, "…[the soul's] awareness is shaped by its choices": I've fussed at my Diagram 1 and think I've got it reconstructed; and I think I get the word sketch of this paragraph, as a description of the taxonomic structure. But can you render this bit—about awareness being shaped by choices—intuitive? It isn't, as it stands. So to say, one wonders what's behind the eductions going as they have: which item—"awareness" or "choices"—departs most from common usage, to yield the unintuitive? (Perhaps I'm reading too much into your "shaped by"—though surely some awareness is shaped not at all by choices, or so I'd say for [say] the pain of the odd toothache, or the observed color of my ceiling when I first awaken in the morning….)

51. p. 44 First full paragraph, "…the unfolding of what is within the Body of God is affected…by what the soul chooses": Reiterating, I think, a query in **45**—and anticipating the claim on p. 53 [upper paragraph] that our choices have an "impact" on God's Body—the question arises as to how the choices of the soul can be effective "backward, *upstream*" on the chain of dependence to reach and touch and effect the spatiotemporal world. I can't get your arrows to take me back there, and though one can appreciate your eagerness to appeal to an intuitive belief about how the mental is related to the physical, one will inevitably have a harder time seeing any principled criteria of when this is OK and when it's not OK—so many eductions, after all, yielding results that seem ever so unintuitive. [I've read your "affected"—not as expressing an ability to produce an *effect*. *Is* it causal?]

52. p. 45 Top of page, first paragraph, “Although we have suggested that computer-governed robots can be conscious…”: What can you mean here by “governed” if, just above (ending of previous paragraph), you require the absence of any deterministic basis of the robots choices?

Still in this third paragraph: I’ve stated my view that there are no institutions, not really: the institution is *them*, thus-and-so related, where by sane metaphysics we deny the universalist’s principle of composition that says any things can add up to a thing, and where we see no non–ad hoc middle ground principles of composition falling between universalism and simplicity. “The First National Bank,” like “The Jackson Five,” is a plural referring term. But all right: let us agree that persons can be aware; and let us agree that if there *are* institutions, their existence depends upon the existence of persons and some principled relations among them. We will deny (as you shall later go on to deny) that the mere awareness of the member persons is sufficient for the institution being aware. So we must look to the relations. Will any relations principled enough to license talk of institutions also and thereby license talk of its being aware? I shouldn’t think so: some relations principled enough to get a robot won’t *also and thereby* be principled enough to get a consciously aware robot; and when you later deny the reduction of institutional awareness to the awareness of its members, you seem to agree that sometimes institutions can fail to be aware. So what relations are needed, beyond the mere artifact-forming ones, to yield conscious awareness in the case of institutional artifacts? (If you are going to take seriously the extension of “aware” to institutional artifacts, and expect the reader to follow you there, something needs to be said about this: mere assertion can seem far too little.)

One can let oneself off of having to answer this very challenging question, by saying not that institutions are aware, but rather that institutions are “aware”—scare-quoted aware, by which we mean ______________—and then the blank-filling can go a bit deflationary in delivering us just analogical, not univocal, predication. I take it that you don’t want to go this route—and indeed cannot, given your eagerness to ascribe moral predicates to institutions (and your eagerness to reckon the moral predicates univocal). So again, the challenging question deserves to get some attention, given how contentious the claim is bound to be. Again, the request isn’t for a reductive story: shy of such a story, one can fairly request at least a formal mapping of some kind.

[These are interesting, difficult, and much-discussed issues, and I haven’t the time or ability to delve into them. Sartre spoke of it (*solidarity*, on his view, being a sufficient relation to yield a “group,” as I believe he called it—though I can’t recall if this was sufficient for group consciousness [of which I believe he was willing to speak, rather less than those following him]). Since then, there is J. W. N. Watkins’s individualism (of the 1950s, inspired by Max Weber’s stuff), Peter

French's collectivism (Columbia, 1984), and—purporting to be midway between these—my former colleague Larry May's *The Morality of Groups: Collective Responsibility, Group Harms, and Corporate Rights* (Notre Dame, 1987), which received the sorts of negative reviews that in my opinion such liberal metaphysics deserves, but which nevertheless frames the issues quite well. My point is that there is a reputable context for your discussion on these pages, and that it's important and relevant. I only know *of* it: I can't say I *know* it, as it falls into value theory generally. So, alas, I have little or nothing by way of help to offer. Piecemeal coming up, I predict.]

53. p. 46 Final paragraph: You might, here, deploy your earlier distinction between *bad* actions (which might be conducted unwittingly, as in the case of non-culpable ignorance) and *evil* actions (which I believe you required, earlier, to be not just intentional but culpably informed).

54. p. 47 Second paragraph: So to say, the attributions of collective belief, action, duty, responsibility, and so on needn't be mistaken cases of the "fallacy of decomposition" (reversing the fallacy of composition, which says that if all the members are F, the whole is F), and might just be true. I still plead, however, for some gesture in the direction of justifying a semantic core to the personal-agent and institutional-agent predications. Perhaps it'd be enough to go fatly functional and call it a day, without succumbing to words opening you to charges of composing serious theory on the basis of a loose and vulgar speech of the masses. You should like to avoid such charges, surely.

55. p. 48 Uppermost, continuing paragraph (from preceding p. 47): Here, you add a third necessary condition for having a soul (the amoeba failing the conscious awareness requirement, though perhaps, in the context of your earlier account of institutions, this isn't so central as the free choice requirement, which a different example might illustrate): you add the requirement that the awareness be selective. But given what you say about this—i.e., that it must be directed toward goals—implicit already in any sane account of freedom itself? You've ruled out random "choices" as genuinely free choices; what's left is selection among alternative courses of action on the basis of reasons—and that's a necessary condition for free choice. Or so I'd have thought: your third item, added here, is already on board, built into what must be meant by genuine *choice*. So to say, by definition genuine choice is selective.

Objection: "Though we can't make sense of random choice, not really, we can make sense of determined choice, and so we need to add selectivity." I'd deny the operative premise; but perhaps—I just can't say—some wouldn't agree with me.

56. p. 48, second paragraph, We're trying to decide if it's right and proper and genuinely true to say that humanity is conscious. First, it'd need to be aware. We sometimes speak this way—of humanity being aware of/knowing X—but as you've said in other contexts, saying it don't make it so. Perhaps it *isn't* so: perhaps it's just assertible as a sentence expressing the proposition that every human is aware of/knows X. You reject that. Perhaps it's assertible in expressing the proposition that the best and most advanced humans are aware of knows X. You reject this. No, say you: "What is required is that this knowledge be located and distributed among humans in a particular way so that it is correct to say that humanity knows it." Well, hang on: we're trying to decide if it *is* correct to say that—or rather, trying to decide if it's more than a merely assertible sentence expressing some different proposition about individual humans being aware/knowing. You seem to have led the reader down a garden path to a conclusion that in fact you've simply (but quietly) helped yourself to.

I'll echo again an earlier complaint, then—appropriate here, but especially at the end of the paragraph over on the next page, and then even more so in the final two paragraphs of Chapter 25: the picking-and-choosing seems to me rather too unprincipled and opportunistic. It's hard for the reader to appreciate the rules of the game and too easy for the reader to suspect that there really are no rules. We often speak this way, but it's not true (souls have desires); we often speak this way, and it's true (humanity makes choices). It's…terribly *blurry*, the decision procedure. Sorry: just reporting (which is, I take it, part of my job).

Chapter 26

57. p. 50 Nicely done in posing this old threat and comparing it with the threat of so-called theological fatalism that has (by some) been thought (wrongly) to follow from infallible divine foreknowledge.

The next paragraph and the one following it (on top p. 51) could stand some work. I haven't time to deal with this in detail, and apologize for that, so let me just focus on this: I don't think your paragraph on top p. 51 properly explains your (good and right) position at the end of the long paragraph on bottom p. 50. It isn't enough, really, to avoid the theological fatalism argument, to say very clearly "I mean by free will the ability to chose between alternative courses of action without internal or external constraint or restraint." Suppose that you do mean this, and suppose, as you continue to say, this leaves some events determined but many events freely chosen. The fatalism argument doesn't trade on any premise that asserts the existence of internal compulsions or external forces (by this is usually mean "causal" forces—"forces" having no other proper usage). The fatalism argument is an almost purely logical affair that trades not on the familiar issues of determinism, but rather on a kind of necessity imposed by the nature of time itself—and in particular, the nature of *the past* (leaving causation, forces, etc., completely out of the picture). The key element, the operative premise about the necessity of things now past (let me call it now-necessity), is the intuition that *there is a kind of necessity that a proposition will have, now, if its content is about something in the past*: it's now-necessary that I went to the doctor on Friday because there is nothing anyone can now do about the fact that I went. The challenge, then, runs something like this, where "*e-M*" is the proposition that I *e-M*ail you on 15 May (future):

(A) Yesterday—indeed from all time past!—God infallibly knew that *e-M*.
(B) If something *x* obtained in the past, then it is now now-necessary that it *x* obtained.
(C) If God yesterday God knew that e-M, then e-M.
(D) So it is now-necessary that e-M.
(E) If *e-M* is now-necessary, then I can't do otherwise than *e-M*ail you on Tuesday (future).
(F) So I can't do otherwise than *e-M*ail you on Tuesday (future).

One doesn't get out of this argument by saying, as basically you do in that paragraph over on p. 52, that universal determinism is false and some of my choices remain free of external and internal causal constraints/restraints. To say that is to just assert a standard—and good and worthy!—libertarian freedom requirement. But nothing in the theological fatalism argument asserts or requires the existence of any universal determinism and its causal grip on human actions: as I say, the argument turns instead on a putative modal consequence involving the nature of time. To avoid the argument, then, one must deny (A) and say that God doesn't know things at any times, like Aquinas says; or else one must deny (B) by saying [for example] that now-necessity is only true for "hard" facts wholly about the past, not "soft" facts only partly about the past—so that (D) won't follow from B) and (C), as Ockham says; or one must deny (E), on the grounds that "PAP," the principle of alternative possibilities which it asserts, is not a requirement for libertarian free will, as Augustine and Frankfurt say. One of those routes needs to be taken; asserting the truth of libertarian freedom doesn't avoid the theological fatalist's challenge.

An easy way out, for you here, might be just to go with Aquinas…. You can of course do what you want. I quite agree with your assertions at middle to end of the long paragraph on p. 51: I say that you can assert those truly—not, however, on the grounds that nothing gets such a strong causal grip on my will or arms as to constrain or restrain it/them in one direction, but rather because God isn't in time, and because soft facts aren't now-necessary (PAP is too contentious for me to feel confident in staking a claim about it).

58. p. 54 It's interesting stuff. I personally would make very short work of it as follows. If there is a Block Universe, then eternalism is true—i.e., the past and future are just as real, and exist in just as genuine a way as, the present. But from

(i) The past and future are just as real as, and exist just as much as, the present

it simply does not follow that

(ii) If *x* will occur, then it's necessarily the case that *x* will occur.

I say that there's no contradiction to be derived from (i) together with the denial of (ii): so, I assert (i) and deny (ii). That what will happen exists, just as much as what did happen and is happening exists, says nothing about *the necessity of what will happen, happening*. So I and my actions are sewn into the whole existing block: what's sewn in includes some contingent things. So to say, I get to control some of the contents of the block universe. (I don't believe in a block universe: I'm a presentist. But I'm not sure I see a serious threat. I'm with you at the bottom of the page: "the mere fact that the future is what it is is not relevant to our own agency." But I've been wrong before—especially when I'm in a hurry to meet a deadline *and* am dog-tired to the bone.)

59. p. 52 From **bold** item on downward: I take it that hereabouts you are beginning to expound on the earlier claim, at p. 52, that the notion most people have about persons or souls (the real deal) is in fact a fatter and in some ways looser notion—a notion related to, or perhaps identical with, an "image" we have of our selves: so to speak, there is (i) your strict and narrower philosophical account of metaphysics of souls, and then there is (ii) our looser and fatter popular/vulgar account of persons. Is that basically right?

I think it would be good to state this position, actually in something very like the way I've just now put it, *again*: I mean, repeat it in that kind of short but clear broad-gloss way, because some very difficult material has been navigated between its original appearance on p. 50 and your finally taking it up here on p. 52—and it's very easy for the reader to have lost sight of the story. I did.

When I imagine something, I get a sort of mental picture. (Descartes, famously and rightly, distinguished between imagining and conceiving.) The idea of a self as *a mental picture of the soul that is me* is, I think, not quite what you want here as a model for selves. Perhaps you are right that the common man reckons himself as a spatio-temporally located particular, and these, I quite agree, one can have a mental image of. But there is no mental image, not really, of all the other items you're building into this fatter construction you calling a self. Choices are still built into this fatter construction, for example, and choices aren't—not really—themselves imagined: one can have a mental picture of a light bulb above a cartoon head, or something like that, but one doesn't really have a mental image of a choice. Nor of survival *per se*, I'd think—though light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel picture thinking (and coming out on the other side, somehow, still conscious but without a body or with a new and heavenly one) isn't itself thinking of survival. Still more so do these points apply to my reckoning as crucial to my self being a philosopher, or being white, or being middle class, etc.

If you want a constructed item that is closely related to but not identical with the soul, I'd think it's rather more like an assembled *conception* of a thing, some rich reckoning of what's essential or important to a thing, rather than one's image of the thing. (All right: perhaps you're using "image" loosely; but it does—I report—have both more of a philosophical lineage than what you want, but also, I'm pretty sure, a loose and popular connotation rather more closely allied with a mental picture than what you want. No mental picture (bearded fellow, head in hands, suffering over papers) is what you want for the representation of *being a philosopher*, and ditto for *being an American Indian* or *being middle class*. The language of "construction" seems fine, to the extent I understand you on these pages, but it's a logical construction or compilation of concepts (ideas in the loose and popular sense), not really mental images.

I wanted to try to get myself clear about the logic of selves. [Here, please read carefully and slowly.] A particular self, *SELFjones*, is not identical with the particular soul, *SOULjones*, that somehow "has" that *SELFjones* as *its* (own). But *SELFjones* is nevertheless closely related to *SOULjones*—indeed, *SELFjones* is *SOULjones*'s own rich and variegated reckoning of *SOULjones*, departing from the metaphysical truth about *SOULjones* partly in forgetting or not knowing some of the metaphysical details of *SOULjones* and so leaving them out of its personal reckoning (of *SOULjones*) when wittingly or unwittingly constructing *SELFjones*, but also partly in regarding this or that as essential or particularly important to *SOULjones* and thus adding that stuff to its personal reckoning (of *SOULjones*) when constructing *SELFjones*.

Is that correct? Sometimes, the wording of your presentation and discussion of selves can make it seem as if the *self* is doing the constructing, not the *soul* (constructing *its* self).[6] But I take it that we need the strict metaphysical items, i.e. the parts of Consciousness that are souls, doing the constructing of something else that it (the soul!) regards/treats as *its* (namely, the self). Indeed, the soul might mistake its self for *it*—though it'd be badly wrong to do so, since no soul is a self.

It is souls that act and are conscious and make free choices, not selves. Selves are like brightly colored shadow clusters, coming along for the ride. Should the soul mistake its *self* (a construct) for *it* (not a construct), the soul would likely form mistaken beliefs about what it (the soul) can and cannot do, which as a consequence affects how conceives its ranges of freedom to choose and act.

Am I getting this right, basically?

60. p. 54 But then, after all this, *I can't for the life of me make sense of the following* (toward the end of the second full paragraph): "…we should see the soul as ontologically dependent upon the self…"

That just looks ass-backward to me. Say I, a non-constructed part of Consciousness cannot be ontologically dependent upon some construct that the non-constructed item itself assembled! So apologies, but I'm quite lost. You say (p. 54) that the self is the appearance of the effects of souls' awareness and choices: this means that selves are in a way caused by souls, which to my mind precludes souls being ontologically dependent upon selves. Thesis: if x is ontologically dependent upon y, then y cannot be an effect of x.

The game analogy doesn't help me. I had thought that people were souls that made choices, and so were the players; but then I read a sentence right at the bottom of the page that seems to me to entail that selves are persons,[7] and so I'm just plain lost. (Doubtless there is some confusion, lack of proper understanding, on my part, here in the game discussion and just above. But I think it is likely that if I can be confused, so can other readers—and it'd be good to figure out how to head it off, in the text/ms.)

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[6] Example: "The image of the self that a soul has…" (p.54) is really talking about the image of the soul that the soul has, since *the image of the soul* is what you're calling the self. It is the soul's image of *it*, i.e., the soul's enriched image of the soul. Other times—still on p.54—you too loosely speak of the self-image when you really mean the self. (The self *is* the image [though I still don't like the mental-picture model of "image"], and so a self-image would be an image of an image.)

[7] The offending sentence is: "These are the elements of selves—of each person that is playing the game…."

61. p. 55 Large paragraph: believe it or not [and abstracting from the above concerns]. I actually like this, and the deployment of the game idea here. It's not that I believe it, really. It's just, well, nicely done, and genuinely useful. The following is beautiful: "…the game that one is playing is not properly called 'My Life' but rather 'God's Life'…." That's really very nice, Marc. It reminds me of the Kingdom of God in my tradition, where we are all citizens of a divine economy.[8] Good for you.

62. p. 55 Last paragraph, "Some selves have no soul corresponding to them": That can't be right, if a self is the image a soul has of it—if my self is my richer image of me, and an institution's self is the institutional soul's image of the institutional soul. At any rate, the material on p. 55f sends the very strong signal that selves are the selves *of* souls, are *had by* souls.

Perhaps it's like this: to get a self, one needs first a soul, which can then construct a reflexive image of whatever richness and variegation; but then, there can be subsequent fragmentation of such a degree that the soul is corrupted right into oblivion, out of existence—but the self somehow *hangs around*. What it is the self *of* is a mystery: it'd be like a game being played by phantom player—no person playing, but playing getting done nevertheless. Spooky.

63. p. 57 OH!! Here, my worries in **51** and **60** above get the reply "No: replace causation by imitation." Well, all right. It's a bit unsatisfying, not really because your "reflected by" and "imitates" sound for all the world causal: we can learn to get past that. Rather, because it looks so damned…lucky, nearly ad hoc.

But perhaps not. Let's see, here. Spinoza's *parallelism*—his item-for-item, aspect-for-aspect match between modes of God under the aspect of thought [finite minds] and modes of God under the aspect of extension [finite bodies]—turns out not to be a lucky happenstance or ad hoc contrivance for connecting up two radically different kinds of domains: he ends up earning it by his famous mode identity thesis, where a mode x is, under the aspect of thought, a mind and that same mode x is, under the aspect of extension, a body—cleverly earning all he needs without abdicating the apartheid between mental explanations and physical explanations (thanks to the opacity/non-transparency of explanatory contexts: here see Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* [Oxford, 1996]).

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[8] No! Please, *don't*—as Johnston so narrowly and ill-arguably did in his piece, and as you incline to do below the surface in your gesturing forays into the very difficult problem of evil—immediately think of the Kingdom of God as the Tyrant's Game: if you think like that, you'll have pretended that you've read Leibniz, George McDonald [the Scottish author], the Bible, and the current literature on the problem of evil and seen clearly that it's an impossible hash of inconsistency, which it most certainly is not.

You've got no identity thesis. You've got imitation. Imitation isn't resemblance,[9] because (i) imitation can't be accidental and resemblance *can* be, and because (ii) imitation cannot be symmetric but resemblance *is* symmetric. [We talked about the first of those in Rome, but not, I think, about the second.] The same is true for various breeds of isomorphism. So, given (i) and (ii), by "imitation" you cannot mean mere resemblance, isomorphism, or anything else that can be either lucky or symmetric. Leibniz's famous mirroring can't be causal: threatened with loosing that source of non-luckiness and asymmetry, he's in your boat too. His *pre-established harmony*—his item-for-item match between the goings on in any monad and the states of affairs outside the monad—turns out not to be a lucky happenstance or ad hoc contrivance, being earned by a designing God who created things at the beginning to unfold their careers like synchronized clocks. Synchrony, for its part, is symmetric: unlucky but symmetric being not good enough, Leibniz handles this by making the asymmetry of mirroring/reflection to supervene on asymmetric degrees of clarity as between the relata (this being his proxy replacement for the vulgar talk of "acting on," which the vulgar masses wrongly think is genuinely causal).

Your imitation is closer to Leibniz's pre-established harmony than to Spinoza's parallelism: it's got a teleological God in the picture. Good! So I'll replace my initial verdict ("so damned…lucky, nearly ad hoc") with something more appropriate and more closely representative, I presume, of a smart readership's reaction: I don't see the details. Basically:

I read the word "imitation," and know I need something unlucky and asymmetric; I'm told that teleology does the trick. I can read those words too, and grant that what's teleological isn't lucky or symmetric; but looking at your diagrams, I can't see the right arrows doing the right job. My **51** and **60** complaints, about not seeing how to get "upstream" with some sort of unlucky and asymmetric dependence arrows of some kind, still stand, *modulo* this adjustment. (So, in the bottom **bold** paragraph of p. 57, when I read "We are responsible for the souls we create in the Body of God," I want to say "Make? How? Not causally make; but not teleologically either, judging from the arrows I'm familiar with.")

Long story short, then: how, *exactly*, are our bodies non-lucky and asymmetric imitations of our soul (choices)? The gesture to teleology doesn't show it, exhibit it, explain it.

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[9] Despite your glossing imitation, on p.57 as "things coming to be like other things," which just sounds like resemblance.

Chapter 27

64. p. 58 Fifth paragraph (a **bold** one), "God Himself is utterly powerless": I think—in my present state, earlier comments now seem rather foggy—I worried at some point about when we *can* say that God is F, thanks to some aspect or part of an aspect, of God being F, and when we *cannot* say that God is F, because only an aspect/attribute of God is. There is power in God, but God has no power. Is that it?

Just below, in any case: "The everyday attitude of ethical subjectivism and the toleration of moral relativism are both deeply mistaken." Hear! Hear! They're great words to read, and they need ever so much to be repeated in the public sphere, somehow. Bravo.

65. p. 59 Third paragraph, "…all souls must be means to divine ends": Immanuel Sanders could grant this, in distinguishing between souls being means and treating souls as mere means—the latter being Kant's emphasis. You're not denying the latter, I take it. But OK, souls are means. But they are not the means *of* anyone's proper moral actions, i.e., are not to be used as instruments, so to say, for ends. But any means is both *to*, and *of*. So souls are the means of…well, I'm not sure (just presumably not the means of any *who*). You say that souls are "means to divine ends," which might, in a pinch, license one's saying that souls are God's means. But that sounds forced and askew, if I understand your overall intentions to deny not merely that God is a person but that we act for God rather than the other way round. Sorry: I'm tired and sluggish, so, not knowing what else to think aloud, I'll just hope to have registered the query with those words.

66. p. 60 Third full paragraph, first sentence: So we cannot read off, from the arrows that arc inward from Piety/Choices to Understanding to The Eide/Attributes, a particular moral requirement for action by particular souls. Why not, though? One needn't go the route of "*the* goal of every soul is _________"; but couldn't there be, for everyone, *goals* (plural), to be parlayed out, or appropriated upon us all, in degrees—many purposes being more weightily incumbent upon some than upon others, depending (as you imply) upon where we are in life, our level of understanding and maturity, our natural talents, and so on? These weightings might change, as the contingent flows of things change and as we succeed or fail to do as we ought—these too in degrees: I used to be a laborer and now am a philosopher, but I always had *some* duty to contemplate the Divine and His attributes. Why deny that every soul has some duty to inquire into, or reflect upon, the nature of God and His aims for us (if I may speak this way)?

I guess I'm just a friggin' Platonist or something.

I like—and appreciate, frankly—the subsequent institutional point, particularly as it intersects with the tradition (and "social" culture, "social" being sorta the wrong word but you get the point) I was raised in. Fuzzily, I think I remember saying that the institutional elements of Amish and Mennonite and Old Order Dunkards served terrific purposes….

And then, very far afield for you, I suppose, but not for me (in trying to see intersections): There is the Universal Church, spoken of in Christianity. It is not regarded as a human institution or construct but a mystical one. Never mind. What I wanted to mention was St. Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. Here's a bit of Chapter 12 of I *Corinthians*: you should appreciate especially verses 14 to 19.

> **4** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5** and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; **6** and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
> **7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. **8** For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, **10** to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.
> **12** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
> **13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
> **14** For the body does not consist of one member but of many. **15** If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be?
> **20** As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.
> **21** The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22** On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and on

> those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, **24** which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, **25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26** If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

67. p. 62 Middle paragraph: You speak here of the soul of humanity. The paragraph can sound Aristotelian—and perhaps enough in tension with what was said on p. 62 [fourth paragraph], *contra* Aristotle, to deserve passing comment here (about why it *isn't* in any tension with the earlier position). [I note some alignments later, on p. 67, second full paragraph. There's a start, perhaps.]

There was something I was meaning to say earlier (and for all I know did, but don't recall it now and scrolling up through 40-plus pages quickly can't spot it on my screen): it's something to the effect of "Your system makes it quite clear that there *are* divine purposes, and it gives some broad indications of how various parts—but in particular, souls and their choices—are to be directed and where; but it is almost wholly silent in terms of specific action-guiding moral principles." I suppose it's a version of the complaint that it's hard to translate teleological arrows into ethical norms for good/right behavior. In what concrete ways, exactly, does the objective teleology represented in the teleological arcs specify for moral agents like ourselves intelligible standards for right and wrong action? Rubber-meets-road point, in short. It cannot really count as an objection, *per se*, if the system isn't meant to do that. (Aristotle didn't exactly mean to do it when telling us speaking of a "proper activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" or whatever—where courage and honesty and charity and so on were accepted as virtues, and the point was to address moral motivation and character in respect of them.)

I don't know what you'd say about this point. Another way of putting it, I suppose, is in the epistemic mode: "How do it know if action A [fill in the blank] serves the purposes of God?" Doubtless, insofar as God has a body, finding out about Him, so to say, by discovering truths about the material world, is a good thing. But just in respect of science, for example, what more can be said about (say) responsible vs. irresponsible scientific behavior that isn't obvious platitude, but a concrete deliverance of your system itself? Doubtless the progress being made by the community of biologists, say, amounts—perhaps analytically—to manifesting greater coming to understanding, in its discoveries about God's Body; but what and how does your system deliver verdicts in respect of other groups and other activities (say, prewar nuclear testing, the activities of the prewar Reichstag, etc., etc.—and on down a long line to other activities and other groups, or even individuals, regarding international relations, property rights, relieving pain vs. saving life, punishing evil vs. saving life, honoring a woman's preferences vs. saving life?

Maybe I don't actually understand if your system is meant to ground a *meta-ethics* or a *normative ethics*. (I had thought a normative ethics; but it now dawns on me that perhaps I'm asking for too much.)

68. p. 63 First (**bold**) paragraph, and forward really: I suppose the above concern, in its epistemic guise, might be posed here in the language of "How do I know that I'm 'in accord with God and His will'?" or "How does one discover if I'm 'actualizing my talents in accordance with the location of my self in God's Body'?" I'm embarrassed to say that at this point, its unclear whether those questions are out of bounds or whether they're in bounds and I've missed their evident but non-platitudinous answers, or something else again. Perhaps I owe you an apology, after all this. If so, I'm genuinely sorry. But maybe others would profit from guidance in this direction as much as I would.

Meanwhile, down further, at the bottom of the page: The permission of radical departure from received ethical norms is a bit scary. Then again, perhaps it renders some perspective to what Johnston couldn't stand, namely God's asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. It would be here in your text, evidently, where Kierkegaard would be most eager to broach his theme of the religious vs. the ethical.

(Hereabouts, as at an earlier point if I recall, I am feeling inadequate to my charter on your behalf, knowing far, far too little about value theory generally and ethics in particular. Have you solicited the reactions of an ethicist for the cause? That'd be great, really.)

69. p. 64-5 Middle **bold**—and also bold!—paragraph: I sure wish this didn't have to be here, though I'm not surprised to see it. It's weird, really: in my bones, I know that the following would strike you as goofy:

Souls needn't be aware, and possessed of a capacity to make free choices.

That's because *you don't think that anything could be just any way whatsoever* and still be what it is. Down deep, you really *don't* want to throw every and all bits of essentialism out the door. And that's because it is completely unintelligible to tell us how souls are, and follow it up with "…but of course, souls could just as easily be blocks of frozen margarine, or prime numbers. I'm easy!" You may tell me otherwise about yourself, but I won't believe you.

And since I don't believe that about you, I don't believe that you really, down deep, deny that there are necessary truths. And here are two:

It is morally wrong to nurture the habit of sexually molesting three-year-old children.

Charity is a virtue.

There is no world—*none*—where these are false. There is no logically or metaphysically possible world where the child molester behaves virtuously. [This is what's so horribly wrong with utilitarianism, according to which the contingent mosaic of mega-Benthams, or utiles, or whatever, just might so happen to fall out into a profile that makes molesting utterly praiseworthy. What rubbish! What depths of utter nonsense!] And the damned thing is, Marc, *you agree with me*, down deep. (This doesn't entail much about what an ethical theory should look like—normative or meta-ethical. It does entail that any story declaring the items above possibly false is itself necessarily false; and that's why I really wish some of that bold stuff wasn't there.)

In any case, down below (final, large, incomplete paragraph): One explanation for why traditional ethical theories have emphasized the role of individuals and not institutions is that they have, properly to my mind, located the principle locus of ethical predication in persons that act—doubting (to my mind, properly) that softball teams and knitting clubs are ethical agents. I'm not quite repeating myself here: earlier I spoke for myself, but here I'm explaining something that you notice about traditional ethical theories. You wouldn't see what you see if the majority of those reflecting on ethics didn't agree with me. (Mind you, that doesn't make them, or me, right! That most people find it more intuitive than your story isn't reason to deny your story. Your story needs to be told; and I still say I'm glad that you're telling it. I'm more than glad: I'm really, really happy that you are, and congratulate you. It's genuinely worthwhile, your work; so I care about people having the chance to encounter it, understand it, engage it. I couldn't wear myself out this way if I didn't.)

70. p. 66 Last/middle full paragraph, and the claim of "unrealistic" ethical requirements on the part of traditional religions: (i) I take it that you're not implying that anyone endorsing a traditional religion must be a divine command theorist about ethics. That would be false. (ii) So what is meant by "unrealistic'? You must mean "not true by the lights of my system," as opposed to something more worrisome like "enjoying low epistemic probability by the lights of rational person" or "inconsistent" or the like. But then, come to think of it, you make supernatural assumptions aplenty (there is far more to your account than nature, than things in the block universe), and indeed—so far as I can tell—your ethical claims *all* have a supernatural component, invoking as they do souls, which are not spatio-temporal and so not a part of nature. They involve a natural component too, I understand: the point is simply to note well that by "unrealistic" *you* cannot mean anything that simply follows from “supernatural.” As I say above, what you *do* mean—since it cannot mean like “enjoying low epistemic probability by the lights of rational person” or “inconsistent”—must be, at most, “not true by the lights of my system.” But then (iii) why call *that* “unrealistic”?

Chapter 28

71. p. 67 On love, according to the Christian model, being “the appropriate emotional response…[etc.]”: I suppose it’s true that love is an emotion. Certainly, though, it isn’t just a feeling: it’s gotta be something essentially attached to action. When Lewis Carroll’s Walrus addresses the oysters, before setting about to greedily devour them…

> “I weep for you,” the Walrus said: “I deeply sympathize.”
> With sobs and tears he sorted out
> Those of the largest size,
> Holding his pocket handkerchief
> Before his streaming eyes.

…we can’t take it seriously because he’s not acting lovingly, tears or not.

72. p. 67 Second full paragraph, “Love thy neighbor as thyself—but let not either of those loves eclipse in any way thy love for God”: That’s right, of course; and that’s why—of course!—the verse you quote here is immediately preceded by “And the second command is like unto it.” What the second command you quote is like unto, is the first command: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

It is of some interest that the love of God is to involve our heart (our emotions) our soul (or will), and our mind (our intellect/judgment). “Not bad,” you’ll allow, even if unrealistic! I catch myself thinking “perfect.”

Just below (next paragraph): you are right, since you are speaking for yourself, when saying that according to your system, we cannot successfully serve Him by “loving” Him. You are right for Christians, too—that’s precisely why there is, in addition to the first commandment, *also the second*, “which is like unto it.”

73. p. 67 **bold** paragraph: This *can* start to look like negative theology!

74. p. 68 First bold paragraph, “*The good* is the unfolding…”: I do wish, for you, that *this* at least were a necessary truth.

Below, and the Abrahamic traditions' implicit identification of the good with love: not, presumably, with the emotion of love, though here the issues of divine simplicity loom large.

I wanted to say this: It is true that Christians, at least, may claim to have a common source for their moral knowledge and are not reticent to claim that this knowledge is distinctive of the right. The list of right and good actions is long—and, remarkably, a list that everyone and their dog largely agree with: don't cheat, don't steal, don't kill, don't…. It's a long and honored calling, on the part of ethical theorists, to try to find a single unifying principle from which all, or most of the obvious, commonly recognized obligations can be derived. (If you extended your system into a genuine normative ethics, that's what you'd be doing.) Now one theme, in Christian ethics, is that such a unifying can indeed be located, in love. When we read "on these hang all the Law and the prophets" in the book of Romans, St. Paul is referring to those two commandments spoken of earlier. Indeed, Paul writes "He who loves another has fulfilled the law" (cf. *Romans* 13:8ff). It makes some sense, you know: if you love someone, you won't cheat him, or take what's his, or kill him, or…. And I've found that it's remarkably powerful in helping me understand various commands that force themselves on me and also powerful in thinking about moral dilemmas. I just wanted to mention this.

75. p. 69 After **bold** statement, "We cannot love what we cannot be aware of": Where by "aware" you mean something pretty loose and not so stringent as to rule out falling in love with a pen pal, or loving a mother whom you've never met but whom you know to have sacrificed almost everything for your well-being. But even then, I'm not sure I see a good reason for even the most stringent gloss. Why believe this? (I appreciate that you're trying to incorporate Awareness into the picture, since there it sits on a teleological arc. But seeing it nearby doesn't make it intuitive. Perhaps the operative conception of love departs from my own, and it's a result of empirical psychology that this special pro-emotion cannot, in human brains, be manifest toward unseen things. Given the ways "love" has figured in ethical discussions, though, I'm doubtful that this is the right conception to make operative in one's reflections hereabouts. I may return to this.)

I quite agree with you, meanwhile: it'd be impossible to love *your* God, or the number two. But I don't quite understand why you end the first paragraph as you do: the Abrahamic religious traditions don't demand of its believers that they love abstractions (since it doesn't demand your metaphysical story about God, persons, constructed selves, and the like). Just funny wording, mostly.

76. p. 69 Paragraphs below the **bold** credo, stretching into subsequent pages: I don't believe this, perhaps because I don't follow quite the narrow emotional line on love that you might be treading. [I haven't managed a good fix on how you're conceiving of love.] Leibniz argued, on broadly teleological grounds, that "we love him whose good is our delight" (*Elements of Natural Law*, 1670), that "to find joy in the perfection of another—that is the essence of love" (*An Introduction on the Value and Method of Natural Science*, c. 1682), that "true love consists in that which causes pleasure to be taken in the perfection and felicity of the beloved" (*Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, 1714). These seem to me sober and good sayings. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" seems to me a good saying, too; but there's nothing of the local in it or in Leibniz's: Christ was asked "Who is my neighbor?" and he said, basically, "Everyone." So I say, it is good and right and proper that we love everyone, and should. (Doing so—trying as best I can to do so—might of course be manifest in the way lots of conditionals or dispositional properties manifest themselves. [I haven't *met* everyone; but anyone I *do* meet, ….] And doing so—trying as best I can to do so—might, remarkably, keep me from bombing the piss out of those unseen folks over there, people who aren't near to me and mine. What's wrong with blatant nationalism is the mean view of love permitting and even prompting it.) The well-being of all others is something I can regard as a great good—I mean, no one excepted. What hath *geography* to do with it?

You despair over the prospects—indeed, value—of egalitarianism. But you can meet the practical demands for locale, in the direction of how most efficiently to initiate actions toward coming to understanding, in other ways than by restricting the greatest of all these. For doubtless obligations can accrue beyond those of global reach, turning some *prima facie* duties into actual duties *but not others*, or *outweighing others*. Leibniz and Christ alike can be right without any threats of love turning impious. The basic argument for your local restriction seems, well, quite underwhelming to me, frankly.

On a flattened and deflationary account of love as a near-to-*my*-arms affair, meanwhile, one that might be handed to me by the empirical psychologist with a framed poster on his wall reading "A friend of everyone is a friend of no one," I can agree with much of what you say. There's no good in trying to hug the whole world. When I strip things down thus, well away from anything that could ground an ethics of love of the kind I described above as "makes some sense, you know," I can get in your pragmatic frame of mind—though when I do, again, I tend quickly to lose any distinctively rich ethical dimension to the whole business. It feels too much like…business.

(I like, by the way, your emphasis on loving the real, not constructions. And that's a very nice move, in respect of misappropriating the object of love to be a constructed self, where actions on the past portions (time slices) of the construct can become sources of resentment. Nicely done! But further down on that page, toward the bottom, on Nietzsche's *Übermensch*: what if "making of all of this the best that he can" isn't very good, indeed is miserably bad? What hath the empirical psychologist to offer now? I said something earlier, way back when, about forgiveness: in that context I said we need a Savior. The best I can do is really never good enough, and when it's recognized that all sin is sin against God, his forgiveness is seen properly to cover the forgiveness of others against me. That's terrific.

77. p. 74 If the logical sequence in a soul is an ordering of discrete choices and awarenesses, imitated somehow by a temporal sequence of happenings to selves in the block universe, and resentment concerns temporally earlier slices of the self, why cannot a corresponding resentment arise toward logically prior experiences? Or is there nothing whatever that corresponds to the experiences that I, this soul, is now having, so that no analog to "earlier awarenesses" is even available? (The point might be worth making—at the risk, inevitably, of having to remind readers that they, the souls they are, are not in any sense *now* aware of anything at all….)

Chapter 29

78. p. 76 First paragraph in this chapter: To souls there are "available"—by awareness, presumably?—other souls. The non-public character of the mental has long threatened immaterialists about minds with the old problem of other minds. Is there any "*how*" to souls being aware of other souls? It's an intra-category question, within Consciousness, and one might suspect that there can be no intra-category causation. But no, scientists study such relations among the particular material modes making up The Block Universe, when balls strike other balls. Is there causation, or something like it, between souls? Or perhaps any soul's awareness of another soul is always indirect, via awareness of its body, in an old-style inference to the best explanation (for the behavior of the body).

79. p. 76 First larger all-left-justified paragraph, on the impious/idolatrous love of selves, material goods, etc.: There are things in the material world, but none of them are worthy and proper objects of love. The sober Leibnizian theme—that true love is taking joy in the perfection of another—leads me to ask: can things (objects, processes, whatever) in space-time themselves have ends? I'd have thought so: Space-time, at any rate, is directed toward Omni-truth. (I don't really know what this means: I'm just typing it out.) If something in The

Block Universe can really have a genuine proper end, why couldn't a soul do well and good in taking joy in its perfection, in its accomplishing its proper end? Maybe I could love Space-time. No, I know: I can't *love* Space-time, you must say, but perhaps you should agree that a Leibnizian could loveL Space-time.

80. p. 77 Larger full all-left-justified paragraph: One would have thought that detachment from personal goals, so to say here and now, is warranted only if the later goals are known to be good and proper ones—which the contingent vicissitudes of life might well thwart. It's a lot to ask, of souls, caught up in more than they can be confident about, to nevertheless rest easy about later goals being improvements, being what you later on to the next page say are goals that *can* surpass and redefine the earlier ones. Are we constrained always to hope for the best, inventing confidence that I'll improve, or that my soul's environment will cooperate to improvement? (I may be misunderstanding your point of the paragraph—probably am. Apologies. You'll not be surprised to hear, from a conservative, that this is why he's *conservative*: he suspects that, as often than not, change is not improvement.)

81. p. 7 First full paragraph, mid-page, concerning the claim that so long as the soul recognizes that everything it is concerned with is a means to something else, then it is a soul engaged in right action: In this context, can you distinguish *bad* actions from *evil* actions? (I had thought that a person might act badly, but not evilly, when he unwittingly—let us say, with non-culpable ignorance—did that which, were it or its upshots accomplished with wrong intent, would be evil.)

Just below: Three cheers for your account of sloth!! Idleness is the devil's workshop, and sloth is the devil's vacation.

82. p. 78 Last full paragraph, "…or from traveling to a place where the abilities it can develop are needed": The bit about traveling someplace is…analogical, is it, souls not being spatio-temporal? I suppose that we all have lots of abilities we can develop, and that there are lots of places or "places" where they're needed. The idea is to maximize—or better, given multiple abilities, *optimize*—these, I suppose.

Next paragraph: it ends with the thought that a soul might pursue more money, which must also be not literal (though "analogical" is the wrong word). Ditto the subsequent paragraph: are these paragraphs literally about corresponding selves, rather than souls themselves—all just elliptical ways of speaking?

Likewise, over on the next page (p. 79): to speak of a proper judgment coming only "subsequent" to the footprint can be to speak literally of a temporally later time. Is speaking of “when the game is over for that soul” elliptical for “when its *footprint/self* is over”?

83. p. 80 You are answering some questions I posed earlier, toward the end of **67**: it’s some meat on the bones. Very good. I haven’t much to say about these pages, really; their contents seem to me fit well into the larger picture you’ve worked hard to develop. Well done.

84. p. 82 Middle/main two paragraphs: No complaints from me, on this story of the relation of Christian institutions to science. Temporally local themes can loom larger than they deserve to loom, though I agree that it’s hard to take a long view—where, crucially, the long view doesn’t merely look forward from where we are, but begins well back to where we came from. Where we—you and I—came from is early Western civilization. I would disappoint you if I did not close with a curmudgeonesque story—one that’s predictably certain to make you both smile and grimace, perhaps in equal measure.

I spoke earlier of the Christian Church—in caps, hence no constructed institution, but the Body of Believers, a mystery thing, this. You may think it no different than a human institution. I say it’s radically different from human institutions: that’s why the caps. But anyway, here’s a fact: Western civilization—what used to be called Christendom—is radically different from any other civilization. It has produced physical science, the rule of law, the independent judiciary, universal suffrage, the concept of human rights and its place in working constitutions, near-universal literacy, drawing in perspective, cartography, navigation, anesthesia, …. I know, I know: it has also produced world wars, bombs, horror of colonialism, and so on. I’m not suggesting that Western civilization is morally superior: I’m arguing that it’s radically different from any other civilization or culture. And here is (say I) a plausible explanation for *why* it is radically different: the Church. The Church was easily, far and away, the single greatest influence on the formation of modern European civilization, and (say I) it would be more than merely oddly coincidental if it had nothing whatever to do with the unique character of that civilization. I’m not saying that it *had* to produce this effect; I’m saying that it *did*. If a tree bears unique fruit, it is probably a unique tree.

The story isn’t *mine*, of course: I just tell it because I think it plausible. The temporally local themes of your two paragraphs on p. 86, aren’t Big Issues. (I don’t mean they aren’t comment-worthy; I just mean to piggyback on your own point about the bigness of footprints. The Christian Church may well have a soul, as no human-constructed institutional religion can [say I] have.)

85. p. 82 I said I was "closing" with that story, but I misspoke. Second longish paragraph, at the end, about faith and its epistemic failure: you are right that faith cannot undercut any empirical scientific method, of course—I don't know of anyone who says that it can. Concerning the further point about justification, though: please see again comment **16**, where I argue that this sentiment of yours far too quickly misrepresents the facts. It's at least *fairly* done, that comment. (Your final point—basically, that any means toward showing the limits of science must be consistent with science—seems innocuous enough, and I agree with it. Here too I doubt if any main discussants of the issue have undertaken to defend the limits of science via theses inconsistent with empirical methods [where, let us insist, that method itself cannot justify any claims to universality in scope: otherwise, all bets are off].)

I hadn't set out to write 50 pages of stuff: the blame goes to you and your wonderfully engaging document. I am almost astounded by it, and say "congratulations." That is not flattery: friends do not do that. Nor is the following flattery. Volume 2 is erudite, probing, broad in scope, and poses a distinctive, if very difficult, picture of how to think about the place and character of human and institutional value in the world. Its organization is noticeably well considered, and its written prose is in my view approaching excellent (between friends, permit me to say that it is much improved over the early documents of yours that I read—and this is, to my mind, no small triumph: please don't be offended by my saying that it seems to me you've come a long way). I have applauded your efforts and vision before, if disagreeing deeply with much of what came from them; disagreeing no less now, I want to say how great is my utter admiration and respect for you and for your ideas, and my genuine pleasure in thinking of the fact that you pressed, and are pressing, forward. I salute you.

C. General Reactions

I enjoyed reading this very much, and learned from it. My first reaction is to say that it hangs together better than I thought it would or could. This doesn't of course mean that I agree with much of it, but rather that I see more clearly some of the motivations for your saying what you do—that I can, more than I had earlier, see where things come from and how they fit. Not everything: plenty of items (most, I hope, indicated in the comments—though not always: it can get tiresome to you, I know) still leave me feeling as if they came rather from thin air. This doesn't mean they're unmotivated, but rather that they aren't at that point in the text satisfactorily earned. That's a gesturing sort of criticism, unfair if left like that: the indicated items in the comments save me from the charge of leaving it like that, but also, I think, the very scope of what you're undertaking invites the difficulty of covering all your bases satisfactorily. You see—or anyway have a felt right to be confident in—more than you can say, more than you can offer by way of "trust me: *here's* where that comes from." So I appreciate the difficulty.

Perhaps I can recapitulate a bit, and just reiterate what I think are the greatest difficulties for me—and perhaps (in some cases, not "perhaps" but "with predictive certainty, knowing my philosophical colleagues") for others. Some of these will inevitably stretch back to the earlier metaphysics: that's unavoidable. I'm just giving you my autobiographical best, in the hope that it might be helpful in casting/posing your case. I'm confident that the more alert you can be to these items, via their comment targets above but also more generally, the greater the chances your book will get purchase in the world of readers.

(1) The first is the monism itself. You should be able to (i) find it personally intuitive, or anyway attractive, by your own lights all on your own, and so (ii) adopt it, without apologies and without having to establish it as true. To establish monism as true would be asking too much. But I guess two things are worth posing aloud and thinking about: What would an argument for the conclusion "Therefore, there is at least and at most one ontologically independent thing" look like? And then, all right, shy of that: Is there any principled and relatively transparent (this doesn't mean "obviously true"—too much to ask, again) route from *pluralism* to fairly plausible candidates for *philosophical disasters* to be avoided if at all possible? If available, some big-picture reflections, of the second sort, would be a terrific way to recapitulate and also set up this fundamental theme, heading into Volume 2.

As things are, in any case, lacking either of those, one is left to surmise that the justification is largely on the order of "we've earned it by its power"—this, if all that's available, perhaps being worth saying up front and again at the end.

(2) The second is the hylomorphism. It's a Volume 1 issue too, but touches again on the lack of intuitiveness. I still do not yet see that this picture, invented for Aristotle's local purposes, very naturally and helpfully generalizes. One oughtn't make much of this if the generated structure itself were intuitive; since it isn't at so many spots—the eductions you pose seeming often, to me anyway, quite mysterious—one is to be excused for wondering here, as above with monism, whether the "we've-earned-it-by-its-power" case has been successfully made. The level of difficulty in granting a superiority to your payoffs is a function of our ability to see and appreciate the contents of the hylomorphic-driven structure, from which the results in this Volume 2 are drawn.

(3) The third, more local to Volume 2 but not restricted to it, is a felt linguistic strain in the appropriation of familiar expressions (predicates, mostly) into and onto entities quite foreign to—at any rate, greatly different from—their received targets in the traditions. This is a huge and difficult issue, for which my

own training renders me unfit to diagnose in proper detail; I don't have the skills to characterize the limits of linguistic propriety. Wittgenstein resorted to family resemblance; others go the route of functional definitions; everyone—except you, mostly—makes an effort to give some story about respecting semantic constraints. I'll just record here the distraction, given its frequency, as my third stumbling block, and refer you to the particular comments where it's on the radar.

(4) The fourth is like unto the third: when all else—concerning principled ways of circumscribing the reach of semantic propriety—fails, go the extra mile to unpack the abstract in the direction of the concrete.

(5) The fifth is that in many cases where you lean on teleological grounds for particular value claims, it is quite obscure what the *content* of those teleological grounds actually are. (This relates, in passing, to my failure to find certain arrows available for the work you claimed teleological relations were doing.)

(5) The sixth is a bit global (reaching to Volume 1), but gets focused rather importantly in respect of ethics: the absence of an essentialist grounding for some necessary truths. The rampant contingency threatens to leave you with just analyticity as a source of modal robustness—leaves you, basically, back with the logical empiricists, which is no place for an ethicist. (I have assumed, judging from what you say in a couple of spots, but not mentioned heretofore, that you are not attracted to the deflationary no-truth-value accounts of non-cognitivism, borne of Hume. Bravo to that!) It will, I predict, endear you to few, to come out and say that there are worlds where child molesters act virtuously.

(6) The sixth is the absence of any real metaphysic of institutional particulars. This could, I suspect, be fixed fairly easily—not to my satisfaction, probably, but that's scarcely the right target: just…*something*.

(7) The seventh is the quickness with which the problem of evil is declared unsolvable by efforts within the Abrahamic tradition. You are in no position to do this, and oughtn't do it. (Johnston invented a new approach to exhibiting the inability to solve it, from within that tradition, by appealing to the idolatry theme from within that tradition. That's new, actually; so he can conclude as he thinks he's licensed to conclude. [I tried to suggest that it's no good to argue from the existence of some texts, in silence about the existence *and content of* others, to the conclusion he drew.] But conclusions are one thing, and mere assertions/declarations another—particularly when good-willed and very smart philosophers [Swinburne, PvI, Plantinga, Wykstra, Bergmann, Howard-Snyder, etc., etc.] have made it abundantly clear that it's very far from abundantly clear.)

(8) The eighth doesn't actually belong on the list, or perhaps rather is already on the list (the first, monism). You have not shown that there is not a personal God, nor have you shown that if there were, the value-theoretic lay of the land must inevitably emerge as impoverished. But this isn't really a shortcoming.

It’s just that a personal God looms so large for my way of thinking that I couldn’t bring myself to avoid saying again that He remains on the board of quite intelligible and promising prospects.

Review 4: Gavin D'Costa

General

Before turning to the actual text, it will be helpful to establish some methodological assumptions so that this report can be properly understood. For ease of reference I am assuming that the author is male and called Smith. The author is anonymous to me. I am also limiting this report strictly to *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, as requested in my contract, although I have had access to Volume 1. In this sense, some of my critical comments might be met by Volume 1 and thus can be discarded if this is the case. All page references within the main body of the text refer to *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, while other texts referred to will be referenced in footnotes.

Genre

In assessing *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, there is an interesting problem of "Genre." *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, does not conform to traditional academic writing as it is currently practiced within academic institutions in North America and Western Europe in a number of ways. This is not a negative or positive judgment, but simply a statement of fact with an attempt to describe the genre for the purpose of coming to understand and also to properly judge the text. In *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, there is a focus on an argument and the argument is executed with discipline and care with reference to philosophy and philosophers and religion and religious philosophers in a manner that simply serves the development of the argument. There is no attempt to give close textual attention to either religious or philosophical sources or place these texts in any historical-social context. Neither does Smith engage with secondary critical literature on these sources or in relation to his own philosophical metaphysics advanced in *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2. Finally, there is no employment of any traditional academic apparatus such as footnotes and bibliographical details. It is thus clear, that the manuscript must not be judged by its conformity to normal academic texts for it is clearly not trying to establish itself in the genre, such as I have defined it.

However, two qualifications are in order. First, the above definition is not exhaustive or complete and some might argue that a text may have none of these characteristics and still be considered an "academic text" acceptable within the university. If one took the doctorate as a model for an "academic text," then this counter-argument fails by all public standards that are currently employed in

Western Europe and North America. Second, it is quite possible that someone who has established their academic credentials within the academic community might write a work such as this and gain the attention of the academic community. The readers will know that they are in well established and safe hands and that the claims being made about the history of religion and philosophy have been elaborated and defended in more traditional style in the wider corpus of that scholar's work. They will be interested to see the argument being developed, rather than seeing all the traditional academic mechanisms being employed. If Smith is akin to such a figure, then *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, might be considered as an "academic text" in this very specific sense. If Smith is not an established scholar, then publishing this as an "academic text" is a risky enterprise as it does not fully conform to the genre. Thus, from now on from the reviewer's point of view, I am not treating this as an "academic text" in the sense defined at the outset and will therefore not develop criticisms along these lines complaining that that text does not conform to such criteria as it clearly does not intend to operate by these standards. None of this is to imply any negative judgment on *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2's intellectual merits or the argument advanced.

If the text is not a traditional academic text, what genre does it conform to? It is not on the lines of pious or devotional literature written for a wide and uneducated audience in a user-friendly style, with humor, illustrations, and examples. It is clearly written by a serious philosopher who knows his philosophy and has chosen to present a vision of metaphysics that is both challenging and illuminating in a manner that is direct, disciplined, carefully developed, and to this reader, challenging. I have thus chosen to assess and respond to the text in like manner as far as it is possible.

Critical procedure

This report will follow the scheme outlined herein. After discussing certain methodological issues in this section, I will then turn to briefly outline the structure and argument of *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, without any critical commentary. I will then outline what I take to be certain problems within the text, first in terms of the text's own principles and assumptions (what I call intra-textual criticism). I will then outline what I take to be certain problems within the text, in terms of the reviewer's own metaphysical and religious assumptions (what I call extra-textual criticism while continuing the intra-textual criticism). Two qualifications are in order here. First, I only bring my own presuppositions to bear in terms of claims made by Smith regarding precisely my own presuppositions. Hence, I am not concerned to argue against Smith from the viewpoint of say a

Roman Catholic Thomist, except in so much as Smith might make claims about Thomas Aquinas or the religious group to which Aquinas belonged: Roman Catholicism. When Smith does touch on these types of issues, then it seems entirely appropriate that in respecting the integrity of Smith's manuscript such a response is required. Second, I should make it clear to the reader of this report that I am in fact a Catholic Thomist and found Smith's comments about religion most challenging. Hence, there are quite a number of issues that I will critically raise with respect to Smith's claims in this area. Relatedly, my interests in Eastern philosophy are also relevant as Smith makes a number of claims about all religions, not just the theistic Abrahamic, so I shall also be raising issues in this area. A reviewer with different interests might of course pick up other areas of contention.

Brief description of *Coming to Understanding, Volume 2*

Coming to Understanding, Volume 1 begins with "Philosophy," turning first to "Categories" and examines this in the history of Western philosophy. Smith here establishes his project of metaphysics as drawing upon the philosophies of Plato, Spinoza, and Hegel. He is also heavily dependent on Aristotle's hylomorphism, the theory that all concrete objects are composed of matter and form in an inseparable unity, and significantly draws on Aristotle's analysis of causality, while nevertheless rejecting Aristotle's pluralistic substance ontology. Smith advances a fundamentally monistic point of view in which the world is seen to reflect the divine reality. He criticizes the skepticism found in some traditions of Western philosophy as to the ability of reason and the mind to know reality as it is. In this sense Smith refuses the Kantian turn that characterizes so much modern philosophy and instead returns to a "great tradition" in which metaphysics is seen as both possible and necessary and one in which we can come to know the divine. Volume 1 contains two other parts (thus in total three parts), dealing first with epistemology (in which belief, rationality, taxonomy, truth, eduction, are dealt with and presented diagrammatically) and secondly with metaphysics (in which ontological dependence, the six principles, further eductions, non-eidetic particulars, a new theory of mind and teleology, agency, and The One are dealt with).

Coming to Understanding, Volume 2, turns to "Theology" and attends to "God" in Part 4 (of the entire project, clearly running on from the first part of this volume; these volumes are to be read as companions and it is not clear to this reviewer how many volumes Smith plans to write or the overall architecture of the project as a whole). In six sections Smith deals with the metaphysics of God, the properties of God, the will of God, the enemies of God, the traditional roles of

God, the proper role of God. In the next and final part of this volume, Smith turns to "Serving God" (Ethics, one might say) and in six sections deals with the metaphysics of souls, souls and selves, external piety, internal piety, impiety. The final section on holy crusade for truth and the four orders of souls is not complete but exists in note form.

With the exception of the final uncompleted section, this volume is a rich and careful unfolding of Smith's metaphysical vision whereby God, the infinite and transcendent reality, not the "person" of Abrahamic theism, is understood in terms of form and matter, whereby each further element is then understood in terms of form and matter, purpose (or finality), and cause. There is a wonderful cascading unfolding of reality that clearly draws from the Platonic, Spinozian, and Hegelian philosophical heritage. Throughout the argument, Smith distinguishes the "God" he is coming to understand through metaphysics from the God of the Abrahamic faiths (both in their philosophical traditions and in their cultic practices and folk traditions) and indeed from the Eastern religions as well.

The basic picture is this and here I over-summarize. God's form and matter are called Godhead and Eternal Life, respectively.

The form, the Godhead, is studied by philosophy and relates to God's attributes and will, upon which all other things are ontologically dependent and which are thus reflective of this Godhead. This form is transcendent, but not unknowable or ineffable, although in so much as it has infinite attributes, we do not come to know it in its totality. Smith makes it clear that this transcendence is different from that affirmed by "negative theology" or "mystical" theologies which speak of the unknowable God who transcends all concepts. Smith's God is knowable precisely because the human soul is ontologically dependent upon this God and thus bears an image of this "God" in terms of causality. Smith's "God" is certainly not "personal" which he sees as a result of folk deities being projected onto the Godhead in an uncritical evolutionary manner within the theistic traditions. In this process initially multiple deities that have various functions and personalities are amalgamated as this type of polytheism or henotheism develops into monotheism. The basic rule underlying this monotheistic resolution is that a characteristic is taken and projected to the *n*th degree within the divine life (11), and thus leads either to crude anthropomorphism or talk of mystery to circumvent any anthropomorphism.

God's Eternal Life, his matter, has as its form and matter Divine Truth and the Body of God respectively. This Body of God is The Block Universe, all "created" realities, and is studied by science. Two important points need to be made about the matter of God's Eternal Life, the Body of God which is the Block Universe. It is ontologically dependent on God's Eternal Life, but not causally under the control of God's Eternal Life. Second, it represents a sophisticated form of panentheism (my word, not Smith's) in so much as the Body of God is the world, but this Body of God is not identical to God (as Godhead), but determines the matter of God's Eternal Life. In this sense, Smith is right to distinguish his own position from the main traditions within the Abrahamic faiths. Whether it is distinguishable from all varieties of Eastern religions is another matter, to which we will return below.

In the Body of God, the "souls" (that transcend this space-time dimension) are related by their choices to particular "selves" that are constituted and developed through these continuing selective choices that make up the Body of God. Humans have souls, and so do institutions in a carefully defined sense. They have souls in so much as they make choices that are not reducible or identical with the humans who inhabit such institutions. Together with nature, these constitute the Body of God. Smith claims that all religions fail to attend to this institutional dimension, both in terms of the evil and good that institutions enact within the Body of God. This is a further important novel element in his metaphysics in contrast to the religions.

The Body of God is thus open to two possible trajectories: imitation of its causal form and matter (God, as Godhead and Eternal Life) or non-imitation. Smith focuses on the drama of the souls of selves and institutions (and by extension, to cultures, nations, and humanity). Hence, morality is constituted by the soul's discernment of what its role is and playing that role out, so that the Body of God reflects the Godhead and Eternal Life. Equally, it can frustrate and rebel against that role, which leads to a very significant point that "God has no causal powers over His Body, over what is in it. He is dependent on souls for the fulfillment of his will" (58). This is because God is contingent (within the space-time of the Body of God), and thus, "Whether and how the purposes of God are manifested in His divine Eternal Life depends on us. God Himself is utterly powerless" (58). Smith in these two volumes presents a rich metaphysics within the schema of a philosophy and theology, the latter also containing an ethics (which he calls "Serving God"). I would anticipate further volumes working this vision out in greater detail.

World religions in Smith's thesis: To fully summarize Smith's vision I must also attend briefly and separately to his treatment of the world religions that he constantly calls into contrast with his own system, portrayed above, and also criticizes in a serious fashion, not without recognizing the need of religions, even if they are finally basically in error. This special attention is called for because part of Smith's argument is that the world religions are incapable of meeting the contemporary challenge of secularism and atheism and thinking in terms of science (83). Smith's metaphysics is viewed as a new form of global "religion," even though he acknowledges that religions do help in "serving God" as understood within his metaphysics, even if fundamentally they “exhibit great and unceasing impiety” (83) as their attention is focused on constructions, “rather than metaphysically real things” (76). In some instances Smith focuses on the Abrahamic traditions and in other instances speaks of all religions.

Regarding the Abrahamic traditions, Smith first claims that his metaphysical scheme resolves what the Abrahamic religions fail to resolve: the tension between God as immanent and transcendent. In trying to attend to these two attributes Smith claims that the theistic faiths cannot resolve on the one hand the need to speak of God in human language that refers in terms of ontological correspondence, which is required to establish the immanence of God—and on the other hand their insistence that human language cannot refer to God for God is transcendent and transcends all possible language. Smith cuts through this unresolved tension with the confidence that language and thought are able to come to understanding of the reality of God as both transcendent (the Godhead) and immanent (Eternal Life, and known in the Body of God). Secondly, Smith also claims that the key concept of God as “person” is problematic and unacceptable. Since I have already referred to this point above, I will not develop this further here. Thirdly, Smith also argues that the theistic traditions’ doctrines of God are explicable through an evolutionary model that contains all sorts of social, political, and psychological considerations, and are not developed from a pure metaphysics. Since I have already referred to this point above, I will not develop this further here.

Regarding the world religions, there are three claims made in the manuscript, all three of which I have touched on above, so I will simply list them and not reiterate in any detail the substantial points being made. First, they do not address the importance of institutional evil or good, but focus exclusively on the individual soul. Second, they all claim that the infinite is beyond our grasp. Third, none of them are capable of surviving the modern scientific age, nor are they able to respond to the challenges of secularism and atheism.

It is important to note that even if Smith’s treatment of the world religions were entirely unfounded, this would not affect the actual claims that his metaphysics develops, except to say that some of its contrasts and distinctions in relationship to world religions would not hold much credibility. Likewise his overall assessment of world religions would not seem to be unconvincing. Indeed, it is even quite possible that some of the world religions might agree with Smith’s metaphysics in contrast to his depiction of them. In conclusion, it is not logically necessary for his claims about the world religions to be true for his alternative thesis to be true.

Intra-textual assessment of Smith's project

In so much as this review has been commissioned purely to deal with *Coming to Understanding*, Volume 2, it is difficult to address the philosophical underpinnings of the project which take place in Volume 1 that produce the effects to be found in Volume 2. If Volume 1 withstands critical philosophical scrutiny, then Volume 2 stands as a clear and challenging unpacking of a monistic metaphysics in the tradition of Plato, Spinoza, and Hegel, with its rich borrowing from Aristotle's hylomorphism. It is an attractive vision in many ways from a philosophical point of view.

First, it cuts through the Kantian paralysis in modern philosophy which has led to the stagnation of metaphysics with the relentless attention to epistemology and an assumption that the noumenon cannot be known. Smith is not on his own in this respect and there is an increasing momentum in modern philosophy to reject the Kantian heritage. Second, Smith avoids the dualism that has characterized so much of the Cartesian tradition that has marked modern philosophy and he instead explores a unity which is also being affirmed in a number of scientific fields such as physics, cosmology, and biology. Third, Smith gives philosophy a central role in unifying the disciplines, bringing together at least science and religion within a philosophical project that is realist, holistic, ethical, and "religious." Fourth, Smith's project has a "beautiful" internal consistency in its outworking and development, with very few lacunas. If Smith's premises are true and defensible (the burden falling on Volume 1 here) then the vision offered in Volume 2 may well be true and defensible. Its challenge is thus significant.

Within the framework provided by Smith, let me attend to two particular internal problems that would merit attention by Smith if he were to rework the manuscript so that it is stronger and more convincing in its vision. First, the role of nature in contrast to humans and institutions is strangely disordered and seems to be a surd that interrupts the vision unfolded regarding the Body of God. Smith writes, "All harm to God originates from within His body. Events and actions within it are not always in accord with the teleology dictated by the Godhead. We know of three such kinds of harm: (i) natural harms to God…" which are then characterized in two ways, as those accidents that happen because "not everything is due solely to God," which relates to consciousness, and the more traditional sense of nature as "monsoons, volcanoes, earthquakes, various diseases the flesh is heir to, famine—all of these are accidents of geography and nature that even God suffers from (for all these things are within Him, as everything is within Him)" (23). The other two harms are from individuals and from institutions. It is not clear from this reference to nature (in the second sense) whether nature will ever be other than the enemy of God. If this were the case, this would lead to the collapse of Smith’s monism, for it would mean that something can exist within God which will always be an enemy of God, thus pushing towards a form of dualism. Further, given the interrelation of souls to selves and selves to material nature, this creates an intrinsic flaw in the possibility of attaining internal and external piety, for nature will always thwart the attainment of this goal. It is not clear from Smith’s description so far as to how he would address this issue. He rejects the notion of a Fall to explain it when he writes “so that the Abrahamic God is not made responsible for the apparent evil in the world, an original ‘Fall’ from the garden of Eden is required, one that leads to a changing, contradictory, morally flawed profusion of events from which we can be saved, on the Christian view, only by an act of sheer grace on God’s part, through Jesus” (37). But in rejecting this move, he actually perpetuates the same outcome of the Fall: “a changing, contradictory, morally flawed profusion” (37) given nature’s surd quality. And he also fails to explain why nature is like this. Clearly, humans and institutions can move towards or against conformity to the divine image, but it would appear that nature intrinsically moves against the divine image and thus would mean that The Block Universe and God are destined to remain unredeemed. Smith says, “God is the victim. We are his only salvation” (37). But with nature in this intrinsically disordered form, we can never save God, and we can also ask whether the Body of God truly reflects the Eternal Life given this “aspect,” which can hardly be said to be ontologically dependent unless the monism breaks down. Smith needs to account for why nature is like this or to change his account of nature to allow his metaphysics to be consistent.

Second, it is not clear why it is that God has no causal power over his body. Is this a contingent choice made by God or is it necessary to God’s nature? Plato, Spinoza, and especially Hegel are all confident that there is a process whereby the telos of what Smith calls the Body of God (in their analogical similarities to Smith’s thesis) will be achieved so there is an inevitability, without compromising human freedom, of the truth of God shining forth in reason, history and the nation-state, or humanity in general. Smith perhaps takes freedom in such a way that he allows and risks the collapse of the monism that underlies his metaphysics. When Smith writes that “God is the victim. We are His only salvation. The “redemption” of the world—and Him—is up to us. The appropriate unfolding of the divine Eternal Life of God depends on us, on our descendants, whoever they might be, and on whatever other sentient beings who realize what it is that God needs. Righting the wrongs in God’s Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions. It is the aim of what follows to describe what we must do in thus serving God.” Besides the minor point that Smith should have written “saving” rather than “serving” God, the serious question is whether Smith’s monism has integrity. If Smith were to answer that a failure in the Body of God does not actually effect the Godhead, but only the Eternal Life, not the form but the matter, this will not help as God's will is compromised and so is the hylomorphism with which Smith is working. Some varieties of "process" metaphysics deriving from Charles Hartshorne follow a similar line but end up, like Smith, either driving a far too serious wedge between the Godhead and the Eternal Life or making God's contingency a hazard to God's infinite and transcendent nature. The same type of problem that bedevils the Abrahamic traditions in terms of reconciling the immanent and transcendent (as portrayed by Smith) returns to bedevil him but through another door. Of course, without the entire project being presented to this reader, it is difficult to know how and whether Smith will attend to these issues in a satisfactory manner.

Further critical reflections: inter-textual and intra-textual

I would like to advance a critique of Smith's treatment of the Abrahamic traditions and the Eastern traditions to show two things. First, Smith does not do adequate justice to these religions, and his claims about them cannot be sustained. As I noted earlier, if my contention is sustainable, it is not intrinsically damaging to Smith's own thesis, but simply weakens his overall strategy and part of his thesis is seen to be problematic. But I want to push this further and argue, second, in so much as his own position has two particular difficulties that create what might be irresolvable tensions within his system, there are some religious traditions that overcome these precise tensions, that indicate that their and not Smith's metaphysics might provide a real metaphysics. Clearly, there is a thin line between the intra-textual and the inter-textual here, but what I am hoping to do is mount a defense of Thomism and Roman Catholic Christianity in particular and also indicate that this tradition can provide a metaphysics that overcomes the problems that Smith's metaphysics is designed to overcome. In a review such as this, I cannot fully develop my position, so I realize this is a tentative claim that requires far more substantiation.

Let me begin with the four critiques of the Abrahamic traditions. First, Smith argues that the Abrahamic traditions fail to resolve the tension between the immanent and transcendent aspects of God which are resolved in his metaphysics. But is this claim feasible? I think Smith arrives at his position through a failure to appreciate the significance of and manner in which analogical language works in speaking about God. Take for instance Smith's comment on Maimonides, who Smith claims "believes that *no* description can literally apply to God *and* to a creation. He is a proponent of 'negative theology'" (7). Smith's comment seems to assume that if no description *literally* applies to God, then the claim is being said that nothing can be said of God and thus that there can be no referent to language being employed about God. But this is not the case with Maimonides,[1] and certainly with Thomas, who argues that (a) God can be inferred from creation and (b) God's attributes can be known through the use of reason and (c) that analogical language is ontological in its import (making claims about the nature of reality, metaphysics in Smith's sense), even if the language is not literal. As a metaphysical property, analogy is not a mere likeness between diverse objects, but a proportion or relation of object to object. Therefore, it is neither a merely equivocal or verbal coincidence, nor a fully univocal participation in a common concept; but it partakes of the one and the other. Thus it is important to distinguish between two kinds of analogy. First, two objects can be said to be analogous on account of a relation which they have not to each other, but to a third object: e.g., there is analogy, following Thomas' example, between a remedy and the appearance of a person, in virtue of which these two objects are said to be healthy. This is based upon the relation which each of them has to the person's health, the former as a cause, the latter as a sign. This may be called indirect analogy. Second, two objects again are analogous on account of a relation which they have not to a third object, but to each other. Remedy, nourishment, and external appearance are termed healthy on account of the direct relation they bear to the health of the person. Here health is the basis of the analogy, and is an example of what Thomas calls *summum analogatum*. This second sort of analogy can operate in two ways. First, two things are related by a direct proportion of degree, distance, or measure: e.g., 8 is in direct proportion to 4, of which it is the double; or the healthiness of a remedy is directly related to, and directly measured by, the health which it produces. This analogy is called an *analogy of proportion*. Or, second, the two objects are related one to the other not by a direct proportion, but by means of another and intermediary relation: for instance, 6 and 4 are analogous in this sense: that 6 is the double of 3 as 4 is of 2, or 6:4::3:2. The analogy between corporal and intellectual vision is of this sort, because intelligence is to the mind what the eye is to the body. This kind of analogy is based on the proportion of proportion; it is thus called an *analogy of proportionality*.

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[1] I cannot cover all Abrahamic traditions, but for the material issues here, see David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknown God: Ibn Sina, Meimonides, Aquinas*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1986; *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1993; *Faith and Freedom. An Interfaith Perspective*, Blackwell, 2004; and Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, (all subsequent same publisher) Clarendon Press, 1994; *Religion and Creation*, 1996; *Religion and Human Nature*, 1998; *Religion and Community*, 2000. In what follows in the main text, I shall draw on Thomas Aquinas to defend alternative positions, which I think are defensible from the Abrahamic tradition with of course the exception of the Trinity. This claim should be substantiated in the literature cited in this note.

As human knowledge proceeds from the data of the senses directed and interpreted by reason, it is evident that man cannot arrive at a perfect knowledge of the nature of God (and here Aquinas would differ from Smith) because God is essentially spiritual and infinite. Revelation affords us this perfect knowledge, but only eschatologically in the beatific vision. Note: there is similarity with Smith in claiming that the mind can know God and Aquinas also claiming that the mind can know God, but the difference is that God must reveal this knowledge of Himself for the fullness of this knowledge. For Thomas natural theology, or philosophy alone, takes us only so far. Yet the various elements of perfection, dependence, limitation, etc., which exist in all finite beings, while they enable us to prove the existence of God, furnish us also with a certain knowledge of His nature. For dependent beings must ultimately rest on something non-dependent, relative beings on that which is non-relative, and, even if this non-dependent and non-relative Being cannot be conceived directly in itself, it is necessarily conceived to some extent through the beings which depend on it and are related to it. It is not an Unknown or Unknowable. In this sense, Smith seems to misunderstand or caricature "negative theology," for God can be known in different ways: in finite things a manifold dependence. These things are produced, and they are produced according to a certain plan and in view of a certain end. It is right to conclude that they have a cause which possesses in itself a power of efficiency, exemplarity, and finality, with all the elements which such a power requires: intelligence, will, personality, etc. This way of reasoning is called by Thomists "the way of causality" and in this sense, Smith and Thomas both draw from the same Aristotelian tradition. When Thomas reasons from the effects to the first, or ultimate, cause, he eliminates from it all the defects, imperfections, and limitations which are in its effects just because they are effects, as change, limitation, time, and space. This way of reasoning is "the way of negation," and not a negative theology in the way Smith makes out. Finally, the perfections affirmed, in these two ways, of God as first and perfect cause, cannot be attributed to Him in the same sense that they have in finite beings, but only in an absolutely excellent or super-eminent way.

At this stage of Thomas' argument there is a very significant move against precisely the forces that Smith says are untouched by traditional religion: secularism and atheism. Atheism, of course, because Thomas' arguments are based on rational reflection and call, like Smith's thesis, for rational refutation. As to secularism, I am assuming it is philosophically agnostic (for apart from agnosticism and atheism, there is only the postmodern nihilism, which philosophically collapses back into secularism or atheism). According to secular agnosticism, this attribution of perfections to God is simply impossible, since we know them only as essentially limited and imperfect, necessarily relative to a certain species or genus, while God is (in principle) the essentially perfect, the infinitely absolute. Therefore all that we say of God is false or at least meaningless. He is the unknowable; He is infinitely above all our conceptions and terms. Hence what Smith actually attributes to negative theology, negative theology attributes to secular agnosticism. The latter admits that these conceptions and names are a satisfaction and help to the imagination in thinking of the unthinkable, but only on condition that we remember that they are purely arbitrary, practical symbols so to speak, with no objective value. According to secular agnosticism, to think or say anything of God is necessarily to fall into anthropomorphism. Thomas argues that both atheism and secular agnosticism (as positions, he of course does not address secular agnosticism in these terms) are false. God is not absolutely unknowable, and yet it is true that we cannot define Him adequately. But we can conceive and name Him in an "analogical manner." The perfections manifested by creatures are in God, not merely nominally (equivocally) but really and positively, since He is their source. Yet, they are not in Him as they are in the creature, with a mere difference of degree, nor even with a mere specific or generic difference (univocally), for there is no common concept including the finite and the infinite. They are really in Him in a super-eminent manner which is wholly incommensurable with their mode of being in creatures, but nevertheless we can conceive and express these perfections only by an analogy; not by an analogy of proportion, for this analogy rests on a participation in a common concept, and, as already said, there is no element common to the finite and the Infinite; but by an analogy of proportionality. These perfections are really in God and they are in Him in the same relation to His infinite essence that they are in creatures in relation to their finite nature.

The importance of giving such detailed attention to Thomas, and I am well aware of the many disputed readings of Thomas,[2] is to show that in Smith's lack of close engagement with the traditions he criticizes, he not only fails to understand them properly and thus undermines his dismissal of them (which logically does not affect his thesis), but also that he fails to portray the issues at stake in fair terms (which might well affect his thesis). Looking at this Thomist perspective also generates further questions to Smith regarding his own thesis.

Let me look briefly at just two such questions. First, on what philosophical ground does Smith dismiss "revelation"? Thomas makes the claim that revelation properly forms the subject matter upon which philosophy must operate, with the help of theology, to develop a metaphysics. Philosophy and theology (understood differently from Smith, who uses this term in Volume 2, purely in terms of natural theology, that is, reason reflecting upon the world) form two distinct sources upon which metaphysics is based. So why does Smith dismiss "revelation"? The answer would seem to be (because Smith does not explicitly attend to this question in the terms given here) that "revelation" is dismissed *a priori* in two particular assumptions held by Smith. First, since God is not a "person," there can be no action of God in history in the way that a person acts in history—and of course, this based on the premise that God as "person" is unintelligible. Second, the claims that are made in religions about God as person are attributable to what Smith calls "folk-psychological" factors (12), and not proper metaphysics. These in effect are the second and third criticisms outlined above against the Abrahamic traditions.

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[2] In my portrayal I have been very dependent on G. M. Sauvage in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 1, 1907; Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God*, Cambridge University Press, 2004; Peter Geach, *God and the Soul*, Routledge, 1969, especially 'Form and Existence' and 'Causality and Creation.'. For an inspection of the various ways of reading Thomas, the best guide is Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism*, Blackwell, 2002.

I think both claims are deeply problematic, even within the presuppositions of Smith's philosophy so far outlined—in the sense that they do naturally follow from his basic premises. Smith says of the Westminster Confession's phrase: "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance" and then adds "On the face of it, there seems to be no way of making the unity and the trinity attributed to God compatible. It is no surprise, therefore, that Anselm said something to the effect that the trinity makes no sense, and thus he believes it. Perhaps, as well, it explains the reaction of other thinkers who also claim that it makes no sense, but who add—in contrast—that they do not believe it." (12). This near trite dismissal of a tradition that has sophisticatedly sought to reconcile the unity and trinity is not really an argument, and Augustine and Thomas, not Anselm, are the key Latin thinkers in the Western Trinitarian tradition. Thomas responds to Smith's objections, which I'm unpacking in a way that he seems to think unnecessary, in the following way.

First, as we have seen above, the term "person" is attributed to God analogically, as God is higher than stones, animals, and humans, and if the highest attribute of humans is consciousness, then consciousness, intelligence, goodness, and purpose are analogically attributable to God, but without in any sense claiming that God is a person like us. To call God less than "person" is analogically implausible. Indeed, when Smith uses the term "Consciousness," if we were to say, thus God must be a person as persons are the only phenomena that have consciousness, Smith would argue that this is not the sense in which the term is being used. Likewise Thomas on person.

Second, if it is objected that if there are three persons in the Godhead, none can be infinite, for each must lack something which the others possess, Thomas responds that the relation, viewed precisely as such, is not, like quantity or quality, an intrinsic perfection. When one affirms it is a relation of anything, one affirm that it regards something other than itself. The whole perfection of the Godhead is contained in the one infinite Divine Essence. The Father is that Essence as it eternally regards the Son and the Spirit; the Son is that Essence as it eternally regards the Father and the Spirit; the Holy Spirit is that Essence as it eternally regards the Father and the Son. But the eternal regard by which each of the three persons is constituted is not an addition to the infinite perfection of the Godhead. This theory of relations also indicates the solution to another objection implied in Smith's work. If he were to argue that since there are three persons, there must be three self-consciousnesses, for the Divine mind *ex hypothesi* is one and therefore can possess but one self-consciousness, Thomas responds that this objection rests on a *petitio principii*: for it takes for granted the identification of person and of mind with self-consciousness. Thomas rejects this identification. Neither person nor mind is self-consciousness, though a person must needs possess self-consciousness, and consciousness attests the existence of mind. Granted that in the infinite mind, in which the categories are transcended, there are three relations which are subsistent realities, distinguished one from another in virtue of their relative opposition, then it will not follow that the same mind will have a threefold consciousness within an infinite mind.

This is not to suggest that Smith's possible objections can be simply refuted, but I want to indicate they need to do a lot more work before they establish themselves. While I have been drawing on Thomas and the Latin tradition, it must be said that an interesting alternative route was taken by the Greek tradition, which shows, by contrast, how close Smith and Thomas are at certain points.

The Greek Fathers approached the problem of Trinitarian doctrine in a way which differs in an important way from that which, since Augustine, has become traditional in Latin theology. In Latin theology thought fixed first on the nature and only subsequently on the persons. Personality is viewed as being, so to speak, the final complement of the nature: the nature is regarded as logically prior to the person. In this sense, Smith shares the same sources with the Latin tradition which insists that because God's nature is one, He is known to us as one God before He can be known as three persons. And when the Latin theologians speak of God without special mention of "person," they conceive Him under this aspect. (Here the Latin tradition would actually concur with Smith.) This is entirely different from the Greek point of view. Greek thought fixed primarily on the three distinct persons: the Father, to Whom, as the source and origin of all, the name of God (*theos*) more especially belongs; the Son, proceeding from the Father by an eternal generation and therefore rightly termed God also; and the Divine Spirit, proceeding from the Father through the Son and therefore also rightly termed God. The persons are treated as logically prior to the nature. Just as human nature is something which individual men or women possess, and which can only be conceived as belonging to and dependent on the individual, so the divine nature is something which belongs to the persons and cannot be conceived independently of them. The contrast appears strikingly in regard to the question of creation. All Western theologians teach that creation, like all God's external works, proceeds from Him as one: the separate persons do not enter into consideration. The Greeks invariably speak as though, in all the divine works, each person exercises a separate office.

The second reason Smith dismisses revelation—and this takes us to Smith's third objection against the Abrahamic traditions—is in seeing their claims that God is a person acting, as founded in folk-psychological factors. Smith may be very indebted to Hegel for this assumption, and like Kant, both see that religion comes to be transcended by philosophy, reason, and science. But in the argument above, I have been trying to show that this position must justify itself with real engagement with religious thinkers if it is to be credible. Of course, Smith actually does not take this task seriously, as he believes that religion is dying as it is incredible to modern man. Before moving to that point, let me make two observations about Smith's point regarding folk-psychological factors.

First, in the history of religions there has been a tradition at least since J. G. Frazer and others that simply see a straightforward historical-cultural evolutionary development from primitive and folk religions to polytheism or/and forms of henotheism to monotheism. Hegel in the West and thinkers like Radhakrishnan in the East simply add monism to this ladder of ascent. Smith is in keeping with this basic tradition. However, in the history of religions there has been considerable debate about the "genetic fallacy" involved in this view, which simply sees the "higher" as an evolution of the lower, rather than novelty and radical discontinuity being introduced (for example, Israel does not develop its monotheism in this fashion at all but does so more through discontinuity with the previous folk traditions of the Middle East).[3] In this sense Smith offers no real evidence for his claim that the Abrahamic tradition's view of God is cluttered with folk-psychological factors if this is taken to refer to the high philosophical traditions within the Abrahamic religions. Clearly, at a popular level, Smith might be right, but in terms of dealing with the best philosophical minds within those traditions, I think he would be hard pressed to make this case of Maimonides, Thomas, or Ibn Sina.[4]

Second, the evolution supposed has not been borne out in the actual history of religions. It can be said that within the world religions there is a final telos for both theism and monism within their respective traditions, with strong rational arguments being offered by both sides as to the incoherence of the other's position and the non-inevitability of monotheism being transmuted into monism or vice versa. The arguments on monotheism and monism are to be classically found in the debate between the schools Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva in Indian Vedantic philosophy, even if "monotheism" in this context should be understood as a family resemblance term to the type of monotheism found in the Abrahamic traditions.[5]

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[3] See further Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy. An essay on interpretation*, Yale University Press, 1970, and Gavin D'Costa, *Sexing the Trinity*, SCM, 2000 regarding this point.

[4] See note 1 above on the Abrahamic traditions on this very point.

The point I am making here is that both Smith's second and third objections to the Abrahamic traditions are problematic, while at the same time, in so much as these objections are defective, they weaken Smith's implicit presuppositions against considering revelation seriously. Thus, at this point the inter-textual and intra-textual meet with a considerable question to the universal scope of Smith's metaphysics, for if based on argument and reason, I have tried to show why it fails, in its own terms, in both these areas regarding the particular problematic I have been inspecting.

It is time to move to the three claims made about the world religions in general to bring this review to a conclusion. The first claim is that the religions in general do not address the importance of institutional evil or good. In one sense Smith is right, and his thesis, in the manner of Hegel, does bring into the foreground the "soul" of institutions, cultures and nations, and finally of humanity. Smith's arguments for the "soul" of these entities are internally consistent and actually quite illuminating. However, one qualification needs to be registered. First, in his discussion about political and religious institutions (27), Smith notes that sometimes the two become identified ("the Byzantine Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, and the current government of Iran (*sic*)" [27]). Leaving aside the historical accuracy of these identifications, the point is that institutions, nations, and cultures have been seen as important in the choice between good and evil within Christianity (in the conception of the Church, both visible [particular] and invisible [universal]), Islam (in the explicit community and those who "submit," such as Jews and Christians) and Judaism (in the Chosen People and the Righteous Gentiles who follow the Noachide covenant), Hinduism (in the dharma, and until the modern period, not really outside the orthodox dharma) and Buddhism (within the sangha, but as early as Asoka, a more universal concept through ethics). Speaking about all, one can thus see a considerable importance attached to institutions, nations, and cultures. Further, within Christianity one can say that while the notion of the soul is entirely alien to that which is a property of anything other than an individual, there is no neglect of the institutional, cultural, or humanity in general. But always mediated through the individual. In effect, there is a difference in emphasis, but admittedly, a serious difference regarding the soul. The point, however, is that the broad categorization suggested by Smith is problematic: it is simply not true that the religions ignore structural good and evil.

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[5] See Eric Lott, *Vedantic Approaches to God*, Barnes and Noble, 1980; S Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1922ff.

The second criticism relates to the claim that they all make unintelligible claims that the infinite is beyond human grasp. I have already dealt with one example of an Abrahamic tradition through Aquinas. Here, I will simply and briefly cite the example of Ramanuja, within Vedantic philosophy. I use Ramanuja for three reasons. He rationally argues that "God" can be known through scripture and reasoning. In this way, he is not unlike Aquinas. Second, he is very sophisticated about his use of language in making metaphysical claims, and a sort of doctrine of analogy can be seen to operate in his work, which is not dissimilar to Thomas' reservations, while at the same time outlining an elaborate metaphysics.[6] Third, his vision of God is very like that of Smith, although Ramanuja's is what is called a qualified monism: that is God is Brahman, the transcendent, which is beyond (not in the negative theology sense of Smith's, but in the analogical sense of Thomas) full comprehension, but God is also known through God's body, the world, within which the "selves" are dependent on "souls" that transcend this space-time continuum, and which in their release do not bear marks of individuality in so much as they are then to be found in Brahman, one without a second. Interestingly, Ramanuja was criticized for precisely the reasons I have criticized Smith by his theistically oriented Vedantins from Madhva's tradition and criticized by the pure monism of Sankara's tradition for not being able to logically distinguish the "souls" in any way, thus allowing for the soul's final identity with Brahman. In this over-compressed summary, I am simply gesturing at two points. First, Smith is wrong in his depiction of the Eastern traditions on his second point regarding the unknowability of the infinite through reason, and contrary to his claims, there are analogical forms of monism very close to his own within the Eastern traditions.

The final claim made by Smith regarding all is that modern man finds these religions obsolete. In some ways I have covered this claim above, but I want to reiterate the sociological and anthropological findings of recent scholars that indicate: there is a resurgence of religion in Western Europe and the United States in stark contrast to the secularization thesis that had been widely accepted from the

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[6] See Julius Lipner, *The Face of Truth: a study of meaning and metaphysics in the Vedantic theology of Ramanuja*, MacMillan, 1985; Eric Lott, *God and the universe in the Vedantic theology of Ramanuja: a study in his use of the self-body analogy*, Ramanuja Research Society, Madras, 1976.

1960s to the 1990s; that worldwide, there is a strong and powerful resurgence of religion, such that in global empirical terms, Smith's claims simply lack proof.[7]

Overall conclusion of the report

Smith's overall argument is well made, thoughtfully developed, and challenging. It places metaphysics at the center of the philosophical agenda and makes a powerful case for a monistic metaphysics in the tradition of Plato, Spinoza, and Hegel. The thesis has some internal tensions that require attention prior to publication. Second, Smith's depiction of the Abrahamic traditions and the world religions is seriously inadequate. This does not invalidate his thesis but considerably weakens it. Smith should either defend and develop his criticisms against these traditions or consider dropping the claims so as not to distract from his own thesis. It is the claim of this reviewer that Thomism is rationally superior to Smith's depiction of it and that Thomism is not only able to refute many of Smith's claims about the Abrahamic traditions but that Thomism can actually attend to the problems that Smith is most concerned to address: to provide a general and universal metaphysics that will challenge all men and women to reconsider their lives in the light of this vision. In conclusion, the comments made about the genre of the text need to be kept in mind in deciding whether to publish this text or not. For its generic type, with revision and editing, it is publishable.

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[7] See for example José Casonova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, 1994; Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2000; M. Scott Thomas, *The global resurgence of religion and the transformation of international relations: the struggle for the soul of the twenty-first century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Review 5: David Ray Griffin

I have labeled this response a critique rather than a review because I will not attempt anything close to a full-scale review. My understanding is that *Coming to Understanding* is a work in progress and that responses have been solicited primarily for the sake of helping the author improve it. I will, accordingly, simply discuss some aspects of it that I find problematic, suggesting in each case what I believe would be a better approach. Although I focus primarily on issues discussed in Volume 2, I sometimes refer to points made in Volume 1 (the version of early 2007).

I share the author's concern with the revival of systematic philosophy. I also share his belief that ethics finally requires theology—because, as I would put it, the questions of justification and motivation cannot ultimately be answered apart from an appeal to something holy.[1] However, I believe that the particular way he develops his philosophy, including his philosophical theology, means that it cannot, contrary to his hope, provide a basis for moral guidance. I will support this conclusion by pointing out what I see as problems in his epistemology and his metaphysics, including his metaphysical theology. Some of the criticisms deal with problems in the intelligibility of the system that would prevent it, I believe, from becoming widely accepted; others deal directly with obstacles in the path from theology to ethics.

My criticisms and suggestions will, of course, be carried out from my own perspective, which is informed primarily by the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.[2]

Epistemology and Fallibilism

Monius says, rightly in my view, that epistemology should be understood as a normative discipline—that it should deal with rational versus irrational methods of belief acquisition. He also rightly regards as most fundamental those beliefs that are forced upon us, saying that these are the ones of which we can be most certain. But he then, wrongly in my view, equates these with beliefs that are "involuntarily forced upon us by sense perception." One problem here is that sense perception is notoriously fallible. But the most serious problem is that there are other beliefs, of which we are rightly much more certain, that are not based on sense perception.

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[1] See David Ray Griffin, "Theism and the Crisis in Moral Theory: Rethinking Modern Autonomy," in *Nature, Truth, and Value: Exploring the Thought of Frederick Ferré*, ed. George Allan and Merle Allshouse (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 199–220.

[2] The major works of Whitehead's mature (metaphysical) period were *Science and the Modern World* (1925), *Religion in the Making* (1926), *Process and Reality* (1929), *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), and *Modes of Thought* (1938).

I refer here to our presuppositions about the reality of the other actual things beyond ourselves (vs. solipsism), the past (vs. Santayana's "solipsism of the present moment"), time, efficient causation (things or events exert real influence other things or events; efficient causation cannot be reduced to Hume's "constant conjunction"), and the distinction between better and worse states of affairs. Hume, while recognizing that we, in "practice," inevitably presuppose these "natural beliefs," said that they were not empirically rooted and hence could not be employed by philosophers *qua* philosophers, even though they, like everyone else, must presuppose them in their ordinary lives.

Whitehead, in line with the "commonsense tradition" in philosophy (of which Hume's antagonist Thomas Reid was an early, albeit inconsistent and supernaturalist, proponent), rejected this view, saying: "When the description fails to include the 'practice,' the metaphysics is inadequate and requires revision. There can be no appeal to practice to supplement metaphysics."[3] Ideas that are inevitably and hence universally presupposed in practice take priority over all other beliefs. The "metaphysical rule of evidence," Whitehead said, is "that we must bow to those presumptions which, in despite of criticism, we still employ for the regulation of our lives."[4]

I have referred to these presumptions as "hard-core commonsense ideas" (to distinguish them from "soft-core commonsense ideas," which, although they are widely called "common sense," are really parochial ideas, limited to certain times and places, and can be denied without self-contradiction). When science is described as a "systematic assault on common sense," as it often is, the "commonsense" ideas in view are all of the soft-core variety. Scientists, like everyone else, necessarily presuppose the hard-core commonsense ideas.[5]

It is anti-rational to deny in theory ideas that one necessarily presupposes in practice, because one thereby violates the first rule of reason, the law of noncontradiction. This law is violated when one simultaneously denies and affirms one and the same proposition. As John Passmore put it: "The proposition *p* is absolutely self-refuting, if to assert *p* is equivalent to asserting *both p and not-p*."[6] And this is what happens when one denies any of our hard-core commonsense ideas, because one is denying the idea explicitly while affirming it implicitly. This point has been made by Karl-Otto Apel in his critique of "performative contradiction," in which the very act of performing a speech act contradicts its semantic content, its meaning.[7]

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[3] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology,* corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), p. 13.

[4] Ibid., p. 151.

[5] I have explained the difference between hard-core and soft-core commonsense ideas in David Ray Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Problem* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), ch. 1; *Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), ch. 1; *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy: An Argument for Its Contemporary Relevance* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), ch. 1.

Crucial to Whitehead's consistent and nonsupernaturalist development of this approach is his nonsensationist philosophy, according to which sensory perception is derivative from a more fundamental nonsensory mode of perception, which he called "physical prehension" ("physical" here simply means that what is apprehended is an actuality, not a merely an possibility; mentality involves the prehension of possibilities [perhaps along with actualities]). It is through this means that we know the reality of other actualities (what Kant called the category of "substance"), causation, and the past, through that type of physical prehension we call "memory" (this is a *physical* prehension because one moment of experience, which is an actuality, is prehending past moments of experience, which were actualities).

Other inevitable presuppositions are known by means of our direct prehension of God, meaning the universe understood as an all-inclusive individual, in which subsist the realm of Platonic forms. By means of our direct and constant prehension of God, we know of mathematical and logical forms and also moral, aesthetic, and cognitive (beyond the purely logical) norms. By means of our anticipation of the future, in conjunction with our prehension of the past, we know of the reality of time.

I am suggesting that the basic principle in a rational method of belief acquisition is to avoid contradicting any of our hard-core commonsense ideas (which provide not a foundation but a compass, letting us know when we are going off course), and that, to understand why we have these ideas, we need to realize that they are forced upon us not by sensory perception but through a more fundamental mode of perception.

Because these hard-core commonsense ideas cannot be denied without self-contradiction, it would make no sense to extend fallibilism to them, as Monius would seem to do in saying: "It is possible to be wrong about anything." This point has been made by Karl-Otto Apel in discussing the tension between C. S. Peirce's fallibilism and his commonsensism. Peirce should have said, Apel pointed out, that fallibilism must not be absolutized, because "[t]he principle of fallibilism and the principle of criticism derived from it are meaningful and valid only if they are restricted in their validity from the outset, so that at least some philosophical evidence is excluded from possible criticism—namely the evidence on which these principles are themselves based."[8]

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[6] John Passmore, *Philosophical Reasoning* (1961; New York: Basic Books, 1969). p60.

[7] For an exposition and discussion, see Martin Jay, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 25-37

Cartesian Dualism vs. Panexperientialism

Monius rightly, in my view, rejects materialism, pointing out that intentionality and awareness cannot characterize "purely physical events." He seems to believe, however, that to reject materialism means to endorse some version of Cartesian dualism, according to which our world contains two radically different kinds of actual things: souls, on the one hand, and things that are "purely physical," meaning completely devoid of experience, sentience, and hence interiority, on the other hand.

This position, however, creates the notorious mind-body (or soul-body) problem of understanding how our minds (or souls) can influence, and be influenced by, our bodies. The only even partly intelligible answer to this question is that given by dualistic supernaturalists from Descartes himself to Richard Swinburne: God effects the interaction (or at least the appearance thereof, as "occasionalists" said).[9]

Monius, however, rejects supernaturalism. He is right to do this, in my view. But this rejection leaves it unclear how he solves the mind-body problem. He seems to affirm interaction, saying that "damage in the space-time configuration of the Body of God damages Consciousness." He thereby seems to affirm that the human body can be damaged by human agency and that this damaged body can damage the person's soul in return. However, Monius then takes this back, saying: "We have mentioned that a soul's decisions have impact on the Body of God. These ways of speaking sound causal, but they are not meant to be. Souls do not cause anything to happen in the Body of God." Monius here appears to be trying to make his position consistent with his Cartesian dualism, which, being severed from supernaturalism, makes the influence of soul on body inconceivable.

But he thereby violates one of our hard-core commonsense ideas, namely, that our decisions influence our bodies. If we deny this idea orally (by using our vocal chords to speak) or in writing (by using our hands to write) we are denying explicitly what we are affirming implicitly (in the very act of using our bodies to express our thoughts).

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[8] Karl-Otto Apel, "The Problem of Philosophical Foundations in Light of a Transcendental Pragmatics of Language," in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* edited by Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 250–290, at 266.

[9] Gordon Baker and Katherine J. Morris, *Descartes' Dualism* (London and New York: Routledge 1996); Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

The only solution to this problem within a nonsupernaturalistic framework, I have argued, is to adopt the third form of realism (beyond dualism and materialism), namely, panexperientialism, according to which all actualities that are genuine individuals have at least some iota of experience. The restriction to *genuine* individuals rules out the standard put-down of panexperientialism, namely, that it would be absurd to say that sticks and stones have experience. This would indeed be absurd, because experience should be posited only of actualities that show signs of spontaneity and hence self-determination. These signs provide the evidence that something is a genuine individual, meaning that it has a unity of experience.

The term "panexperientialism" is, incidentally, preferable to the traditional term for such positions, "panpsychism," because that term suggests the presence of consciousness (as distinct from experience, which may or may not rise to the level of consciousness).[10]

Monius explicitly rejects this position, but not, as far as I can see, on the basis of any good reason. Defining panpsychism as the position that "mental properties are found in everything" (one would need to sort out what is meant here by "mental properties" [do they presuppose consciousness?] and "everything" [my Whiteheadian version does *not* see rocks and other things devoid of spontaneity as having mental properties], Monius says:

> But we *disagree* with [this contention]. We claim that (i) though mental activities are crucial for The One's purposes, they are not located anywhere in The Block Universe.

That, however, is not an argument, merely a reassertion of dualism. He declares sentience (by which he apparently means sense-based experience) and consciousness to be "local and parochial phenomena." That is obviously true. But it leaves open the question of whether non-sensory experience, which may or may not be conscious, is ubiquitous. Many great minds, including Whitehead, Peirce, James, and Hartshorne, have concluded that it is.

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[10] I have developed my Whiteheadian version of panexperientialism most fully in *Unsnarling the World-Knot*. Briefer articulations can be found in "Panexperientialist Physicalism and the Mind-Body Problem," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 4/3 (1997), pp. 248–268, and in "Scientific Naturalism, the Mind-Body Relation, and Religious Experience," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 37/2 (June 2002): pp. 361–380.*the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

Moreover, this position and only this position, I have argued, allows us to affirm in a self-consistent way all of our hard-core commonsense presuppositions about the mind-body relation.[11] If that is true, then although panexperientialism may initially appear to be absurd, given soft-core common sense as shaped by modern dualism, materialism, and even idealism, it turns out to be the only position that is truly rational.

Nontemporal Souls

The form of dualism suggested by Monius also involves a dualism between temporal and nontemporal things: physical processes are temporal but the "events of consciousness" are not. I would argue that this, given how Monius understands "physical processes" (as not involving experience), has it exactly backwards: Minds or souls are temporal, whereas physical processes, if defined either as processes studied by (present-day) physics or as simply events devoid of experience, are not. This point is illustrated by two philosophers who have thought long and hard about temporality, Adolf Grünbaum and J. T. Fraser.

Temporality as we know it from our own experience involves three features: asymmetry, constant becoming, and irreversibility in principle. *Asymmetry* means that the relation of the present to the past is different in kind from the relation of the present to the future: We "anticipate" the future, whereas we "remember" the past. *Constant becoming* refers to the fact that the present—the "now" that divides the past from the future—does not stand still but always divides a different set of events into past and future. *Irreversibility in principle* means that a series of events could not conceivably turn around and go in the opposite direction. Events in my past could not also be in my future. I cannot anticipate past events or remember future events, and this fact is not simply a contingent feature of our experience but is analytic, being built into the very meaning of the terms "past" and "future."

Given some such understanding of what we mean by temporality, Grünbaum argues that time in the sense of becoming is a mind-dependent property, from which he concludes that time does not exist in the physical universe. He sometimes calls time "anthropocentric," as if, like Descartes, he attributed mind only to human beings. In more careful formulations, however, Grünbaum makes clear that he generalizes mind to other animals. Where exactly he would draw the dualistic line between some mind and none at all is unclear, but it seems to be at about the level of cockroaches, regarding which Grünbaum is hesitant.[12] But wherever this line be drawn, the point is the same: A dualism between experiencing and nonexperiencing actualities means we must speak of time in the usual sense as something that does not exist prior to the emergence of mind. I am using "mind" here in the most generalized sense, as does Grünbaum, to indicate the presence of experience, however minimal.

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[11] Griffin, "Consciousness as a Subjective Form: Whitehead's Nonreductionistic Naturalism," in *Whitehead and Consciousness*, ed. Michele

A similar conclusion is reached by J. T. Fraser, the founder of the International Society for the Study of Time. Although Fraser at one point says that it is incoherent to think of the world "as divided into the temporal and the timeless,"[13] he ends up doing just that. He begins by suggesting six levels through which time gradually emerged out of a world that began as completely atemporal. Prior to the rise of life, which Fraser calls the "biotemporal" realm, there was no final causation, or goal-directedness, and it is this that provides the basis for a "now" dividing past and future. His point is that it is first with life—and he seems here to mean only animal, not also plant, life—that experience arises. So although the two realms just below the level of living things are called the "prototemporal" and the "eotemporal" realms, as if they embodied a type of temporality, temporality in the real sense does not emerge until there is experience. So he really has only two realms: the temporal and the nontemporal.

I have argued that the temporal-nontemporal dualism endorsed by both Grünbaum and Fraser is incoherent, that the only position that can do justice to our hard-core commonsense assumptions about time is pantemporalism and that pantemporalism implies panexperientialism.[14] I do, however, agree with these two philosophers' contention that if there were "purely physical" processes, meaning processes completely devoid of experience, then they would completely nontemporal (being devoid of asymmetrical becoming and irreversibility). I also agree with their view that the temporality of human experience cannot be denied without completely distorting it.

Monius apparently thinks otherwise, arguing that conscious processes are timeless, analogously to a logical entailment:

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[12] Adolf Grünbaum, "The Anisotropy of Time," *The Nature of Time*, ed. Thomas Gold (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 149–186.

[13] J. T. Fraser, *The Genesis and Evolution of Time: A Critique of Interpretation in Physics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 1982), p. 154.

[14] See Griffin, "Introduction: Time and the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness," in *Physics and the Ultimate Significance of Time: Bohm, Prigogine, and Process Philosophy*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 1–48; "Time in Process Philosophy," *KronoScope: Journal for the Study of Time* 1/1-2 (2001): pp. 75–99; or "Time in Physics and the Time of Our Lives," in Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, pp. 106–138 (this chapter combines elements from the first essay, which did not discuss Fraser, with the second one, which did).

> Consciousness is a timeless set of relations corresponding to the physical process we call "seeing a table," just as the temporal process of someone inferring *Socrates is mortal* from *All men are mortal* and *Socrates is a man* has corresponding to it the timeless logical entailment between the second two propositions and the third. Even though the implication itself is not in space and time, there is still a sense in which it is a process: the consequent follows from the premises that imply it. In exactly the same sense the processes of consciousness are timeless.

But this is fallacious. Monius rightly says, at first, that making an inference is a temporal process. But then, because the object of this temporal process involves a logical entailment, which is timeless, he ends up claiming that the inference itself, hence the conscious process itself, is timeless. Here is another version of his argument:

> [W]e grasp [the inference] over time. We first grasp the premises, and then when we understand what follows from those premises, we grasp the. . . conclusion. But although this grasping of the inference is carried out over time, . . . the inference itself holds atemporally. [T]emporal processes are altogether irrelevant to the nature of inference. . . . [A]lthough the inferences we carry out are temporal objects (or processes), the inferences themselves—although they are naturally also described as processes (because they involve prior steps and subsequent steps)—are not naturally described as processes that takes place in time.

One problem in this painfully forced argument is the equation of inferences with entailments (implications). We do *not* "grasp" an inference; we "make" an inference, during which we may grasp an entailment (implication). An inference is a (temporal) process in which we engage; it is not a (timeless) relation that holds between premises and a conclusion. The word for that relation is entailment (or nonentailment, as the case may be). Inferences, by contrast, *are* "naturally described as processes that takes place in time."

Selves, of course, do things other than make inferences. They also act, and carrying out an action, such as ordering dinner or writing a paragraph, is clearly a temporal process. And yet Monius claims otherwise, writing:

> Agency, . . . is not a temporal process. Rather, it is ontologically dependent on temporal processes that—as a result—we often confuse agency with. But agency, purely understood, only describes certain logical relationships between selves, and their actions. Although these relationships are ones we take ourselves to perceive in time. . . in point of fact to treat agency as therefore essentially connected to temporal processes is to make the very same mistake we make when we treat atemporal logical relations as temporal ones.

Whereas the argument about inferences could be thought to result simply from confusing inferences and entailment, the strangeness of this argument about agency cannot be blamed on any such confusion. It is simply a claim that agency, "purely understood," is not really what we all perceive it to be.

This counterintuitive claim forces the question: From what standpoint is Monius speaking in declaring that our commonsense view—that agency involves temporal relations ("I did that, and then that, and, at long last, accomplished this")—is wrong, because agency *really* involves only "atemporal logical relations." Where is this higher ground from which he can simply declare that, "in point of fact," the way we all perceive agency is false. What is the "fact" upon which this declaration is based?

I cannot see that any is given. The declaration seems to be simply a deduction from Monius' starting point, which is that although the world is a process of "coming to understanding," this is an atemporal process. If it is, then the participation in this process by human selves must itself be atemporal, all appearances to the contrary.

Monius' also describes the interaction between selves as an atemporal process. He says:

> In interacting with another self, we capture a complex of perspectives held by that self and reflect it in our own self. This process, although apparently unfolding in time, the way that inferences seem to do, is also atemporal: It is a process of logical relations among selves.

This, however, is not an argument but merely an assertion. It is, moreover, an extremely counterintuitive assertion. The interaction between two selves is so obviously a temporal process that we could even use it as a paradigmatic example of what we *mean* by a temporal process. ("I said A, then you said B, then I countered with C, and you then you argued for D.") To call this an atemporal process, involving purely logical relations, is to misdescribe it completely, most, if not all, people would say.

Our conscious processes, moreover, involve still more experiences that are obviously temporal. We remember the past, we anticipate the future, and we make decisions, through which we intend to help shape some of the details of that future. These are all irreducibly temporal processes, and the distinctions involved—between the past, the present, and the future—belong to our hard-core common sense. Although the White Queen said, "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," we do not in practice try to remember the future; nor do we try to shape the past (although historians, revisionist or otherwise, certainly try to shape people's *understanding* of the past).

I strongly disagree, in sum, with Monius' claim that our construal of inference, agency, interaction, and consciousness more generally as temporal processes is a *mis*construal "due to cultural influences." Cultural influence can be plausibly used to explain parochial understandings, which obtain only in some societies. But it cannot be plausibly used to explain presuppositions that are common to *all* cultures.

All this said, I would agree that there is one sense in which consciousness (or experience more generally) is nontemporal. A unique feature of Whitehead's version of process philosophy is a distinction between two kinds of process. One kind, called "transition," occurs when an actual entity, which is an event (also called an "actual occasion" or an "occasion of experience"), is completed and exerts causation on subsequent events. This is a temporal process in the strict sense, involving the causation of the settled past on the present. The other mode of process is "concrescence," in which an occasion experience becomes concrete, by synthesizing, through decision, a multitude of perceptions into a unified experience. Although this is a process, it is not, in the strict sense, a temporal process, because there is no efficient causation within the occasion of experience. It is a self-determining whole, involving final rather than efficient causation. Whitehead's "epochal theory of time," which incorporates both quantum theory and William James's insight that perception consists of "drops" of experience, is based on this distinction.

Monius may have something like what Whitehead means by "concrescence" in mind in describing conscious processes as nontemporal. It is one thing, however, to refer to a single, very brief process as nontemporal, quote another to speak of the soul itself as nontemporal, because the (enduring) soul is, in Whiteheadian language, a temporally ordered society of occasions of experience, in which each new occasion receives causal influence from prior occasions. Although that is a description based on a particular theory, which Whitehead shares with Buddhists, it fits with our own hard-core commonsense understanding that our present experience is causally influenced by our past experiences, which cannot be changed (although our present reaction to them, including our understanding of them, can, of course, be changed).

Freedom in a Block Universe

Although "block universe" is usually used as a derogatory term, Monius uses it in articulating his own position. He means it, moreover, in the customary sense, saying that "modes in the past, the present and the future are all on a par with respect to existence." Leaving no doubt about his meaning, he says: "The future is definite. . . . The future therefore is already one way." He, remarkably, gives no argument for this view, as far as I can see. He perhaps simply assumes that it is implied by current quantum and/or relativity physics, although, I have pointed out (on the authority of many experts), it is not.[15]

Monius' position, in any case, conflicts with the nature of time, as I have characterized it, as involving asymmetrical becoming: the relation of the present to the past is different in kind from its relation to the future. As I pointed out, we "remember" the past but "anticipate" future. Also, we may "regret" or "be grateful for" past events, whereas we may have "dread" or "hope" about the future. We could not reverse any of these statements without uttering nonsense. Implicit in these attitudes is the hard-core commonsense idea that the past is settled, while the future is still (partially) open. To say that the past and the future are "on a par" implies that they are equally settled, as Monius indeed contends. By trying to convince others of this view, however, he shows that he, like everyone else, presupposes in practice that the future is still partly open—still partially to be settled.

To say that the future is *already* settled is to deny that the present is that temporal mode in which possibilities are being turned into actualities. To deny this is to deny freedom, the idea that we in the present make genuine decisions—with "decisions" referring to cutting off some possibilities by actualizing others. If a decision of mine is free, it is true that although I did A, I could have done B (or perhaps C, or perhaps D, and so on).

Although some philosophers have defined freedom in a compatibilist sense, according to which calling our actions "free" is compatible with their being foreordained by God, foreknown by God, determined by physical processes, or timelessly existent,[16] freedom as we all presuppose it in practice is incompatible with any view saying that the future is already (or eternally) real in the sense that its details are already (or eternally) settled.

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[15] See my "Introduction: Time and the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness" or "Time in Physics and the Time of Our Lives."

[16] See, e.g., William G. Lycan, *Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 113–114.

This fact has been recognized by two philosophers, John Searle and Thomas Nagel, who cannot be accused of distorting the phenomenological evidence, because neither of them believes there is a consistent way to articulate the belief in incompatibilist freedom. Searle says that the freedom that we all presuppose in practice implies an affirmative answer to the question, "Could we have done otherwise, all other conditions remaining the same?" This point is important, Searle stresses, because "the belief that we could have done things differently from the way we did in fact do them. . . connects with beliefs about moral responsibility and our own nature as persons."[17] Searle's point, however, is not simply that we cannot give up our commonsense notion of freedom without giving up the idea of responsibility. His point is that *we cannot give it up, period*. Although we have been able to give up some commonsense beliefs, such as beliefs in a flat Earth and literal "sunsets" (which, in my language, were at one time *soft-core* commonsense beliefs),

> we can't similarly give up the conviction of freedom because that conviction is built into every normal, conscious intentional action. . . . [W]e can't act otherwise than on the assumption of freedom, no matter how much we learn about how the world works as a determined physical system.[18]

Searle himself, in fact, believes that we have learned that the world is a completely determined physical system, so that there is, in fact, "no room for the freedom of the will." But he also says that our conviction of freedom is so strong that no discussion, including his, "will ever convince us that our behavior is unfree."[19]

Similarly, Thomas Nagel, in spite of the fact that he also sees no way to give a coherent account of freedom, says: "I can no more help holding myself and others responsible in ordinary life than I can help feeling that my actions originate with me."[20]

Accordingly, both of them affirm that freedom in the incompatibilist sense (which Searle calls "radical freedom") is, in my language, a hard-core commonsense belief. They nevertheless assume that this belief is wrong. They have thereby failed to realize that, if we cannot help but presuppose that we are free, denying our freedom is irrational in the strongest possible sense, because we are simultaneously affirming and denying the one and the same proposition.

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[17] John R. Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Science: The 1984 Reith Lectures* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984), pp. 89, 92.

[18] Ibid., p. 97.

[19] Ibid., p. 93.

[20] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 110–117, 123.

The rational approach was taken by Whitehead, who said that our sense of freely making decisions is "too large to be put aside merely as misconstruction. It governs the whole tone of human life."[21] This fact, Whitehead says, provides one of the central tasks for systematic philosophy:

> Here we find an example of the value of a systematic philosophy. For we have either to explain the diverse senses in which freedom and necessity can coexist, or we have to explain away one or other of the most obvious presuppositions of our daily thoughts.[22] (MT 7).

Whitehead rejected the second alternative, saying: "Philosophy destroys its usefulness when it indulges in brilliant feats of explaining away. . . . Its ultimate appeal is to the general consciousness of what in practice we experience."[23]

Whitehead hence says: "One task of a sound metaphysics is to exhibit final and efficient causes in their proper relation to each other."[24] Given Whitehead's experientialism, moreover, he, unlike Searle and Nagel, was able to do this, as I have shown elsewhere.[25]

Monius evidently agrees that one task of philosophy is to defend the idea that we have a degree of freedom. His rejection of materialism in favor of dualism was probably motivated in part by this conviction. But he believes, unlike Nagel, Searle, and Whitehead, that freedom is compatible with a block universe, in which the future is already settled.

Traditional theism, according to which God knows the details of the totality of what to us is still future, certainly implied a block universe. Even if we ignore the fact that God, according to this view, could know what was going to happen by virtue of being the cause thereof, the view that God is timelessly omniscient by itself, I have argued, rules out genuine freedom. If God knows infallibly, whether "eternally" or "in advance," that at a particular moment I am going to do X, it is impossible for me to do either Y or Z. Why? Because if I were to do either Y or Z,

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[21] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 47.

[22] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (1938; New York: Free Press, 1968).

[23] *Process and Reality,* p. 25.

[24] Ibid., p. 84.

[25] See my "Panexperientialism, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Relation," in *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, ch. 3; or "Feeling and Morality in Whitehead's System," *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer, with Marjorie Suchocki, John Quiring, and Katie Goetz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 265–294.

I would, through my free action, make God wrong, which is by definition impossible.[26]

Monius thinks otherwise, saying that agents can “choose freely in our sense, despite the fact that the God of the tradition can see—ahead of time what they will freely choose to do. The traditional God’s foreknowledge . . . does not threaten their freedom or their responsibility.” But if God knew that I was going to do X, so that I could not possibly have done Y, Z, or anything else, then my action could be free only in a Pickwickian sense. Freedom in that Pickwickian sense would *not* make me morally responsible, in any intelligible sense of the term, because it was impossible for me to have done otherwise.

What does Monius mean by “choosing freely”? He says: “an agent choosing freely in our sense means that his decision has not been determined either by internal compulsions within him or by external forces outside of him.” This lack of internal or external determinism is necessary because “Genuine determinism—the claim that every event has an antecedent [sufficient] cause—undermines the rationality of decision making.” This is correct.

However, Monius then gives a strange reason for holding it, saying that if determinism were true and the agent started looking for relevant information about his choosing, “that agent will (eventually) learn of the antecedent events or facts about himself that necessitate his choice.” Note that it is not the truth of determinism itself, but the agent’s discovery of its truth in relation to his own decision, that undermined the rationality of the agent’s decision-making process.

Having given this account, Monius then says that his view, according to which the future is fixed, does *not* cancel our freedom and hence responsibility, because his view, like that of contemporary science, “denies genuine determinism.” From this perspective, he claims, “the mere fact that the future is what it is” does not rule out our freedom, because “[n]o matter how much we learn about the present and the past,” we will not learn that one of our free decisions was “forced or fixed in advance or predictable from the laws and . . . past history.”

But this argument is confused. If the world were a deterministic causal nexus, all of our acts would be unfree whether we knew this or not—the truth of the situation would not be dependent on our knowing that truth. Likewise, if the future is fixed for some reason other than the world’s being a deterministic causal nexus (I am, I might add, unclear what this reason might be), my actions are unfree whether I know that this is a Block Universe or not—because although right now it *feels* like I could choose either X, Y, or Z, I can, in fact, choose only X, because it has been timelessly true that I will choose X.

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[26] See the chapter on Augustine in my *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (1976; Westminister John Knox, 2004)

Accordingly, Monius' Block Universe implies, against his intentions, a negation of our hard-core commonsense assumption of genuine freedom.

Institutional Souls

Monius correctly says that the greatest evils, producing the greatest harm to the Body of God, are caused by institutions. He is in error, to be sure, if his statement, "No extant religion addresses the problem of institutional evil," means that no movements within the extant religions have done so. This idea has been central to the movement known as liberation theology, just as it was to the movement in the early twentieth century known as the Social Gospel. (See especially Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, which spoke of "supra-personal forces of evil."[27]) It is also central to the movement known as Engaged Buddhism. But Monius is absolutely right to emphasize the fact that institutions, insofar as they are large, rich, and powerful, can cause far more truly serious damage to the world than can individuals or small groups thereof. Monius, however, weakens his position, in my view, by arguing that institutions have souls.[28] They at most, I would say, have *quasi*-souls.

To say that an institution genuinely has a soul, the institution would need, in Monius' words, to have its own awareness and decision-making capacity, in the sense that it could not be reduced "to the awarenesses and decision makings of the individuals in that institution." There would, in other words, be a super-soul, numerically distinct from the souls of the individual members. "Uncle Sam," for example, would not simply be a metaphor; it would refer to a literal soul of the United States, over and above all the souls of its citizens.

With regard to awareness, Monius argues that the attempted reduction of the institution's awareness to that of its members fails, "because what an institution is aware of can deviate from what the individuals making it up are aware of." But his examples are not convincing.

The deviation occurs, he suggests, if only one individual in the organization knows some particular thing: "the organization— as a whole— should be described as failing to be aware of what that individual knows." But surely we would most naturally take that statement to mean simply that the majority of the members of the organization did not know this fact.

"A more complex way that an organization can fail to be aware of something," Monius then suggests, "is when all of the individuals in the organization are aware of something, but the organization itself—perhaps because of its official policy or because of its constitution—is not in a position to take notice of this fact." Here, however, we would normally simply say that although the organization—meaning its members, especially its officers—was aware of X, it was unprepared to reveal this awareness by publicly acting on it.

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[27] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1918).

[28] I also disagree with Monius' belief that computers can have souls for reasons explained in *Unsnarling the World-Knot*, but I will not argue that point here.

With regard to deciding and acting, Monius says: "The ways that an organization chooses to act can similarly deviate from the actions of the individuals in it." When one institution sues another institution, for example, it is not that "some particular individual in the organization is actually doing the suing." That is right, because we have laws designating some institutions as legal entities, which have various rights and powers, including the power to sue. But this does not mean that there is some soul, over and above the souls of the various members, that made the decision to sue. The decision was made by the person or persons legally designated to make decisions on the basis of the organization, perhaps the president, the CEO, or all the officers. The same would be true of Monius' other example, declarations of war.

My rejection of institutional souls does not, however, involve a rejection of the principle involved, which is that experiencing individuals at one level can be organized in such a way that a higher-level experiencing individual results. This idea is central to Whiteheadian process philosophy. In an animal with a central nervous system, the bodily cells, which have experience, are organized in such a way as to give rise to a higher-level experience, that of the animal's soul. Each (eukaryotic) cell in turn is compounded of organelles and macromolecules, which are lower-grade experiencing entities, and so on down until we get to the simplest individuals. Charles Hartshorne, the second leading philosopher of the movement after Whitehead himself, referred to such beings as "compound individuals," because higher-level individuals are compounded of lower-level ones.[29]

Compound individuals, however, are contrasted with mere *aggregational* societies, such as rocks, in which there is no highest-level, all-inclusive experience to give the entity a unity of experience and action. Somewhere in between animals, on the one hand, and inorganic aggregational societies such as rocks, on the other, are living plants. They are organized in such a way that their various cell-based structures perform diverse functions, which somehow work together to support the plant's life, even though, evidently, there is no soul of the plant as a whole. So whereas animals have a monarchical structure, plants are, Whitehead suggested, more like democracies. This structural difference is so important that I have suggested that the Whiteheadian-Hartshornean position should be called not simply "panexperientialism" but "panexperientialism with organizational duality."[30]

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[29] Charles Hartshorne, "The Compound Individual," in Otis H. Lee, ed., *Philosophical Essays for Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: Longmans Green, 1936), pp. 193–220; reprinted in Charles Hartshorne, *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays 1935-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 41–61.

The criterion for deciding whether a society of actual entities is a compound individual is behavioral: Does it show signs of responding as an individual to its environment, or can its behavior be understood without positing a center of experience over and above its parts? The behavior of institutions, I have suggested, can be understood without assuming a central intelligence agency.

Nevertheless, having articulated this organizational duality, I would suggest that references to the souls of nations and other institutions need not be considered merely metaphorical. We can instead speak of an institution, at least in some cases, as having a quasi-soul.

This idea, at least in my thinking, depends on the notion that experiences are internally related to prior experiences, meaning that the prior experiences are constitutive of the later ones. This notion is implicit in the concept of a compound individual: the experiences of the brain cells, then through them the experiences of other cells in the body, enter into the experiences of the mind or soul, being constitutive of them. The experience of pain, for example, can be both in my leg and in me, my mind, so that I can either say "my leg hurts" or "I hurt." We can hence explain the causal influence of the body on the mind. We can likewise explain the influence of the mind back on the body in the same terms, saying that our feelings, including our decisions, enter, to some extent, into the experiences of our bodily cells. As Charles Hartshorne put it: "cells can influence our human experiences because they have feelings that we can feel. To deal with the influences of human experiences upon cells, one turns this around. *We* have feelings that *cells* can feel."[31]

This notion of internal relatedness is not limited, however, to the relation of higher- to lower-level individuals. It applies also to equals. At the human level, we clearly incorporate feelings, beliefs, images, and attitudes from our parents, siblings, classmates, and, more generally, the culture in which we grow up. Insofar as these patterns are repeated by a large percentage of the people in that culture, there is what can be called a "collective soul" (Carl Jung sometimes used this notion of repeated themes to explain what he called the "collective unconscious"). But because this "collective soul" is not actually a center of experience, it is better to call it a *quasi*-soul.

Insofar as this quasi-soul becomes demonic, in the sense of acting in ways that are diametrically opposed to the divine will, the culture has a demonic (quasi) soul.[32] This idea could support Monius' emphasis that some institutions, by acting *as* institutions, have been enormously destructive.

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[30] Griffin, *Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism*, introduction.

[31] Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1962), p. 229.

Although Monius, unless he were to accept panexperientialism, would not be able to adopt this idea of compound individuals as a general truth about the world, he could certainly adopt it, I would think, at the level of human existence. It could be seen as a high-level exemplification of his Spinozistic notion that "the full understanding of a dependent particular requires an explanation of all of its relations of dependence to other particulars." This notion of "dependence" would only need to be fleshed out in terms of a fuller articulation of the notion that human souls are internally related to each other.

Relevant to this notion of a quasi-soul is the previously discussed idea that sensory perception is an outgrowth of a more fundamental, nonsensory mode of perception. Empirical support for this idea is provided by the abundant evidence for telepathy.[33] Insofar as we recognize that our interactions with each other are not limited to our sense-based exchanges, but include nonsensory prehensions (which usually, albeit not always, remain below the threshold of consciousness), it becomes easier to understand how a quasi-soul can emerge.

Monism and Evil

Monius affirms monism, "agree[ing] with Spinoza that the whole of reality (. . . 'The One') is the only independent concrete particular." One of the reasons Monius prefers this view to traditional theism, apparently, is that it avoids the latter's problem of evil: Given the traditional God's omniscience and omnipotence, the presence of evil in the world contradicted God's perfect goodness. Pointing out that it was omnipotence and omniscience (understood to include knowledge of what is still future for us) that generated the problem of evil, Monius says that these attributions are "jettisoned" in his position. He, in fact, denies that God exerts efficient causation, saying that God is "not a force, . . . not anything that might be included in the inventory of the efficient causes."

It is not clear, however, that Monius has avoided the problem of evil in another form. The problem in his thought arises from the fact that he, accepting Spinoza's slogan *Deus sive Natura*, equates God with "the world as a whole."

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[32] I have developed this notion in *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11* (Westminster John Knox, 2006), ch. 8, "The Divine and the Demonic."

[33] I have discussed this evidence in *Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), and in *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts* (Albany: SUNY, 2000), ch. 7, "Parapsychology, Science, and Religion."

There is nothing, therefore, outside of God, nothing that could be in any sense independent of God. God is the one and only substance. How, therefore, could anything exert agency that would not ultimately be God's own agency? Monius' assertion that God does not exert efficient causation would seem to mean only that God is not an *additional* efficient cause, beyond the finite agents in the world. The efficient causation of all those agents would seem to be describable, finally, as *God's* efficient causation, working through those finite entities—which, in comparison with God, Monius says, are not really real. Insofar as these finite agents, which Monius calls "parts of [God's] attributes," act immorally, the deity itself would seem to be imperfect.

Monius, in seeking to avoid this conclusion, agrees that "the parts of the attributes of God are . . . less than perfect" insofar as they "fail to live up to" ethical standards that they "are supposed to meet." Monius argues, nevertheless, that God and God's attributes "fall short of no standard." But that is to imply that the parts, the modes, are *not simply* parts of the attributes of God but have sufficient independence to perform acts that are not God's acts. Monius, in fact, says: "[N]ot everything that there is is due solely to God. Not every aspect of every part of every attribute of God is His responsibility."

Those assertions, however, appear to deny the monistic position Monius has articulated. This monism seems clearly affirmed in the following statement:

> Most of us feel as though the understanding that we "have" is something that *we possess as part (or parts) of our "own'" separate individual minds*. But in reality, it is only the *awareness* of particular elements of Understanding that we "possess."

Although this statement is about understanding rather than agency, the same analysis would seem to apply to the latter, about which Monius would say: Although we feel as if agency is something that we exercise as separate individuals, it is in reality simply a portion of Agency as such.

It seems, therefore, that Monius' affirmation that human beings have genuine free will vis-à-vis God is in contradiction with not only his Block Universe view but also his monism. And if we have no freedom vis-à-vis God and yet genuine evil occurs, then it follows that God is not perfect. The problem of evil has not been avoided.

Divine Contingency

An especially unusual feature of Monius' position is his assertion that everything, including the divine reality, is contingent. He says:

> [A]lthough [The One] is an unchanging particular, it is nevertheless contingent. There are many different ways The One could have been, and one of those ways would have been for The One to not exist at all.

One might think that this means that there is something more ultimate than the One, which explains its existence by being its efficient cause. But Monius denies this, saying that he need not posit an efficient cause for the One, even though it is not a necessary being.

Monius realizes that his position also might seem "to leave unanswered the question of why there is something rather than nothing." Does this position not mean that the existence of God, of everything, is simply "a brute inexplicable fact"? And if so, has Monius not thereby denied the principle of sufficient reason, which he affirms, which means that he "reject[s] brute facts or brutely existing objects: objects that just are for no reason"? Monius claims not, because the "version of the principle of sufficient reason" that he affirms contains a built-in exception: "There is an explanation for the existence of every particular, other than God Himself."

This move, however, leaves a further question: What is the justification for this exception? In seeking to justify it, Monius says:

> [E]xplanation is always a matter of accounting for *existing things* being a certain way. This means that it is muddled to look for an explanation of why there are any existing things at all—for why there is something rather than nothing. And thus, it is also a muddle to look for an explanation for why there is God rather than nothing at all. Many have tried to use the principle of sufficient reason to argue that the question of why there is something rather than nothing is both a cogent question and one that requires the self-necessity of God as an answer. The question of why there is something rather than nothing is not cogent. The fact that there is something rather than nothing is not in need of an explanation.

This attempt at justification, however, hinges on assertions that are *merely* assertions, because they are neither self-evident nor supported by argument. *Who says* explanation is "always a matter of accounting for *existing things* being a certain way"? *Who says*, therefore, that "[t]he question of why there is something rather than nothing is not cogent"? Monius seems to be trying to rule out this question by fiat.

There is, to be sure, a reasonable basis for the claim that this question—why there is something rather than nothing—is not a question that can be answered in terms of some cause. This basis begins with the recognition that the principle of sufficient reason, properly formulated, says that everything that exists *contingently* requires a cause. It then shows, by argument, that it is not a contingent fact that something exists. This argument can be summarized thus:

> Something exists.
>
> Something cannot come from nothing (*ex nihilo*, *nihil fit*).
>
> Therefore, something has eternally existed.
>
> The eternal and the necessary are convertible: the necessary is eternal and the eternal is necessary.
>
> Therefore, something exists necessarily.

Monius is, to be sure, aware of this argument. He summarizes it thus: "A necessary being exists necessarily—it is impossible for that being not to have existed. Accordingly, there is no need to explain why a necessary being exists, for there is no alternative possibility."

He, however, rejects this argument and thereby creates an enormous problem for himself. He argues that although the existence of God is contingent, in the radical sense that God might have failed to exist, no reason is needed for why God does exist. I cannot see how, in spite of Monius' claim to the contrary, this fails to imply that "the existence of God [is] a brute inexplicable fact." Monius' claim that it is not, because the principle of sufficient reason does not apply to God, appears purely arbitrary.

Another problem is created by the fact, recognized by Monius, that we must regard numbers to be "eternal and necessary." How can numbers be necessary if God, in whom they presumably subsist, is not? Are we to imagine that if God did not exist, numbers would exist anyway? This would return us to Plato's apparent view, according to which forms could exist on their own, which was criticized by Aristotle, then overcome by Middle Platonism by putting the forms in God, who exists necessarily and hence eternally.

Whitehead, who focused much on mathematics and logic before turning to natural philosophy and then metaphysics, adopted this Middle Platonic view on the basis of the "ontological principle," which he sometimes called the "Aristotelian principle," according to which nonactual things—such as numbers (which are examples of "eternal objects of the objective species") and moral norms (examples of "eternal objects of the subjective species")—can exist only in actual things.

Although I am uncertain of Monius' motivation for denying that God exists necessarily, it appears to be his rejection of the way this claim has been used by traditional theists such as Al-Gazali, Avicenna, and Aquinas. According to these theists, as he puts it: "An explanation is . . . required for the fact of the existence of things in the world and hence for the world itself. And inevitably, so the argument goes, that explanation must appeal to a necessary being [namely, God] as the cause or source of contingent beings." Given Monius' rejection of traditional theism's contrast between a wholly necessary deity and a wholly contingent world, he would naturally find this move distasteful. He also perhaps accepts Spinoza's insight that, given traditional theism's characterization of God, especially the divine "simplicity," this contrast is incoherent.[34]

However, the doctrine that God exists necessarily need not, and even should not, lead to that conclusion. There is a middle way between Spinozistic monism (which Monius appears to affirm for the most part, except for Spinoza's necessitarianism) and traditional theism. This middle way is a version of "panentheism," meaning all (finite) things are in God. As in traditional theism, God is distinct from the world; but as in pantheism, the world's existence is not contingent. In the version developed by Whitehead and Hartshorne, the world is the body of God, and God is by definition the soul of the world. It is this reality, God-with-a-world, that exists necessarily.

This doctrine does not mean, however, that the particular events that happen in the world occurred necessarily. It does not even mean that our particular cosmos, with its laws of physics and chemistry, exists necessarily: it is "our cosmic epoch," which originated at some time in the past and will come to an end at some time in the future, to be succeeded by another cosmic epoch. To say that the world exists necessarily means only that *some* world of finite actualities exists necessarily, whether these finite actualities be organized into a cosmos or merely exist, as they do between cosmic epochs (by hypothesis), in a state of chaos. The world is hence neither wholly contingent (traditional theism) or wholly necessary (Aristotle). It is instead partly necessary, partly contingent. Its essence, consisting of its metaphysical principles and eternal possibilities, exists necessarily, meaning it is always embodied in some actual world, but the precise nature of that actual world, along with all of its actual events, is contingent.

The same is true of God. God has an eternal essence, which exists necessarily. The existence and the essence of God are, therefore, necessary. The divine essence, however, is an abstraction, being merely the attributes that God always exemplifies. It can be described in some of the terms that traditional theism applied to God as a whole: eternal, necessary, impassible, immutable. In

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[34] I made this case in my chapters on Aquinas and Spinoza in *God, Power, and Evil.*

Whiteheadian and Hartshornean panentheism, however, God as a concrete actuality is contingent, because God experiences (prehends) the events in the world, which are contingent. So God, like the world, has both necessary and contingent aspects.[35]

If Monius is able to adopt some such position, he can overcome the arbitrariness of affirming the principle of sufficient reason by then saying that it does not apply to God, even though God exists contingently. He could do this, moreover, without giving up his portrayal of the world as the body of God. (By adopting panexperientialism as well as panentheism, moreover, he could regard the experiences of humans and other animals as a part of this body—indeed, the part with the greatest intrinsic value.)

God as Impersonal, Insentient

Monius creates further difficulties for his position by characterizing God as impersonal, even insentient, devoid of experience in every sense.

I do not see any good argument for this position. Monius does, to be sure, say that thinking of God as "a personal sentient being" reflects an "archaic tendency." But that is not an argument, merely an expression of opinion (which can be dismissed as easily by others as Monius himself dismisses the view that attempting to develop a metaphysical category theory reflects "an archaic—if not bizarre—philosophical taste").

Monius does appear to offer an argument, saying: "We do not accept the personal nature of God as it is given in the Abrahamic religious tradition, for God is not a personal being." That, however, is not an argument, but merely a circular statement, of the form: "I do not believe X because X is not true."

The closest thing to a real argument, as far as I can see, is a rhetorical question: If God is a personal being, concerned with our lives, Monius asks, "why does He allow such terrible things to happen?" That question makes sense, however, only if God is defined as omnipotent, in the sense of having the power unilaterally to prevent terrible things from happening. But many philosophers and theologians in recent times have conceived of God as a conscious being while rejecting that traditional view of divine power, according to which God essentially has all the power, while also not adopting Monius' view, according to which God is "utterly powerless." There is a middle way, according to which although God has power to act in the world, this power is persuasive, not coercive. Among the best-known proponents of this approach are Whiteheadian process philosophers and theologians; I myself have written extensively on the issue.[36]

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[35] See my *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, ch. 4, "Naturalistic, Dipolar Theism."

Besides not being based on a sufficient reason, Monius' description of God as impersonal creates several problem. I will conclude this critique by mentioning five.

Purpose from the non-purposive: One problem is Monius' claim that although God, not being a personal being, has no purposes, God "created the world with purposes in it." I can find this claim no more plausible than the claim of neo-Darwinian materialists that the emergence of beings such as ourselves, with our conscious purposes, emerged during an evolutionary process that, besides being devoid of any overall guidance, began with insentient bits of matter. Both views claim that purposive beings arose out of something entirely devoid of purposes or final causation of any type. Calling that something "God" does not make the claim any more intelligible.

This problem threatens to undermine Monius' entire project, insofar as he insists (rightly) on the nexus between ethics and metaphysics: to know how to act, we need to know God, or, more directly, the objective moral standards that are built into our world by virtue of the purpose pervading the evolutionary process. If people, however, cannot believe that purposes can arise *ex nihilo*, in the sense of emerging out of something completely devoid of purposes, then they will be unable to believe that there really are any purposes in the fabric of the world. They will not find Monius' position to provide any stronger basis for morality than do the completely atheistic positions of philosophers such as John Mackie, Gilbert Harman, and Bernard Williams.[37]

Omni-truth without omniscience: A second problem involves Monius' affirmation of omni-truth, meaning what an omniscient being, if one existed, would know: "knowledge of the way everything is." Monius argues that omni-truth can exist although there is not actually an omniscient being. He acknowledges, to be sure, that truth cannot exist without consciousness, and so: "Writ large: without consciousness or intelligence there can be no Omni-truth." But, he says, "an omniscient being . . . is [not] needed to ground Omni-truth."

From my perspective, however, that claim is not intelligible. According to Whitehead's (Aristotelian) ontological principle, everything that is not actual must be somewhere, with "somewhere" meaning: in some actuality. But omni-truth, defined as what an omniscient being would know, does not exist in any finite mind or even in all finite minds combined. (For example, all the truths about physics, chemistry, and astronomy that have been discovered since the eighteenth century had been true for billions of years before any humans knew them, and there are surely many truths at that level that are not yet in any finite mind.) If there is no omniscient being, there is nowhere for omni-truth to exist. This was one of Nietzsche's insights, which lay behind his "perspectivism": The death of God implies the death of Truth. If we have nothing but a multiplicity of finite minds, we have nothing but a multitude of perspectives, with no all-inclusive perspective in terms of which to measure the accuracy of the various finite perspectives. Whitehead, aware of this issue, responds to it by saying: "The truth itself is nothing else than how the composite natures of the organic actualities of the world obtain adequate representation in the . . . 'consequent nature' of God" (God's "consequent nature" is God as responding to [consequent to] the temporal world).[38]

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[36] See, in addition to *God, Power, and Evil*, also *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), and "Creation out of Nothing, Creation Out of Chaos, and the Problem of Evil," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, 2nd edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 108–125.

[37] On the connection between the atheism of these philosophers and their inability to affirm objective moral norms, see *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, ch. 7, "Whitehead and the Crisis in Moral Theory: Theistic Ethics without Heteronomy."

Given Monius' Block Universe view, incidentally, he includes knowledge of the future in omni-truth, saying: "Omniscience is the knowledge and understanding of everything, everywhere, at all times." From the point of a temporalistic view of reality such as process philosophy, however, omniscience would not include knowledge of future contingencies: Omniscience, defined formally, is simply perfect knowledge, which is knowledge of everything that is (then) knowable. Because the temporal process is not deterministic, the details of the future are not knowable, and even perfect knowledge cannot know that which is inherently unknowable. Omni-truth, therefore, need not be understood to include truths about the future, except for the truth about those facts that are already settled. The truth about all other facts is still indeterminate. (As Aristotle pointed out, propositions about future contingencies, such as "There will be a sea battle tomorrow," are neither true nor false. They are [presently] indeterminate.)

Misleading language: Monius' doctrine of God's impersonality, combined with other things he wants to say, leads to misleading language. He, for one thing, speaks of God as "He," thereby suggesting that God is not only personal but male. (Monius says that he uses "He" rather than "It" purely as a matter of style, but the effect is to suggest greater continuity with the traditional Western view of God than is appropriate. The inappropriateness would probably be more obvious if the issue of using "She" were raised.) Monius speaks of things as having "value for God Himself," but a completely insentient being has no intrinsic value, meaning value for itself. Monius says that when destructive events such as earthquakes and famines occur, "even God suffers"; but an insentient being cannot suffer. Monius says that murder is wrong because of its "impact on God," but Monius could at most say that murder has an impact on the world's divinely rooted purpose (assuming, for the sake of argument, this notion to be intelligible).

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[38] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 12. I have discussed this issue in *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, ch. 5, "Truth as Correspondence, Knowledge as Dialogical: Pluralism without Relativism."

Monius could, to be sure, easily overcome this problem by simply no longer using such language. The ideas suggested by such language, however, can create effects in readers, insofar as they do not notice the problems, that may be essential to Monius' purpose. That is, if Monius no longer said that murder is wrong because of its impact on God, but instead merely said that it is wrong because it retards the world's objective teleology (which God knows nothing about), he would likely be less able to generate moral motivation in his readers—which brings us to the next problem created by Monius' denial of divine personality.

Religious-moral motivation: Monius recognizes that "humans are religious animals" so that, even in these times, "[r]eligious institutions continue to be the most successful at eliciting unswerving loyalty and belief." He also recognizes that love for God has played a central role in the Abrahamic religions. "[T]he love of God that is the primary emotion that a believer should have—and the primary good that a believer should strive for. All his emotions towards everything else should be subservient to that love."

Because Monius' God is impersonal, however, "a love of God, and indeed, any emotional response towards God, cannot play the [same] role" in his position. It does, to be sure, play an essential role: "Love is absolutely necessary if we are to successfully serve God." But, he adds, "we cannot successfully serve Him by 'loving' Him." Why? Because "we cannot have genuine emotional relations with what our awareness presents to us as pure abstractions. Loving what is in fact an impersonal God is attempting to engage emotionally with an abstraction." Given the fact that God, understood as The One, is elsewhere described by Monius as the only true "substance," the "only independent concrete particular," it was surprising to see God described here as an abstraction. This problem does not, however, undermine Monius' main point, which is that we cannot love an entity, even if it be called "God," that is understood to be impersonal, insentient.

This fact raises a problem: What is the psychological basis for the transition from Monius' metaphysics to an ethic, around which Monius' entire project is based? Within theistic systems, this transition is usually effected by love for the divine —whether conceived as God, gods, the cosmic Buddha, Boddhisattvas, or in some other way—combined with the idea that the divine reality loves all people or indeed all sentient beings. But Monius cannot rely on this psychological transference because, he says, "loving something because it is a part of God is . . . impossible for us. No one can say genuinely*: that* is a part of God, or *that* belongs to God, and *therefore* I love it."

Whitehead dealt with this problem as it had developed in modern discussions of the humanitarian ideal. Referring to Hume's contention that "there is no such passion in human minds as the love of mankind, merely as such," Whitehead pointed out that moralists such as Bentham and Comte, given their rejection of a cosmological basis for morality, had no basis from which to undergird their humanitarian ethic, according to which people should work for the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." Whitehead wrote:

> If any people are subject to this passion [that Hume denied], of course they will act on it. But no reason can be given why we should inculcate the passion in others, or why we should pervert legislation to subserve the ends of such an unreasonable emotion. . . . Bentham and Comte were mistaken in thinking that they had found a clear foundation for morals, religion, and legislation, to the exclusion of all ultimate cosmological doctrines.[39]

Whitehead, who accepted Hume's view that ethical action is most effectively motivated by sympathy for others and hence concern for their welfare, believed that the best foundation for morality would be religious belief that serves to expend one's sympathy. Religion, he said, should be "directed to the end of stretching individual interest beyond its self-defeating particularity."[40]

Having long been an agnostic and perhaps even an atheist, Whitehead, after turning to metaphysics, came to believe that a coherent cosmology required a power that could plausibly be called God. In the first book of his metaphysical period (*Science and the Modern World*), in which he suggested a somewhat Spinozistic view, he thought of this power as an impersonal principle, which he called the principle of limitation (or concreteness). However, in his next book, *Religion in the Making*, in which he developed a more personalistic idea, he said: "The consciousness which is individual in us, is universal in [God]: the love which is partial in us is all-embracing in him." Worship of this God—as opposed to the barbaric God presented in much of the Bible—would promote "world-loyalty," in which the human spirit has "merged its individual claim with that of the objective universe."[41] In a still later work, Whitehead portrayed worship of a God of all-inclusive love as producing a "bond of sympathy" that motivates a humanitarian ethic:

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[39] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933; New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 38.

[40] *Process and Reality*, 15.

[41] *Religion in the Making* (1926; Cleveland: World, 1960), pp. 152, 59.

> This bond is the growth of reverence for that power in virtue of which nature harbours ideal ends, and produces individual beings capable of conscious discrimination of such ends. This reverence is the foundation of respect for man as man.[42]

He also portrays reverence for this God as producing Peace, which he sees as the crowning virtue. Referring to Peace as "the barrier against narrowness," Whitehead adds: "One of its fruits is that passion whose existence Hume denied, the love of mankind as such."[43]

Given the fact that Monius cannot, given his present view of God, develop any such line of thought, how does he hope that his position can nevertheless provide motivation to adopt "the right way of orienting one's life" by following "the standards for an objective morality." He *says* that "the compelling moral ground for human behavior . . . resides with The One," but it is not clear exactly what this means and how it would provide motivation. Monius announces at the outset that his aim is "to reinstate the fundamental nexus between having the right kind of ethical knowledge and understanding the realities that must be invoked in the account of what things really are." He does not, however, give a plausible account of the *psychological* nexus between "the right kind of ethical knowledge" and actual human behavior. The primary obstacle appears to be the denial that God is the kind of being that can evoke love.

The resulting ethic: Perhaps because of this obstacle, Monius reveals that he, having begun by reaffirming the "fundamental nexus" between metaphysics and morality, does not expect that his metaphysic, even if widely accepted by a people, would make much difference in their moral outlook.

Throughout much of Monius' work, he seems to be saying that living morally would require us to understand and live in accord with the "intrinsic teleology at the heart of reality" and hence "the *eide* [that] set the standards for an objective morality." It is from this teleology that we will derive an answer to the most basic questions about how to live: that is, how to orient one's cognitive life and the behavior that flows from this orientation."[T]he teleological structure of the One," Monius tells us, "bears directly on . . . what our ethical goals in life should be."

When we get to Monius' actual discussion of morality, however, an understanding of the teleology of the universe seems to have, at best, a very indirect bearing on what our ethical goals should be. While repeating the claim that "[t]he objective teleology embodied in the Godhead . . . sets the ultimate standard for right and wrong activity in God's Body," Monius adds that there is a vast distance between this teleology, which involves a "large-scale quest to ensure coming to understanding," and "the lives of ordinary people." The large-scale quest is, as we will see below, assigned to institution.

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[42] *Adventures of Ideas*, 86.

[43] Ibid., pp. 285–86.

As for individuals, our moral role and happiness come from "understanding our location or place in the scheme of things" and from "actualizing our talents and virtues in accordance with the location of our selves in God's Body." And this means that we need not focus on the universal teleology.

> For most individual conscious souls [all of them except for a few exceptional souls in exceptional circumstances], the best way to facilitate coming to understanding precisely accords with the obligations of conventional morality. One should have a family, honor one's obligations to one's friends, be honest in business dealings, and exhibit temperance and restraint in struggles with others.

This focus on local relations and conventional morality is appropriate, Monius says, because we have a psychological incapacity to "love large things, such as . . . humanity as a whole."

In a statement in which Monius clearly states the virtual irrelevance of the universe's objective teleology to the moral lives of most people, he says:

> [S]etting the goals of individual conscious souls . . . in terms of the pattern of the teleology of the Godhead is too grand for individual conscious agents to grasp in the [needed] kind of detail. . . . Love's role . . . keeps the focus of individual conscious souls and their understanding *local*, for it is only locally that the vast majority of those souls can succeed in initiating actions that successfully facilitate coming to understanding. Individual agents are not meant to engage in large doings; they are meant to enable the process of coming to understanding in small increments. . . . Individual conscious souls are . . . successful in serving God by following the lead of the emotions that they are aware of: not by their direct pursuit of the good. . . . When individual souls attempt to act on such an understanding that they take themselves to have, they . . . become . . . "fanatics in the service of God."

There are two quite different reasons why Monius says that individuals should focus on local matters. One reason is insufficient understanding: just as "a single individual cannot understand and execute everything needed to build a rocket that can travel to the moon," so "an individual conscious soul cannot understand enough . . . to act towards God as a whole."

The other reason is love with an insufficient scope: "an individual conscious soul cannot . . . love broadly enough." This incapacity, as Monius sees it, seems to follow directly from his view of God. "Loving God is too much to expect of any soul, because a soul can only love what it is aware of, and nothing can be aware of everything." And because people cannot love God, as we have seen, they cannot love humanity by virtue of the fact that it belongs to God.

How, then, is metaphysics relevant to morality? Who can benefit from it in order to work directly in harmony with the objective teleology of the universe, with its "large-scale quest to ensure coming to understanding"? The souls of institutions. Just as only an organization can build a rocket or write an encyclopedia, "only . . . institutional souls . . . have the breadth of intellectual power to enable them to continue the process of understanding God in a direct way." Monius seems to have in mind especially the institution that he calls "scientific culture." But because scientific culture cannot be separated from humanity as a whole, it is finally the soul of humanity itself in which this objective teleology is being realized. "It is the soul of humanity that at present determines how we, individual conscious agents, should orient our lives."

I find this position doubly problematic. One problem involves the previously discussed issue of the relation between the soul of an institution, insofar as it has one, and the individuals who make it up. From my perspective, in which an institution can at best have a quasi-soul, this "soul" is constituted by the souls of the various members, especially, in most cases, the designated leaders. The morality of an institution will not, therefore, surpass that of its members, especially its leaders. If these people as individuals have not been inspired to have love or even concern for humanity as such, or even the people of their own country or city, but have been encouraged simply to follow "the lead of the emotions that they are aware of," to limit their love to people who are nearby, the institutions to which they belong will have no impetus to work for the general good.

Let us look especially at scientific culture, which Monius considers the institution that best furthers the teleology of the universe. It is obviously this culture that has produced the advances that have done the most to increase human power. Thanks to science-based technological advances, modern military organizations have the capacity to cause far more death and destruction in a few hours than could the Roman legions in a year. Given the ethic that, according to Monius (at least as I understand him), should be taught to people, our military and political leaders would properly have no concern for the welfare of distant people. A more powerful country should abstain from destroying a weaker country only if doing so would not be in the interest of the people these military and political leaders care about. Monius surely does not actually intend this. But it seems to me to be the implication of what he has written.

If I have understood him correctly, this consequence would point to the fact that his view of institutional souls is, besides being of doubtful intelligibility (as I argued earlier), also dangerous. Why? Because it could encourage the view that the soul of the institution, being a genuine soul over and above the souls of all the individual members, might, besides having far more understanding than those individual members, also surpass them morally. This assumption would reverse what most people who have thought about this problem have concluded—namely, that the morality of institutions is generally far *inferior* to that of the individuals making them up (for reasons explained, if imperfectly, in Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*).

Another feature of Monius' ethic that I find troubling is his statement that "It is the soul of humanity that at present determines how we, individual conscious agents, should orient our lives." From my own perspective, the (quasi) soul of humanity has become demonic, by which I mean that humanity now, besides having developed sufficient power to defeat divine purposes, is governed by aims that are diametrically opposed to those purposes. I strongly believe, therefore, that individual conscious agents should *not* allow the present soul of humanity to determine how they orient their lives. We need to work *against* this quasi-soul in the sense of trying to change its trajectory.

Here I suspect that we differ because of the difference between my panentheism, according to which human souls have a radical degree of freedom to act contrary to divine purposes, and Monius' monistic position, which could be called pantheistic, according to which there is not room for a radical distinction between the way things are and the way they ought to be. From Monius' monistic position, if I understand it correctly, the evolutionary process, including the evolution of modern science, technology, business, and government, is finally, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, a divine process.

I have perhaps misread Monius. If so, I apologize. But this is what his position, finally, seems to be.

A Concluding Comment

I regret that my critique of Monius' two-volume work is so negative. Given my strong agreement with his formal concern, to revive systematic philosophy, along with his conviction that ethics is dependent on theology, I did not expect my evaluation to be mainly negative. Had I realized this in advance, I might not have agreed to write it. However, once having agreed to perform the task, I felt that I had to carry through without pulling any punches. I can only hope that some of my comments will prove helpful.

Review 6: Mark Johnston

Piety and The Soul

> Man's proper activity is to love and understand. Now the question is: What does blessedness most consist in? Certain masters have said that it consists in understanding, others say that it consists in loving, still others say that it consists in understanding and loving, and these speak better.—Meister Eckhart

In Volume 2 of *Coming To Understanding*, the author is offering us nothing less than a new theology, one with affinities to neo-Platonism, Spinozism, Hegelianism, Consequentialism, and a strenuous Pietism. The new theology arises from an ontology of God as The One, the being that is ontologically prior to all else. The first part of *Coming To Understanding* explains that everything besides God is either an attribute of God or an imitative part of one of these attributes. God's attributes are none other than the categories, and these attributes or categories stand in *teleological* relations (among others)! From these teleological relations among the categories or the attributes of God, the author infers an objective teleology governing the universe as a whole. So he finds that a fundamental purpose of the universe and of our lives within it is understanding; specifically understanding directed at God's attributes. God's self-revelation is thus an objective goal or "telos" to which things are oriented.

That such understanding occurs is not a preordained necessity; first, it is an ideal limit which we shall never achieve, for no one can have complete knowledge of God's infinite attributes; second, the extent to which this goal is approximated is *up to us*. Though we are ontologically dependent on God, God is radically dependent on us to bring about his self-revelation. Against this backdrop, the author advocates a strenuous moral life based on the master virtue of piety, understood as the facilitation of God's will, which is his will to self-revelation through the process of our coming to understand his attributes.

What could be more urgent than God's need to be truly understood?

Rather than examine the original theory of categories that leads the author to the conclusion that coming to understand the attributes of God is an objective end, I propose to examine the theological significance of this idea. In particular, what can be said of the religious outlook which such theology underwrites? To what extent would it or could it succeed as a replacement for the "impious" religions which the author excoriates at the end of his essay? Is the religion of coming to understanding "good news" for mankind, or is it merely a strenuous Consequentialism organized around the goal of facilitating understanding?

Is It Really Religion?

Is the purpose of a religion simply to reveal a moral system and the metaphysical ground for that moral system, so that the moral system appears not as a mere cultural artifact, but as dictated by the things themselves? On the face of it, that simply sounds like metaphysics and objective ethics, and not yet religion, even if we go on to call the metaphysically grounded ethical imperatives "the will of God."

Religion, and particularly monotheism, has been crucially concerned with redemption or salvation, broadly understood as the replacement of one's ordinary "broken and banal" life by participation in the inner life of God, either through the sacramental, ritual, or liturgical actions of the religion or through mystical experience or in an alleged afterlife. Each religion offers its own vivid idea of *blessedness* as a concrete form of new life that we can attain through our efforts or by God's grace. In this redemptive self-giving of God, through which we experience something of the inner joy of the Godhead, something happens that is not anticipatable on the basis of the wisest rational exploration of reality. The purported "good news" of religion is that something new, something transformative which goes beyond the deliverances of reason, can happen in the soul of man. And this transformation is salvation and blessedness. If no such transformation has occurred or can occur, then religion is *de trop*, for it has no good *news* to offer us; nothing beyond the old (which is not to say unimpressive) deliverances of reason. Hence the oxymoronic character of the Victorian idea of "a religion of reason," a religion that is not merely compatible with reason but one which takes its whole character and content from reason.

The urge to develop a religion of reason was understandable, particularly on the part of those who viewed religion primarily as a social phenomenon. Looked at in this way, from the outside as it were, religion at its best might be seen as a relatively efficient means of securing a unifying social order; as the author of *Coming To Understanding* writes:

> Secularism and atheism are inappropriate belief sets for human beings because humans are religious animals: they are largely able to form into permanent groups without the employment of extensive tools of social control when such groups employ the methodology of religious belief (a focus on God, on good and evil, etc.) to cement their

> concerns to that of the group. Religious institutions continue to be the most successful at eliciting unswerving loyalty and belief.

One can sympathize with the author's desire to demonstrate that there is an objective and not merely conventional source of moral rightness, which might provide a basis for social order, a basis which would not be eroded by a secular world view. However, this is still to look at religion from the outside; it is not yet to address the question of whether there is any authentic inside to religion.

From the inside, religion is a response to a more desperate need than the need for social order; namely, the need for salvation and for blessedness. The author's work therefore raises an old and interesting question: Can a rationalistic monism of the sort that the author defends in Volume 1 of *Coming To Understanding* address these more desperate needs? Or must it inevitably respond by simply urging the needy to grow up?

Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* is the most famous attempt to deploy a rationalistic monism precisely to address the need for salvation and blessedness. But when Spinoza writes, as he does in the fifth book of the *Ethics*, that the intellectual love of God provides a way to enter into the infinite love that God feels toward Himself, we are left wondering whether this can be anything more than metaphor and analogy. For if God is not a person, how can he literally love anything?

Likewise, Spinoza argues that blessedness and salvation consist in the possession of a certain sort of understanding, which he calls the third kind of knowledge, the understanding of how the essences of individual things derive from the essence of God's attributes. Here God's self-revelation takes place in the context of an idealized form of rationalist understanding of reality. But, as critics of Spinoza's monism urged, why is God's self-revelation so preciously important if He is simply a first principle and not the first person? How can He be "harmed" in anything but a Pickwickian sense if He has no conscious life? Perhaps Spinoza escapes this criticism, for he famously located the harm in us; that is, in our remaining in a condition of emotional bondage so long as we lack adequate knowledge of God. Volume 2 of *Coming To Understanding* might also be expected to find a place for this theme.

Is God A Person?

The author of *Coming To Understanding* is absolutely right to note that the traditional ideas of God found in the major monotheisms are each under considerable strain, for they are made to play contradictory roles for historical reasons peculiar to the monotheisms themselves. This raises the question of how one might pare down the demands on the idea of God so that the resultant idea is not only internally consistent but non-superstitious, i.e., not at odds with the legitimate discoveries of science.

There are a variety of possible parings of the traditional monotheistic idea of God; the author himself provides a quite radical trimming of the traditional idea of God. The resultant theological picture may be summarized as follows:

(i) God is not a person who loves or cares for us.

(ii) There is no prayer, no intercession, no afterlife, no otherworldly reward for virtue, no possibility of a personal relationship with God. All of that is so much superstition, at odds with the legitimate discoveries of natural science.

(iii) Although God is not a person and does not have a soul, He does have a body. Although God is ontologically prior to all else, He is *not* the creator of the universe. The universe, here understood as "the block universe" of modes in a four-dimensional space-time structure, is uncreated. It is the body of God. [Whether this is an accurate report of the consequences of the author's ontology is another issue. A natural thing to think is that the body of God should be his matter, and according to Volume 1, that is Coming to Understanding. At least that is so given the clear implication that the God of Volume 2 is The One of Volume 1. For each is described in the respective parts as "the only ontologically independent particular."]

(iv) Unless we turn to the joys of understanding, which the author curiously does not dramatize in any detail, there is no distinctive religious experience associated with the author's implied religion; in fact, the experience of the love of God is held in enormous suspicion by the author. He sees it, with some plausibility, as a dangerous opening for fanaticism.

(v) There is no outpouring of helping Divine Grace that prompts us to the right acts and ends. Instead, it is God who is radically and wholly dependent on us for the realization of His "will" and so for the achievement of the proper condition of His body, made up of space-time and its modes.

(vi) Given the objective teleology of Coming to Understanding, God can be said to have a plan or a will. How one stands with respect to God's plan or will, the objective teleology of coming to understanding, is determined by how effectively one has promoted coming to understanding, relative to one's endowments, and station in life.

(vii) The central religious question facing any soul, be it individual or institutional, is whether the Body of God, the block universe, will be "disfigured" by not including the modes and sequences of modes that constitute better and more developed states of understanding of God's attributes.

Let us ask a question which a potential missionary or proselytizer of this theology's implied religion might ask: What is in the religion for us; what is life all about according to it? *At best, proper functioning with respect to Divinity.* This may lead to "peace and comfort" deriving from the thought that we have played our role in the divine drama as well as we could. But there is no extrinsic reward. Virtue, in particular the master virtue of piety, is its own reward.

Here, then, we have a very strenuous and serious Pietism. Which is not (or not yet) an objection; but only a reminder to the effect that the implied religion is suited for a very specific character type.

Platonic Consequentialism

The implicit religious morality of the system of *Coming To Understanding* is built around the master virtue of piety and appears in the text in the context of a sort of Platonic Consequentialism; that is, the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by the extent to which it promotes the master goal of understanding God's attributes, which in Volume 1 are shown to be none other than *Eide* or forms in something like Plato's sense. Hence the author's natural contrast between his own ethic and Hedonistic Utilitarianism:

> Attempts to rationally justify right action by utilitarian principles designed to maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain experienced by a population fail also. Such utilitarian principles can only justify principles like "Do not murder if the outcome is worse in pleasurable and painful consequences than otherwise." Every action is placed under the same standard of maximizing utility—understood this way—and the serious wrongs are trivialized by having their utility for pleasure and pain measured alongside the utility of rules about awnings. Failing to leave one's house on time may be worse in its utility outcomes than murdering one's neighbor—especially if he is disliked by everyone else, and he is killed peacefully without his knowledge while he is sleeping.

> What is required is that the good and the bad be justified by how they are grounded in God and His attributes within which humans live and have their being. If a murder is wrong, it can only be wrong because of its ultimate impact on God. To murder is to prevent a part of Consciousness from manifesting itself any longer in the Body of God, and doing so—in this case—is wrong because it impedes the unfolding of God's body in accordance with the will of God—the teleology embedded in the Godhead.
>
> All actions of sentient beings must be evaluated in terms of their consequences, just as with the utilitarian urges, but not in terms of their consequences for maximizing the pains and pleasures of sentient beings. Rather, the consequences of actions must be evaluated in terms of piety—serving God's will and His divine Eternal Life. However, evaluating the consequences of actions in terms of their impact on God's Life is directly related to the form of that life—Divine Truth. Its form and matter in turn being Understanding and Consciousness explains why actions should be evaluated as good or bad in relation to sentient beings and how those beings are affected. To this extent, standard Utilitarianism is correct.

That is, what is correct in Utilitarianism is the Consequentialist element; the ambition to define the rightness and wrongness of acts in terms of their consequential contribution to some specified master end. Utilitarians have the master end wrong; it is not pleasure and the avoidance of pain; it is serving God's will and thereby promoting his Divine Eternal Life.

What exactly is this master end, and in what sense can it be facilitated or promoted? The author's discussion at this point could be helpfully clarified, for although the end of understanding the attributes of God is something that could be promoted by action, how could His *Divine Eternal Life* be promoted by our action? Well, when we look back at Volume 1, we see that this "Divine Eternal Life" is none other than the Category or *Eidos* of Coming to Understanding!

Here then we have a kind of doubling up of the teleological significance of understanding. To promote the Divine Eternal Life by our action is to promote Coming to Understanding, which we now see is understanding directed at God's attributes.

(By the way, these last remarks suggest two difficulties in the overall work as it now stands. Volume 1 and Volume 2 need to be better integrated, and one good first step in this direction would be to set out in tabular form, and then justify, the theological "renamings" of the categories of Volume 1. But once that is done, we shall find that many of the theological renamings, for example, the renaming of the category of Ontological Dependence as "The Godhead" or the renaming of the category Choosing as "Piety," will seem metaphorical or analogical at best. Then the author will have to examine the extent to which he is characterizing something close to ineffable, by way of philosophical and theological metaphor and analogy.)

The master goal is understanding the attributes of God. There is some residual unclarity in the author's characterization of the goal of understanding the attributes of God, especially in such passages as

> Understanding, lastly, is also not an end in itself. Understanding is not an intrinsic value. Its value is for the purpose of God's attribute the Attributes of God. To turn the ultimate operation of understanding away from God's attributes is to pervert the right purpose of understanding; it is to utilize it for something that is not valuable, and further, to utilize it for something that is not what understanding is valuable for.

Is the master goal, or end in itself, the Attributes of God? No, for that end already exists and is self-complete. Nothing could be done to promote the Attributes of God. The master goal or end in itself is *understanding* the attributes of God. That end is intrinsically valuable, and at least in principle it can be promoted by human action.

What are the attributes of God? Volume 1 depicts them as *eide* in Plato's sense, and so we are left with a vindication of Plato's idea that contemplating the structure of the *eide* or forms confers knowledge of the good life.

But what we are calling the author's Platonic *Consequentialism* goes beyond this: it judges acts and institutions right or wrong, better or worse in the absolute action-guiding sense, in terms of the degree to which they facilitate or fail to facilitate the understanding of the *eide*, otherwise known as the attributes of God.

What is Wrong With Consequentialism?

Platonic Consequentialism is an advance over Hedonisitic Utilitarianism, but many of the most decisive objections to Utilitarianism are actually objections to its Consequentialist character, not to its account of the master "right-making" goal.

To rehearse just three of those objections: Consequentialism faces a version of the "open question" argument; it distorts moral rightness because it is no respecter of persons; and it secures moral objectivity at the expense of implying that the moral facts are largely unknowable, since they partly consist in unknowable facts about huge causal patterns laid out in a vast, if not infinite, open future.

First, our concept of what is right in the way of action and institutional arrangements is not the concept of what maximizes the chances of securing some good, as is shown by the fact that for any good we like we can imagine an act that maximizes the chances of securing it and yet regard as an open question whether the act is right. Maximizing goodness does not close the question of rightness off, as it should if rightness were to be analyzed in terms of maximizing good outcomes.

One way in which maximizing good outcomes (or maximizing the chance of good outcomes) comes apart from what is right can be seen by considering the second objection, namely that Consequentialism is no respecter of persons. That is, it does not capture the way in which persons figure in moral thinking as *absolute side constraints* on the pursuit of any end and so place limits on what can be done in the pursuit of any good, however noble. Why, according to Consequentialism, is it false to say that one is morally obliged to kill a healthy person and harvest his organs if this would save a much, much better contributor to the reduction of suffering or the development of understanding? The answer is one that a Consequentialist cannot give, namely that persons cannot be reduced to the status of instruments for noble ends, that personhood properly understood evokes a kind of holy reserve which finds its expression in true morality, in particular in the idea that there are certain things that cannot be done to people, no matter what happens later as a result. The best Consequentialist response to this objection has been that here we find in ordinary morality an essentially *religious* idea of holiness and inviolability, one that is no longer tenable in a secular age. But this is an odd response from a religious Consequentialism of the sort propounded by *Coming To Understanding*.

This bears on the missionary problem raised earlier; the proselytizer of the implied religion will have to tell people they are simply *instruments*; and in that respect the apparent disclosures in personal love and family life that there is something holy and inviolable about other people are all illusions. Love is then seen as no more than an “emotion,” as the author puts it. Contrast this with what is arguably the most successful religion since Islam and certainly the most successful religion indigenous to the Americas, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Here the loving relations of family and community are enshrined in God’s eternal plan; they are integral to it, not merely a means by which some other divine goal might be facilitated. And this of course helps to explain the solidarity and commitment of the Mormons and their evident self-sacrifice for their religion. As a matter of actual psychological fact, can a religion of Platonic Consequentialism which tells people that they are mere instruments expect to command anything like the same commitment?

The third objection to Platonic Consequentialism is that Consequentialism is unwittingly and fatally a form of moral skepticism, since it makes the moral rightness of an act, be it an individual or institutional act, dependent on the consequences throughout the long run; that is, the vast if not infinite future. This is the sense in which the *specific* moral claims of any Consequentialism are hugely speculative, for the long run is something that we can only color in with our own hopes and guesses. So the thought that this or that act or job or marriage or child or donation is more or less likely to contribute to the *ultimate* goal is not a thought we are entitled to in the ordinary course of events. There are unforeseen and unforeseeable consequences of our actions. There are perverse effects of our actions, effects which undo their intended and immediate consequences, and which we cannot even foresee, let alone control for. As to which acts before us now are pious in the sense of actually making a long-run approximation to the goal of understanding the attributes of God more likely, we cannot now know.

Here then is the death knell of teleological morality; the objectivity of morality is secured at the cost of making the facts about which acts are really right practically unknowable, since what is really right depends on effects (be it on understanding or pleasure) in an unsurveyable long run. This is so particularly if we give up the religious idea of a guiding hand in history which associates good intentions with good outcomes in the long run. It is an important fact about Utilitarianism that the height of its appeal was during a period in which such religious ideas where still prevalent, even among the practical implementers of the Utilitarian vision. (*Vide* John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays On Religion.*[1])

How Much Do *We* Count?

There is a kind of ethical contradiction in a strenuous Consequentialism of the sort promoted by *Coming to Understanding*. It allows for a counsel of depression, as follows: You don't count much, it is the goal that really counts, *you* count only to the extent that you facilitate *it.* "Well, suppose I don't facilitate it, then I don't count much, and *my not facilitating the goal doesn't count much either*!"

Given the Consequentialist ethic, there is nothing intrinsically worthy about being human, as opposed to being in some way a capable engine for generating understanding. Compare Negative Utilitarianism, the apportionment of merit in accord with one's capacity to reduce pain. On this view, aspirin, the famous pain-reducing substance that has done so much to reduce the painful subjective quality of our life, is clearly a better thing than any human being. And given Platonic Consequentialism, we get parallel results: a well-run library seems a better thing than any human being, on the author's own account, better in that it is more likely to effectively facilitate understanding.

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[1] *Three Essays On Religion* (Prometheus Books, 1998).

Of course, it is a wonderful thing for human beings to get together and run a library; but as a matter of actual psychological fact the generous people who do this are those with a healthy sense of their own *intrinsic* worth, and this has been conferred on them by a fortunate history of loving and being loved.

The Contrast with Spinoza

We may usefully contrast the monistic theology of *Coming to Understanding* with the monistic theology of Spinoza's *Ethics*, where Spinoza explains that the "highest endeavor of the mind" is the third kind of knowledge or understanding; that is "the knowledge that proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essences of things," a knowledge which leads us into the inner life of God. By way of a reminder, here follow the relevant propositions from the last part of Book 5, "On Human Freedom":

> Proposition 25: The highest endeavor of the human mind and its highest virtue is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge.
>
> Proposition 27: From this third kind of knowledge arises the highest possible serenity of mind.
>
> Proposition 30: Insofar as the mind knows itself and the body under the form of eternity, it necessarily has a knowledge of God, and knows that it is (a mode, i.e.) in God and conceived through God.
>
> Proposition 32: Whatever we understand by the third kind of knowledge, we take pleasure in and our pleasure is accompanied by the idea of God as its cause.

Since, for Spinoza, love for a thing just is pleasure accompanied by the idea of that thing as the cause of the pleasure, the third kind of knowledge or understanding produces "intellectual love of God." Now God himself embodies the third kind of knowledge to the highest possible degree, for his relation to the total face of the universe [Spinoza's analog of The Block Universe] can be understood as a derivation of the essences of individual things from the essences of his divine attributes. So God can be said to love Himself to the highest possible degree; as per

> Proposition 35: God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love.

And now Spinoza is ready to draw a startling consequence from his monism, namely that through the intellectual love of God we can participate in the inner life of God.

> Proposition 36: The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself.

Spinoza has spent considerable time explaining how the possession of the third kind of knowledge, with the fully rational emotions it generates, frees us from the emotional bondage that comes from failing to recognize that we are modifications of the divine. And of course Book 4 "On Human Bondage" is nothing less than a theory of redemption from those conditions of mind and body which arise from inadequate knowledge. So Spinoza is able to conclude *The Ethics* thus:

> I have thus completed everything that I wished to demonstrate concerning the mind's power over the emotions and the mind's freedom. From this it is apparent how powerful the wise man is, and how greatly he surpasses the ignorant man who is driven only by his lusts. For not only is the ignorant man distracted in many ways by external causes and never able to enjoy true serenity of mind, but he also lives as if he were unaware of himself, or God, or things; and as soon as he ceases to be acted upon, he ceases to be.
>
> The wise man, on the other hand, is hardly ever troubled in spirit, but being conscious of himself, and of God and of things, by a certain eternal necessity he never ceases to be, but always posses true serenity of mind.
>
> If the way I have pointed out leading to this result seems exceedingly hard, it can nevertheless be found. It must indeed be hard since it is found so seldom. For if true freedom were readily available and could be found without great effort, how is it possible that it should be neglected by almost everyone. But all things excellent are difficult as they are rare.

Even given his rationalistic monism, according to which persons are mere modes or modifications of the attributes of God, Spinoza is in a position to assign intrinsic value to persons. They are intrinsically valuable because they are the potential sites of God's love for Himself. A person is saved to the extent hat he makes himself such a site of the experience of God's love for Himself.

The author might do well to go on to elaborate a similar soteriological theme around his own quasi-Spinozistic intellectualist ideal of coming to understand the attributes of God. Where do the brokenness of ordinary life and the bondage of the emotions loom in the author's theology? And what is the mechanism of liberation from this brokenness and bondage? It cannot simply be living out my station and its duties, with the hope and comfort that I am in some way facilitating understanding.

It would be surprising if the author could not find the resources to develop such a soteriological theme, given the many affinities between his system and that of Spinoza.

Consciousness

Coming To Understanding's doctrine of the soul is built up from a novel understanding of consciousness as ontologically dependent on the physical, but in itself timeless. The central claims about consciousness are these, given in the author's own words:

(i) Specific consciousnesses are ontologically dependent on the bodies they are associated with, but they are distinct from those bodies.

(ii) Consciousnesses are not in space and time at all. Most think otherwise. They think of the events of consciousness as temporal, and indeed, as like physical processes: a man sees a table, and then becomes aware of it, just as a man walks from one part of a room to another. But this is to confuse a physical process that takes place over space-time with a timeless and spaceless process that is akin to a logical relation: The seeing of a table (timelessly) entails becoming aware of it.

(iii) Consciousness is a timeless set of relations corresponding to the physical process we call "seeing a table," just as the temporal process of someone inferring *Socrates is mortal* from *All men are mortal* and *Socrates is a man* has corresponding to it the timeless logical entailment between the second two propositions and the third. Even though the implication itself is not in space and time, there is still a sense in which it is a process: the consequent follows from the premises that imply it. In exactly the same sense the processes of consciousness are timeless.

All of this presents a number of difficulties. First, as the author himself emphasizes, consciousness is inherently *intentional*, or directed upon objects of consciousness. Accordingly, a conscious act is partly individuated by what it is about; what it is about is part of its nature as a conscious act. Take that away and you take away the conscious act. Now consider a conscious act directed at a change, i.e., something essentially in space and time, say an explosion. An individuating part of the conscious act involved in hearing the explosion is therefore essentially in time. It therefore follows that the conscious act itself cannot be timeless. Thus conscious acts are in time.

Second, today as I write this, I have looked, *several times*, at the table before me from my viewing position in the chair. There have been several *distinct* conscious acts of my viewing the table from here in the chair. And those conscious acts occurred in a definite temporal order, one before the other. So those conscious acts must themselves have been in time. It is not enough to note that the material processes associated with each of the conscious acts are in time and occur in a certain order. There is also a definite pairing of each conscious act with a particular material process of my body's coming under the efficient causal influence of the table. Why should the pairing take the form that it did? A conscious act should be paired with the material process which subserved it, and so on which it was ontologically dependent. But if one thing is ontologically dependent on another thing, and that second thing occurs in time, then the first thing must also occur in time. For example, a singleton is ontologically dependent on its sole member. So consider {the number 1} and {Socrates}. The first is timeless because its sole member is timeless. The second is in time because its sole member is in time; indeed it came into being when Socrates did, and it ceased to be when Socrates did.

Third, among the individuating objects of consciousness are objects, like tables and chairs, which came into being at specific times. Hence the conscious acts that are individuated by such objects could not be said to exist timelessly. For consider a time before their objects came into existence. The conscious acts could not have existed then. But if an item has a timeless existence, then there is no time at which it did not exist. Thus conscious acts are in time.

Fourth, there are not only conscious acts, there are *streams* of consciousness. In such streams of consciousness there are conscious acts directed not just at the material processes which underlie other conscious acts but at other conscious acts themselves. Such higher-order conscious acts are what knit together streams of consciousness. This, for example, is how it is with the conscious act of remembering seeing *Santa Maria Majore* from the *Hotel Danieli*. One conscious act, remembering, is directed at another conscious act, seeing. Now it lies in the essence of an act of remembering another conscious act that the remembered act came earlier than the act of remembering. Thus conscious acts are in time.

Fifth, conscious acts nest together to make up other conscious acts, but only if those constituent conscious acts occur in a certain temporal order, hence exist in time. So it is with explicit inference, in which one considers certain premises and then draws a conclusion from them. The conclusion has to be drawn from the consideration of the premises, and that means *after* considering the premises. So conscious acts like the drawing of a conclusion have to be in time.

Likewise, decisions are conscious acts, and they are conscious acts that only make sense at certain times and in the wake of (and that entails *after*) other conscious acts, like realizing what one's situation is and intending to do something about it.

Throughout his discussion of the timelessness of consciousness, the author correctly notes that the *logical* relation of *implication* among premises and conclusion is timeless. But he has a tendency to slide from this observation to the view that the *psychologica*l relation of *inference* is timeless. But it just couldn't be timeless and be *inference*. And inference, at any rate explicit inference, is a conscious act.

So we get passages like this:

> We have spoken of souls as the locus of consciousness; we have described them as making choices and as having self-images that such souls may recognize later to be false to themselves. But souls are not in time. Is there a contradiction in this way of speaking? No. As with inferences, we describe the timeless logical relations of the decisions of souls to what they are aware of and what goals they have by the use of the temporal idiom of process. Thus, to speak of souls coming to a realization or as making a decision is to speak of them timelessly engaged in a process with a preceding part and a consequent part in exactly the way that a timeless inference so divides into its premises and its consequences.

Timeless *implication* makes sense, but it has no preceding part and consequent part. There is just the implied part and the part that is implying it. The implied part does not come after the implying part. That only happens in inference. "Timeless *inference*" is just a contradiction in terms.

In summary then, any theory of conscious acts must recognize that they stand in relations of being before and being after other conscious acts. And that entails that conscious acts are in time, and so are not timeless.

(The author's appeal to Aquinas's account of God's cognition is not helpful in this context. For to say that God cognizes the world is, for Aquinas, to rely upon a very special sort of analogy, one from which it need not follow that God is in any sense *conscious* of the world.)

The Soul

The alleged timelessness of conscious acts is crucial to the alleged timelessness of the soul. For the soul is "the seat of such timeless events." (Again, how could an event, which is a *change*, fail to be in time? To change is to be one way at one time and another way at another time.) Accordingly, we are told:

> (i) The soul is not in space and time. This is the sense in which "souls are immortal."
>
> (ii) Souls of individual conscious agents, however, are ontologically dependent on the bodies they are the souls of—whether those bodies be human ones, or other kinds of bodies, such as institutions.

The author goes on to describe souls as follows:

> (iii) Souls are intrinsically aware.
>
> (iv) A soul is not just a collection of awarenesses. A soul has as its form the ways that it singles *this* out as important—and not *that*. A soul's awareness is shaped by how it foregrounds this and backgrounds that. A soul's awareness is necessarily selective—even when it does its best merely to contemplate what it sees without making any of the details of what it sees significant.

Here again, what is being said about the soul backgrounding and foregrounding directly implies that the soul is acting in time on things occurring in time. Moreover, these backgroundings and foregroundings seem to play a crucial role in the choices a soul makes. As for these choices, they are, along with awareness, the proper functions of the soul. As the author puts it:

> (v) The proper attributes of a soul [are] awareness and choice, [these should be distinguished] from what are not properly attributed to it: desires, judgments, and understandings. A soul does not, properly speaking, desire anything. It is *aware* of the desires of its animal body, and it makes choices based on what it is aware of.

The ambition to locate the "higher activities" of awareness and choice in the soul and locate desire in the animal body is an old and venerable one, but contemporary philosophy of mind regards it as a failed ambition because conscious desire is an intentional state; conscious desire is inherently directed at certain objects. If we separate desire into a consciousness that is not appetitive and a mere bodily disposition to go toward certain objects, we have two elements, neither of which deserves the name of desire. Conscious desire is a form of awareness and so should not be banished from the soul or seat of awareness and choice.

Now it is the soul, as the seat of choice, that is the primary bearer of responsibility, and so we are told that

> (vi) Maximizing awareness, and especially awareness of understanding, in itself and in the souls it affects, is what each soul must attempt to achieve by its choices.

On the face of it, this requirement seems to entail that each soul should aim to have certain effects in the world and so be a certain kind of efficient cause of events in the world. But efficient causes of events in the world will be temporally related to those events and so will also be in time alongside the events they cause. Indeed, among the products of souls are certain mental constructs—"selves"—which can seem to usurp the place of souls. Here is the author on selves:

> The selves of souls are the constructed products of the choices that those souls make on the basis of what they are aware of. As such, selves are imitations of their souls; they are the ecological footprints of those souls in God's Body.

Selves are constructs, constructed over time by the choices souls make. (Hence it must be a slip when we are told in Volume 1, p. 109, that selves are "atemporal.") This would seem to indicate that selves are ontologically dependent on souls in the way that a constructed house is dependent on those that constructed it. But no:

> We should see the self as the actual appearance of the effects of our awarenesses and choices: the laying out in space and time of the results of who we are. In turn, we should see the soul as ontologically dependent on the self that its choices construct in space and time, in the Body of God.

Here the exact relation between soul and self is far from clear. In some places the self is a product of the soul; in other places the self is an imitation of the soul, where this quasi-platonic relation of imitation seems to be anything but a matter of causal production. This is made clear by such passages as this:

> Neither is imitation a causal process—there are many ways that things come to be like other things apart from causation. Imitation is a teleological process. Our sense of our self is that we are beings who make choices that causally affect our body. That is not the right picture. Choosing and awareness are timelessly in the soul, and our body is an imitation of those choices of the soul.

But either way it is hard to see why the soul is said ontologically dependent on the self; for just as the effect seems to ontologically depend on the cause, the imitation seems to depend on the imitated.

Kant proposed that our actual choices manifest in our empirical psychology are the expression of intelligible characters not located in the phenomenal world of cause, effect, and time. This might be thought of as a precursor of the present idea of the soul, where imitating stands in for expressing, but even so Kant's idea makes the manifestations in our empirical psychologies ontological dependent on the corresponding intelligible characters. For an expression of some thing is ontologically dependent on that thing.

In any case, let us put the issue of ontological dependence aside and stay with the idea that selves imitate their corresponding souls. It should then follow that we cannot have a self without a corresponding soul. But no:

> Some selves have no soul corresponding to them. An organization, especially, may be so fragmented that its members do not operate in harmony with each other but instead each acts on his own in the name of the organization. Over time, such an organization displays a trajectory of decisions made in apparent awareness of this fact or that fact of the environment, but a closer inspection reveals that the organization appears to be aware of something at one moment and not at the next, that its choice at one moment is made with one set of goals apparently in mind and an entirely different set in the next moment. A self is present, but there is no locus of awareness and piety; there is no soul.

Here we have a dramatization of the effects of lack of integration; they correspond to a kind of *soullessness*. But paradoxically there are still acts of awareness and choice occurring at the institutional level, acts which are not simply the acts of the institution's members. What is it that is aware and is making the choices? Must we now recognize that a mere *self* can be a "seat of awareness and choice"?

And what is a soulless self *imitating*?

The Self-Image as Usurping the Role of the Soul

As well as the danger of "soullessness," or lack of integration of awareness and choice, there is the danger of the soul not understanding that it is the seat of awareness and choice. The soul can come to identify itself with its constructed self-image and so wrongly suppose that central parts of that self-image are essential aspects of the soul. In this way the soul can lose all sense of its true vocation, namely facilitating coming to understanding.

Here the author is beginning to develop a significant soteriological theme, that of being lost in one's self-image, and offering a way to overcome this broken condition by returning to awareness of oneself as a soul.

This needs to be developed further, particularly such suggestive remarks as:

> Our self-image is something we can reconstruct and improve. We can uncover what and who we really are. We can discover the soul itself that is the locus of choice and awareness and use that discovery to construct a self-image that better fits with who we are and what we should do—a kind of psychotherapy, as it were.
>
> The idea is not that our self-image should simply be replaced with our notion of soul. Our notion of self—rather—has a different and complementary role to our notion of soul: the self-image should be made to correspond to the actual self developing in God's Body. Our self is the manifestation—the ecological footprint—of our soul in the Body of God. So it is imperative that the soul be appropriate in its choosing and its awareness.

Here we have the beginnings of an account of salvation or redemption emerging within the author's own distinctive monism. One way in which our lives are broken is shown by our susceptibility to resentment, which the author sees as having its source in the false identification of the soul with the self.

> Should that soul, however, identify itself with the self, it will experience resentment. It will treat its perceived past as a repository of wrongs done to *it* that should be righted. It will recall its past, in the sense of debts and credits between itself and others that are required to be settled. It will wish its past were different than it was, and it will

> blame its own failings on that past and on others who forced it to have the negative experiences it resents having had.
>
> In doing this, such a soul no longer views its self as something it is constructing with such and such resources but as someone who deserves better than what he has gotten. This will not be someone who contemplates what is the best thing to do in the circumstances of the here and now that he finds himself in. Instead, he will be someone who fantasizes about, and executes, various forms of revenge.

What needs to be shown, however, is that these negative emotions are *due* to "a misidentification of the self with the soul." Why isn't it that some souls suffer resentment because they dwell on the past and so do not recognize that their vocation to promote understanding is continually renewed in every present moment, along with the resources it presents? This in its turn has two consequences: resentment and a false attachment to one's self and its history.

So resentment is not *itself* the soul's illusion that it is a self existing in space and time. It is a consequence of the soul's prior resistance to its vocation, renewed in each moment, to promote understanding given the resources at hand.

Why Isn't There a World Soul?

The author is properly sensitive to transpersonal unities, such as corporations and institutions, and is prepared to grant that under certain conditions of integration these transpersonal unities may be said to have souls which the institutional selves "imitate."

Yet we saw earlier that the idea of soulless institutions is somewhat unstable. Perhaps the best thing to say here is that there are souls which certain institutions (or their selves) try, unsuccessfully, to imitate. The souls exist, the institutions exist, but the so-called "soulless institutions" lack sufficient integration to effectively imitate any transpersonal soul.

Now notice that with respect to the extent and variety of transpersonal souls the theology of *Coming To Understanding* is significantly under-constrained by the purely ontological theses of Volume 1. Nothing there, as I understand it, forecloses the issue of the World Soul, something preexistent in whose choices and acts of awareness individuals may participate in the way they participate in the choices and acts of awareness of institutions or indeed of humanity, thereby being liberated from the merely banal expression of their own souls.

Perhaps another name for the World Soul would be the soul of God, so that God would then have a soul as well as a body, with the consequence that we could come not only to shape his body but participate in his inner life, somewhat in the fashion envisaged by Spinoza in the *Ethics*.

> And if God were allowed to have a soul as well as a body, would it not then be exactly right to call him a person?

Which leaves us with the question of whether this person could or should be loved.

Love Revisited

The author presents love as an emotion, which if properly constrained can be quite functional in promoting coming to understanding. Thus

> Worshipping God is serving God. It is neither a way of loving God nor a way of expressing fear of God. And worshipping God is neither being in awe of God nor an expression of gratitude to God. Prayer cannot be an act of communication. No prayer is ever answered by God.
>
> Love is crucial to our successful serving of God.

Religions such as Judaism and Christianity have presented love as an obligation, perhaps the primary obligation. And no obligation is an emotion, and it is incoherent to morally require people to *feel* something they do not or cannot. So the religions of love must be talking of an orientation towards others which can be chosen or willed.

The author's view is that considered as an emotion, love is misdirected towards God and towards others *in general*.

> Love is an important check on overzealousness. A balance between our vision of the good and what we love locally is what serves God best.
>
> No soul can be aware of everything. No soul can love God. It is impious to even try: To try to love God is to trivialize God—to make Him into the sort of thing that *we* (mere souls) can love. We can love only the parts of God that are near to us.

Yet it is far from clear why one would have to be aware of everything in order to love God. One would, of course need a conception of God in order to love him, but *Coming To Understanding* can offer no consistent bar to developing a conception of God, for that is precisely what the text itself is concerned to do.

To love another person in the sense in which love can be commanded as an obligation is to take that person's true interests as seriously as one takes one's own. This is the sense in which the loved one is "another self"; his or her true interests function in one's deliberation with the same weight as one's own. In this sense of love it follows that in the absence of awareness of one's own true interests one cannot love oneself, no matter what positive emotions of esteem or admiration or affection one has towards oneself.

Now a religion is, among other things, a radical reinterpretation of our true interests, an interpretation which sees them as converging rather than diverging. We are shown to be creatures of God, so that our true interests are God's interests. To that extent taking into account God's interests in the context of individual lives amounts to loving those individuals.

So the love that can be commanded, the love urged by the Abrahamic religions, seems fully compatible with the monistic theism of Volume 1 of *Coming To Understanding*. What excludes that love from Volume 2 just seems to be the irreligious doctrine that love can only be an emotion.

Review 7: Alister E. McGrath

Introduction

A. M. Monius's *Coming to Understanding* is a remarkable work, which seeks to renew a metaphysical approach to reality, including God and which is steeped in the classical tradition yet not inattentive to the complexities of interpretation and application encountered in the early twenty-first century. It will clearly provoke debate, just as clearly as it is intended to do so. This is to be welcomed, not least because the work so shrewdly recognizes that many of the great themes of the classical tradition had simply been abandoned, rather than refuted; regarded as unfashionable rather than demonstrated to be unusable.

Yet others who are sympathetic to the work's emphatic reassertion of the importance of metaphysics will wish to engage with Monius at other points. I would judge that theologians and philosophers who are embedded within, and see themselves as reflecting the leading ideas of, the Abrahamic religions would wish to engage in a respectful yet ultimately critical dialogue with him, especially over his rejection of some key aspects of traditional theism.

The style of the work requires comment. It is written in the classic tradition, engaging with grand questions rather than seeing itself as having an obligation to engage with the multiplicity of books and articles that such debates have spawned over the decades. We find reference to the great and the good—to Thomas Aquinas and Maimonides, for example. But there is no attempt to deal with a galaxy of minor thinkers and the myriad of issues that they raise. In terms of its style, this is a work that aspires to the tradition of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* or Descartes's *Meditations*.

The philosophical position articulated in the first half of the work stands recognizably within an Aristotelian tradition (see especially Chapter 13), even though the author sees no particular reason to slavishly adhere to its every point. Indeed, the creativity with which this tradition is used is one of the more attractive and engaging aspects of this work, as it shows an informed and principled willingness to develop the tradition in response to perceived weaknesses and new challenges. A similar judgment must be made in relation to its more explicitly theological sections, which are dealt with in the fourth and fifth parts of the work. This review will focus on the theological sections of the work (Chapters 19–30), making reference to earlier parts of the work as necessary. Given the richness and complexity of the theological sections of the work, I shall engage with its leading themes rather than its fine detail, as I believe that this is a more satisfactory manner of assessing its merits and potential.

The Reassertion of the Metaphysics of God

The opening section of the fourth part of the treatise (Chapter 19) is of decisive importance, as it sets out the fundamental principles which govern Monius's approach in the remainder of this work. The opening words of this section make its classical roots abundantly clear. The "metaphysics of God," like metaphysics in general, is seen as an intellectually significant and necessary task in which the metaphysical status of God is seen as determinative. This marks a decisive, and in my view welcome, shift away from the anti-metaphysical tendencies of much (though not all) recent theological reflection, which has often taken the view that metaphysics is discredited and obsolete. Since about 1960, Christian theology appears to have reached something of a rare consensus—namely, that it has no place for, or need of, metaphysics. This can be seen in Harvard theologian Gordon Kaufman's assertion that "there is an inescapable rivalry between metaphysics and theology."[1] While Kaufman does little to clarify precisely what he means by metaphysics or why he should choose to consider it as obsolete, his remarks seem to have struck a chord among many contemporary theologians. In his dramatic and somewhat incendiary essay "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," the Nottingham theologian John Milbank argues that metaphysics is to be rejected on account of its pretensions to theological autonomy.[2]

> [Metaphysics] claims to be able fully to define the conditions of finite knowability, or to arrive at possible being as something "in itself." . . . Modernity is metaphysical, for since it cannot refer the flux of time to the ungraspable infinite, it is forced to seek a graspable *immanent* security . . . By contrast, the Christian thought which flowed from Gregory of Nyssa and Augusine was able fully to concede the utter unknowability of creatures which continually alter and have no ground within themselves, for it derived them from the infinity of God which is unchanging and yet circumscribable, even in itself.

Milbank thus argues for the elimination of metaphysics from a radically orthodox theology, holding that metaphysics is in the first place theologically *unnecessary* (in that the Christian revelation of God is epistemologically autonomous), and in the second place *degrading* (in that metaphysics is intellectually contaminated by the presuppositions of a secular world). Yet it is important to note that many of the theologians who Milbank clearly regards as exemplary in their orthodoxy—such as Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa—were actually rather enthusiastic in their appropriation of metaphysics for theological purposes.[3] Milbank appears to endorse a deployment of metaphysics by his favored surrogates, even if he declares the procedure to be illegitimate for others.

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[1] Gordon D. Kaufman, "Metaphysics and Theology." *Cross Currents* 28 (1978), pp. 325–41.

[2] John Milbank, *The Word made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, p. 44.

It will therefore be clear that Monius's approach to the place of metaphysics in human reflection on the nature of God runs counter to a powerful current within Western theology. This challenge is to be welcomed, in that there is already a growing reaction against such anti-metaphysical diatribes within theology and increasing interest in the reappropriation of classical approaches, such as that associated with the great medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas.[4] *Coming to Understanding* injects some significant components into a debate which gives every indication of being at a turning point, and might well be of importance in tipping the balance.

So what ideas does *Coming to Understanding* advocate? In what follows, I shall identify the themes that I regard as being of particular importance. I would not wish my decision to pass over some sections or themes as implying that they lack significance; I have simply taken the view that it is the task of a reviewer to single out statements of particular importance, whether positively or negatively.

The first major theme is the epistemological priority of God over all other forms of knowledge:

> God comes first. We believe that in order to know who and what we are, and what we must do in life, we must know about God.

Once more, this can be seen as a vigorous reassertion of a principle that was known to and greatly valued by earlier generations of theological and spiritual writers—namely, that we only know ourselves when we know God. This principle is deeply embedded within, though not restricted to, the Christian tradition, with writers as diverse as the Protestant John Calvin and the Catholic Jacques Bénigne Bossuet insisting on the priority of knowledge of God for a right understanding of other things—above all, of human identity.

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[3] Douglas Hedley, "Should Divinity Overcome Metaphysics? Reflections on John Milbank's *Theology beyond Secular Reason* and *Confessions of a Cambridge Platonist*." *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), pp. 271–298. For the rather limited place of metaphysics in Milbank's Cambridge colleague Nicholas Lash, see Gale Z. Heide, "The Nascent Noeticism of Narrative Theology: An Examination of the Relationship between Narrative and Metaphysics in Nicholas Lash." *Modern Theology* 12 (1996), pp. 459–481.

[4] I have in mind two important studies by Norman Kretzmann, which have been of particular importance in renewing interest in the metaphysical dimensions of philosophical theology: *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra Gentiles I.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997; idem, *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra Gentiles II.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

What sort of God?

Up to this point, *Coming to Understanding* has emphasized the priority of knowing God over knowing all other things. The work now moves on to clarify how the conceptually elusion notion of "God" is to be understood. In a terse account of the "divine attributes," a classic topic of discussion in any philosophy of religion course, it becomes clear that *Coming to Understanding* advocates an understanding of these attributes which is eclectic and idiosyncratic (Chapter 19), distinguishing this approach from, for example, that of Thomas Aquinas. This immediately raises the intriguing question concerning how one is to position this distinctive conception of God in relation to its alternatives—for example, the Trinitarian vision of God associated with Christianity, the rival (though related) visions associated with other Abrahamic faiths, or the more philosophical notions of God developed by Leibniz, Spinoza, or A. N. Whitehead (to mention some obvious possibilities). It is clear that Monius has given thought to this question, to judge by his nuanced discussion of "the properties of God" (Chapter 20), to which we may turn.

In Spinozan fashion, Monius insists that it is improper to speak of God as a "person." His discussion of this point merits attention:

> God is not a person. No psychological attribution can be accurately applied to Him. He is not conscious; He is not sentient; He is not aware. He is not concerned either with humans or with anything else—He is not even concerned with or aware of Himself.

The statement that God "is not concerned with humans" indicates that the comparison with Spinoza is particularly appropriate and raises the not unimportant question of whether this God can be said to "love" humanity or the world.

Monius is aware of the complexity of language and the intense difficulties that accompany any attempt to use human terms to refer to God. He acknowledges that the Abrahamic faiths do indeed speak of God as "loving" (Chapter 28); yet he clearly regards this analogical way of speaking as being deeply problematic. One cannot really speak of God "loving" people; nor should one encourage people to "love" God. In an interesting discussion, Monius argues that the proper means of acknowledging this God is through service of others and the exercise of love between people. "Loving God" raises both intellectual and spiritual difficulties for

Monius and serves to place conceptual distance between his vision of God and that of many (though not all) Christians, Muslims, and Jews. He cites Maimonides in this respect (Chapter 20):

> Some major figures in the tradition, Maimonides for example, would deny that God can be described as "all-loving" without great inaccuracy. That term, and indeed all terms that involve psychological descriptions applicable to humans, Maimonides believes, cannot be literally applied to God. God manifests psychological traits in a way that is at best only analogous to how human beings manifest such traits. (Maimonides, actually, believes that *no* description can literally apply to God *and* to a creation. He is a proponent of "negative theology.")

Monius argues that God is both "transcendent" and "immanent" (Chapter 20), noting that the paradox of this situation has never really been resolved. He is certainly right to note that the problem has often been restated rather than resolved. This leads him to develop his critique of any attempt to describe God using personal language, imagery or activity:

> In the same documents where it is stressed that God is a person who is aware, who thinks and who acts, it is also said that He is otherworldly, transcendent, and unchanging. He is described as something unlike anything that one can imagine, and it is claimed that He cannot be represented by anything in our world. As it is always put: He is not like us in any way whatsoever. It is this kind of view that Maimonides is propounding when he argues that to attribute any personality trait to God, including sentience, is to speak at best analogously and therefore in a way that cannot be literally understood.

The argument here is significant and merits close attention: those same texts, Monius argues, that appear to legitimize the use of personal concepts and language in relation to God also declare it to be improper on account of their simultaneous assertion that God cannot be likened to anything other than God.

At this point, I would anticipate Monius encountering criticism from those who believe that such analogical forms of argument and representation are legitimate, while nevertheless conceding its limits and difficulties. There is an important point being made here, but perhaps one that needs judicious modification. Maimonides—like Aquinas—is well aware of the limitations of human analogies. There is a fundamental distinction between "analogy" and "identity," raising the critically important issue of how one ascertains what aspects of a proposed analogy between God and any aspect of the creation are to be presumed to apply to the comparison and which are to be disregarded. Although Aquinas, for example, regards this analogy between God and creation (the *analogia entis*) to be grounded in the doctrine of God's creation of all things, this does not, in itself and of itself, resolve the question of how one determines which aspects of the analogy are to be presumed to be valid. This is perhaps one of the most fundamental difficulties attending any form of analogical reasoning, whether one allows the concept of *analogia entis* or not.

Analogies are as much about what God is "not" as about what God "is." Yet I am not entirely persuaded that this allows us to suggest that the analogical method is doomed to failure. Aquinas, for example, if I have understood him correctly, is a proponent of the critical use of analogical language, drawing attention to its limitations and potential to mislead, while at the same time affirming that it can serve a positive role in talk about God. I certainly agree with Monius that Maimonides can be thought of as a "negative theologian";[5] but I do not think that this fundamentally invalidates an analogical approach to a discussion of the "love of God."

So is God a "person"? In dealing with this and related questions, Monius expresses concern that some religious approaches to the nature of God—such as the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—run the risk of intellectual incoherence. "If the metaphysics of God is amenable to rational understanding, as we claim it is, then not everything attributed to God in the tradition can be retained." In a very significant section of his thesis, Monius argues it is necessary to reconceive the notion of God if it is to be protected from incoherence (Chapter 20).

> We repudiate the central attribution that creates so much trouble for the notion of God—that of His being a person. It is clear that to attribute a mind and other personal qualities to God is—on pain of incoherence—to disallow other claims about Him. If His being a person is instead rejected, then other aspects of the traditional attributions of properties to God, ones that generate the problem of evil, for example, can be jettisoned as well: His omnipotence and His omniscience, for example.

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[5] I suspect that we have both read and annotated Ehud Z. Benor, "Meaning and Reference in Maimonides' Negative Theology." *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995): pp. 339–360, at this point.

Monius's argument is consistent with his overall methodology. This concern for intra-systemic consistency naturally gives rise to a number of significant problems, which he is careful to identify and address. In particular, he notes, this involves setting to one side certain ideas about what a "God" ought to be like in order to preserve the notion of "God" itself. For such reasons, Monius believes that perceived tensions between his notion of God and those embedded within the Abrahamic faiths are not of decisive importance and are certainly not fatal to his own position. Nevertheless, he would do well to note that these statements might well constitute a significant disincentive to thinkers embedded within these traditions to interacting positively with his approach.

To give one obvious example, one of the most distinctive features of the development of Christian theology since about 1950 has been its rediscovery of the doctrine of the Trinity, following a long period during which this doctrine was seen as being of little value or interest. Its credibility was widely regarded as having been significantly eroded, if not entirely eliminated, by the rationalist criticism of the Enlightenment. Yet in the burst of intellectual energy that followed the ending of the Second World War, this question was subjected to fresh critical examination, leading to the emergence of a very positive evaluation of both the conceptual foundations and intellectual utility of the doctrine, across virtually all Christian denominational divides.[6] Monius's critique of the doctrine of the Trinity, although not set out in full, seems to echo the basic themes of eighteenth century critiques of the doctrine, which focused on its apparent intellectual incoherence.

The issue here seems to me to be that all human intellectual endeavor—whether religious, scientific, or philosophical—eventually leads us to places in which we are forced to express ourselves in conceptual systems or analogies which, on the face of it, seem incoherent or contradictory, yet are nevertheless forced upon us by the realities that we seek to represent and analyze. The analysis of experience can lead to the generation of conceptualities which are often very complex and occasionally quite counterintuitive. The Princeton philosopher of science Bas van Fraassen is intensely skeptical of those who suggest that science is justifiably simple, whereas religion is unjustifiably complex; he cites quantum theory to illustrate his point:[7]

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[6] To note only a few works to deal with this development: see Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998; Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, eds. *The Trinity : An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Vincent Brümmer, *Atonement, Christology, and the Trinity : Making Sense of Christian Doctrine*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

> Do the concepts of the Trinity, the soul, haecceity, universals, prime matter, and potentiality baffle you? They pale beside the unimaginable otherness of closed space-times, event-horizons, EPR correlations and bootstrap models.

Fraassen clearly considers that the conceptual and imaginative demands of some areas of modern physics exceed those traditionally associated with even the most labyrinthine theological and philosophical systems of the Middle Ages. His point is that an empirical engagement with the world of experience and phenomena throws up theoretical concepts which are far from simple yet which appear to be inevitable if the phenomena are to be preserved. Similarly, for an orthodox Christian theologian, the doctrine of the Trinity is the inevitable outcome of intellectual engagement with the Christian experience of God; for the physicist, equally abstract and bewildering concepts emerge from wrestling with the world of quantum phenomena. But both are committed to sustained intellectual engagement with those phenomena, in order to derive and develop theories or doctrines which can be said to do justice to them, preserving rather than reducing them.

Knowing and doing the will of God

The overall intellectual trajectory of the view of God found within *Coming to Understanding* is strongly teleological (Chapter 21; note the earlier emphasis on this notion at Chapter 18). "The will of God is the objective teleology embodied in His Godhead. It can be understood only by the study of God and His attributes." This is an important statement, and it would certainly garner support from many. It echoes important themes of the rational philosophy of the eighteenth century, to the effect that the true will of God—which was often regarded as being at odds with those attributed to God by organized religion, especially in the writings of Voltaire—can be known through the exercise of reason, and actualized in everyday life.

Monius lays the groundwork for his position by arguing that many simply seek to impose their own values on reality, rather than discerning the values that are already embedded within it. "Subjective teleology" arises through the human attempt to create its own system of values and goals. In contrast, an "objective teleology" is to be recognized which "encapsulates those purposes that things have intrinsically embodied within them by virtue of their relationships to the attributes of God." This is an important point which interlocks with the contemporary debate over the origins of human systems of value and meaning. One might, for example, contrast the concept of "natural" goals (meaning "goals that are grounded in the greater order of things") found in many classic Greek philosophers[8] with the alternative view of Richard Rorty, to the effect that human beings construct their own value systems for their own ends.[9] This is an important aspect of Monius's argument and merits proper consideration.

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[7] Bas van Fraassen, "Empiricism in the Philosophy of Science." In *Images of Science: Essays on Realism and Empiricism*, edited by P. Churchland and C. Hooker, pp. 245–308. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Quote at 258.

It does, however, raise some not insignificant questions. One of these stands out as being of particular importance: how is this *telos* to be known? Monius takes the view that it can be known, to the extent that is necessary, by rational reflection—by "study." His analysis of the attributes of God is clearly predicated on the belief that these can be apprehended by human reason, which is then able to judge how these should be actualized. Although I am very sympathetic to this approach, I have to confess that I consider it to be faced with some serious difficulties. The issue here is whether human reason has the intrinsic capacity to gain access to the concepts that Monius clearly regards as playing such an important role in his philosophy. To illustrate the difficulty, I shall draw on Alasdair MacIntyre's reflections on his own study of the history of ethics, especially during the period of the Enlightenment. The problem was that human reason seemed unable to identify a single "rational morality" that could be sustained convincingly. In exploring the history of the contested notion of "rationality'" MacIntyre points out the implications of this dispute for the entire Enlightenment project:[10]

> Both the thinkers of the Enlightenment and their successors proved unable to agree as to precisely what those principles were which would be found undeniable by all rational persons. One kind of answer was given by the authors of the *Encyclopédie*, a second by Rousseau, a third by Bentham, a fourth by Kant, a fifth by the Scottish

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[8] See, for example, Fred D. Miller, *Nature, Justice and Rights in Aristotle's Politics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Helen S. Lang, *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Gerard Naddaf, *The Greek Concept of Nature*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, pp. 11–35.

[9] Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1982; David L. Hildebrand, *Beyond Realism and Antirealism : John Dewey and the Neopragmatists*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003.

[10] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* London: Duckworth, 1988, p. 6.

> philosophers of common sense and their French and American disciples. Nor has subsequent history diminished the extent of such disagreement. Consequently, the legacy of the Enlightenment has been the provision of an ideal of rational justification which it has proved impossible to attain.

For MacIntyre, the inevitable conclusion of such reflections is that there is no universal rationality; rather, there are competing tradition-mediated rationalities which are in conflict and which cannot be totally detached from the traditions which mediate them. Now it is possible that Monius will believe that he has been able to circumvent or neutralize the force of this point. If so, it would be helpful to know the grounds of this belief and the evidence and arguments that he would care to adduce in its defense.

The nature of the "good"

Monius moves on to deal with the question of values and priorities in human society (Chapter 22), noting the widespread diversity within contemporary culture at this point. Monius makes some important points concerning the apparent arbitrariness or pointlessness of the regulations that govern human societies and quite correctly suggests that this points to the need for some form of framework that is able both offer both guidance concerning moral behavior and prioritization of obligations. His own positive proposal involves the following basic proposal:

> What is required is that the good and the bad be justified by how they are grounded in God and His attributes within which humans live and have their being. If a murder is wrong, it can only be wrong because of its ultimate impact on God.

We see here both a significant attempt to reestablish the grounds of human morality in the transcendent realm and a significant modification of some traditional renderings of this approach. This requires further comment.

To begin with, we may consider the question of the transcendent basis of human morality. Monius has an important ally here in Iris Murdoch, one of Britain's most interesting moral philosophers of recent years. Although best known for her remarkable series of novels, Murdoch (1919–1999) was also a moral philosopher of substance, passionately concerned about what needed to be done if humanity was to break free from its selfishness and act out the good life. Her famous formulation of the moral problem sets the scene admirably for our analysis.[11]

> One of the main problems of moral philosophy might be formulated thus: are there any techniques for the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly?

Murdoch's answer is complex, yet is ultimately possessed of a central theme: there must be a transcendent ideal, capable of capturing our minds and imaginations, captivating us with a vision of the good. Alluding to the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), she sets out the connotations of the term "good," as follows: "the proper seriousness of the term [good] refers us to a perfection which is perhaps never exemplified in the world we know ('There is no good in us') and *which* carries with it the idea of transcendence."[12]

Murdoch does not believe in God, as traditionally conceived; yet her disinclination to accept such a conventional notion does not prevent her from insisting on the critical role of the transcendent—above all, of "the Good"—in affecting and guiding the human moral quest. It is as if something is intimating that this world is not of final significance, morally or metaphysically. We sense that our attempts to live the good life are ultimately judged by some standard that we have not ourselves created but is somehow built into the fabric of the world. It is our task, as reflective moral agents, to encounter these deep structures and adjust our thinking and our acting accordingly. Murdoch, who is of course writing from a Platonist perspective, sets out the issues in her characteristically robust manner: "How do we know the very great are not the perfect? We see differences, we sense directions, and we know that the Good is still somewhere beyond. . . . 'Good is a transcendent reality' means that virtue is the attempt to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is. It is an empirical fact about human nature that this attempt cannot be entirely successful."[13] The critical role of the notion of the "transcendent" in Murdoch's vision of the moral quest will be obvious at this point.

Murdoch is aware that the notion of transcendence is not without its difficulties and that it was regarded with some disdain by Oxford philosophers during the 1960s and 1970s. For many such writers, "any true transcendence" was a "consoling dream projected by human need on to an empty sky." Writing in the face of relentless opposition to the notion, characteristic of that bygone age, Murdoch insisted that some such notion was required to make sense of human experience in general and moral experience in particular. Human moral activity can be thought of as a pilgrimage towards "a distant moral goal, like a temple at the end of the pilgrimage," something that is "glimpsed but never reached."

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[11] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*. London: Routledge, 1970, p. 53. See also the more extended discussion in her *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London: Penguin, 1992.

[12] Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and mystics: writings on philosophy and literature*, edited by Peter J. Conradi. London: Chatto & Windus, 1997, p. 376.

[13] Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 91.

Where other voices of the era were insisting that morality was a matter of human invention,[14] Murdoch refused to concede the then fashionable insistence upon the distinction between fact and value. Morality is about seeing things as they really are. It is a form of realism, which ultimately depends upon the recognition that some ideal of perfection, ultimately lying beyond us, informs and challenges our moral reflections, through what Murdoch calls "a refined and honest perception of what is really the case, a patient and just discernment and exploration of what confronts one, which is the result not simply of opening one's eyes but of a certainly perfectly familiar kind of moral discipline." The key point here is simple: We can only choose within worlds that we can see—that we can visualize. To act as we should we must first see things as they really are.

There are clearly important affinities between Murdoch and Monius, despite some not uninteresting divergences. But for the purpose of this review of Monius, I judge it to be important to note that both his criticism of pragmatic accounts of morality and his insistence upon the ultimate transcendent basis of a stable morality would find much support in her writings.

Having emphasized the importance of a metaphysically transcendent dimension to life in his account of the good, Monius then moves on to articulate his understanding of the transcendent ground of morality in terms of "its ultimate impact on God." Monius is critical of what we might call "divine command" theories of ethics, which hold that "morality becomes purely a matter of reward and punishment for appropriately placed loyalty to God."[15] Instead, he adopts an approach which is reminiscent of some themes found in the "process philosophy" of A. N. Whitehead; namely, that one must consider "morality" in terms of its impact upon God. There are, of course, echoes of this elsewhere. In the Christian liturgical tradition, for example, the rejection of God by humanity is often evaluated in terms of the pain and distress that this causes to God.

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[14] See, for example, J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: inventing right and wrong*. London: Penguin Books, 1977. For a discussion of such developments, see J. B. Schneewind, *The invention of autonomy : a history of modern moral philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[15] For a more nuanced account of this approach, see the influential study of Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Yet it might perhaps be worthwhile for Monius to revisit his statement and consider whether it might benefit from some nuance and qualification. While there may indeed be truth in his suggestion that "morality becomes purely a matter of reward and punishment for appropriately placed loyalty to God," especially in some popular and somewhat uncritical presentations of religious piety, there is a very significant strand of opinion that holds that the grounds of morality lie elsewhere. Consider, for example, the following Christian hymn, which is thought to originate from sixteenth-century Spain:

> My God, I love thee not because,
> I hope for heaven thereby,
> nor yet because who love thee not
> are lost eternally.

A similar approach is developed, although in a much more sophisticated manner, by the English literary critic and theologian C. S. Lewis, especially in his famous sermon "The Weight of Glory."[16]

Threats to God

In the section entitled "The enemies of God" (Chapter 22), Monius notes a number of human activities and constructions that he considers to pose a threat to God. This is an interesting section and one that raises some difficulties. To put it as simply as possible: the agencies or activities that Monius identifies as posing threats to God are not monolithic. A critic might suggest that his criticisms at this point rest on the untested assumption that "religious institutions" and "science"—to note the two "enemies of God" that I shall consider in this section—are uniformly opposed to God in their attitudes, outlooks, and activities. I would enter a plea for caution at this point and urge a recognition that there is a significant degree of intellectual variegation within them, as well as difference between them.

To turn to the first of these: "religious institutions." Monius makes some entirely fair points here. Many Christians, especially in the Anabaptist tradition, regard the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine to have been one of the worst disasters to have befallen the Christian church, in that it made the church complicit in acts of violence and injustice. Other examples could easily be given, reinforcing the general thrust of his anti-institutional agenda. Yet caution does need to be exercised, for two reasons. First, not all institutional variants of religion are vulnerable to his criticisms, though I concede immediately that many are. And second, most religions explicitly embody a corporate vision of life, which inevitably leads to the emergence of religious institutions. This may well be something that needs to be monitored rather than something that can be abolished.

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[16] C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory." In *Screwtape Proposes a Toast, and Other Pieces*, pp. 94–110. London: Fontana, 1965.

The second major enemy that Monius identifies is "science." On close reading of *Coming to Understanding*, Monius appears to have a particular concern about scientific institutions, although this concern is clearly extended to the scientific method in general.

> Science as a practice sheds concern with the broader issues of morality and the corresponding need to ground morality in the metaphysics of God. Though in principle nothing rules it out, science has no interest in God or metaphysics: it arbitrarily restricts the domain where it takes explanations to be available only to specialized empirical subject areas, and it treats mathematics purely as a tool for studying those areas.

These statements raise legitimate points about the marginalization of both God and general issues of morality by and from the scientific enterprise, and the ensuing disconnection of scientific institutions from these issues can at least in part be put down to the nature of the scientific method itself.

Closer examination, however, suggests that Monius's real concern has to do with a specific way of conceiving the natural of the scientific enterprise, as entailing that the "knowledge that science provides can be taken to exhaust all of the options for any possible knowledge." This position—now increasingly referred to as "scientism,"[17] a term which Monius clearly feels able to accept and use—has become well established in recent years and is associated with writers such as the aggressively anti-religious zoologist Richard Dawkins.[18] On this view, human knowledge is limited to what can be "proved" by the natural sciences. This serious impoverishment and attenuation of human knowledge is to be resisted, and Monius is entirely right to raise concerns at this point (they are developed further later: see

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[17] See Murray Code, "On the Poverty of Scientism, Or: The Ineluctable Roughness of Rationality." *Metaphilosophy* 28 (1997): pp. 102–122. For its religious aspects, see Mikael Stenmark, *Scientism: Science, Ethics and Religion*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

[18] See, for example, Luke Davidson, "Fragilities of Scientism: Richard Dawkins and the Paranoid Idealization of Science." *Science as Culture* 9 (2000): pp. 167–199. For a more detailed criticism of Dawkins at this point, see Alister E. McGrath, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes and the Meaning of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. The term is also used to refer to E. O. Wilson's approach to reality, evident in works such as *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. New York: Knopf, 1998.

Chapter 29, in which he makes some important and persuasive comments concerning the relation of scientism, atheism, and secularism).

What role should God play?

In his overview of the “traditional roles of God” (Chapter 23), Monius offers a brief account of what religious believers have historically held to be the proper roles of God. This brief section lacks documentation, so it is difficult to judge and assess its evidential basis. However, matters become clearer when he comes to present his own understanding of that role God should play (Chapter 24). God, for Monius, is a publicly accessible and intelligible entity, knowledge of whom (or which) is not hidden within a mystical tradition or confined to a specific privileged group of people.

Repeating his criticisms of notions of God as a “personal, sentient being,” which we noted earlier, Monius sets out some fundamental principles which he believes should determine the role that God should play. One of these—perhaps the most important—is ethical.

> God provides ethical guidance for us, not by promulgating laws nor by His being aware of what sentient beings do or fail to do to uphold those laws but by Himself being in such a way that ethical precepts are present in the structure of what He is, in his attributes and how they are related to each other and to Him.

It is a classic view, not dissimilar to the moral vision of Spinoza. These deep ethical structures that Monius proposes are not built into the universe as a consequence of its having been created by God. Monius is unequivocal in his rejection of any notion of God having “created” the universe. God is ontologically prior to everything that exists; yet God did not create these things. The relation of these two statements would seem to require some further clarification.

Traditional theistic doctrines of creation have seen the notions of “creation” and “ontological dependence” as being necessarily linked. Monius proposes their separation, holding that it is possible to affirm the one without proposing the other. It would, I think, have been important to explain how this is the case, as I found his terse statements on this question to raise questions rather than answer them.

For Monius, God is noninterventionist. He does not reveal Himself, partly because no such revelation ought to be necessary. The knowledge of God lies within the epistemic capacity of humanity, which is not held to require any heightening or augmentation for this purpose. In a similar way, salvation is not held to be an act of God or something that is dependent upon divine grace. It is something that humanity is called upon to achieve, in itself and for itself.

> The "redemption" of the world—and [God]—is up to us. The appropriate unfolding of the divine Eternal Life of God depends on us, on our descendants, whoever they might be, and on whatever other sentient beings who realize what it is that God needs. Righting the wrongs in God's Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions.

This bold statement resonates strongly with the moral philosophy of the Enlightenment, especially during the eighteenth century. Christian theologians would express concern that this position constitutes "Pelagianism," a viewpoint that the Western church judged to be unacceptable fifteen hundred years ago. It is, however, entirely consistent with Monius's general position.

Monius's distinctive position is then followed through with total consistency. Since "righting the wrongs in God's Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions," it follows that we are called upon to give careful thought to how we serve God. This is the topic of the fifth and final part of the book. Although it is of practical importance, I propose to focus on its conceptual elements and will therefore treat this conclusion part in a single section within this view.

How should we serve God?

Monius's analysis of the way in which human beings can serve God in the world is developed through a critical assessment of how one can be an free, active, reflective moral agent within the world (Chapter 25). His "metaphysics of souls" is intended to provide a reliable and robust conceptual foundation for his ethics. Yet as this analysis unfolds, it leads into perhaps unexpected conclusions. One of the most important of these is his view on divine responsibility for human action (Chapter 26). In contrasting traditional Christian, Jewish, and Islamic approaches with his own position, Monius makes the following statement.

> The traditional theist denies God's responsibility for the free choices of created agents, placing full blame for what they do only on them. We do not agree with this. We believe that the omniscience of the God of the Abrahamic tradition does make Him responsible for His created agents' actions—despite the traditional attempts to avoid this conclusion: His omniscience implies that He knows what created

> agents will do, and His omnipotence implies that He can do something about what He sees that created agents will do.

This raises some intriguing issues. Monius rightly notes that the traditional assertion of human free will is generally taken to imply that God devolves responsibility and accountability for the actions of moral agents to the agents themselves. God may show them how to act; God may urge or command them to act in this way; but in the end, the decision is theirs, as is the responsibility for the ensuing actions. Yet it is difficult to see how God can be held to be "responsible" in anything except a weak sense unless God is capable of enforcing obedience—something that sits uneasily with the earlier analysis of the metaphysics of moral agency (Chapter 25). It also sits uneasily with the opening, programmatic statement of the following section (Chapter 27): "God has no causal powers over His Body or over what is in it." This bold statement, which is amplified and explored in the discussion that follows, seems to eliminate or at least discount the possibility of God causally executing his will, once more emphasizing the moral autonomy, and hence responsibility and accountability, of the human agent.

There is much in this section that merits comment and close attention. Consider, for example, this strongly teleological statement: "Piety requires the subordination of the ends of the souls to the ends within God." This proposes a correlation between divine and human concepts of "justice" or "righteousness." Yet Monius's rejection of any notion that God can be said to "create" humanity, or that humanity is created "in the image of God," raises a difficulty here, which should be noted.

The difficulty that I have in mind, usually known as the "Euthyphro dilemma," is set out in Plato's dialogue of that same name, which explores the basis of morality and sanctity. In this dialogue, Socrates poses the famous question: "Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?"[19] In other words, do the gods endorse a standard of morality that already exists and is independent of their will; or do the gods create those standards of morality? The usual formulation of this dilemma in contemporary philosophy takes a slightly different form, as follows:[20]

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[19] Plato, *Euthyphro* 10a. For the text, see John C. Hall, "Plato: *Euthyphro* 10a1-11a10', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 18 (1968): pp. 1–11; Richard Sharvy, "Euthyphro 9b-11b: Analysis and Definition in Plato and Others." *Noûs*, 6 (1972), pp. 119–137.

[20] See Paul Faber, "The *Euthyphro* Objection to Divine Normative Theories: A Response," *Religious Studies* 21 (1985): pp. 559–572; Peter Geach, "Plato's *Euthyphro*: An Analysis and Commentary." *Monist*, 50 (1966): pp. 369–382; Mark McPherran, "Socratic Piety in the 'Euthyphro.'" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): pp. 283–310.

Either: something is right because God approves or commands it;
Or: God approves or commands something because it is right.

The first approach asserts the dependence of a moral action on God, the second its independence. If the "dilemma" is to have any force, the alternatives presented here would have to exhaust the options.

Yet the dilemma gains its force precisely because we are asked to consider the relationship between two allegedly independent entities: what *human beings* recognize as good and what *God* recognizes as good. The dilemma forces us, through the terms in which it is posited, to choose between human and divine conceptions of goodness or justice. But if these can be shown to be related to each other in any way, the force of the dilemma is lost. And there are other approaches, allowing us to decline the "forced choice" that the dilemma seeks to impose upon us. The choice we are forced to make is then seen as false. A Christian understanding of the implications of the creation of humanity in the "image of God" holds that there is a congruence between divine notions of truth, beauty, and goodness and proper human notions of the same on account of the creaturely status of humanity.[21] The dilemma thus loses its force.

But not for Monius. If I have understood his position correctly, he is caught in something of a dilemma here, which threatens to make any appeal to God (as he construes this notion) as the basis of morality redundant. To avoid this difficulty, Monius would need to clarify his concept of "ontological dependence" and show how this allows the dilemma to be evaded. Given his earlier emphasis upon God as the ultimate ground and arbiter of ethics, this is a difficulty that I think merits closer attention on his part. Although Monius's position is self-consistent at this point, it is vulnerable to this kind of external criticism.

Earlier, we noted how Monius's concept of God led him to draw a series of conclusions, each of which is entirely consistent with his fundamental principles: God does not reveal himself; God does not impose his will on others; God does not effect salvation. In dealing with the consequences of his vision of God for human existence, Monius now moves on to draw an additional conclusion, once more entirely consistent with his driving vision of God: namely, that "No prayer is ever answered by God" (Chapter 28). This conclusion is, of course, grounded in his noninterventionist understanding of God. However, it also follows on from his insistence that God is not to be conceived as "personal." In Christian piety, prayer is often conceived in relational terms—in other words, as expressive of a personal relationship between God and the believer. Monius's rejection of such a notion of

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[21] For some interesting Jewish responses to the dilemma, see Michael J. Harris, *Divine Command Ethics: Jewish and Christian Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 3–25.

God clearly plays a significant role in his rejection of this traditional religious understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer.

Monius's rejection of a "personal" God has important implications for piety. For many religions, such as Christianity, the life of faith is shaped through the expression and articulation of "the love of God," which leads to worship and adoration at one level and to social action and commitment at another. Monius, however, is critical of the concept of a "loving God" and the human responses to this that are traditionally encouraged by the Abrahamic religions.

> We cannot love what we experience only as pure abstractions—we cannot have genuine emotional relations with what our awareness presents to us as pure abstractions. Loving what is in fact an impersonal God is attempting to engage emotionally with an abstraction.

For Monius, a "loving God" is actually a social construct, not a living reality. One cannot, he not unreasonably suggests, love such an abstraction. But one can love real entities in close proximity to us. He thus calls for a redirection of love, away from the abstraction of God, towards our immediate environment.

> No soul can love God. It is impious to even try: To try to love God is to trivialize God—to make Him into the sort of thing that *we* (mere souls) can love. We can love only the parts of God that are near to us.

Where Christianity suggests that we ought to love God, as the totality of being, Monius argues that this represents a misguided human attempt to make God into something that we can love—and hence represents a distortion of the divine nature. He commends a form of divine iconoclasm—a breaking or destruction of the mental images or constructs created by humanity, which are potentially misleading and unhelpful.

This leads Monius to move on to discuss varieties of impiety (Chapter 29), in which a critique of such mental "constructs" plays an important role. "Impious love is the love of constructions rather than metaphysically real things." For Monius, "constructs" are human inventions which are as spiritually and pietistically damaging as idols within the Abrahamic religions. For the latter, these are human constructions and creations which have been allowed to displace and replace God. Monius takes a similar attitude to social constructs, arguing that they distract us from the "metaphysically real."

Yet while Monius' critique of the Abrahamic religions reflects concerns about their concepts of God, it also rests upon misgivings concerning their ideas about human nature (Chapter 29).

> One handicap traditional religions face is, as we have discussed, that they all present false pictures of the soul and the self. As a result, they all make demands on their believers—to love God, to extinguish desire—that are impossible to meet.

For Monius, a metaphysically realistic view of both God and human nature is required if "piety" is to ensue. I think that most theologians would agree with him on this; they would, however, offer somewhat different understandings of both God and human nature—leading to very different outcomes. Once more, this is a point at which further exploration is appropriate. How may humanity know itself, following the traditional Socratic injunction?

The work concludes, in the form in which I reviewed it (April and May 2006), with a very brief discussion of "The Holy Crusade for Truth and the Four Orders of Souls" (Chapter 30). While this section mapped out some interesting possibilities, I felt that it was not sufficiently developed or defended to allow me to interact with it in any detail. I assume that this will be expanded in later drafts.

Throughout this work, I have suggested that Monius might be advised to enter into a more extended defense of his position—for example, by interacting with writers such as Iris Murdoch and others. However, I concede that to do so would be to alter the character of this treatise quite radically, something that Monius may not believe to be appropriate. The essay interacts with classical positions rather than their more contemporary statements and is not thus far characterized by detailed engagement with the finer arguments raised by more recent writers. If Monius were to offer such an interaction, it would result in a work which may be rather different from that which he believes to be appropriate to his task. I must leave him to judge how best to proceed.

In conclusion

This review of the theological sections of *Coming to Understanding* has focused primarily on its fourth part, in which its fundamental views concerning the nature of God are set out, and secondarily on its fifth part, in which their implications for human existence are considered. It is my view that Monius sets out a classic metaphysical conception of God, whose intellectual roots lie in the eighteenth century, which reaffirms the primacy of the divine, while at the same time interpreting this in ways which will challenge traditional monotheisms—such as the Abrahamic faiths.

It is an interesting and important vision which affirms much that I can endorse and commend, especially in relation to the reassertion of the importance of both metaphysics and teleology in our thinking about God. In the end, I find myself in fundamental disagreement with him over his concept of God and of human nature. But I found myself intrigued and stimulated as I engaged with this alternative vision of both, and forced to defend my own understandings—at least, to myself. I believe that Monius is vulnerable to criticism at a number of points, and in this review, I have tried to identify what those points might be, and what sort of response would be necessary to engage with such concerns and hope that these will be helpful as this project unfolds.

Review 8: Alan J. Torrance

The remit I have been given is to comment on the second volume of this wide-ranging, ambitious, and indeed impressive work, which seeks to outline a grand unified theory integrating metaphysics, theology, and ethics. I should say at the start that despite my critical concerns and my disagreement with what I see to be some substantial misrepresentation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, engagement with this work has been stimulating and indeed rewarding.

Understanding the second volume requires careful study of the first volume. Indeed, it provides the conceptual machinery and fundamental ontological affirmations which drive the second volume and prescribe its theological and, ultimately, ethical conclusions. That having been said, it is also the case that just as Norman Kemp Smith argued that the function of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was to clear the way for his *Critique of Practical Reason*, that is, for his moral philosophy, there is the sense throughout his first volume that this is preparing the ground for what is to come, namely, the quasi-theistic and indeed ethical agenda which, if it lacks some of the intellectual rigor of the first, appears to be the locus (or telos) of the author's controlling concerns.

Questions of context and associated themes spanning the two volumes

I shall start by engaging briefly with some central issues raised in the first volume but which span both. The academic world has found itself confronted by a resurgence of "scientism" to which the author is determinedly opposed——as is made clear in the opening of Volume 1 as also in the conclusion of Volume 2 ("Secularism and atheism are impiety.") with many references in between. The scientism of which he complains is close to what Alvin Plantinga refers to as "Perennial Naturalism"—the fideistic conviction witnessed at a popular level in the writings of Richard Dawkins (as also Dennett and the Churchlands) that there can be no really significant knowledge that is not ultimately accessible to scientific enquiry and its reductionist methods. For Patricia Churchland human beings are simply "nervous systems" driven by the four "f's" (feeding, fleeing, fighting, and reproducing), and there is little more to be said.

Against this backcloth, *Coming to Understanding* sets out to ask whether there is any "substantive knowledge" of the nature of things that both is intelligible and transcends the knowledge and understanding provided by the natural sciences. His concern is that the significance of metaphysical analysis be rediscovered, not least so that science can see itself in a proper philosophical perspective. A brief genetics traces the anti-metaphysical stance of recent philosophy back through logical positivism and Wittgenstein to certain confusions in Kant's critique of metaphysics. If we can liberate ourselves from the resulting distortion of the philosophical task, we discover that "the very understanding provided by the natural sciences invites metaphysical questions." The whole thrust of the first volume serves to demonstrate the extent to which this is the case by engaging in rigorous and unapologetically metaphysical argumentation.

The "defining focus" of science is "the explanation of events in terms of antecedent events coupled with very general non-accidental regularities or laws of nature." This definition (which begged to be filled out further—what is meant by "very general," for example?) proceeds to ask the key question—one that is demonstrably beyond the scope of science but which science is obliged to recognize—namely, why scientific sorts of explanation work at all, how it can possibly be the case that the human mind can predict or penetrate or make heuristic leaps of understanding into processes immanent within the non-human, non-cognitive material world. Is it the case that the "laws of nature" (to put aside, for a moment, the difficult but significant questions raised by Van Fraassen and Nancy Cartwright) represent an inherent intelligibility of the world inaccessible to empirical science which begs explanation? And if this it the case, does this denote some kind of inherent necessity to which access is given in thought itself, as the Marburg scientists believed during that remarkable period a century ago when one of Europe's greatest universities was devoted right across the board to interpreting its various fields, both the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (science, philosophy, theology, and ethics) in the light of a neo-Kantian monism. This sought to develop the implications of Kant's transcendental move while repudiating his dualism through rejecting the *Ding-an-Sich* as simply a *Grenzbegriff*. There is something of that dynamic Marburg vision of a grand, unified theory grounded in an "objective" logic to reality, one which sheds integrated light on the whole expanse of academic disciplines (and which united the logical, philosophical, theological, and ethical visions of Cohen, Natorp, Herrmann, Bultmann, et al.) reflected in *Coming to Understanding*.

One significant difference, however, lies in the fact that this author immediately points to a contingency indicative of a higher order or indeed ultimate explanation which in the final analysis is *not* deduced from the necessary structure of our law-governed construction or objectification of reality but "educed" from Reality itself. This is accompanied by what appears to be a profound optimism running through both volumes with respect to the capacity of human reason to provide epistemic access to ultimate reality—to the structure, matter, and form not only of The One but of "God." Whereas the monist idealism of the neo-Kantians was grounded in a deductive analysis of the necessary structures of understanding, the author of *Coming to Understanding* appeals to a process of *eduction*. The concept of eduction is clearly easier to reconcile with fallibilism, which the author advocates, and indeed with the recognition that reality will be "parsed" in different ways. What is clear, however, is that he believes that "speculative cosmology" couched in an eductive (rather than a deductive) process can access the ultimate shape of things, providing not only a rigorous metaphysical account but an understanding of reality *which will serve to shape our lives*—an understanding which will shape our whole orientation to reality and to our own lives. Speculative cosmology should generate a "theistic" understanding attended by a form of "piety" as well as an "ethic." What is to be delivered is no arbitrary or impressionistic "parsing" of reality.

Although different schools of philosophy have sought to go about the task differently, it is impossible to deny that the intelligibility of what philosophers of religion widely refer to as the "contingent order" invites, indeed requires, explanation. Why is it that we *can* indeed not only observe the success of science in articulating the structures of the physical universe but assume that the Universe is, at one level at least, inherently intelligible for human reason? Science can only assume—it cannot explain—the intelligibility of reality. By means of extremely abstract mathematical models, the contemporary awarding-winning mathematician Eric Priest, for example, has been able to provide profound insight into the highly complex activities of the sun's magnetic fields. Much of his successfully predictive work is the result of abstract thought of a highly speculative kind involving what Polanyi described as imaginative heuristic leaps of the mind which appear to plot or, as Nozick would put it, "track" reality. The supposition which underpins the application of abstract mathematics to these physical phenomena is that the structure and function of magnetic fields will inevitably be intelligible even though we do not yet understand them. This is not and indeed cannot be grounded in any scientific theory and yet appears to require explanation.

What the first volume of *Coming to Understanding* successfully demonstrates is that there is a role for philosophical investigation beyond the compass of science. The author's use of phrases such as "large-scale purpose" or the "significance of reality" may be judged to be philosophically extravagant in their implied teleological assumptions as to the "rationality" of Reality. If rationality is not simply a groundless metaphor, it clearly implies some kind of rational teleology. On such grounds, one might comment that not only have "the rumors of the death of metaphysics," as the author rightly points out, been "greatly exaggerated" but rumors of the death of theism have also been exaggerated. The major question, however, which the second volume will raise concerns what counts as "theism."

A brief aside is perhaps appropriate here. This view finds from an unexpected place, namely, in Quentin Smith's significant editorial article, "The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism" (*Philo*, 2001), published in the "official publication of the Society of Humanist Philosophers." In its opening section on the "Desecularisation of Academia that evolved in Philosophy since the late 1960s," he writes, "By the second half of the twentieth century, universities and colleges had become in the main secularized. The standard (if not exceptionless) position in each field, from physics to psychology, assumed or involved arguments for a naturalist world-view; departments of theology or religion aimed to understand the meaning and origins of religious writings, not to develop arguments against naturalism. Analytic philosophers (in the mainstream of analytic philosophy) treated theism as an antirealist or non-cognitivist world-view, requiring the reality, not of a deity, but merely of emotive expressions or certain 'forms of life'…" He goes on, however, to note that it is now the case that a quarter to a third of all analytic philosophers are theists and concludes, "The predicament of naturalist philosophers is not just due to the influx of talented theists, but is due to the lack of counter-activity of naturalist philosophers themselves. God is not 'dead' in academia; he returned to life in the late 1960s and is now alive and well in his last academic stronghold, philosophy departments." He goes on to complain that the arguments produced by this new breed of theists are outclassing those of their naturalist/humanist opponents at key nodal points in their rigor and use of logic.

In short, there has indeed been a transformation of metaphysics since what the author describes as the "stultifying atmosphere imposed by positivism and linguistic philosophy." However, this interest on the part of analytical philosophers in addressing the metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological questions which attend scientific progress parallels an exponential rise in theistic philosophy. The latter is increasingly held to possess unparalleled explanatory power when addressing such questions. It is not clear to this reviewer, however, that the extensive use of teleological terminology (ultimate rationality, intelligibility, purpose, etc.) can avoid further engagement with more traditionally theistic forms of analytic philosophy than is advocated in these volumes.

The author rejects approaches whose explanations come to a halt with the recognition of contingent brute facts. On what grounds, one asks, are we entitled to suppose that there are "ultimate explanations" for things to which epistemic access can be open to the cerebral processes of human beings? The author argues that the fact that "brute (unexplainable) contingent facts do not exist" is a "natural presupposition of metaphysical studies." This, he adds, is an "equally natural assumption of the sciences as well"—"*prima facie* inexplicable events are precisely the ones young scientists home in on in their attempts to make a mark on the field." The question which this immediately raises is whether this does not fall foul of a kind of naturalistic fallacy. The fact that there are certain "natural presuppositions" attending metaphysical studies does not in and of itself imply that these presuppositions are true or appropriate. It may, as a matter of fact, be a true observation, and it may even constitute an argument of a sort, but on what grounds might one suggest that it is a strong one? He argues the assumption that "inexplicable events" in science are precisely those events which scientists are motivated to pursue. But that is not always the case—as we have seen, it is emphatically not the case with questions such as these: "Wherein the grounds of the intelligibility of the universe?" "On what grounds can we explain the explanatory success of science?" This may be because these questions are considered by science to be meta-questions and are accordingly, as we have argued, beyond its remit. However, they are also evidence of the fact that there are questions which scientists might "naturally" *feel* invite explanation but where scientists rightly recognize that natural intellectual ambitions do not imply the possibility of success. To many it will not be clear that because we *are* naturally inclined to expect an answer to questions of a metaphysical kind concerning the ultimate explanations of things does not imply that we *ought* to expect that there is an answer to be found.

In his discussion of the "Metaphysics of God," the author reaffirms this rejection of brute facts: "We reject brute facts or brutely existing objects: objects that are just for no reason, or facts that just are the facts without there being in principle some explanation for them." He then goes on to explain that this "does not mean that any particular explanation for anything can easily be known. What it means, rather, is that the search for explanations never ends." Is this to suggest that his repudiation of brute facts is a statement of resolve or principle, namely, that we reject any attempt to give up on the search? What is apparent, however, is that his rejection of brute facts does not repose on traditionally theistic suppositions of the kind that suggest that because God is rational in his creative intentions, epistemic access to the contingent rationality of the "book of nature" belongs to God's creative purpose. The author's concept of God appears to be in tension with such a conception despite his claim to hold to a form of the "principle of sufficient reason."

One of the challenges of coming to understand *Coming to Understanding* is the way traditional concepts and affirmations are commandeered and then radically reinterpreted. "The divine Eternal Life of God," he argues, "reveals His objective teleology" (p. 3) and, further, "No more or no less should be expected of us than that we organize our lives around this objective teleology" which is "God's will." None of this, however, can be taken to imply that there is anything within the neighborhood of a conscious, divine intentionality. God is not a consciously reasoning or willing being, and we must resist the projection onto God of psychological categories. ("No psychological attribution can be accurately applied to Him. He is not conscious." [p. 7]) How precisely he understands the relationship between God, teleology, and human reasoning on the one hand and the moral life on the other is an issue which will remain in the background.

In the first volume, the author makes it plain that he is committed to an exercise in "speculative cosmology." The key to this, as also to what we might call his "speculative theology," is "analytic ontology." The structure of reality as a whole is informed by the categories and their interrelations. His controlling "conviction," which drives both volumes, is as follows: "When we comprehend the nature of the categories and the fundamental relations among them, the nature and purpose of reality as a whole will be laid bare." The approach of the work is "fundamentally monistic" while emphasizing the revelatory power of categorical structure and indeed of God.

As already suggested, it is a mistake, however, to assume that the "theology" which the author is to advocate in the context of his repudiation of the scientism and atheism of contemporary academic culture focuses on "theos" conceived in anything resembling a traditional sense. The answers he educes do not take the form of cosmological or teleological arguments for theism as found in Aquinas, Paley, Plantinga, or Swinburne. Indeed, the author regards it as simply confused to ask and indeed to seek to answer why there is something rather than nothing. He does not regard God, moreover, as a supreme intelligence. Whereas the author opens his theology with the affirmation that "God comes first" and that "We believe that in order to know who and what we are and what we must do in life, we must know about God," concern with teleology, and his emphasis that atheistic scientism cannot make sense of the intelligibility or rationality of the physical order which science assumes, does *not* lead, as one might expect, to a Perfect Being theology or a theistic approach to sufficient reason. Quite the converse.

God, Monism, and Contingency

The monism that the author advocates affirms the ultimate "contingency" of The One: "The One, therefore, and like everything else, is a particular. In addition, although it is an unchanging particular, it is nevertheless contingent. There are many different ways The One could have been, and one of those ways would have been for The One not to exist at all" (Volume 1, p. 62).

1. This appears to conflict with the earlier, arguably merely subjective or psychological statement (p. 2) that "We reject the existence of brute contingent facts… to do metaphysics at all is in part to presuppose that brute (unexplainable) contingent facts do not exist." The rejection

of brute contingent facts, the author suggests, is a "natural" presupposition of metaphysical studies, as it is also an equally natural assumption of the sciences. As suggested earlier, it is not clear that this is a strong argument (hints of a naturalistic fallacy), but is it not problematic to utilize this at one point as warrant for providing a totalizing (this is not intended dismissively), metaphysical account (eschewing the modesty of the person who halts the explanatory process earlier on) while affirming, at another, the brute contingency of The One that supposedly makes the whole "intelligible," satisfying the natural desire to progress beyond "brute contingent facts"?

2. If we are, indeed, to suggest that neither "The One" nor "God" is a necessary being, that is, self-explanatory in a complete way, this reader remains, after many hours of engaging with these texts, unclear as to how this does not undermine the account's explanatory power. This is because it is not satisfactorily apparent to this reviewer how it provides access to any clear principle that explains why things are this way and not another way. If the assessment as to whether an eductive process is true inevitably amounts to a comparative assessment between the probabilities attaching to competing claims, is it not the case that on this key principle (articulated on p. 1), a theistic ontology which identifies The One with a necessary being is inherently likely to win in the probability derby unless the author really can succeed in demonstrating internal incoherencies or inconsistencies in theism?

3. If there are many different ways The One *could* have been, does this not imply some "reality" of which an ontological account needs to be provided? (This is genuinely a question and one that is posed nervously, as I assume the author has a straightforward response that I failed to grasp or anticipate.) To say that things could have been different is, of course, to suggest that there are other possible worlds in which things *are* different. Given that the relevant alternative possible worlds (in which The One is not the way it actually is) are real, albeit not actual, are we to suggest that the reality of the non-actual possible worlds is located, in some way, within the reality of The One? Given that, if again I am correct, the author is not an actualist, I would wish to read more on how he would respond to the kinds of challenges which emerge from Alvin Plantinga's analysis in *The Nature of Necessity*, for example.

Immanence, Aseity, and Divine Freedom

On p. 7 of Volume 2, the author writes: “Can God be eternal and transcendent, not be in space and time, and yet nevertheless be immanent? Traditional religious thinkers never solved this problem.” This leaves me puzzled and suspecting that I have missed something, since I do not see this as highly problematic for Judeo-Christian theism. Certainly, if “immanence” implies some kind of necessary presence in all things, then it would be. However, the majority of contemporary theistic theologians speak of “presence,” implying “free presence” rather than “immanence.”

So is it, perhaps, a problem for theologians who adopt a four-dimensionalist, Block Universe approach? Again, as one who has argued for such a view in print, it is not clear that affirming the transcendence of God while simultaneously affirming that God freely determines (timeless present tense) to identify with a series of space-time coordinates, generates insuperable problems. On the other hand, the author’s use of the term “process” as we find it in Volume 1 appears to acquire its currency from what D. C. Williams famously refers to as the “myth of passage.” If so, that is a feature which may generate at least an apparent tension with four-dimensionalism.

This brief discussion brings us, however, to perhaps the most significant feature of Volume 2, namely, the question of divine freedom. The rejection (or rather bypassing) of this concept is one of the most telling features of its exposition of theism. Traditional theism has obvious grounds to affirm divine aseity, namely, that God is “from himself,’ that he is the ground of his own being and action. Integral to this is the affirmation that God’s presence is invariably a free presence as opposed to a passive immanence. These two terms serve in turn to define God’s transcendence. God’s transcendence is best described as affirming that God is not subject to the necessities which characterize the contingent, created order.

What does this mean with respect to God’s presence in space and time? It would appear to mean that to the extent that God identifies with a series of spatio-temporal coordinates, that is, to the extent that God determines to be “present” (for example, as Christian theism affirms with respect to the incarnation or the creative or reconciling presence of the Spirit), what is being affirmed is that the being of God includes, in eternity, those coordinates. This appears to represent the position adopted and advocated by Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* Volume 2, Part 1.

Just as the author rightly repudiates the notion that four-dimensionalism undermines human responsibility by implying determinism, conceiving of God in these terms does not imply that that eternal decision to be present is not a contingent one. If you believe that there are counterfactuals of freedom which can be known by God, moreover, one may consider it contingent on God’s surveying, in advance of actualizing this possible world, all the relevant counterfactuals of freedom. Consequently, God might determine that if A (a possible free agent) were to be in C (a particular possible situation), then P would freely perform A (a possible free action) and, bearing all the relevant counterfactuals of freedom, freely determine to actualize a particular PW in which He also determines, in the light of that, to identify in one way or another with a particular series of space-time coordinates denoting part of that block universe. This recognizes divine freedom, transcendence over the block universe he created and also the possibility of free presence (or free immanence, indwelling) within it.

This gives rise to a second more general point which I would wish to raise with respect to the author's strategy. As I mention above, Volume 1 provides the conceptual machinery which defines "God" in Volume 2. *Coming to Understanding* is an exercise in what might be described as quintessentially "natural" theology. The main objection to "natural theology," most recently articulated in the theology of Karl Barth, is that it assumes an *a priori* repudiation of divine freedom. It assumes that the nature of God may be determined or understood prior to any free divine self-determining to be known, articulated, or understood by humanity on God's part. *Coming to Understanding* is emphatically, therefore, a "theology from below," to use Pannenberg's famous phrase, where the direction of the pressure of interpretation is from human, creaturely analysis of the realm of our experience to speculation as to what God is and must be capable or incapable of.

The thrust of Christian theism from Irenaeus and Athanasius through Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Barth, Juengel, et al. has been to suggest that God is understood by human beings to the extent to which God freely determines to disclose God's reality to human beings and by means of God's free and creative presence (Holy Spirit—where *hagios* (Holy) implies divine freedom).

The cynical theist would suggest, therefore, that the following (the conclusion of Part 4) was the inevitable outcome of theological inversion at the methodological level which started by assuming the denial of God's freedom and, in effect, aseity:

"God is the victim. We are His only salvation. The 'redemption' of the world, and Him, is up to us. The appropriate unfolding of the divine Eternal Life of God depends on us, on our descendants, whoever they might be, and on whatever other sentient beings who realize what it is that God needs. Righting the wrongs in God's Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions."

Divine Personhood

So why does "freedom" not play a much more fundamental role? It would appear that this is because of the author's objection to using "personal" language of God. His very first statement regarding the nature of God runs, "God is not a person. No psychological attribution can be accurately applied to Him. He is not conscious; He is not sentient; He is not aware. He is not concerned either with humans or with anything else—He is not even concerned with or aware of Himself." (p. 7) Again, "We do not accept the personal nature of God…for God is not a person." (p. 67)

This emphatic repudiation of the central tenet of Judeo-Christian theism is affirmed despite the author's sustained use of personal metaphors of God. First, he refers to God throughout as "He"—though, to be fair, he insists (slightly counterintuitively) that this is "purely as a matter of style." He also refers to God's "will," to his "Eternal Life" and to the "Godhead." Then there is the teleological terminology, which is summarized with respect to human persons in terms of his account of piety defined as "serving God's will and His divine Eternal Life" (p. 25) and "a soul's loving its service to God is that soul appropriately worshipping God" (p. 71). Even the use of the upper case "G" in "God" seems slightly unusual given that it appears to imply a misplaced reverence. Then there is the language of Body of God (paralleling "God's Body/Body of Christ), service of God, piety, impiety, sloth, sin. The reference (p. 63) to our "actualizing our talents and virtues in accordance with the location of our selves in God's Body" echoes strongly Paul's reference to our various and diverse contributions to the church as parts of the Body of Christ. Indeed, so much of the language throughout Volume 2 is a commandeering and utilization of the language of a personalist theism but with a subtle semantic shift imposed by means of the very different underlying ontology. It is hard not to ponder whether this air of personalism with its associated teleological implications does not acquire its inherent appeal, together with its associated deontological grunt, from subliminal associations with a conscious intentionality on the part of the divine—despite the fact that the primary reference of this language is a non-conscious, non-aware, non-personal x.

So why the concern to reject divine personhood? Ostensibly because it is the central attribution of personhood that creates so much trouble for the concept of God. By rejecting it, the author suggests, we are able to jettison the attribution of properties which, for example, give rise to the problem of evil—omnipotence and omniscience for example. The problem is that it is impossible for this reviewer to see how one avoids jettisoning a great deal else—not least, as I have suggested, the teleological and ethical force that the author wants the theology to provide.

But let's consider the suggested benefits.

a) The problem of evil. This is indeed and without doubt a massive problem for traditional theism, and it would be an inappropriate use of space to rehearse arguments of which everyone is aware. J. L. Mackie's logically inconsistent quintet of affirmations convinced the substantial majority of philosophers for quite some time that it was indeed logically incoherent to hold traditional theistic views. Plantinga's free will defense demonstrated, of course, that that was not the case and that God's permitting evil is not logically compatible with God's creating the best of all possible worlds given human freedom and "trans-world depravity." Recently, Marilyn McCord Adams has offered a further sophisticated, if not necessarily convincing, attempt to reconcile the existence of horrendous evil with a God of love. Van Inwagen has made use of vagueness theory to address the problem as to whether there should not be less evil than there is if, that is, the existence of some evil can indeed be shown to be compatible with the existence of a God who is essentially omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. There are further arguments from the observation that a world without evil would be one in which there were none of the character traits that make life worthwhile—there would be no mutual concern, no altruism, no empathy, sympathy, compassion, love, etc. Finally, there is an argument *from* evil *for* traditional theism, namely, that the evilness of evil constitutes negative testimony to the ultimate value of the personal and interpersonal virtues best made sense of by a traditionally theistic account. In short, although there are strong counter arguments, it may be that evil is not as irreducibly incompatible with a personal God as is easily assumed. At the same time, it is not clear that a non-personal theistic framework (that is, a framework which defines God as non-loving, non-conscious, etc.) does not trivialize evil in the way that certain atheological arguments risk doing. The strength of Judeo-Christian theism is that there are unambiguous grounds for affirming the extent to which the evil which God apparently "permits" contravenes his purposes for persons and opposes every facet of his creative engagement with persons and his purposes for free relationships between persons. An impersonal God cannot be said actively to oppose or condemn or seek to deliver from evil. Consequently, the onus is on those who reject divine personhood on account of the existence of evil to show that they themselves do not ultimately trivialize evil and the weight of the obligation to oppose it.

In short, it remains the case that for a theist in the Judeo-Christian tradition, God's ways may indeed be "mysterious" and beyond human comprehension in certain respects. However, since they are not perceived to be mysterious in so many other key respects, it is not clear that we have here reason to reject the existence of such a God outright.

Much seems to hang further, however, on the author's understandable suspicion of the attribution of "folk psychological properties" which he perceives to have dogged the tradition of the Abrahamic faiths. This criticism, together with a number of his critiques of the tradition, beg the response, "*Abusus non tollet usum*." Given that the Judeo-Christian tradition stems from a (perceived) event of historical self-disclosure on God's part in an alienated and sinful world, it is inevitably the case that over a period of two thousand or more years there will be myriad examples of misunderstanding, intellectual folly, and the misappropriation of its resources for dubious ends. Indeed, one could put the case here that much more strongly. It is doubtful whether any human activity has caused greater polarization; marginalization; oppression on grounds of ethnicity, gender, and even skin-color; emotional blackmail; alienation; war; and general human misery than "god talk." Why? Because it is so easily misused by human beings to attach divine ratification for their particular social or political agendas. Here I concur entirely with the author's comment that "the potential vices of religious institutions are, in some sense, far greater than those of political institutions." (p. 28) The reasons given (the forming of beliefs at young age, inertia of familiarity and the lack of transparency of motivation in religious leaders) are clearly highly pertinent. Combine this with the perceived divine endorsement of views and one has a potentially lethal recipe, the poisonous effects of which are evident in Northern Ireland and South Africa in the apartheid years, not to mention the contemporary problem of suicide bombers and religious terrorism.

Does that mean, however, that theism is inherently and inevitably oppressive and polarizing? Clearly not. It has provided immense momentum to those opposing exploitation, abuse, and racism, as also to those working for reconciliation, relief from poverty, disease, etc.

The author seems to associate the concept of divine command, prayer, and worship with folk psychological language. Suffice to say, Christian theism has thought about this in a sustained manner for two thousand years. In the light of contributions to the debate by Athanasius, Aquinas, Suarez, and Mondin, one might suggest that personal language might be used of God by means of the "analogy of intrinsic attribution." On such an account the attribution of personhood to God would seek to avoid any crude projection of folk psychology by affirming personhood of God in a manner that recognized first the priority of that term's reference in God and its derivative, contingent use of human creatures *(analogia* *per prius et posterius*); and second, that we cannot subsume God and persons under a genus of "personhood" (*duorum ad tertium*)—that analogy must be some direct relation of contingency between divine and human personhood (*unius ad alterum*). Back in the fourth century, Athanasius interpreted the two-fold *homoousion*) as warranting "*analogein*" along precisely these lines.

The theistic tradition has emphatically sought to ensure that in all divine predication, the direction of the pressure of interpretation is from the divine (reposing in God's self-disclosure) to the human/contingent and not the other way round.

Dualism, Monism and the Personal

We must now turn from the question of language to the question of ontology as it bears on this issue. In his profoundly influential book entitled *Being as Communion*, the contemporary (Greek Orthodox) philosophical theologian John Zizioulas argues that the categories of person and communion in the West can be traced to the distinctive legacy of the Greek fathers. In the context of the polarized debates between monism and dualism that had defined Greek philosophy to that point, the Greek church fathers, in the light of the experience of *koinonia*, made the profoundly significant move of interpreting the term "person" as an ontological term. Instead of interpreting the person in the light of a prior category of "being," they interpreted "being" in the light of the person precipitating a profoundly significant ontological shift from Greek categories. For Zizioulas, the concept of the person (with the associated conceptuality of communion) came to be conceived, therefore, as an ontologically primordial notion. The being of persons was traced not to an impersonal concept of "being" but to the free personhood of God. This means that persons came to be defined teleologically in terms of the connection between creation and *koinonia* rather than by reference to individual functions. It is significant to note that Zizioulas' insistence on the primordial nature of "person" parallels Strawson's description of the person as a logically primitive concept in *Individuals.* For these reasons both, I suspect, would challenge the view that "persons" are "unanalyzed composites of several ideas" (p. 39). When theologians from this tradition use the term "person," they use it in a manner similar to how the author uses the term "soul." As such it cannot be seen as a complex of more fundamental metaphysical parts. It denotes a primordial or logically primitive reality.

For Zizioulas, the identification of person and *koinonia* as ontological terms stands, therefore, in profound contrast with the "psychological" and deontological use of these terms as this has come to characterize Western individualism, whose roots can be traced to the monadic notions of the self associated with Boethius (*persona est individual substantia rationalis/rationabilis naturae*) and the Cartesian *res cogitans*. Significantly, there are strong parallels between Zizioulas' approach and that of modern Jewish theology as we find it articulated in Martin Buber's *I and Thou*.

Volume 2 of *Coming to Understanding* appears in effect to be seeking to redefine theism in a manner that *reverses* this ontological move, returning us not to a dualist but a monist ontology of the kind rejected by the theists of the third and fourth centuries. The fascinating question that this raises is what this means for the attempt to sustain a non-atheistic teleology and ethic.

From the perspective of this reviewer to dismiss the categories of personhood and the associated notions of communion and freedom, not to mention the ethical categories so tightly associated with the traditional language of teleology as "folk psychological," is to fail to appreciate the ontological significance of the developments which defined the roots of Christian theism. To affirm personhood of God may be argued, in this light, to be no more guilty of denigrating the divine through the anthropomorphic projection of folk psychological terms than the language of teleology, parts, structure, or body, as advocated in Volume 2, involves the projection of sub-personal categories. What comes into conflict here are two radically different ways of portraying (parsing?) reality, two contrasting ontologies operative from different controlling categories.

Brief footnote on Triunity

If one is going to reject the associated language of God-as-triune as contradictory (p. 11), one should not overlook how sophisticated the debates are on what precisely is meant by triunity. Is it appropriate to suggest that the substantial majority of the four thousand academic (mostly analytic) philosophers who are members of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the Evangelical Philosophical Society, or the American Catholic Philosophical Association (including Plantinga, Wolterstorff, Van Inwagen, Rea, Flint, Freddoso, and Evans, to name a few) would be unlikely to sign up to a terminology which was both contradictory and the mere psychological projection of *Volksreligion*?

Problems with the Abrahamic Religious Traditions

Part of the rationale for the author's rejection of traditional theism is the inadequacy of its system of morality. He writes "The attempt to coerce believers in the Abrahamic religious traditions towards right action and away from wrong action has been mythicized into a systematic hierarchy of rewards and punishments: eternal bliss in Heaven for those who are good, eternal damnation and punishment in hell for those who are bad." Again, "For all of the Abrahamic religions, morality becomes purely a matter of reward and punishment for appropriately placed loyalty to Go, or for misplaced loyalty to Satan" (p. 25).

First, the vast majority of Christian and Jewish and Islamic theologians would simply repudiate the apparent assumption that the "Abrahamic religions" share a common core to their faith. To point out that their scriptures overlap to some degree is certainly not to imply some shared body of core beliefs. The Judeo-Christian and Islamic conceptions of God and God's dealings with humanity are profoundly different, and the central affirmations of Christian theism relating to the incarnation and defining orthodoxy are explicitly rejected by Judaism and Islam. The doctrine of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, moreover, is fundamental to the whole Christian conception of ethics, obligations, and duties, and this cannot be conceived as a contractual system of reward and punishment.

A Covenantal, Not a Contractual, Relationship

The Judeo-Christian tradition does clearly affirm a common ethical base in the *torah* (the law). The central, controlling concept here is *berith*, meaning covenant. God is understood as making an unconditioned and unconditional covenant (promise) to be faithful to his people. It is the sense of God's presence for and commitment to God's people that constitutes the grounds of the categorical obligations articulated in the law. "I am the Lord thy God who has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage…" THEREFORE be faithful to me and to all those to whom I am faithful. In short, the commandments simply describe or articulate the character of this corresponding faithfulness—do not kill, commit adultery, lie, steal, covet and the like. Consequently, when Jesus summarized the Christian ethic as "Love God and your neighbor as yourself,' he was simply articulating the Jewish torah.

What is important to note is that the specified obligations articulating the implications of God's covenant faithfulness to his people emphatically do *not* articulate a contractual scenario articulating conditional rewards and punishments in such a way that the ball is in our court to choose what we want. They are categorical or apodictic commands, and they are not an arbitrary list, as implied on p. 23. There is, moreover, an unambiguous "rationale" for being faithful to God and the rest of humanity, namely, the fact that God has been and remains unconditionally committed to humanity—a commitment of love mediated not by being written on stone or in the skies or simply in a book but mediated through the life and witness of a people chosen for this purpose.

In parallel to Elizabeth Anscombe's famous article "Modern Moral Philosophy," the Pentateuch describes what amounts to a series of institutional facts which carry obligations. What underpins these institutional facts is the unconditional commitment of the Creator to his people.

Does this not imply an unwarranted exclusivism at the roots of Judeo-Christian theism—an arbitrary favoring of Israel?

The answer to this is made clear in the second part of Isaiah, where Israel discovers that she is not arbitrarily *selected* for an "exclusive" relationship but *elected* for an "inclusive" relationship to be a "light to the nations," that is, to communicate God's inclusive covenant love for all humanity (the Gentiles) and to communicate this in a manner that is so radically true to its message that a bruised reed will not be broken or a smoldering wick quenched.

What are the implications of this? That those who know God are not simply to love their friends but their enemies, they are to "pray for those who despitefully use" them, they are to forgive unconditionally and without ceasing, just as God loves and forgives his enemies. For all there is some reference to hell in the New Testament, the dominant view is that to the extent that hell is occupied, it is occupied by those who mysteriously choose to live in separation from God, namely, in hell. What is unambiguously clear is that heaven is not populated by those who "do good," as the author suggests, and that God does not desire that hell be populated at all. Heaven is the place where sinners enjoy communion with God on the grounds of their having been forgiven by God's *undeserved* grace. The unambiguous implication of the whole thrust of the Christian resources is that to the extent that hell is populated, it is populated by those whom God loves, forgives, and does *not* desire to be there!

This brings us back to the fact that the heart of the Judeo-Christian theology is an ontology of persons grounded in the divine personhood. God is defined not as one who delights in rewarding people for "good works" and punishing eternally those who are "bad" but one who desires to bestow dignity on the radically undeserving. The nature of this love is not the heavenly *eros* of the Greeks, i.e., love of the good or beautiful, not *philia* in the sense of an exclusive friendship with an elite or "local" group, but *agape*, in which God creatively bestows dignity on the sinner, on the ugly, in a creative act of undeserved loving commitment.

It should be clear, therefore, how radically Christian theists would disagree with the generic references to the Abrahamic religions, most notably, "The idea of Heaven evolves into a lifestyle of eternal beatitude, where the good ones can—for their delectation—even watch the bad ones eternally tortured in hell."

Cosmic drama?

The author refers to "Christian folk literature" in which Satan is seen as a "credible challenger to God's dominion." Such a dualist account was advocated by the Manichaean sect and repudiated by the Christian tradition as heresy.

The further suggestion that for the Abrahamic religions, the "important consideration of what is right, what is wrong , and why is reduced to a cosmic drama of war where right and wrong are decided solely by whose side one is on and whether one has uttered the right mottoes of loyalty…." is not a description we would recognize as characterizing orthodox Christian thought. The same would apply to the following comment, "Lost entirely is a concern with how the question of what is right and what is wrong is to be grounded in God in order to make sense out of it." The New Testament is unambiguously clear. What is right is right because it is grounded in the God who is love—"God is love and we love because he first loved us." What is wrong is because it betrays that fundamental grounding in God. Consequently, its form is unfaithfulness to Creator and creature. To be unfaithful to one's fellow human beings—friend or foe, local or not (an area of divergence with the ethic of *Coming to Understanding*).

The whole thrust of Christian ethics and teleology as it stems from the Nicene creed, as this is taken to define the faith of the whole church since the fourth century, is perceived to be grounded in the love of God for creation and God's desire that His creatures discover happiness in personal communion—in a "body" that is one, holy, universal and "apostolic" (sent by and grounded in God). What is denoted is a communion of persons which is universally one and which is sent into the world to communicate God's unconditional and all-inclusive, reconciling love for that world, that is, for friend and foe alike.

Institutional Evil—and Institutional Reconciliation

Whereas the Abrahamic religious traditions recognize the danger that human evil is (though they misdescribe it), they fail, the author argues, to recognize the danger of institutional evil—"the Abrahamic religious traditions… fail to recognize the danger that institutional evil poses for humanity."

Here, as throughout *Coming to Understanding*, the author's concerns are invariably highly significant, perceptive, and pertinent. Moreover, one can find within some section of the Abrahamic religious traditions evidence of most of the dangers, confusions, and improprieties which the author denotes. That having been said, the relevant question is whether these are telling criticisms of the thrust of the major elements of any or all of these traditions, whether they reflect on their definitive affirmations and whether they constitute reason to repudiate them. Again, *abusus not tollet usum*!

On the question of institutional evil, it would be hard to accuse contemporary Judaism of failing to recognize the dangers of this kind of evil. Anti-Semitism defines one of the most widespread and endemic institutional evils the human race has known, and Orthodox Jews have a clearer grasp than most, post-Holocaust, of the dangers of a consciousness "manifested in groups of sentient beings working in unison" (p. 26).

The very extensive Christian theological literature on the "demonic" nature of fascist institutions in the Germany of the 1930s and on institutional oppression as exhibited in racist and sexist policies manifest more widely suggests that there is an appreciation by the Judeo-Christian tradition (as also, I am certain, by the Islamic tradition) of the dangers of institutional evil. Recent Christian theologies have engaged extensively with this both as it haunts the institutional church itself and as it functions within the state. Indeed, the prevalence and influence of "liberation theologies" (Marxist, black, feminist, womanist, gay, etc.) has led to a growing criticism of modern theological ethics that it is *too* committed to perceiving institutions rather than individuals as the perpetrators of evil. Reference to institutions, as also demons, can serve to displace responsibilities.

If what Metz refers to as "bourgeois religion" has focused too much on individual sin, it must not be forgotten that the focus of the Christian tradition itself attributes the crucifixion of the Messiah not to an individual's committing an act of murder but to the institutions of the state and corrupt institutional religion, where the agent of sin are dysfunctional institutional processes which are not just subject to but manipulate the fickle collective will of the people under which the responsibilities of individuals, Pilate, for example, gradually collapse. When Paul refers to "principalities and powers," he is widely perceived as referring not to demons but to falsely usurped forms of sinful authority manifest in institutions and in "civil religion." Discussions of this can be found in Jacques Ellul, Lesslie Newbigin, Jürgen Moltmann, J. B. Metz, and John de Gruchy as also, a generation ago, in the writings on church and state of Karl Barth and Reinhold Neibuhr.

One of the primary functions of South Africa's "Truth and Reconciliation Commission," under the influence of Desmond Tutu, was to find a way of addressing the problem of institutional evil in such a way that it was not re-institutionalized in new ways in post-apartheid South Africa. It was precisely because of the institutional nature of those evils that the leading Christian thinkers in South Africa pressed for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission whose rationale was couched in the (theological) conceptualities of forgiveness and reconciliation. Analysis of precisely these issues engaging with South Africa, Northern Ireland, South America, and post-unification Germany can be found, for example, in the various contributions to *The Politics of Past Evil Religion, Reconciliation, and the Dilemmas of Transitional Justice*, ed Daniel Philpott (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). The most influential example of a theological analysis of such issues was written following the atrocities in the Balkans by the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf in his Grawemeyer Award–winning *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Abingdon, 1996).

These last sections have been very critical of the representation of the Abrahamic religious traditions in *Coming to Understanding*. These criticisms, however, should not detract from the very strong areas of convergence between the author's project and Christian theism as I have sought to articulate it. Suffice to say, it is imperative that where moral rules operate, it should be clear (a) why we should have such rules; (b) the good and the bad should be justified by how they are grounded in God and his attributes; and (c) the consequences of actions should be evaluated with reference to God's will and "His divine Eternal Life."

The fundamental issue, as we have seen, is whether or not we operate from and/or are warranted in operating within the framework of a personal ontology grounded in God conceived as Person. It is divergence at this nodal point that defines, despite endless notably parallels, the contrasting approaches between the very different kinds of theism under discussion.

I shall now seek to mention rather more briefly some additional issues which deserve to be developed considerably further than space and time allow.

Consciousness and the Soul

I found this to be a really fascinating section. The exposition of the categories in Volume 1 prepares the ground for some highly original analysis which articulates the issues which physicalism cannot address. The suggestion that the soul and consciousness are not "in space and time" clearly warrants further discussion than can be afforded here. What are the implications of four-dimensionalism on this? Clearly, it suggests that Descartes cannot draw the razor so easily between thought and body given that thought can no longer be regarded as non-extended. In so far as (a) thought is extended in time and, (b) four-dimensionalism suggests we cannot dichotomize as radically as is assumed between the spatial and temporal dimensions, Cartesian dualism surely requires to be reformulated. We have the beginnings of an attempt to do so here. However, is it possible to reconcile the removal of intentionality from space-time with four-dimensionalism unless it is to become, as the author seems to suggest of "consciousness," a kind of logical relation? If so, the (distal?) *qualia* element in "consciousness" and intentionality appears to be lost.

This same question reappears when the author seeks to draw parallels between an individual's consciousness and that attributed to a state or an institution. On p. 47, he articulates a natural hierarchy of conscious agents—individuals, institutions, organizations, and humanity itself. The question that this raises is, again, whether this takes insufficient cognizance of the debate about *qualia* and their association with consciousness.

Yet again, the question of the nature of the person raises its head. Is it possible to articulate personal presence and relationship without taking individual *qualia* more seriously than is allowed by predicating them on institutions in anything other than an analogical or metaphorical manner? The problem here is apparent on p. 48, where "aware" appears to be used univocally of all the levels of the hierarchy of consciousness. Surely an individual is "aware," tastes and consciously suffers in a way in which "humanity" as a collective entity does not.

Second, does the argument that the soul is not in space and time in any sense not further marginalize personal relations for the life of the soul to the extent that personal relationships are intrinsically spatio-temporal?

Despite these areas of unclarity on the part of this reviewer, the analysis of the distinctions between what is properly and improperly attributed to the soul is a fascinating and thought-provoking one.

Omniscience, Omnipotence, and a "Fixed Future"

> We believe that the omniscience of the God of the Abrahamic tradition does make Him responsible for His created agents' actions—despite the traditional attempts to avoid this conclusion: His omniscience implies that He knows what created agents will do, and His omnipotence implies that He can do something about what He sees that created agents will do (p. 51).

If God actualizes a possible world with respect to which he knows "in advance" all that every agent in that PW will freely do, then God is "responsible" for this to the extent that had he *not* actualized that PW, none of these activities would have taken place. However, the history of that PW is contingent on the free actions of its agents. To that extent responsibility resides with them, and they are responsible for "fixing" the future. Consequently, it is unclear that "predestination" in the sense of God's actualizing a foreknown scenario implies the kind of determinism that threatens or undermines free agency and responsibility.

Ethics

Another area of potential discussion concerns the nature of love. Referring to the dangers of "overzealousness" in pursuit of the good, he argues that "love directs our attention locally towards persons and activities that are near to us. We *care* about those near to us, and our degree of caring tapers off as the distance of things from us increases" (p. 69). Earlier, he writes, "An unfair hierarchy of rewards and deprivations—partially based on supply and demand—is virtually a corollary of the emotional needs of the human animal…A hierarchy of material rewards is currently an essential tool to progress in coming to understanding" (p. 70).

Here again, we find an implicit naturalism which raises questions—an ease in moving from "is" to "ought" in describing the body of God. The world which emerges does not appear to be the world one might want to prescribe from behind Rawls's veil of ignorance. As a moral world it digresses from Kant's Kingdom of Ends or Bernard Gert's reformulation of the universalizability principle in *The Moral Rules*. Clearly, the emphasis on "locality" would be hard to advocate universally as a moral principle—one is more likely to want to advocate it in the first world than the developing world. Perhaps it is indeed dangerous overzealousness that leads me to feel concerned about the fact that I spend money on my children that could keep orphaned children in the developing world alive—children who, by the nature of the case, simply don't have "local" benefactors.

My wife and I run a charity which provides health care and education for the Kham nomads in Tibet. The author writes, "Proper love is local love" (p. 69). Although he rightly repudiates Plato's universalizing tendency, which serves to eliminate families and favoritisms, is it really the case that a healthy theism suggests that love properly seeks local ends? Should my primary concern be friends with problems in Scotland rather than the struggling children of an oppressed nomadic people in a remote land? From a Christian perspective this is to displace agape with *philia*, if not *storge*.

It is suggested that for the Abrahamic religious tradition the love of God is the primary emotion—"Love thy neighbor as thyself—but let not either of those loves eclipse in any way thy love of God" (p. 67). This appears to suggest that there is an inherent "either-or" here. For Christian theism, however, if one loves God, one does already love one's neighbor. As to the question "Who is my neighbor?" that is carefully defined by Jesus in a parable designed to overturn the "natural" desire to love the one who is ethnically, geographically or culturally "local." Again, there are issues here which would require much further careful dialogue.

Conclusion

One of the most impressive features of these two volumes is not merely the lucid, courageous, and rigorous argumentation throughout but the honesty that attends the reflections on the shape of human life. Perhaps the most discomforting feature of my commentary is the fact that I seem to have concentrated on hunting out areas with respect to which I am negative! The hard fact of the matter is that I found these two volumes to be a profoundly impressive piece of philosophical exposition which have challenged my own position in ways that will continue to stimulate me to question and indeed to rethink many of the assumptions in my own thinking.

The essential difference between the position the author defines and the position which I identify with traditional Christian theology concerns the nature of persons and the associated category of what we might term "communion," which, as we have suggested, possesses ontological as opposed to merely deontological status within Christian theism. The thinker to whom I referred earlier, John Zizioulas, famously defined the nature of the person by reference to the Greek equivalent of the Latin "*substantia*." Far from being merely an *individua substantia* (a monadic entity) with a nature of some kind, a person uniquely has its *hypostasis* in *ekstasis*. That is, a person's being is constituted in and through its relationship to and communion with other persons—a mutual *koinonia* definitive of the being of all those involved and ultimately both grounded and completed in relation to the divine life. The ontology that emerges requires to be characterized in terms of participation in God—but participation conceived not as the author of *Coming to Understanding* conceives it, nor as Platonic participation *methexis*, but as *koinonia*. It is this category that serves not only to define the shape of theological anthropology and indeed ethics but to explain the *telos* of reality, its intelligibility, the grounds but also the limits of the explanatory success of science, the mysteries of "fine tuning," and not least, the reason as to why there is "something rather than nothing." (I remain unconvinced that this is an answer to a confused question!)

For this reviewer, the alternative described in these two volumes, despite the immense light shed on an ambitious range of questions, lacks not only the degree of explanatory power that traditional theism possesses but also the capacity to underpin, direct, and motivate the moral life. As the contemporary German theologian Jürgen Moltmann once commented: "how is God supposed to mean everything to us if we don't mean anything to God?" The concept of God as defined in the second volume left me asking a similar question. Does clarity as to the nature of God, as defined in these impressive volumes, really have the potential to shape human self-understanding in such a way as to inspire the moral life?

Review 9: Michael Welker

Writing with or without acknowledging contexts

How do we gain the attention of other people so that we can mediate our thoughts and concerns to them? How do we convince and teach them or challenge them to deal with our insights? In each personal encounter and in each public uttering, whether oral or in writing, the content, the appeal, the lucidity, and the inner consistency of the arguments will be the decisive factors which have an impact on the minds and world views of others. In our day, however, a contextualization of the texts we write greatly eases the mediation of our thoughts. Where do we come from, what are the concerns that cause us to speak up, what expertise supports our thinking, what audiences do we wish to address, and what are the goals of our speech, writing and publication? It helps our readers when we locate our contribution in the broad spectrum between a personal piece of advice, witness to a friend, or breaking news which through the media potentially tries to reach everybody on the globe.

Most of the valuable and important texts in classical literature, religious, philosophical and other genres seemed to be highly successful by addressing an indefinite public. In fact, however, they showed at least an indirect contextualization. For instance, they were clearly developed in a faith community whose context and traditions they addressed; they mirrored a cultural and sociopolitical context and its world views; or they philosophically "smarted out the smartest," who were more or less clearly addressed.

Volume II: Theology of *Coming to Understanding* remains vague in its contextualization. Its author seems to prefer to remain anonymous. Both the intention and the function of the text become only gradually clear. Still, there is a latent contextualization in that the audience addressed is evidently an educated and learned one, but it is not the academy. The author possesses philosophical knowledge and has obviously had a religious socialization. For reasons that are not transparent he brings in the texts of the tradition without paying attention to the standards of current academic quotation, thus evoking the style of pre–nineteenth century writing. The author has clear religio-moral concerns. But it is not clear which circles in churches and public education he wants to address. Also, his text is too long and far too difficult to make it as a general lay philosophical and popular religious pamphlet.

Evaluatory Contexts and Expertise

The main concern of the following comments is the inner consistency and the argumentative weight of the text presented. Moreover, the potentials of outreach to academic and non-academic audiences will be reflected. In order to classify the following remarks, some information on the background of the evaluator will be helpful. I have taught systematic theology (in the United States this would be "theology" or "constructive theology") at the universities of Tübingen, Münster, and Heidelberg in Germany for more than 30 years, and I was a guest professor at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, at Princeton Theological Seminary, and at Harvard Divinity School. I also spent a year at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. I have supervised about 50 doctoral students from 15 countries as their main advisor (or, as we say in Germany, their "doctor father"). For ten years I was the director of the "*Internationales Wissenschaftsforum*" of the University of Heidelberg, a center of international and interdisciplinary research which hosts fifty to seventy high-quality consultations and symposia per year. I also took part in the organization of multiyear interdisciplinary research projects in Princeton and Chicago. Two years ago I founded the "Research Center International and Interdisciplinary Theology" at the University of Heidelberg in which about twenty professors are actively involved. I received doctorates in philosophy and in theology and wrote my *Habilitationsschrift* (a postdoctoral book required in Germany in order to be eligible as a professor) on Alfred North Whitehead, a mathematician and scientist who developed a general theory.

I perceive some resemblances between Whitehead's thoughts and the text I was asked to review. As the following comments will show, my approach to texts like the one before me is not that of a "philosophical theologian" or a "theologizing philosopher" alone, but also of a systematic theologian from the Christian tradition who for many years has been in conversation about central religious topics with historians and biblical scholars, and also with international colleagues from various disciplines on specific overlapping topics. My reflections are guided by the conviction that a constructive critique and an attempt to revise modes of thinking and moral orientation with respect to "God and Piety" (in the broad sense) should try to do justice to the major classical texts and to the inner rationalities and logics of the so-called Abrahamic faith traditions as far as we are able to decode and to reconstruct them. In this sense, even the critical remarks in the following text are meant to be constructive and encouraging.

The text which starts with “The Metaphysics of God” belongs to the traditions of a “philosophical theology.” Most of these traditions rest on metaphysical speculation. The title “**The** Metaphysics of God” indicates that the author prefers a premodern type of metaphysics over a metaphysics which comes out of interdisciplinary or even multidisciplinary discourses. The mathematician and scientist A. N. Whitehead spoke of the development of “**A** Metaphysics” as soon as the most general and basic concepts in one area of knowledge are shown to be applicable in another area of knowledge and disciplined expertise. This approach is more modest than the generalizing one; it appeals more to learned minds of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It requires thorough dialogues with scientific, religious, philosophical, and commonsense thinking. Thus with the sweeping statement, “We believe: that God comes first. We believe that in order to know who and what we are, and what we must do in life, we must know about God,” which the author chooses as the start of this chapter, he risks the loss of vast parts of his potential audience.

Even if parts 1 to 3 of his metaphysics have won him followers, he now has to rise to new challenges. His strong religious and moral appeals will cause the reader not to rely exclusively on the fact that the author has had some training in metaphysics, but rather he or she will refer back to his or her own religious and moral convictions and insights. The whole metaphysics will be put to the test by the contents now introduced as “God” and by the orienting power of the knowledge of self and of moral conduct: “How do the proposed religious and moral insights relate to my religious and moral convictions? Can they tempt me to undertake the effort to penetrate the underlying theory and potentially change my modes of thinking?”

The first questions evoked by the start of this part—without reference to the text that follows—will probably be:

> Who is meant by “we”? (Cf. above Part 1.)
>
> What is meant here by “belief”? A mere opinion (correlated with “rejections” of which the author also speaks)? A strong conviction? (In the end the text does not only make frequent use of the phrase “we believe”“; it even speaks of a “confession” and a “Holy Crusade”; but in the beginning the tone is more open to several interpretations.) If the latter, what supports this strong conviction? Only the speculations offered so far? How is belief related to mere thought and speculation? And how is it differentiated from them? These questions demand

> answers if belief has to direct a kind of religious and ethical orientation.

Is the phrase “God comes first” meant in a temporal sense (“before everything else”)? This could imply a poor notion of “eternal life.” Or is it meant in an axiological way? Then the value and measure system would have to be exposed.

The following statement that “Like God … everything has form and matter” raises the question how the author categorically wants to distinguish God and creatures. Is God, as in Whitehead’s thought, only a special and encompassing “actual entity”? The author repeatedly states that “Everything imitates God, and in imitation of God, everything has form and matter.” At this point one would like to learn more about the creatures’ process of imitation. Is a panpsychism behind it, in which each entity envisions God and repeats aspects of the divine in an imitative way, thus gaining its texture of form and matter?

The author clearly wants to structure his theory of God by the duals “form and matter,” “whole and part,” and by a theory of divine attributes and ontological dependence. But neither in terms of content nor in terms of a distinction from, and a relation to, established disciplines of thought do his statements—again, only with reference to the beginning of the text—provide sufficient transparency (despite many repetitions and obvious changes in perspective in the following parts):

> The body of God, The Block Universe … (is) studied by science.
>
> The form of God, the Godhead … is studied by philosophy.
>
> Here we study Divine Truth—the form of God’s divine Eternal Life.

I do not see how the many scientists I met in interdisciplinary discourses could and would identify with the task assigned to them here. I do not see how the many philosophers I studied and encountered could identify with the author’s statement (possibly with the exception of some variants of Spinozist—”*deus sive natura*”—traditions). Finally, I do not see how the author’s position—without having read his meta-anthropological reflections which are to be found in the chapters 21ff. in Part 4 and in Part 5—could somehow be academically located between science and philosophy—topically and methodologically. I do not know any philosophical or meta-scientific theory which could be a conversation partner for or a meaningful critic of the position exposed in Part 4. The whole conception appears like a very “private philosophy” in search of a potential transparency and outreach. I could not even name an adequate conversation partner with regard to the technical exposition of this theory of God in itself. The further elaboration in terms of piety and ethos, however, will allow me to relate the ideas offered here to traditions, modes of thought in faith traditions and in the academy, in ways that might be helpful for further reflection and writing on the issues raised in this text.

When the author speaks of God's "revelation" and of "prayer," it becomes very clear that he wants to challenge classical beliefs. On the one hand he can say that "the divine Eternal Life of God reveals His objective teleology" and that we should "organize our lives around this objective teleology." On the other hand he strictly rejects classical understandings of prayer and says "it is we who must come to the aid of God." In an interesting way he wants to make sense of an approach to the unfathomable yet orienting power of the divine.

Before I turn back to a step-by-step reading of the text, I should like to make the following remark: The whole impression of the text changes as soon as one has read the complete text. The program can then be identified as an interesting and thoughtful project of an "*Aufhebung*," a sublation, of classical religion in the double sense of the term given to it explicitly by Hegel and implicitly earlier by Kant: sublation (*Aufhebung*) in the sense of a relativization (*Relativierung*) and transgression (*Überschreitung*) on the one side and preservation (*Erhaltung*, *Bewahrung*) on the other.

I would very much recommend the author to make this program very clear in the beginning, to contrast this theory more clearly against major faith traditions, and to do so with reference to the meta-anthropological theory of the author which is involved in and guides his thinking in his original theory of God. As it is, the author in some parts relies on negative evaluations of the classical religions in general and the Abrahamic religions in particular. Several of these negative evaluations, however, meet, as I will show, at best only some popular impressions about these faith traditions and not the depth structures which should be clear for even moderately educated scholars. In this way the author weakens his argumentation and cause. A less polemical presentation—one that would make the anthropological and ethical concerns of the author clear and thus would constructively support his idea that a revised religious thinking might serve these concerns—would considerably strengthen the whole text. The statement, "the organization of God's attributes reveals the ethical ligament of Divine Truth that in turn provides us with the religious and moral guidance that we all need," should not remain (or seem to be) a mere assertion throughout Part 4. In connection with a self-congratulatory rhetoric ("Traditional religious thinkers never solved this problem …") and several misrepresentations of these traditions, this strategy is fatal for the resonance and impact of the text.

Several of the problems, which can illustrate my point and have to be dealt with in order to improve the text, result from the tension between more or less popular metaphysics of God and the Abrahamic religious traditions, in particular the Jewish-Christian ones. The author challenges the rich and complex literature on the metaphysics of God and states, "The traditional list of God's properties seems to arise from the process of extending those various powers or dominions to the "*n*th degree." He argues, "It seems clear that the notion of God evolved from earlier notions of deities to which were attributed various powers or dominions." Against the idea that a useless complexity has led to confusing literature and that it only takes a clear mind in order to sort these complexities out and provide a better philosophical orientation, most learned scholars and exegetes, however, would make the point that important religious traditions witness to processes of religious learning in which indeed earlier notions of deities are evaluated, partly incorporated, partly rejected, thus creating knowledge of humankind (*Menschheitswissen*) which then is capable of sustaining major faith traditions. They would challenge reductionistic constructions of individual thinkers which are not able to host the experiential complexity absorbed by those traditions which have grown over centuries.

Yet the author deals with a very simple notion of divine omnipotence and its incompatibilities with human experience, above all the burning issue of theodicy. For both investigations—the problem of divine omnipotence and the evolution of the concept of God in dialogue with previous forms of the understanding of God(s)—the classical biblical creation texts, particularly the text of Genesis 1, can help to paradigmatically examine modes of biblical thinking. They deal with the evolution of the notion of God by referring back to earlier notions of deities and with the development of a qualified notion of divine power which is blurred by a metaphysical talk of an abstract omnipotence.

The classical creation accounts of the biblical traditions speak against an abstract omnipotence and against the conventional identification of creation with the one-sided sovereign production and the utter dependence of the created alone. Anxiety about the creatures' own power being too great is apparently foreign to the classical creation texts in the biblical traditions. Instead of such an anxiety we encounter a rich description of the creatures engaged in the activity of separating, ruling, producing, developing, and reproducing themselves. Not only God separates, but also the creatures, including the firmament of the heavens. The gathering waters and the stars assume functions of separation (Genesis 1:6.9.18). Not only God rules, but also the creatures, for instance the stars rule through their establishment of rhythm, differentiation, and the gift of measure and order (Genesis 1:14ff.). Not only God brings forth, but also the creatures bring forth creatures—animals of all species and plants (Genesis 1:11f.20.24). Creatures develop and reproduce themselves, as explicitly recorded in detail with regard to plants, animals, and human beings. The texts use the same terms for God's creating activity and for the activity of the creatures. Since the account does not think in a one-on-one model, but in a one-on-many model, the orchestrating power of God permits a co-creativity of the creatures without destroying the concept of the sovereignty of God. The whole notion of creation exhibited here is not compatible with the concept of absolute omnipotence. And it indeed goes hand in hand with the secularization of earlier deities.

The sun, the moon, and the stars are no longer deities which should be worshipped, but rather creatures of enormous power. "Monsters" of the deep are no longer enemies of God which God has to fight in order to establish creation, as we learn in earlier myths, but they are just "big whales," as Luther translates the term *tanninim*. The earth is no longer a motherly deity, although it has the power to bring forth creatures and plants of all kinds. A very subtle regulation is depicted here in which creatures get a graded share in the creative activity of the generation, regulation, and sustenance of the world. The fact that this is correlated with potentials of self-endangerment and with all kinds of complexities is expressed in the so-called "call to dominion,"which uses slave holder and conqueror language to describe the rule of human beings over their fellow-beings, the plants and the animals. On the one hand a clear anthropocentric power-based conception is developed. On the other hand the human beings are meant to represent the *imago Dei*, the image of God, towards their fellow-creatures. A very subtle ethos is described here, an ethos which should be attractive to the author of *Coming to Understanding*.

The argument that on this basis it does not make sense to speak of the "goodness of creation," as Genesis 1 does, is not tenable. Good in Hebrew (*tob*) means life-furthering, and this includes death and the sobering insight that life lives at the expense of other life. Creation is good, but it is not glorious; it is not divine.

My second objection would be that the sweeping statements about the association of the divine ethical commands with punishment and reward do not do justice to the strong inner biblical reflexive traditions. The position underlined by the author is indeed particularly crass in Deuteronomy, which copies the vassal treaty of the dominating Assyrian power and correlates it with the threat of curse and the promise of blessing. It is, however, a standard insight that the biblical traditions correct this politically powerful but theologically devastating concept in the priestly writings and that the New Testament critique of the distortive side of "the law of God" strongly mirrors the concern about a too-simplistic understanding of the divine concern for order.

The third point of critique is the author's notion of the personhood of God, where he sees "folk psychological notions ... being applied to Him"." In this context the author also wrestles with notions of Trinitarian theology, taking up some quotes of the Westminster Confession. The comments have to be seen as a popular or even populist critique of what the author regards as a "tortured theology." The difficulties in the attempts of a Trinitarian theology to deal with an anthropomorphic notion of personhood in terms of a self-reflexive subjectivity or similar concepts should not speak against it. It wrestles with the notion of how to relate divine immanence and transcendence, of how to correct simplistic notions of creation with no perspective on salvation and eschatology, and it includes orienting potentials for a multidimensional anthropology, which is badly needed for an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary understanding of the phenomena of the human person.

The difference, for instance, between the very powerful concept of the spirit first proposed by Aristotle in Book XII of his *Metaphysics*, and the concept of the Spirit witnessed to in the biblical traditions should not speak against the validity of the latter. As I have shown elsewhere, the philosophical concept which shaped occidental thinking in epistemology, anthropology, and diverse cultural and social theories is fundamentally different from the Holy Spirit in Jewish and Christian religious thinking. The philosophical spirit is self-referential and full of certainty. The Spirit of the biblical traditions, the "Spirit of truth," bears witness to Christ and to God the Creator and does not speak on its own authority (John 15:26). It gains its personhood by its sensitivity to context by which it generates emergent processes which bring about justice, mercy, and the ennoblement among creatures. The biblical traditions express this by the image of the "pouring of the Spirit" and in the quite revolutionary insight that the Spirit does not only work through males and masters, but through "male and female, old and young, masters and slaves," and through different national and cultural traditions (Joel 3, Acts 2). Here again, religious resources are given which could be related to the author's interest in ethical and religious orientation on a higher level of abstraction.

The Trinitarian notion and the attempt to envision more complex concepts of personhood challenge popular understandings of prayer which imagine a personal conversation between "myself and my God," the human I and the divine Thou, etc. To be sure, one should not take the religious and philosophical striving for deeper insights on the basis of complex experiences and reflections on them as a blank check for pretentious talk about "the depth and the inaccessibility of the contents of faith." One should not take them as the basis to oppose reason and faith.

The fourth point which could cause some trouble for the position depicted is the notion that God "has the whole space-time kingdom as His body." This notion in this text is much more sophisticated than the talk in some process theology that "the world is the body of God." It aims at an explanation that makes the talk of God's immanence and God's transcendence coherent. It requires the author's meta-anthropological insights in order to illuminate what he has in mind. This is also important in order to understand the author's insistence that God is "insentient," that God did not create the world with a purpose, and that yet "there is a direction to His divine Eternal Life," because it is the human beings and particularly the virtuous, the venerable, and the holy souls, as the author finally states, that give an eschatological direction to the flux of divine and cosmic reality. At the end of Chapter 20 the author explains that he wants to "teach" the notion of God, which stands in contrast to the notion of God which is found in the Abrahamic traditions.

The author's warning, "It would be superficial to think that metaphysical doctrines promulgated by religious leaders and thinkers are designed merely to capture truths about God's supernatural reality," can convince on the basis of Chapters 21ff. and particularly Part 5. The same part, however, makes it difficult for me to understand the polemic tone in the sentence, the "scriptures and commentary (scil. of the great religious traditions) are not mere descriptions of truths sincerely offered for believers, but instead have many sociological, psychological, and even political uses." He should either insist on a notion of "truth" as merely abstract and formal metaphysical insight, an understanding which most scholars and believers on this globe would probably contest, or he should admit that at least some of the truth-seeking traditions have tried to grasp the "flesh and blood" correlated with the revelatory processes he is so eager to attribute to the mental and ethical orientation of creatures. In this attempt, they had to seek the help of historical, even sociological, psychological, and political observations and insights. The opposition the author seems to construct here between a "top-down metaphysics" and a "bottom-up empirical approach" is questioned by the sophisticated approach of the whole project as it presents itself in the end.

This, I think, can be underlined by a very general statement of the author himself. He says, "Divine Truth … is not something of value only in and of itself. The purpose of it is the Godhead, the form of God Himself. The purpose of Truths is for how everything depends on everything else and how they depend on God; and they are for the purpose of explaining things in terms of other things and ultimately for explaining everything in terms of God." If the word "explain" really means more than "stating a (more or less vague) relation," if the whole theory aims at more than a mere proposed "framework of thinking," the metaphysical structuring and the search for "bottom-up" historical evidence should not fall apart. In my view, the question of the ethical and religious fruitfulness of the whole endeavor depends on the question whether the author can reconcile his insights with some or several traces in the classical religious traditions which are indeed concerned with experience-based "witnesses." If he just wants to promulgate the absolute alternative to conventional religious orientation by an abstract notion of truth directed against key concepts in the grand traditions, presented in a weak, one-sided if not distorted form of understanding, the whole enterprise will result in a very private self-satisfaction.

Chapter 21 offers an interesting correlation of "apperception," "piety," and "understanding" which should be introduced as early as possible in order to clarify the author's theological and epistemological intentions. The author seems to fuse thoughts of metaphysical religious-ontological traditions, the transcendental theory of apperception, and a somehow secularized notion of piety, which could be related to a Schleiermacherian understanding in a quite defensible way. The crucial argument which can shed light on the whole project seems to be: The deepest form of self-awareness is on the one hand rooted in what can be seen as the divine being. This self-awareness is dynamic and directional. In an Anselmian way it could be named "*fides quaerens intellectum*," faith seeking understanding. The search for understanding, however, is intrinsic to self-awareness, it is non-trivial and should thus be named "piety" and seen as directed toward a disclosure of the Divine as seen by this theory (the divine Eternal Life of God and Space-time as the form of the Body of God).

Although this line of thinking would shed explanatory light on most of the statements in the first chapters of the text, the question arises whether the author would like to propagate a subtle and nuanced form of pantheism. One also has to ask on what grounds can the text speak of "damages," injuring and "poisoning" of "the divine Eternal Life of God" and of "Enemies of God." Should his non-personal notion of God not require an ultimate divine indifference over against any constellation in the Body of God and towards any direction the flux of Eternal Life might take? The author sees the ultimate danger that "the process of coming to understanding" might be "impeded."

But where are the grounds in this general theory, which do not allow for a relaxed "anything goes" in the sense of Mme de Stael: *Tout comprendre c'est tous pardonner*—to understand everything means pardoning everything?

The author himself gives various examples of relativizing value judgments on the basis of a theory which uses "understanding" as the eschatological key concept. Again, he seems to conceal this problem by blaming the Abrahamic religions. He clearly underestimates the differentiating power of the biblical law traditions by relating all stipulations to an abstract will of God. He even introduces a very simplistic Manichaean "God-or-Satan" dualism, which we see only at some edges of the canon, and claims that "human evil is misdescribed in the Abrahamic religious traditions." It is simply wrong to say that "the Abrahamic religious traditions, and all religious traditions, for that matter, fail to recognize the danger that institutional evil poses for humanity" because they are unable to see the "institutional evil."

The cross of Christ is a revelatory event which sheds light on the religion's wrestling with exactly this problem of institutional evil. It is not without reason that the cross of Christ stands at the center of the Christian Church and stands for the centre of Christian faith. The cross reveals first the situation of God-forsakenness. It marks a situation over which the world can trip in speechless despair, but also over which it can step, shruggingly, happily, or mindlessly unaware. The cross gives this situation of God-forsakenness a name. Jewish and Christian thinkers have associated Auschwitz with the situation of the cross, although we must be uneasy about this association for two reasons. First, because Auschwitz stands for the murder of countless people and for the brutal annihilation of millions and because it can easily promote the poisoned idea that Christians somehow wanted with the horrific murder of millions to compare and balance out the death of the One. Second, the cross reveals a situation of hopelessness without escape, where the so-called enemies, the relative global public, and even the resistance fighters, the disciples, conspire together and are implicated in it.

The situation of God-forsakenness here is not only one of individual and collective disorientation. Rather this situation of God-forsakenness displays itself in public anomy (in lawlessness and in unlawfulness), in public chaos and in a triumph of sin which pervert the good forces of life. Jürgen Moltmann’s insight that on the cross it is the blasphemer and the political agitator who dies must be picked up here and developed further.

Religion, law (not only Roman but also Jewish law), politics, and public opinion work together here; Jew and Gentile, native and foreigner, occupier and the occupied, friend and foe, they all collaborate. A precise concept of sin is achieved on the cross, one which looks the abysmal fact in the eye: that in the name of justice and the good, in the name of truth and salvation, innocent people can be ostracized, tortured, and killed. The cross not only necessitates and enables the development of a precise understanding of the good, yet utterly pervertible law, but also the denial of any general identification of law and sin, or of any reductive perversion of the law to mere human self-righteousness and self-relatedness.

In this respect, the cross also reveals the radical difference between God and humanity. Theistic theologians attempted to grasp this radical difference in terms of an infinite difference in power. This difference becomes clear in the light of a complete human self-seclusion from the presence of God, prepared “in the night in which he was betrayed”—even by Christ’s own disciples.

The corruptedness of political institutions, religious institutions, and public morals in their cooperation is depicted by the focus on the cross in the Christian traditions. They do, of course, not yet reflect on the set of scientific or rather scientistic forms of institutional distortions which the author carefully describes. But the sensitivity to institutional evil is not absent from the grand religious traditions, as he states. Quite the contrary. The whole biblical canon shows that religious creativity operates under the enormous pressure of institutional evil inflicted by the presence of the then superpower or even world power: Egypt, Assur, Babel, the Persians, the Greeks, and in New Testament times, the Romans. Deep religious insight is aware that tradition and the great religious institutions are too weak or even too corrupt to help out of this situation. They see the institutional evil from two sides or even from several directions. Prophetic visions search for a divine reality which can overcome this distortion (e.g., the reign of God, the power of righteousness, and love) in very sublime emergent processes. Here, again, I see logics at work which could and should inspire the author to develop a more mature concept of his own post-Abrahamic religiosity, a concept which avoids caricatures of those traditions and avoids false confrontations. In any case, the religious traditions of power and weight are very much aware of the fact that "the crimes of institutions against God (and against humankind) dwarf those of individuals." Not only the canonical faith traditions, but also important theologians of the twentieth century have seen this fact. The theological "critique of religion" in Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich's insights in the third volume of his *Systematic Theology* (disclosure and critique of the ambiguities in religion, culture, and morals) can strongly underline this point.

Chapter 23 names seven "roles of God" which indeed have played important parts in the Abrahamic faith traditions. But it clearly underestimates the theological and prophetic struggles in these traditions against these functionalizations of God. It gives a very sketchy account of the processes it calls "naturalizing" and "transcendentalizing" God. A minor point is the widespread confusion of "transcendent" (= beyond empirical experience) and "transcendental" (= the conditions of the possibility of experience as introduced in Kant's philosophy), which should be avoided. A major problem is that the abstract juxtaposition of the author's metaphysical theism and the less speculative biblical faith traditions creates a tension field in which the global judgments can be generated. The interesting thoughts and ideas presented in this text should in my view avoid the self-congratulatory rhetoric and the poor representation of major faith traditions in the style of the following sentences, "The paradoxical tension between the transcendent and immanent roles of God is due exclusively to tensions found within traditional religions. There are many conflicting culturally and politically motivated factors that force God to take the roles He takes in those traditions and that force the attribution of conflicting properties to Him. These are not operative in our presentation of God as He actually is. We have indicated God's properties and distinguished them from the false images of Him that are reflected in the Abrahamic tradition. We now describe His proper role, given the correct view of His metaphysics."

On such a basis Chapter 24 could be reformulated in a less offensive tone. The author could ponder whether his offer of an "*Aufhebung*" (sublation) of religion—taking away the aspects of God usually connected with his role as creator and a personal God—should be understood as a “post-religious” position or whether his own approach should be located in pneumatological types of thought (which, I think, would be possible). Freed from false titanic postures the author could and should concentrate on the question how “God provides ethical guidance for us … by Himself being in such a way that ethical precepts are present in the structure of what He is, in his attributes and how they are related to each other and to Him.” He could and should also reflect his frequently used notion of “service to God” and explain why his metaphysics does not rather “teach” a polyphonic “creation of God” through humankind: “We are His only salvation … The appropriate unfolding of the divine Eternal Life of God depends on us … Righting the wrongs in God’s Body depends on *our* knowledge, on *our* power, on *our* goodness, and on *our* actions. It is the aim of what follows to describe what we must do in thus serving God.” This is connected with the question whether the title of Part 5 is adequate or rather misleading.

***Coming to Understanding*, Volume II: Theology, Part 5: Serving God**

Part 5 starts with summarizing remarks which should, in my view, be placed—in a slightly elaborated and better explained way—at the beginning of Volume II, as the “fundamental credo” of the author and as the basis of the “Holy Crusade” he wants to initiate. I personally found his attempt to give a new and fresh understanding to the lost notion of “the soul” most helpful and to relate it to a defensible understanding of “the self.” When the author says that human consciousness “may be appropriately described as inherently truth-seeking,” one wishes that he could support this idea by sound arguments, because this could possibly provide a basis for the discernment of a positive flux of Eternal Life and the Coming to Understanding. But I do not see this salvatory move.

In recent years we have explored the inner logics of “truth-seeking communities” which not only make claims to truth but also develop means of verifying these claims which are recognized by all persons involved. They distinguish between personal certainties and consensus on the one hand and an accurate knowledge of the matter on the other and relate these to one another. When truth-seeking communities have arrived at certainties and consensus, these must be reviewed and validated just like claims to an accurate knowledge of the matter. This review is carried out for the sake of increasing and stabilizing certainty and consolidating consensus and also for the sake of the necessary differentiation and stabilization of factual knowledge. The way in which certainty, consensus, and factual knowledge are constantly called into question for the sake of established or rather *increased* certainty, consolidated or *improved* consensus, and validated or differentiated factual knowledge—this is the path of truth-seeking.

It is a path of learning, testing, increasing, deepening, consolidating, refining and also of mediating and disseminating knowledge. But can one show that this is intrinsic to any flux and operation of consciousness?

I think that the last part of the project at least shows some potential towards a solution of this problem when it states that the soul on the one hand is essentially awareness, but on the other hand "not just a collection of awarenesses." It selects and it grades its perceptions—and this allows or even requires its association with free choice and piety. But the assertion that each soul aims at "maximizing awareness, and especially awareness of understanding" remains a mere claim and assertion. The author rightly shifts to the context of associations and institutions, but again he cannot show how they could provide an intrinsic drive towards truth in the soul, or even only a specific quality of selection—be it individual, in associations or in humankind as a whole.

I do see that it is the creative tension between the souls and their selves as their "ecological footprints" which should provide a solution to the problem exposed. But I simply cannot see how this solution should be brought about. The author rightly describes problems of all sorts of "self-delusions"; he locates the task in what he calls "the game of life." He introduces the notion of "responsibility" connected with the challenge "to serve God efficaciously." But all these maneuvers just circle around the unfulfilled task to show how the intrinsic search for truth could be engraved in the very texture of human identity.

In Chapter 27 the author introduces the "purposes of God," which should become "manifested in His divine Eternal Life" by us. But all one can see is a circle that one seeks "the objective teleology embodied in the Godhead … [which] sets the ultimate standard for right and wrong activity in God's Body"—and hears that it is dependent on us. This circle is not broken by broader and broader contextualizations of this process (institutions, large institutions, cultures, humanity, God's will). The introduction of polyphony and difference and novelty as such does not help either. The structural cluelessness can clothe itself nicely by the general relativization of all sorts of power structures. The final outcome is a lesson on "peace and comfort" in our self-adjusting in the "scheme of things." I could not contradict all those who would regard this as just an ideology of appeasement, fitting with the above "*Tout comprendre c'est tous pardonner*"—"to understand everything means pardoning everything."

This relativism is finally overcome by a dangerous call towards what one could call institutionalism. "For individual conscious souls, pious behavior is best exhibited by their serving institutional souls: making institutional souls possible and contributing to institutional souls being pious." And this is complemented by a plea for "local love," which, in our (so far systemically clueless) vision of the good "is what serves God best." In the last pages the process depicted turns self-referential, “Love of one’s own pious choices is an example of proper love.” And it turns into a non-theological docetism: we cannot love God, and we can only love disembodied souls. The strong Johannine notion of love as a mutual honoring which opens this relation in an inviting and revelatory way could help to discern elements of strong insights and problematic abstractions in those options.

Since the notion of love—transformed into the context of the metaphysical theory proposed—could provide a directionality for the process of Eternal Life and Coming to Understanding, I should like to give a few informative reflections on it from a biblically informed Jewish-Christian perspective.

Love is a unilateral or mutual relationship (involving two or more elements) with an affective dimension in which well-being, absolute well-being, or even salvation is sought. Love can be related to human beings, things, states, forms of ideals, or a combination of these relations (e.g., love for the beauty of another person). In a relation of love, the goal may be one’s own well-being, mutual well-being, or the well-being of someone or something else. Relations of love and the affects involved may alternately enhance, strengthen, or block one another. Finally, they may—actively or receptively—refer to God and states of salvation that transcend any notion of well-being. Thus love involves an extremely wide and complex spectrum of experience, causing continual problems in how to define it. Attempts at grasping the phenomenon of love using the *I-Thou structure* and the *dialectics of self-reference and selflessness* lead to underestimations and problematic constructions, because love cannot be reduced to an intimate relation between two persons. The common differentiation between *eros*, *agape*, *and philia* (less often: *cupiditas*, *caritas*, *and amicitia*) only partially captures aspects of the phenomena. Various cultures and epochs have had different emphases and taxonomies (Nussbaum) when referring to the phenomena of “love.”

The biblically oriented Christian understanding of love both connects and differentiates between (1) God’s love in which God is creator and redeemer, (2) God’s love in which the triune God relates to God’s self, (3) human love for God, (4) the love humans have for one another, and (5) the love humans have for themselves as well as so-called “self-love.”

Since the days of early Christianity, Christian theological dogmatics has emphasized that God not only is characterized by an outwardly directed love but also is defined internally by love within God’s self. In its various expressions the doctrine of God and the Trinity has repeatedly attempted to get to the heart of the conviction underlying Johannine theology that love is not merely a central quality of God but that God’s essence is love (“God is love,” 1 John 4:16b).

According to John, God’s love between Father and Son is not an abstract relation or “reciprocity” in which human beings can participate in some “mystical” way. Rather, two features are characteristic of this love:

- The Father, or his Name, is made known and revealed among the creatures (John 17:26), and the Son is revealed and he “dwells” with those that are his own (John 14:21ff.).
- Divine love seeks the glory of the beloved beyond the boundaries of the relation to the beloved. It is a “contagious” love that seeks imitation and agreement. It offers participation in itself.

The love with which God loves and wishes to be loved is thus revealed to humans, and God is revealed in this love. In this love God makes known the divine identity as well as God’s creative power. Just as the creator entrusts Jesus Christ with creative power through their relationship of love, so humans, too, are to come to know the love of God intimately and share in God’s power. The biblical traditions associate this transfer of power with the activity and “pouring out” of the Spirit.

Throughout the entire spectrum of the canon and thus across centuries, the biblical traditions have emphasized the strong connection between the “love of God,” that is, the genuine human relationship with God, and the “respect and observation of the commandments,” or the “adherence to God’s word.”

This connection between the “love of God” and acting in accordance with God’s wishes and commission is especially clear in Jesus’ relation to the creator as detailed in the Johannine writings. In general, “love of God” means taking up and pursuing God’s intentions and interests in the order and flourishing of creation. As intended by God, love of God includes a loving relation to the world and to fellow humans that is faithful to the law (Old Testament) and oriented towards Jesus’ life and teaching.

This is expressed in the so-called *“double commandment of love”* (Mark 12:28ff. and parallels; cf. Deuteronomy 6:4f. and Leviticus 19:18). When love in general is called the “fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:14), the intention is to combine a loving relation to God and loving relationships with fellow creatures.

However, when love is limited to family and friendships, then humans are not sufficiently complying with God’s desire for the order and flourishing of creation. This is so even when this love transcends the interests of sustaining and reproducing oneself (*“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”* Luke 6:32, cf. 6:33ff., and Matthew 5:46f.). Old Testament traditions already interpreted the command to love one’s neighbor not only with a complex ethos of what it means to be a “neighbor” (the Decalogue), but expanded the command to include even strangers and enemies (Leviticus 19:34 and Deuteronomy 10:18; Genesis 23:4f.; cf. Matthew 5:42ff. and parallels). Love is considered to be an increase in mercy towards those who are acutely or chronically disadvantaged, as expected by God’s law. The full meaning of this increase becomes clear only when the phenomenon of “growing in love” is grasped.

Many canonical texts—and the New Testament epistles in particular—seek to understand and describe love as a form of social communication in which the human relation to God, the human relationship to self, interpersonal relations, and complex social networks exert a positive influence on each other. God’s love allows participation in God’s power, and the perception of God’s creative love leads to personal growth in love, which also benefits a relation to self characterized by love.

The text settles with a notion of an open process: “However, when the emotions that the soul is aware of are appropriately locally focused and when that soul recognizes that everything that it is concerned with is a means to something else, then it is a soul engaged in right action, regardless of the outcomes.” The final differentiated warning against seeing “institutionalized souls” as “ends in themselves” mirrors the unhappy relation of the whole text with religion and with the whole talk about God. It tries to use the motivating energies and orientations of classical religion in a transformed way (Aufhebung, sublation). But it cannot provide a convincing critical equivalent to classical notions of a creative, sustaining, saving, and ennobling God.

Review 10: Dean W. Zimmerman

I. Introduction

In an earlier review of a work called *Coming to Understanding*, I used "A. M." to refer to the author, then known only as "A. M. Monius." Since then, A. M. has radically revised *Coming to Understanding*, both in content and form. It has split into two volumes, the second of which is concerned primarily with the theological and moral consequences of the metaphysical scheme presented in Volume 1.

My review of Volume 2 will, naturally, focus on the objections I have to various arguments—although there are attempts to develop some of the central doctrines in positive directions, as well. I shall pass over in silence the many points of agreement concerning metaphysical method, save one: I applaud A. M.'s rejection of extreme forms of negative theology and other attempts to take what *may* be limitations in our current conceptual resources and to elevate them to the level of high doctrine.

II. The Problem of the Attributes

Are the Attributes Attributes?

As indicated in my recent review of Volume 1 of *Coming to Understanding*, it is unclear whether the Categories of that manuscript can consistently be regarded as attributes of The One. The difficulties return in Volume 2: it is unclear whether the attributes of God deserve the title. Many of them seem pretty clearly *not* to be attributes that God exemplifies; indeed, many seem not to be *attributes* at all. I will not repeat the criticisms I made in the first review in detail, but I will consider some alternative ways of understanding some of the claims made about the attributes in Volume 2 and suggest different directions in which A. M. might develop his theory.

How should the phrase "Attributes of God" be understood? In what sense are the attributes *of* God? One natural interpretation would be: they are God's attributes, the characteristics he possesses or exemplifies, understood as they would be by a Realist about universals: i.e., as entities distinct from the things that have them but present in those things in some sense and in virtue of which the things are the kinds of things they are.

Some of A. M.'s statements suggest that the attributes of God do indeed belong to this category. If Ontological Dependence is rightly called "the form of God," then it must be a name for the complicated structure of ontological dependencies that God exemplifies (and that is depicted as a "wheel" in Volume 1). Since God is not actually ontologically dependent upon anything, the only way to understand Ontological Dependence as "informing" God, or grounding God's structure or nature, is to treat it as a structural property in which ontological dependence plays a prominent role. Similar moves can be made with respect to such attributes as Consciousness, Awareness, Belief, etc. Since God is neither conscious nor aware and has no beliefs, Consciousness cannot be a name for the attribute exemplified by things that are conscious, Awareness cannot be the attribute *being aware*; Beliefs is not *believing*. Instead, these are names for complicated structural properties of God as a whole, in virtue of which individual souls have consciousness, awareness, and beliefs.

The structural approach to the attributes may perhaps be discernible in the passages in which "God's attribute Consciousness," "God's attribute Awareness," "God's attribute Belief," etc., are clearly differentiated from the consciousnesses, awarenesses, and beliefs of individual souls (e.g., p. 39). A. M. claims that individual conscious souls are "parts" of the (presumably very different) attribute called "Consciousness" that God has. And one might take this to mean: (i) that "Consciousness" is a term for some gigantic feature of God (who contains everything); (ii) that this feature has parts; and (iii) that some of these parts are responsible for *my* soul's awareness, other parts are responsible for *your* soul's awareness, and so on. Perhaps Consciousness is best thought of, then, as a structural property that contains individual souls as literal parts. But can properties have individuals as parts?

Here is a more mundane example of a property that plausibly contains individuals as parts: *Being the child of Roger and Margarett Zimmerman* can be thought of as a structured property (a property that is divisible into constituents) that is distinct from any qualitative property (e.g., *being the child of someone named "Roger Zimmerman" and someone named "Margarett Zimmerman,"* or *being the child of parents born under such and such circumstances*). Some philosophers will think of this property as literally composed of the generic relation *is the child of* and the two individuals, Roger and Margarett Zimmerman. If Consciousness, as a property of God, contains individual conscious souls as parts in this sort of way, it could easily do both of the things A. M. seems to want it to do: (i) characterize God itself as a whole; and (ii) be the explanatory ground for the fact that there are conscious souls within God.

Even if this is the right way to understand *some* of the so-called attributes of God, others resist interpretation as genuine features attributable to God itself. The space-time manifold that is God's body does not, for example, seem to be an attribute of God (or of anything else) in any normal sense of the word. Other attributes are clearly *not* attributes of God, although they do seem amenable to interpretation as structural properties of something else. Imitation, for instance, is "the actual way in which Modes is organized as the whole that it is"; so Imitation is a structural property of Modes, which serves as the matter of the space-time manifold. Imitation, then, seems to be something like the pattern or arrangement of modifications within space-time, a property implying that anything exemplifying it has parts that are modified in one way, other parts modified in other ways.

Some of the items listed as attributes of God seem to be neither attributes of God nor attributes of other things, but rather collections. Divine Truth is redescribed as "Truths," and the Attributes of God seem simply to be, well, the attributes! When the purposes of these attributes are described, it seems as though Divine Truth is just the truths describing "the way things are in the divine Eternal Life of God" (p. 20); and the Attributes are just what they seem to be, considered as the goal of the process of coming to understanding (p. 22). It may be that "the Attributes" is only sometimes used by A. M. as a plural term. But on many occasions, it clearly refers to the attributes of God in the same way that "the Presidents of the United States" refers to the men who have held that office. Perhaps, in other uses, it is supposed to be a name for the property of being an attribute of God, or for a structural attribute that God has and that contains all the attributes as parts. But neither of these latter suggestions can be substantiated by anything in the text of Volume 2; and the reader is left to conclude that some attributes of God are mere collections—in the case of Truths and Attributes, collections of propositions and collections of everything that appears on the "wheel" of Volume 1. As best I can tell, the list of attributes is a heterogeneous one. It includes at least the following: structural properties of God, structural properties of things other than God, individual things like The Block Universe, and sets of propositions like the Divine Truths.

The heterogeneous nature of this list begs the question: Why are these all called "the Attributes of God"? What, if anything, do they have in common? This, it seems to me, is one of the most pressing questions that A. M. must answer. There are characteristic roles played by the attributes in A. M.'s theory; and one might look to them for an answer.

For example, there are the roles of "matter" and "form," which A. M. uses to characterize the notion of "attribute of God" at the beginning of Volume 2 (p. 2). Given A. M.'s doctrines concerning material and formal attributes of attributes, he can offer the following definition:

> X is a Divine Attribute $=_{\text{df}}$. There is set *S* such that *x* is a member of *S* if and only if either *x* is the form or matter of The One or *x* is the form or matter of the form or matter of The One; or *x* is the form or matter

> of the form or matter of the form or matter of The One; or …; and X is a member of *S*.

For reasons I gave in my review of Volume 1, I would not find such a definition very helpful. The other things A. M. says about the attributes do not allow me to import my understanding of "form" and "matter" from the context in which these notions have their natural home—namely, Aristotelian theories of the metaphysics of ordinary particulars. So the proposed definition becomes relatively empty: there is an infinite binary branching tree structure that starts at The One. The principle behind the branching remains mysterious to me.

Another structural feature of the Attributes of God is relations of teleology and consequence. Some attributes are "for" others; if one is "for" another, the latter "reveals the purpose" of the former. The pattern of branching just described could be further complicated by adding these sorts of relations in the pattern A. M. describes. In the case of teleology, the attribute that provides the purpose for a given formal attribute is "that attribute of His that is immediately ontologically dependent on the super-attribute of it" (p. 5); in other words, the purpose of a formal attribute can be found one row up and one space clockwise in the "wheel"—catercorner from it, so to speak. Unfortunately, adding this element of teleological structure to the definition of "Divine Attribute" does not help me much either, because the examples A. M. gives do not seem to me to reveal a unified kind of purpose-giving relationship. When I am told that "Space-time is the aim or purpose of Imitation," because imitation is "the actual way in which Modes is organized as the whole that it is," I simply draw a blank. Why is the pattern of the modifications of space-time *for* space-time, rather than, say, *for* The Block Universe? When I am told that Space-time is for the Truths, because things "are in space and time in order for there to be such truths," I again do not see anything distinctively purposive. Given some things that are any way at all, their being *that way* will be reflected in truths about them, and they could be said to "be that way in order for there to be such truths." And there are lots of truths (according to A. M.) that are not about things in space-time; why is space-time *for* these truths? Should not those non–spatio-temporal things be *for* the truths about the non–spatio-temporal aspects of God? When told that the "purpose of Truths is for how [sic] everything depends on everything else," I again draw a blank; why should they not be "for how everything directly ontologically depends on everything else," say (i.e., Immediate Ontological Dependence), rather than for Ontological Dependence? Why are not Truths *for* Coming to Understanding itself? I have similar reactions to the claims about the purposes of Constitution, Form, and Immediate Ontological Dependence (pp. 20–21).

Perhaps, instead of relying upon the theoretical roles of matter and form or teleology, A. M. could elucidate the concept of "Divine Attribute" by putting more emphasis upon relations of ontological dependence among the attributes—the pattern of direct ontological dependencies might provide some intellectual purchase upon the nature of the attributes and the way they differ from other things. According to this strategy, what it is to be one of the attributes of God is simply to be an item on the "wheel" of Volume 1. On this interpretation, the way to exhibit some kind of unity among the seemingly very different entities in the category of Divine Attributes would be to define the term in this way:

> X is a Divine Attribute $=_{df}$. There is an infinite series of entities A, B, C, etc., the first of which is directly ontologically dependent upon the one absolutely ontologically independent entity (i.e., God), every other member of which is directly ontologically dependent upon the previous member of the series; and X is a member of this series.

The proposed definition will not even be extensionally adequate, however, if there is more than one such series. Since there are parts of attributes of God that are not themselves attributes of God but that are ontologically dependent upon the attributes of which they are parts, there is a danger of more than one infinite series of ontological dependencies "spinning off" of God. The only way to avoid this problem would be to suppose that the chains of ontological dependencies that run *off* of the "wheel" inevitably come to an end. I am not sure that A. M. can admit this, given his commitment to infinitely long explanations for even contingent particulars. So it appears that the role reserved for Divine Attributes by A. M. cannot be characterized entirely in terms of their place in a series of ontological dependence. Something more must be added. Here, I have run out of ideas; in the end, I am not at all sure what the Divine Attributes are supposed to have in common.

The Attributes of God Are Not Parts of God

Although the attributes of God do not all seem to be attributable to God, one might think that since God includes *everything*, they still belong to God at least in the weak sense of being *parts* of God. But A. M. will reject this idea: God is a unity, without parts. He may have form and matter, but these are not parts. In Volume 1 more was said by A. M. about the way in which everything could be "included in" The One (i.e., God) without being a part. As a monist, A. M. needs to be able to deny that God is one thing and other particulars are additional things existing "over against" God. But how can there be all the things in A. M.'s system without their being either parts of God or else additional things "outside" God? The basic idea adumbrated in Volume 1 was, I believe, that there is a further notion of "inclusion" that can be understood on the model of Aristotelian form and matter. Form and matter are supposed to be two components of a substance that nevertheless fall short of being actual parts. If the immediate form and matter of God are not parts of God, there is no pressure to regard the form and matter of these attributes, or the form and matter of their formal and material aspects, as parts of God either. And when one finally reaches attributes that have parts that can be identified with ordinary physical objects or individual souls, their parthood relations to attributes need not "carry over" to God. After all, it does not follow from the facts that something has an attribute, and that the attribute has a part, that the first thing has a part—and God is even further removed from the parts than that.

If I am right that many of the so-called attributes of God are not really attributes in the normal sense—they are not the properties *of* anything—and that others are attributes not of God but of other things, such as The Block Universe; then there is a real worry that some of these things will not be "included in" God by virtue of being attributes of attributes of attributes…of God, or parts of attributes of attributes of attributes….of God. And, in that case, they are simply distinct from God, and pluralism looms. I suspect that the best way to resist this anti-monistic threat is to put weight on the material side of the equation. Within an Aristotelian metaphysics, the matter of a thing is nothing like an *attribute* of the thing; it is an underlying parcel of stuff that is nevertheless not really a substantial *part*, because it is "potential" and not "separately existing." If Coming to Understanding and The Block Universe and Modes, for example, were thought of in this way, there would be a further form of "inclusion" to relate particulars (like ordinary objects, parts of the modes in space-time) to God without having to treat them as undermining God's partlessness.

III. The Principle of Sufficient Reason

Rejecting Explanations of Existence

A.M. articulates a very strong version of the principle of sufficient reason:

> There is an explanation for the existence of every particular other than God Himself and for every fact about every particular. We reject brute facts or brutely existing objects: objects that just are for no reason or facts that just are the facts without there being in principle some explanation for them. … What [this] means … is that the search for

> explanations never ends. No fact or object is ever to be treated as just given without a reason for it that is amenable to future study and understanding. Furthermore, it means that the explanation for any particular or for any fact about that particular is part of the metaphysics of that particular and ultimately part of the metaphysics of God (pp. 2 and 3).

(I assume that when A. M. says that the search "never ends," he means, among other things, that circular explanations are not satisfactory; a circle of explananda would leave the series unexplained.)

The existence of God himself is exempted from explanation for the following reason: "Facts … are always of the form of something being a certain way; and such facts are contingent when the things in question could have been different. Explanations, in turn, rule out those other ways things could have been on the basis of other—also contingent—facts. So explanation is always a matter of accounting for existing things being a certain way. This means that it is muddled to look for an explanation of why there are any existing things at all—for why there is something rather than nothing" (p. 16).

This appears to be a prohibition on explanations of existence in general, which would be hard to square with his earlier claim that "[t]here is an explanation for the existence of every particular other than God Himself…" (p. 2). To the complaint that the existence of particulars routinely receives explanation, A. M.'s response seems to be this: when a demand is issued for an explanation for the existence of some particular other than God, "[t]his is not…a genuine question of the form, Why is there this particular rather than not?" Its proper answer will take the form "God's attributes [are] a certain way" (p. 17). The claim seems to be that in fact, when one looks closely, *no* demand for the explanation of the existence of some particular contingent thing is legitimate.

A. M.'s attempt to motivate the rejection of questions of existence seems strained. The question whether a certain particular contingent thing exists may receive an adequate explanation in terms of the attributes of God being a certain way, says A. M.; but if the thing is indeed a contingent particular, distinct from God, then the fact that it exists has, after all, thereby been explained. There would be no explanation of the existence of the thing if the question could somehow be regarded as *not really* a question of the form, "Why does X exist?" but rather of the form "Why is God configured in such-and-such ways?" But that would require analyzing all talk about existing particulars distinct from God into talk about God and his attributes, disowning ontological commitment to the contingent particular. And that is not something A. M. is inclined to do, so far as I can tell.

Setting that worry aside, I still do not think A. M.'s position is consistent with his expressed resolve to "reject brute facts or brutely existing objects." God exists contingently and has an individual essence—the particular form, the Godhead, that "individuates" God. I take it that a property that individuates a thing cannot be exemplified unless the thing in question exists. If a thing's having an attribute is a fact, God's having His divine essence is a fact—a fact that is necessarily equivalent to the proposition that God exists. One can then ask: Why is it a fact that an existing thing has the divine essence? If this fact has an explanation, then there is a perfectly good explanation for the existence of God. If it does not, then there is a brute, unexplained fact about the way a certain existing thing is.

If the demand for explanations of existence is cogent and sometimes has answers (as in the case of contingent things other than God), then the advocates of a necessary deity are in a position to satisfy A. M.'s very strong version of the principle of sufficient reason, while A. M. is not. What is not clear to me is *why* A. M. is committed to the contingency of everything, including the deity. Does it have to do with the "particularism" of the new version of his system? Perhaps being a particular requires being contingent. As I say in my review of Volume 1, I am not sure what "particular" means in the context of *Coming to Understanding*; but, as I pointed out, it was clear that A. M. did not regard particularity as *trivially* implying contingency.

The Contingency of God's Teleology?

God's merely contingent existence raises an important question about the inevitability of *coming to understanding* as the *telos* of all things. Suppose I grant to A. M., for the moment, that the actual God, the one that *happens* to exist but could have failed to exist, has the understanding of ontological structure as its end. What about the *other* ways things could have been, the ones that do not include this merely contingent deity? Although I did not find much in the way of argument for A. M.'s monism of The One in the first volume, I shall grant that there may be solid philosophical arguments to recognize such an entity. So perhaps, for every way things could have been, there would be some God or other; and perhaps every God must have a structure with built-in teleology (though I should like to see some argument for that conclusion). Still, why think that understanding the ontological or categorical structure of reality is the inevitable goal of every possible God?

Gideon Rosen, in his review of the first version of *Coming to Understanding*, underscored the remarkable fact that according to A. M., the purpose of the whole of reality happens to be nothing other than the project of working out the details of A. M.'s wheel. This is not as hubristic as it sounds, since the details include all of the structure that will ever be uncovered by, for example, scientists, as well. I take it that everyone engaged in the pursuit of genuine knowledge is directly involved in *coming to understanding*; and even those who merely enable the knowledge seekers to carry on their work (e.g., the janitors A. M. mentions in the final section) are indirectly involved in the process. So even after I have recovered from the initial shock of learning that the point of the universe is to enable humanity (and whatever other sentient beings there are) to understand the abstract structure of everything (and, preeminently, the abstract structure of ontological dependencies); I would once again be in for a shock were I told that understanding structure, with an emphasis on ontological structure, was the only possible purpose that any universe could have.

On the face of it, understanding the ontological structure of everything would seem to be only one among very many good ends. Many of us would take such understanding to be less important than ethical and religious ideals of self-sacrificial love and community. At the very least, it seems to me to be one noble end among others. Different individuals take different goods as their chief ends; why could not different possible deities do the same?

With the comparison to agents and their ends, a darker possibility opens up: could there be deities who say, with Milton's Satan, "Evil, be thou my *telos*"? We can easily imagine a possible world in which virtue is inevitably defeated and understanding immediately snuffed out. Were all things working together to that end, should we not conclude that the goals represented in the structure of The One are not *coming to understanding* or *reaching moral goodness*, but *plunging into ignorance* or *descending into hell*?

More worrisome yet is the doubt that creeps in upon contemplation of such possible alternative ends: Why think *our* deity is completely fixated upon understanding, rather than, say, ignorance? Our deity, according to A. M., contains infinities of attributes that require infinitely long explanations if they are to be understood; yet our deity has apparently only allowed for a finite number of souls with finite life spans. So our deity has ensured that however much we come to understand, even our biggest, most successful institutional souls will barely have scratched the surface. Our deity has either "chosen" an impossible goal or denied itself the means of reaching it. (Granted, talk of "choosing" and self-denial is potentially misleading anthropomorphism.)

A. M. may hold that potential for reaching a goal is not necessary in order for that goal to be the *telos* of the deity. But surely the actual tendencies a thing has to develop in a certain direction cannot be irrelevant to the question of the purpose for which it exists. In the case of a goal or purpose imposed from without, there may be a total failure to achieve the end for which a thing exists. For example, a badly designed boat might sink like a stone as soon as it is launched, although it was *supposed to* float. In the case of a thing with *intrinsic* teleology, however, a real tendency to move in the direction of its *telos* would seem to be required. If the only flickers of motion in the direction of coming to understand the ontological structure of the deity are brief and doomed to failure, *coming to understanding* would not appear to be the *telos* of our deity.

III. Souls and Selves

Noumenal Souls, Phenomenal Selves

I found much to like about the theological metaphysics of souls and selves in Volume 2. The overall picture is reminiscent of Kant: "noumenal" souls are outside of the spatio-temporal world; but their free, atemporal choices are expressed somehow in the "phenomenal" histories of spatio-temporally constrained "selves." A. M.'s metaphysics is mercifully free of Kantian technical jargon and consequently much easier to understand and assess. In keeping with his rejection of "negative theology," A. M. sees no reason to deny that we can know anything about souls—they do not belong to an unconceptualizable realm of "things-in-themselves."

One of the distinctive aspects of A. M.'s theory of the soul is his account of mind-body interaction. Unlike the traditional Cartesian dualist, A. M. insists that the existence of a particular soul is dependent upon the existence of a functioning body—more particularly, presumably, upon the existence of a functioning brain. In this respect, his dualism of mental and physical substances resembles the "emergent dualism" of William Hasker [cf. his *The Emergent Self*, (Cornell U. P., 2001).] Unlike both emergent dualism and Cartesianism, A. M.'s dualism locates the soul outside of *time*. And A. M. also at least *seems* to disagree with these other dualists when he denies that the soul is the cause of changes that occur in space-time: "Souls do not cause anything to happen in [The Block Universe]. Their decisions are reflected by modes in the Body of God and in the unfolding of God's Body in time and space, because such modes imitate the souls they have: The self is an imitation of the soul it has" (p. 57). It is not so clear, however, that there is any deep difference here. Surely "imitation" is a causally loaded notion. A Roman statue that looks exactly like Richard Nixon is not a statue of Nixon, no matter how much its head resembles Nixon's; to be an "imitation" of Nixon, it has to have the appearance of Nixon *because of* Nixon's appearance. The relation between atemporal choices in the soul and bodily motions at particular times may be unlike ordinary causal relations in many ways; but, to deserve the name "imitation," the body must undergo certain changes *because of* the state of the soul; and so there is something at least *very like* causal dependence between events in space-time and atemporal events in the soul. If this form of “imitation” is radically noncausal, A. M. needs to say much more about why it deserves the name “imitation,” when imitation seems to require a causal connection between imitation and the thing imitated.

The Argument for Atemporal Souls

Souls are, according to A. M., primarily the subjects of awareness. On the face of it, acts of awareness are completely temporal, occurring one after the other. Indeed, some acts of awareness seem to preclude others, requiring separation in time. So I cannot have a visual field that is uniformly red and *also* white with pink polka dots. Since I have had awareness of both sorts of visual field, my acts of visual awareness must not be completely intrinsic features of a partless soul. I must have “seen uniform red” relative to one thing—presumably, relative to one *time*—and have “seen pink polka dots” relative to another thing—another time. There would seem to be only two alternatives to this relativization of sensory states to times: One could follow the lead of David Lewis, dividing the soul up into temporal parts, some of which sense uniform red, others polka dots. Or one could follow the “A-theorists,” positing a privileged fact about which intrinsic states a thing *presently* (i.e., *really*) has, and supposing that presently (i.e., really), the only intrinsic sensory state I have is the one I have *now*; if I now sense uniform redness, I can only stand in backwards-looking or forwards-looking relations to incompatible intrinsic sensory states, like *sensing pink polka dots*. Since A. M. rejects the A-theory and does not seem inclined to divide up souls into different parts corresponding to different times in the history of their “selves,” he must find some other way out of this “problem of temporary intrinsics.” [For discussion of the range of alternative solutions to the problem of temporary intrinsics, see my “Temporary Intrinsics and Presentism,” reprinted—with a postscript: “Can One ‘Take Tense Seriously’ and Be a B-theorist?”—in *Persistence*, ed. by Sally Haslanger and Roxanne Fay (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., 2006).]

A. M. might simply reply that although some intrinsic sensory states *seem* incompatible and *seem* to require relativization to something, nevertheless, when they are exemplified *atemporally*, there is no incompatibility. Still, both the argument from temporary intrinsics and simple common sense generate a powerful *prima facie* case for the temporality of *acts* of awareness. What argument does A. M. offer for the atemporality of the *subjects* of awareness?

So far as I can see, the only argument for the atemporality of souls and their acts of awareness appears in the following passage: “[Most people] think of the events of consciousness as temporal, and indeed, as like physical processes: A man sees a table and then becomes aware of it, just as a man walks from one part of a room to another. But this is to confuse a physical process that takes place over space-time with a timeless and spaceless process that is akin to a logical relation: the seeing of a table (timelessly) entails becoming aware of it" (p. 41).

If I see a table, and if seeing a table *just is* being aware of it (by visual means), then it would be a mistake to suppose that the process of seeing and (thus) being aware is like first being in one part of a room and then in another part of the room. One cannot first do the one and then do the other; seeing *entails* awareness; it is a way of being aware. But there is another use of the verb "seeing" that does not require (conscious) awareness; something can be "in one's visual field" without one's noticing it. The "long-distance truck driver" (to take David Armstrong's example) surely must have seen the bend in the road, because he didn't drive into the ditch; but in retrospect, he does not recall having any conscious awareness of the bend—he was listening to the radio or thinking about something else. Less dramatically, something can have been "right in front of me" all along, although I only gradually become aware that I am looking at it. A. M.'s claim that seeing a table and becoming aware of it stand in quasi-logical entailment relations is only plausible if A. M. is using "seeing" in the first way, so that it really does *imply* (simultaneous) awareness. Used in the second way, there is no such implication. The truck driver need never be aware of the bend; I might never become aware of the thing I, in a weaker sense, saw right in front of me. And in this second sense, seeing and becoming aware of a table *can* be just like walking from one part of a room to another: first one sees the table; then one becomes aware of it. There seems to be no "confusion" here on the part of someone who would distinguish seeing and awareness and no entailment of the latter by the former.

A. M. could object that there is no decent sense of "see" that does not imply awareness; but even if that were true, it would just show that the example is a poor one for a person who would defend the thesis that acts of awareness are in time. If indeed seeing necessarily includes awareness, no one is likely to suppose that seeing and becoming aware is a process that requires a period of time in which to occur, like walking across a room. The friends of temporal awareness and temporal souls will choose a better example, such as deciding to open one's eyes and seeing a table. Does a relation of "entailment" hold between the decision and the seeing? Surely not, since one can decide to open one's eyes only to find that the room is dark or that one is wearing a blindfold, or…. In this case, the natural tendency we all have to regard the visual experience as following (temporally) the awareness of the decision cannot be a case of confusing "logical following" (entailment) with "temporal following."

(On p. 40, the "intentionality" of mental states is said to be a feature that distinguishes them from mere physical events. But in order for this to serve as a reason to ascribe atemporality to mental states, it would have to be the case that only physical events can be in time—and that, I take it, is the very question at issue.)

Timeless Processes

Even if he lacks a convincing argument for the timelessness of souls, A. M.'s discussion of the doctrine contains much of value. He goes a long way toward showing that however alien it might seem at first, the idea can be developed and made quite attractive. [Howard Robinson is engaged in a similar project; see his chapter "The Self and Time" in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).] As I see it, there are two fronts along which A. M. advances the cause of timeless persons. One has to do with the nature of the mental states of souls. Our mental states seem to constitute processes—but what sense can be made of a timeless process? The other concerns the relation of timeless persons to temporal bodies and will be discussed in the next subsection.

A. M. distinguishes between two kinds of states of the soul: First, there are states of *awareness*, which are "intrinsic," "constitutive of that soul," and "a simple matter of the soul being what it is" (p. 42); these "events of awareness are properly described as *in* the soul" (p. 68). The other category includes acts of understanding, belief, judgment, desire, and choosing; they display "intentionality" both in being "about" things external to the soul. All of the ones just mentioned display another feature traditionally associated with the word "intentional": they are directed towards things that can be evaluated for truth and falsehood. They seem to be equivalent, then, to "propositional attitudes." One can understand that *p*, believe that *p*, judge that *p*, and even desire or choose that *p* be the case—with "*p*" replaceable in each case by a declarative sentence and the resulting term of the form "that *p*" referring to a proposition. (Of course one need not buy into a heavy-duty metaphysics of propositions in order to regard all of these mental states as having something in common, something in virtue of which the label "propositional attitude" is an appropriate one.) Other states that are contrasted with mere awareness and that are said to display "aboutness" are desiring an apple and loving another soul—states that relate a soul to a thing outside the soul but that can be ascribed without thereby directly implying anything about the soul's propositional attitudes. Such states are said to involve "awareness of" other things, but this does not mean that standing in one of these relations to an object constitutes an act of awareness that is intrinsic to the soul—though perhaps it does mean that whenever one stands in one of these *awareness of* relations to external things, there is some intrinsic act of awareness that corresponds somehow to the more extrinsic state of awareness (cf. pp. 41, 43, 68).

One danger with drawing a sharp distinction between intrinsic states of awareness on the one hand and intentional states on the other is that the atemporality of souls might be compromised. I suppose that episodes of non-intentional awareness will be things like phenomenal experiences. If I am timelessly characterized by some set of phenomenal states but nevertheless am desiring that apple now and then not desiring it any longer later on, then I am not very timeless! Similarly, I had better not be timeless and yet have different beliefs and other occurrent thoughts at different times. To be genuinely timeless as opposed to merely unchanging with respect to *some* mental states, my acts of believing (desiring, etc.) and my thoughts about particular objects must be timeless as well. I believe this to be A. M.'s view (e.g., the soul's awareness of the table, despite its being a relation to something temporal, is said to be a timeless event; cf. p. 42).

Often, mental states that we would ordinarily attribute to temporally *later* parts of our lives are partially caused by or otherwise dependent upon mental states that we would ordinarily attribute to *earlier* parts of our lives. Suppose I become sad, and this makes me irritable and causes me to kick my dog; but suppose some other person is irritable, kicks her dog, and as a consequence becomes sad. It is not enough to describe our atemporal souls as containing the choice to kick the dog, irritation, and sadness. Similar episodes can stand in different explanatory or causal orderings in different souls. What would ordinarily be thought to be a temporally spread out mental process must be regarded as a series of states of the soul standing in "timeless logical relations"—a series we misleadingly describe using "the temporal idiom of process" (p. 56). Really, the relations are more like relations of "timeless logical entailment" holding between the premises and conclusion of an argument (p. 41). A visual experience that precedes the awareness of a table (e.g., one might see something and then figure out after awhile that it is a table) comes "earlier" in the life of the soul than the awareness—but in an explanatory, not a temporal, ordering of the soul's states (pp. 42 and 43). Deliberation and choice and awareness of consequences are atemporal states of a soul; but the deliberation "comes before" the choice, which in turn "comes before" the awareness of things we would ordinarily call effects of the choice (A. M. would say they are the results of non-causal imitation); but this "coming before" is some kind of explanatory, not temporal, priority.

The believers in a personal but atemporal God have gotten used to positing this sort of ordering among God's decisions and various portions of his knowledge, as A. M. knows (cf. p. 42). If a timeless God decides to create a world with human beings in it, the decision can hardly be based upon his knowledge that Adam and

Eve will exist! Some things that a timeless God knows come "before" others, separated by decisions that are based upon the "earlier" knowledge, and at least partly responsible for the "later" knowledge. God's timeless knowledge must, then, be divided up into "stages," sets of things that God knows that are separated from other sets of things he knows because one set includes bits of knowledge that depend upon decisions made on the basis of the other set. (I explore the idea of "stages" in God's all-at-once knowledge in a paper called "Yet Another Anti-Molinist Argument"; it is available here: http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/zimmerman/Anti-Molinist-Arg-Jan-25.pdf.)

One point at which a personal but timeless God would have His knowledge divided into stages would be between (a) the set of things God knows that includes His reasons for making creatures with indeterminism-requiring freedom, and (b) the knowledge of what the creatures actually do in their circumstances. Given A. M.'s commitment to indeterministic free will on the part of creatures, he must surely allow that something analogous happens in the timeless *human* sphere. I may timelessly know that my friend is hard up for money; I may, on that basis, timelessly choose to offer her a bribe; and if she freely accepts, I timelessly know that she did. But this latter piece of knowledge is dependent upon my choice to offer her a bribe and cannot have gone into the "stage" of my knowledge that preceded my choice to offer the bribe (which did, however, include my knowledge of her financial troubles).

A. M.'s acceptance of the divisibility of a single soul's timeless knowledge into stages raises problems for one of his objections to a traditional, personal God with absolute foreknowledge, as I shall now show.

Stages in the Foreknowledge of a Personal God

A. M. rejects the A-theory of time, with its objective distinction between the present and the future; so he cannot defend an "open" view of the future, according to which there are as yet no facts of the matter about some future contingents. The existence of a definite future does not, he thinks, threaten my ability freely to decide what to do next. The process of choosing must be genuinely indeterministic if I am to be free (p. 52), but the mere fact that I will do a certain thing does not imply that I am not free to do otherwise. Suppose, however, that there was a personal God of the traditional sort, infallibly foreknowing what I will do. Many have thought that such a deity would pose a greater threat to freedom than the mere existence of facts about the future. A. M. disagrees; agents can be perfectly free "despite the fact that the God of the tradition can see ahead of time what they will freely choose to do. The traditional God's foreknowledge, or ability to predict what created agents will do—and consequently His responsibility for what they can do—does not threaten their freedom or their responsibility" (p. 51).

Although A. M. sees no incoherence, then, in the very idea of combining foreknowledge with libertarian (indeterministic) free will, he does have an objection to the existence of such a deity. The God of the tradition is also perfectly good—morally impeccable and benevolent. But with foreknowledge of our wrong choices comes responsibility for the evil of these choices; God becomes an accomplice:

> The traditional theist denies God's responsibility for the free choices of created agents, placing full blame for what they do only on them. We do not agree with this. We believe that the omniscience of the God of the Abrahamic tradition does make Him responsible for His created agents' actions despite the traditional attempts to avoid this conclusion: His omniscience implies that He knows what created agents will do, and His omnipotence implies that He can do something about what He sees that created agents will do (p. 51).

I take it that the claim is *not* merely that because God knows ahead of time that Adam will culpably choose to accept the fruit, God is obligated to do everything He can, subsequently, to minimize the bad results of this choice. That would not make God responsible for the choice but only for not doing more to negate its effects. Rather, God is supposed to be responsible for the free choice itself: A. M. contrasts his view with that of the "traditional theist" who "denies God's responsibility for the free choices of created agents" and wants to say that there would, in the circumstances, be two agents responsible for the very same thing. I shall argue that, given A. M.'s other commitments, this argument is not tenable.

First, imagine the attempt to blame the timeless deity of the previous subsection for the free choices his creatures make: He timelessly knows that Adam will sin; so he should have done something "ahead of time" to make sure that he not sin. But what knowledge was available to God at stages prior to his decision whether to create Adam? Did those stages contain the knowledge that Adam would sin? Certainly not; nothing could be included in that early stage that depends upon God's choice to create Adam.

A libertarian theist who believes in a God of absolute foreknowledge can make a precisely analogous move. The believers in "simple foreknowledge" (theists who reject the Molinist's "middle knowledge") insist that the set of things God foreknows must be divisible into stages, some of which are explanatorily prior to, others explanatorily posterior to, various of God's creative decisions. Their breakdown of God's foreknowledge into stages will look exactly like the stages posited by the believer in a timelessly omniscient deity who allows his creatures libertarian freedom. The only difference will be the "time" at which they are known—instead of knowing them at that locus of truth called "eternity," these theists will say that he knows them at every time. In response to A. M.'s argument, this sort of believer in foreknowledge will insist that God could not "do something about" the fact that Adam was going to sin *before* deciding whether to put him in circumstances of temptation and then allowing him to choose. He could not make use of his foreknowledge concerning what Adam's choice would be in those circumstances, prior to deciding to put him those circumstances.

Molinists have a slightly more difficult time explaining God's allowing bad choices to be made. According to them, at the very first stage, God has not only "natural knowledge" (knowledge of the necessary truths) but also "middle knowledge" (knowledge of what every possible free creature would do in every situation into which he or she could be inserted). Knowing that Adam would sin if offered an apple by Eve under such-and-such circumstances, why did God not prevent the offer from being made? Here, Alvin Plantinga's version of the Free Will Defense comes into play: The conditionals that constitute God's middle knowledge are not necessary truths, and they are not under God's control (under pain of God's being able simply to cause us to freely do whatever he wants—a logical impossibility). So they are set, randomly, from the beginning of time or from all eternity. Plantinga argues that they *could* have randomly "turned up snake eyes," so to speak, over and over—in other words, it could have turned out that no matter what free creatures God would create, if He put them in circumstances of significant free choice, they would sin. So there is at least the possibility of God's being forced to allow wrong choices to be made, if he wants free choices at all. Since God does not determine which Molinistic conditionals are true, and since we are (by hypothesis) free to choose as we see fit, His putting us in the circumstances of free choice does not make Him responsible for the choice we make, despite His foreknowledge of what it will be.

It is true that the Molinist has a harder time making God seem not to be complicit in our sins; but never mind: Molinism is false. (Cf. my "Yet Another Anti-Molinist Argument" for just one of many objections to the view.)

What possible reason could one have for admitting the coherence of dividing *timeless* knowledge into stages in a way that would block A. M.'s argument, while denying the coherence of dividing *foreknowledge* into stages to block the argument? So far as I can see, the only reason would be the conviction that God simply could not know ahead of time the outcome of genuinely free choices. And of course many philosophers have argued for this conclusion. God's ancient beliefs are "hard facts" about the past, the kinds of things that can no longer be affected by anything I might do; so if God has always believed that I do a certain thing, then my having the power to do otherwise would require that I have the power to render God's belief false—impossible, given His essential omniscience. Or so the argument goes. But A. M. can have no objections along these lines; as we have seen, he thinks that God's foreknowledge would not pose an obstacle to my acting freely.

I conclude, then, that A. M.'s commitment to timeless souls undermines his argument that a personal God with foreknowledge is responsible for the sins committed by free creatures.

Souls and Selves

Perhaps the most exciting and original aspect of A. M.'s neo-Kantian theory of persons is the idea that a "self"—the bodily "imitation," in space-time, of the soul—has persistence conditions that are at least partly a function of the way in which the soul thinks about itself. In particular, the kinds of episodes that a self can survive (e.g., sex change or even more radical kinds of physical or psychological discontinuities) depends in part upon how the soul is thinking of itself at that time—although "at that time" means, in this context, something like "at the atemporal stages in the soul's mental life that are separated by choices with effects near that time." Sometimes I shall ignore this wrinkle, pretending that the soul *is* in time and that stages in its atemporal mental "process" occur simultaneously with the bodily episodes to which they are relevant.

I explored a closely related idea in still-unpublished lectures given at Oxford University (Trinity Term, 2004, as the Dasturzada Dr. Jal Pavry Memorial Lectures). I was chiefly inspired by Mark Johnston's defense of a "Protean" conception of personal identity. Johnston's paper on the topic is tucked away in a somewhat obscure book— the paper is "Relativism and the Self," in *Relativism: Interpretation and Conflict*, ed. by Michael Krausz (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1989, pp. 441 to 472)—and I do not know of any other authors (besides, now, A. M.) who have entertained this possibility.

A. M. points out that "people differ greatly in what they regard as the sorts of properties that can be *essential* to their selves" (p. 55); the "regarding" need not, however, be a matter of explicit, self-conscious belief. Although "in part the creative construction of the very human who has adopted it," a soul's self-image is "in larger part an unconscious result of how that individual's history and nurture has affected him" (p. 53). Johnston agrees. The important factors for determining the kind of self one has are, he thinks, one's "person-directed attitudes": "(i) one's future-oriented and retrospective concerns for oneself and others; (ii) one's expectations about experiences and memories of those experiences; (iii) one's expectations about the relations between action and desert" ("Relativism and the

Self," p. 448). These attitudes may be primarily latent—not a matter of explicit conscious belief.

Both Johnston and A. M. emphasize the way in which one's self-image may change, and they infer that sufficiently radical changes can alter the range of possible trajectories one can take through space-time. A. M. contrasts individuals who implicitly hold a "psychological continuity" account of their persistence conditions (those for whom "the particular aspects of their bodies, or even that they have bodies, are irrelevant to who they really are") and individuals who have a self-conception rooted in one or another kind of "bodily continuity" (those who "include various bodily aspects of themselves…as essential to the selves that they really are") (pp. 53 and 54). Since a soul can change in the attitudes that ground its self-image and the episodes its self can survive are partly determined by its self-image (though there are limits); A. M. concludes that there can be changes in what sorts of episodes a given soul's self can survive. Johnston agrees and calls such a change a "refiguration."

There are significant differences between them, of course. Johnston regards each person as *identical to* the physical object that A. M. calls "the self"; he rejects the idea that persons are fundamentally nonphysical souls.

One further point upon which Johnston and A. M. probably agree can be made vivid using a stock science fiction device: the teletransporter, which "reads off" the internal structure of an object, dispersing its atoms in the process, and then creates an atom-for-atom duplicate of the object at some distant location using different matter. Johnston thinks that some but not all episodes of teletransportation involve the same person at both ends. I suspect that A. M. would agree. He might put it this way: If a soul's self-image is primarily that of a psychological being, one that survives so long as its memories and other mental states evolve continuously, then this soul will be associated with the body that enters the teletransporter and also with the body that appears at the teletransporter's destination. In that case, the bodily modifications of space-time at these two widely separated locations will be part of a single self. Johnston believes that if a person enters the teletransporter at a time when her "person-directed attitudes" converge upon the kind of biological continuity that is not preserved in this process, then she cannot survive teletransportation. The analogous hypothesis, in A. M.'s metaphysics, would be the following: If a soul's self-image includes the uninterrupted continuance of one's physical attributes, preserved in the normal, biological, fashion, then the soul will not be associated with the self that appears at the destination. If the self of such a soul enters the teletransporter and has its physical states recorded and then its atoms dispersed, its life comes to an end.

I suspect that A. M. would go along with Johnston in regarding this outcome as inevitable, given the person's attitudes upon entering the teletransporter. But one might have doubts about it. The self that appears at the destination will be just the sort of modification of space-time that is sufficient for the existence of a corresponding soul. And this soul will have "memories" that can be traced back to the life of the self that entered the device (assuming that mental states such as seeming memories supervene upon brain states). If the soul associated with this body has a resolutely biologically based self-image, then A. M. (as I read him) and Johnston would both agree: a different person is brought into existence at the destination. But what if the being that results from the teletransportation immediately orients his person-directed attitudes around psychological continuity alone? If the apparent memories he experiences are sufficiently vivid, it might be impossible for this *not* to be the case. Johnston is pessimistic about a person's ability to "refigure" under these circumstances. It is too late to change one's mind about the relative importance of psychological and physical continuity; he should have thought of that before getting into the teletransporter! Would A. M. disagree, allowing that the person does survive, so long as he undergoes a sudden, *ex post facto* refiguration? In A. M.'s terms, the result would be a single self associated with the same soul both before and after teletransportation—a soul that suddenly "refigures" its self-image. Let us call a theory of personal (or self) identity that allows for such refiguration "optimistic"—it implies that it is not too late to change one's mind.

The passage most relevant to the question whether A. M. would allow for optimistic refiguration is the following:

> The image of the self that a soul has evolves even despite the soul's resistance to change in its self-image and sometimes despite its denial or failure to realize that its self-image has changed. Dramatic events in its life that it responds to in ways it did not anticipate and that it even would have denied were possible provide the accidental discovery that it is capable of much more (or much less) than it thought—crushing the illusions of self that so many cherish. But these forced developments in maturity reveal something positive: that the self-image is one that is far more under the control of the soul than most souls imagine it to be (p. 54).

A soul's discovery that it is "capable of much more … than it thought" might not be a matter of changing its self-image after the occurrence of an event that was inconsistent with the soul's self-image up to that point—although, upon an initial reading, that is how I interpreted this passage. Perhaps the idea is, instead, that in order for the same self to persist through the problematic episode, the change in self-image must already have occurred subconsciously, despite the soul's "denial or failure to realize" that the change has occurred. If that is the correct reading of A. M., then he agrees with Johnston's pessimistic judgment about attempts to refigure immediately after undergoing episodes inconsistent with one's former self-image. It is too late then—the original person is no longer around to do the refiguring.

I think that believers in radical versions of the doctrine of temporal parts should find a Johnston-style "Protean" conception of personal identity quite attractive—they should allow that one's persistence conditions are partly a function of one's self-conception and that changes in self-conception can permit one to survive events at some times that one could not have survived at other times. According to the temporal parts metaphysicians, there are, potentially at least, persisting objects "out there" satisfying any consistent persistence conditions one cares to invent—including persistence conditions that allow a thing to survive events at one time that it could not survive at another time. Given all the objects to choose from, if we believe, at a given time, that "person" in our mouths refers to things that cannot survive teletransportation, should we not be allowed to determine what we mean by "person"? If so, then near that time, at least, we are not things that survive teletransportation. But if we change our minds and start using "person" to refer to things that we think *can* survive teletransportation, then, given the presence of all sorts of person-like objects with different persistence conditions, should we not once again be allowed to succeed in referring to something that satisfies our self-conception? In that case, we succeed, at this different time, in referring to things that at least near that time, *can* survive teletransportation. If the friends of temporal parts are willing to accept these conclusions, then they can be led to accept the Protean theory by means of two further assumptions about the word "I": (i) "I" is used by me on an occasion to refer to one of the things that is then in the extension of the word "person." And (ii) if the word "I" is used by me at t to refer to a certain object x, then, if I use the word "I" at some other time t^* to refer to some object y, x must be identical with y. Given these premises, a person whose self-image changes from prohibiting to allowing teletransportation is able to survive episodes after the change that he could not survive before the change. (The details of this argument are spelled out in *Persons and Their Boundaries*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.)

Should the friend of temporal parts who accepts a Protean theory of our persistence conditions be pessimistic, like Johnston and (if I read him aright) A. M.? Or should he choose the more "optimistic" sort of persistence conditions described above—ones that would allow for a sudden "refiguration" after teletransportation, so that a person with a body-based self-image could convert to a purely psychological self-conception and thereby survive the event? I am not sure. However, it looks to me as though the temporal parts metaphysician can take the optimistic persistence conditions seriously, while A. M. may well have reason to reject them as impossible.

On the metaphysics of temporal parts, one looks at the whole spread of four-dimensional objects located anywhere in space-time, however disconnected and gerrymandered their boundaries might be, and determines which ones constitute individual persons. Whether a pair of temporal parts belong to a single person might well depend crucially upon events involving the temporally later member of the pair—or even events in the far future, for that matter. A. M.'s metaphysics is very different, however. The modes of space-time that constitute selves may have temporal parts; but they generate atemporal souls, which (obviously!) do not have temporal parts; and a series of temporal parts is united into a self on the basis of its association with a single soul. Reasonable constraints upon explanatory circularity will, I think, rule out optimistic persistence conditions. But it takes a little work to show this.

Corresponding to the self-stage *S1* at *t1*, the time at which someone is about to enter the teletransporter, there is a stage *B1* in a soul *x* that is ontologically dependent upon *S1*. *B1* is a subset of all the things *x* atemporally believes; it includes just the beliefs that could figure in *x*'s reasoning about what to do "next"—i.e., the atemporal decisions that would result (via imitation) in modifications of Space-time immediately after *t*. If the teletransporter works, there will be a self-stage *S2*, sufficiently rich in complexity for there to be a soul *y* that is ontologically dependent upon it. Given the nature of the brain in *S2*'s head, *y*'s atemporal beliefs will include a stage *B2* with seeming memories of *S1*. Suppose *B1* includes a self-image that does not allow for survival of teletransportation but also includes beliefs leading to a decision to enter the teletransportation device (perhaps *x* is a suicidal soul). The event of entering the device is dependent upon the choice (by means of imitation), which is in turn explanatorily dependent upon the beliefs in *B1*. The existence of *S2* is causally dependent upon the event of entering the device. *y*'s belief that stage *B2* is ontologically dependent upon *S2*. Now, the two questions to ask A. M. are: Is *x* the same soul as *y*? Could the self-image contained in *B2* be at all relevant to whether *x* is the same soul as *y*? The pessimistic view of persistence conditions answers both answers negatively. The optimist answers maybe and yes. The optimistic view implies that *x* may be the same soul as *y*, depending upon whether *B2* contains a refigured self-image according to which psychological continuity is sufficient for the survival of the self.

Could A. M. be an optimist? Here is a not-so-impressive argument for the conclusion that he should not be one (it is similar to arguments that have been given against "closest continuer" theories of personal identity, such as Robert Nozick's). Suppose *B2* does not contain the required refiguration of self-image, retaining the self-image of *B1*. Then (according to both optimism *and* pessimism) *x* is not identical with *y*. It is tempting to describe the optimist's view as implying that, had *S2* generated not *B2* but some *B3* with a self-image allowing for teletransportation, then *x would* have been identical with *y*. If the optimist accepts this characterization of her position, there is an easy refutation of her proposed persistence conditions on the grounds that they require the contingency of identity—*x* is not identical with *y*, she says, but *x* and *y* could have been identical—and, as Kripke has taught us, identity holds necessarily or not at all. This would, however, be too quick. The optimist should not claim that *x* is actually distinct from *y* but could have been identical with *y*; rather, she should say that had *B2* been replaced by *B3*, *y* would not have existed (or at least *y* would not have been the subject of *B3* and would not have been associated with the self stages at the teletransporter's output). Instead, the subject of *B3* would have been *x*. If in fact *x* is distinct from *y*, that is a necessary truth; what is dependent upon the self-image in the soul associated with *S2* is whether *x* continues to be imitated within Space-time or whether instead a new soul (e.g., *y*) is "born."

Still, there is something fishy about this scenario, given A. M.'s metaphysics. The pessimist will say that no matter what self-image is contained in the soul associated with *S2*, the conditions leading up to the attempted teletransportation were sufficient to cause one soul to cease to have a "footprint" in Space-time and to generate a new soul associated with the body assembled at the destination. The optimist says that these conditions were *not* sufficient to generate a new soul; that the existence of *y* depends also upon the fact that *y*'s beliefs (the stage *B2*) retained the bodily self-image of *B1*. So *y*'s existence depends upon *B2*; but *B2* is a set of mental states *belonging to y*. If mental states are ontologically dependent upon their subjects, a kind of circularity threatens. I am not entirely sure that it is vicious—perhaps the two kinds of dependence are very different, and dependence of one sort can hold between two things despite the fact that dependence of the other sort holds in the reverse direction. Nevertheless, there seems to me to be something fishy about the sort of two-way dependence to which A. M. would be driven, were he to accept the optimistic theory of Protean persons. I suspect, then, not only that A. M. is a pessimist but that he has good reason to be one.

Institutional Selves and Souls

It is natural to speak of some corporations, teams, governments, and other institutions as though they have beliefs and desires, make choices, deliberate, are surprised, and so on. To use Dennett's terminology, it can often be useful to consider such entities from the "intentional stance." A. M. thinks that when the intentional stance "holds up," it is not merely *useful* (from the point of view of predicting behavior). If "a closer inspection reveals that the organization appears to be aware of something at one moment and not at the next, that its choice at one moment is made with one set of goals apparently in mind and an entirely different set in the next moment" (p. 56), then the intentional stance has "broken down." But if it does not break down in this way, A. M. thinks that it is *literally true* that the institution has awareness; and so, according to A. M.'s metaphysics, it has an atemporal soul as well.

Although appealing enough in its way, this doctrine could surely use some defense. As A. M. points out, "[i]t is tempting, because such institutions are made up of individual conscious agents, to try to reduce the awareness and the decision making of an institution to the awarenesses and decision makings of the individuals in that institution" (p. 45). His argument against reductionism is not, however, convincing. It amounts to this: The mental states of an institution can differ from those of the individuals that make it up. A member of the institution may be aware of something, but the institution might never manage to be aware of this fact. An organization may sue someone, though no one in the organization does any suing. A citizen of a country may assassinate a foreign leader in the name of his country, yet the country might not be responsible for the action—it never chose to act in this way. And so on. But all this shows is that a very simple-minded reduction of the mental states of an organization to those of its members will not suffice.

Suppose one proposed the following as part of one's reductive theory of institutional minds:

> Institution x is aware that $p =_{\text{df}}$. At least one individual who is a member of the institution is aware that p.
>
> Institution x performs action $A =_{\text{df}}$. At least one member of x performs action A and does so intending to represent x.

These would be very bad definitions, for the reasons A. M. adduces. But reductivists about institutional minds will surely attempt something more sophisticated than this. An institution can be said to be aware of some fact only if enough of its members are aware and the ones who are aware are in a position to cause the institution to change its policies in light of the fact. An institution can do things that no member does, so *A* may be performed without any member performing it; and not everything any member does "in the name of the institution" is really an action performed by the institution (as A. M.'s renegade assassin shows). One might propose to replace the first definition with something like:

> Institution x is aware that $p =_{\text{df}}$. Every individual who is a member of the institution is aware that p.

But again, for reasons A. M. mentions, this will not do. So long as the members who are in a position to set the institution's policies are apprised of the fact, many other members can remain ignorant while the institution is aware. But all this shows is the inadequacies of a reductionist theory that would rely on overly simple definitions.

Compare the above proposed reductions to a couple of other simple-minded attempts at reduction:

> x is a liquid $=_{\text{df}}$. Every part of x is capable of sliding over every other part of x.

No substance consisting of intact molecules will count as a liquid on this definition. There must simply be *enough* of the parts—all of the parts below a certain size—that are capable of "sliding over" one another; some atoms may be bonded to one another and incapable of "sliding." One should not, however, conclude that liquidity is an irreducible property of portions of matter, one that cannot be explained as a function of their smaller parts, simply because this attempted reduction has failed.

Here is another inadequate attempt to reduce properties of a whole to those of its parts:

> x is moving at n miles per hour $=_{\text{df}}$. All of the parts of x are moving at n miles per hour.

This will not do, since an object may be moving at n miles per hour, although there is movement of some of the internal parts of the object that makes their speed slightly different from that of the object as a whole. Some more complicated account of the speed of a complex body is needed; but the speed of complex bodies should not be regarded as irreducible to that of their parts just because the above proposal has proven unsatisfactory.

Perhaps, when institutions become sufficiently sophisticated, they do generate souls with their own irreducible atemporal mental states. But it is too early to be confident that institutional "mental states" cannot be given reductive definitions—too early to conclude that taking the "intentional stance" toward them is anything more than a useful fiction.

IV. Criticisms of Western Religions

Moral Failings of Western Religions

Some of A. M.'s criticisms of the main Western religions—the "Abrahamic tradition," including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—could be competently only assessed by a historian. But I will lodge a few complaints.

The claim that "institutional evil" is not even "recognized as the danger it is" by the "Abrahamic religious traditions" (p. 26) rings false. The ancient Jewish prophets focused mainly on the vices of rulers, the priestly classes, and the rich; they called for repentance on the part of institutions within the nation and the nation as a whole. Jesus fulfilled a similar prophetic role, condemning some of the practices of the priests, scribes, and Pharisees—who, it should be remembered, were both religious and political leaders, representing the Jews to the Roman rulers and judging most local disputes. Indeed, the leverage religious institutions provide "against the dogmas of political institutions" is acknowledged by A. M. himself: "Right and wrong as described by a religious institution can be used as a perspective against which to measure the actions that a political institution inclines its citizens to engage in and—more important—as a tool to measure the actions that the political institution itself engages in, apart from those of its citizens" (p. 28).

The moral authority and inspiration provided by religions have, of course, been used to promote both good and evil causes. For every William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu, there is a bloodthirsty Crusader or Inquisitor in our history. But suppose that the quasi-religious element of *Coming to Understanding* were to take hold of the imagination of millions of people, including entire nations; that millions were to come to believe that the examination of the structure of reality is the greatest good, to which all others are subordinate. Is it difficult to imagine dictators and demagogues among these millions who would advocate euthanasia for those who do not have the mental capacity to directly advance the cause and who are not needed for menial labor or the continuation of the species? Would not some cynical voices call for the enforced sterilization of those likely to give birth to children incapable of the highest intellectual achievements? Surely some countries with ancient grudges against their neighbors would use their enemies' failure to appreciate the importance of coming to understanding as an excuse to invade and oppress them. And no doubt some dangerous and egotistical individuals would feel certain that *they* are in the vanguard of *Coming to Understanding*, while their enemies—the annoying neighbor, the unreasonable landlord—are incapable of higher thought, not needed for janitorial work, and therefore disposable.

Indeed, *Coming to Understanding* seems to me to have fewer built-in safeguards against such abuses than Christianity. After all, anyone who actually reads the purported words of Christ will discover absolute prohibitions against any kind of retaliation and insistence upon the dignity of the poorest and weakest members of society. Of course governments and governments-cum-religious-institutions have claimed to represent Christ and have perpetrated all manner of crimes in His name. But Christianity contains, at its core, the repudiation of such abuses; inevitably, some Christians actually *read* their Bibles and are repulsed by the inconsistency between word and deed. They cry out for justice, and their demands are credible from within the religious framework of the hypocritical Christian offenders themselves. It is unclear (to say the least!) whether a religion or quasi-religion based upon *Coming to Understanding* would provide its adherents with the same sort of moral traction against its misuse. Could its prophets credibly condemn politicians who would twist its teachings to support the oppression of the less intelligent?

Metaphysical Failings of Western Religions

I have already shown that the contingency of A. M.'s God makes it impossible for him to accept the version of the principle of sufficient reason formulated early in Volume 2. To the extent that he is committed to that principle, versions of the Cosmological Argument may provide him with a reason to accept the existence of a being upon which everything else depends (like A. M.'s own God) and that has at least one of the attributes traditionally ascribed to God by Christian theologians: necessary existence. [Samuel Clarke's version of the cosmological argument uses a principle even weaker than A. M.'s and suffices for this conclusion; for a contemporary presentation of Clarke's argument, see William Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998).]

One of the great explanatory advantages traditional theism has over A. M.'s model is that the kind of teleology discernible in a personal God is much easier to grasp than the "built-in" teleology of A. M.'s God. It is tempting to think that the only genuine purposes and ends in nature are ones that depend upon agents with explicit goals. It is hard to see how a contingent thing (such as A. M.'s deity) could exist without a cause and without a mind of its own and nevertheless be *intrinsically* aiming at certain ends, no matter what anyone else thinks. It is not so hard to see how a contingent *person* could possess intrinsic teleology of this sort. At the heart of A. M.'s explanation of everything lies a great mystery—perhaps not as great as that of the Trinity, but still quite mystifying.

Earlier, I found a flaw in A. M.'s argument for the conclusion that a God with complete foreknowledge and omnipotence would be responsible for our moral failures. As a consequence, A. M. is not in a position to reject the traditional "free will defense" out of hand, as he thought. Of course there is a lot of evil that does not seem to be absolutely necessary merely to ensure that we are able to make free choices between good and bad options. But once the basic machinery of the free will defense is functioning, it can be made to do a fair bit of work toward chipping away at "natural evil" and seemingly "gratuitous evil" of all sorts. (For one attempt at building a comprehensive theodicy on the basis of the free will defense, see Peter van Inwagen, "The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil: A Theodicy," *Philosophical Topics* 16 1988, pp. 161–187.)

The other main objections A. M. lodges against a traditional personal God is that His attributes are inconsistent. Several of the usual objections to the compossiblity of the divine attributes are either not pursued or not open to A. M., given other commitments. A. M. does not lean heavily upon the paradox of the stone or upon the supposed incompatibility of foreknowledge with free will or upon the difficulty of attributing beliefs and desires to a "simple" being. He is not in a position to claim, as many have done, that it is impossible for a *person* to exist *timelessly*—after all, that is how he thinks *we* exist! So where, then, does he locate the inconsistencies among the traditional divine attributes?

He points out that some theologians have adopted "negative theology" or doctrines of "analogical predication"—they will not ascribe to God, in any literal sense, any attribute we can truly ascribe to creatures. This includes, of course, mental states and personhood itself. But these theologians represent an extreme position within the spectrum of views to be found in Western theology. It would be unfair to the God of the Abrahamic tradition to conclude, on the basis of their pronouncements, that "[i]t is clear that to attribute a mind and other personal qualities to God is—on pain of incoherence—to disallow other claims about Him" (p. 13). It is only incoherent to do so and *also* to say things like "no concept that we can grasp applies to God," as some of the more radical negative theologians are wont to do.

A. M.'s only other substantive criticisms of the traditional God seem to be that theological articulations of the Trinity and of transcendence and immanence are mysterious. I shall say nothing in defense of the Trinity except that it is admitted to be a mystery—and if there really were a God with the other attributes ascribed to him, should we not expect that he might describe some aspects of his nature that we can nevertheless not fully grasp, simply due to the differences in our conceptual resources?

A. M. seems to use “transcendent” to indicate the doctrines of the negative theologians (p. 12); so I shall say no more about transcendence and turn directly to the attribute of immanence.

The traditional theist has, I shall argue, a fairly adequate *ad hominem* response to A. M.’s arguments concerning immanence. Here is the relevant passage:

> [God] is described as with humans—and the world—in every way and all of the time. He is present. But at the same time that He is described as present, He is also described as infinite. If He is everywhere at all times and He is infinite, one can easily wonder, as Spinoza did, how there is room for anything else. The traditional answer is that He is spiritual, not material. Therefore, despite His immanence, He is not in space and time; thus, He is everywhere at all times in some other sense that is not specified (p. 12).

One objection that could be made is that there is one or another theological gloss on “immanence” that specifies the nature of this relation to space-time, and in a non-mysterious way. Richard Swinburne, for example, offers a simple, elegant theory of (the closely related notion of) omnipresence in terms of God’s ability to act directly upon any point in space-time and to receive information directly from every point in space-time. But suppose one regarded such analyses as inadequate and were driven to say what A. M. says: God is present in space and time in some way or other, without being spatio-temporal.

Perhaps this *is* a bit mysterious, but I am no less mystified by A. M.’s explanation of the way in which *his* deity can “include” everything there is (including every part of The Block Universe) yet nevertheless be “outside of space and time.” If a person were a composite of a nonspatial soul and a human body, then sure, she would be *partly* spatial. In general, if a thing has a part that is *F*, then the thing is at least partly *F*. So, if God had The Block Universe as a part, God would be at least partly spatio-temporal. The inference is blocked by A. M.’s claim that God merely *includes* The Block Universe and by his insistence that the relevant notion of “inclusion” does not imply parthood. But as I complained earlier, A. M. has not done enough to identify a relation that is sufficiently like parthood for his view to count as monism, yet not sufficiently unlike parthood to block the inference to the conclusion that God has a spatio-temporal aspect. It remains a mystery to me how a thing can be *utterly* outside of space and time despite the fact that The Block Universe and its contents are not separate from it but are included within it in some way.

V. Conclusion

Volume 2 of *Coming to Understanding* is not as well organized as Volume 1, and its theories are not crafted with the same sort of precision—although one must treat a subject with the degree of precision it admits, and the subjects of Volume 2 are no doubt intrinsically messier than the pristine metaphysical abstractions that are the focus of Volume 1. If experience is any guide, we should expect the author of Volume 2 to refine and improve the ideas it contains after criticisms and suggestions have been provided by a wide range of scholars. Although it is clearly a "work in progress," it contains numerous interesting arguments and sketches a non-theistic philosophico-theological system of genuine grandeur.

My main criticisms have been that the sense in which "God's attributes" are attributes has not been made sufficiently clear and that A. M.'s various commitments undermine his strongest objections to traditional theism. On the positive side of the ledger, there are some highly original ideas, several of which are sufficiently well worked out to be taken seriously as "live options" by contemporary metaphysicians—at least by the more open-minded members of our guild. Especially intriguing is his neo-Kantian picture of non–spatio-temporal souls and their four-dimensional "footprints." I found much to admire in the details of his conception of the relation between souls, their "self-images," and the selves that imitate them; it is a metaphysics of souls and bodies that deserves defenders.